

Market Cross was a gathering place for public speakers in Victorian times. Can you spot 6 more?



Discover your heritage
Read about the great connection between the patron saint of northern England and Bedlington. It's fascinating, see inside...

Bedlington

Townscape Heritage Initiative

Go regenerate your town centre's heritage!

Newsletter 4
Summer 2012

Inside...

Town stores restored

Catch up on the fantastic results of THI building grants in Bedlington's town centre.

Trained up

See inside to find out how the local community have been taking part in local heritage events.

The next generation

Pupils from a local school have been exploring their local heritage. Find out how they became Bedlington's expert historians!



Market Place grant award

Bedlington's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) has gained momentum and made tremendous progress helping to transform the town centre.

In 2009, Bedlington was one of a select few towns awarded Heritage Lottery funding to regenerate the town's retail economy. A total pot of £1.25m was allocated to the conservation area to bring historic commercial buildings back to life.

Awarded to local businesses, the grants aim to repair or reinstate original architectural features and the results are beginning to change the town's image and attract some new businesses.

The funding has also contributed to the revival of Market Place and has been used for a range of events

and activities for local people to get involved in their heritage (see inside for more details).

A fantastic example of the excellent work achieved through the THI in Bedlington is the improvement of 4-7 Market Place, the former J R Johnson & Flower Stop. Apart from the obvious physical enhancement, this building grant will also help to bring a long term vacant property back into use.

Mr Clive Johnson of JR Johnson & Son, owner of the building at 4-7 Market Place, said he was delighted with the transformation of the building.

Mike Rogerson, founder and director of Mike Rogerson Estate Agents who represents Mr Johnson, said 'It is tremendous to see this old and rundown building brought back into use to provide

good quality floor space in the heart of the town centre. Bedlington town centre has also been at a low ebb for a number of years, but thanks to the provision of THI funding and forward thinking property owners like Mr Johnson, Bedlington town centre has been transformed".

Historic



The property was restored according to historic images of the building.



Before



Works a treat

Prepared by Reavell & Cahill Architects, the exterior work is now complete with the interior refurbishment to follow:

- repaired the Welsh slate roof
- repaired & reinstated chimneys
- reinstated cast iron rainwater goods
- removed cement render, repaired stone and re-pointed in lime
- renewed timber box sash windows
- installed two timber shopfronts

The team



Capturing memories

Leading Link, a local not-for-profit organisation, has been working with families in Bedlington to look back on the last 60 years of the town.

The local community played their part by producing a film of Bedlington memories entitled '3 Generations...', and a creative wall featuring the journey through time. The memories depict stories across the generations and give a real flavour of the town's history.

Leading Link and BBC News School Reporters from St Benet Biscop High School also worked with a journalist from the BBC in London to produce a feature for Radio 4's 'Saturday Live' programme. Our young reporters spoke to residents such as Christine Bell, who was born on the day King George VI died, and Dave and Alan Walker, ex-miners who recall the famous Bedlington miners' picnics.



A Jubilee-themed celebration at The Lodge was also organised to mark the occasion on Sunday June 3rd. 'The Big Event' saw over 1000 local people come together for a day of family fun, and gave locals an insight into the beginning of the '3 Generations...' film and creative wall. It also marked the official opening of the Community Orchard by Wansbeck MP Ian Lavery, signifying the beginnings of new growth.

The completed film and the creative wall will hopefully tour Bedlington after the summer. Leading Link is also hoping to co-ordinate drama and skills workshops to coincide with the tour. Following this, a time capsule will also be buried on 22nd September in the new community garden currently being constructed next to The Lodge. The film will also contribute to the Commonwealth Virtual Time Capsule, set up as part of the Jubilee celebrations.

If you would like to get involved in this project, or would like to know more, please feel free to contact Lyn Horton on either 01670 820088 or email lyn.horton@leadinglink.co.uk.

