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A crucible of the industrial revolution in the region, Bedlington is one of the older and more attractive towns in south east Northumberland.

Today, it's a busy spot with local shops and fascinating historic buildings lining the long tree-filled Front Street. With the strikingly restored Market Place, it's a lovely place to take in the day.

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FREE  
HERITAGE  
GUIDE!

# DISCOVER Bedlington Conservation Area

**NORTHUMBERLAND**  
Northumberland County Council



## From the Saxons to the Seventies and beyond

Bedlington has seen some interesting changes in its development history over the centuries, some leaving their mark more than others.

Bedlington is older than you may think, and probably has Saxon origins. Tradition has it that the remains of St Cuthbert (of Lindisfarne and Durham fame) rested at the site of Bedlington's parish church in 1069.

From early on, the town was a local capital, with its church, possible Bishop's palace, hospital, mills and markets. Until 1844, Bedlington was part of Co Durham, and the Sheriffs or main representatives were long linked to the Old Hall, demolished in 1959.

Although farmland surrounded Bedlington into the twentieth century, the market town began to change to an industrial one from the 1730s, due to the iron and coal found here. The town became pivotal to supplying the new railway industry, led by the Stephensons of Newcastle. Commerce, industry and housing flourished, plus churches, schools, institutions and many pubs.

By the mid nineteenth century, mining was crucial to the town's economy. Collieries and miners' terraces were added, plus

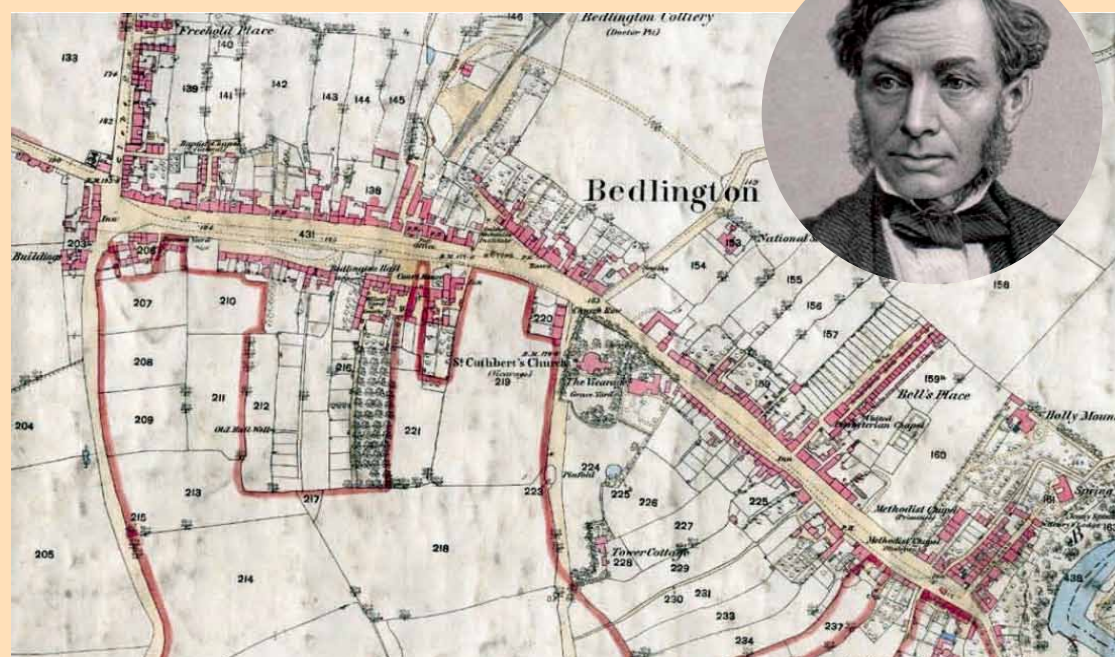
upmarket housing and a football ground. The town was at its peak.

But the later twentieth century brought change. Mass housing was built in surrounding fields, a dual carriageway pushed through the rural road at the west end, there was demolition, and a few intrusive 1960s blocks built.

Still, enough of Bedlington's attractive and interesting past survived to designate a conservation area in 1971. Today, the town retains much of its historic authenticity from eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings, and the archaeology beneath.



Above: East End Front Street in the late nineteenth century. Below: Sir Daniel Gooch (see overleaf).  
Bottom: Bedlington in 1860.



See more about the town's history at Bedlington Library, or try:  
[www.keystothepast.info](http://www.keystothepast.info)  
[www.bedlington.co.uk](http://www.bedlington.co.uk)  
[www.bedlingtonironworks.org](http://www.bedlingtonironworks.org)  
[www.experiencewoodhorn.com](http://www.experiencewoodhorn.com)

# Bedlington Conservation Area



## Simple qualities give Bedlington its special interest, with historic buildings and pleasant open spaces combining to create a distinctive townscape worthy of its conservation area status.

**A Conservation Area is a whole neighbourhood which has a special historic character from its buildings, streets and spaces. The idea is to protect and enhance what makes it special whilst still allowing new development.**

### The Pattern of Development

Bedlington Conservation Area is laid out like many old Northumberland towns - one street with a market place and church at the middle. Strings of buildings (most built as houses, now shops and pubs) line the north side of Front Street, creating attractive 'linear views' enlivened by trees. Alleys in between once led to fields beyond.

The south side has a mix of smaller and larger buildings including religious, commercial and civic uses, plus former farms. This is all laid out behind a generous arc of green spaces, a very attractive feature.

### Architectural Qualities

Bedlington Conservation Area has a wide range of eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings which create a strong 'backbone' of special interest.

Most are simple two storey buildings, and each tends to vary a little from the next, creating an attractive variety. Some of the larger buildings, such as the churches, the pubs, and the former police station, have more lively architectural detailing, with some lovely flourishes.

Warm, well-weathered yellow sandstone, quarried locally, is the key building material here, giving the conservation area a distinctive feel. Many of the architectural features - doorways, window openings, chimneys, etc - are quite plain, but a few are more decorative. This shows the pride in appearance which developers have taken in Bedlington over the years.

As a market town, shopfronts are key to the way it looks. Many shops were originally houses, and so have small domestic-scale openings. Some have large traditional wooden shopfronts. There are a few good shopfront features surviving, and some are being restored, too.

Roofs are simple with slight variation in height and pitch. Many older roofs would have used red clay pantiles (some can still be seen) but the arrival of the railways in the nineteenth century brought cheap Welsh slate to the region, so most of Bedlington's roofs use this rich, dark material. This gives the area a spirited mix of roofs.

### Contribution of Spaces

Front Street's grassy banks and trees give a strong green character, adding greatly to the place's distinctive appearance. The Market Place and Market Cross were restored in 2009/10, so it is once again a wonderful space at the heart of the town. Other characterful

spots are Church Lane, Bell's Place, and St Cuthbert's elevated, secluded churchyard, which is rich with trees. There are still some interesting old buildings and boundary walls in the back yards, too.

### Loss, Intrusion and Restoration

Bedlington has suffered harm to its character during the twentieth century. There has been demolition (eg. the medieval Old Hall and at the Market Place), gradual modernisation, and loss of some special features. But there is still a great integrity to the historic environment, and much can be rescued through restoration.

From 2008 to 2013, a grant scheme called a Townscape Heritage Initiative, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Northumberland County Council, helped to restore some of the prominent historic buildings and spaces, bringing back some of the town's distinctive character.

**Where's your favourite spot in the conservation area?**

**Which of the more recent buildings have fitted in best with what's gone before?**

**Which parts of the conservation area still need enhancement?**



Above: Window to St Cuthbert in the church. Right: The Old Hall, demolished 1959.

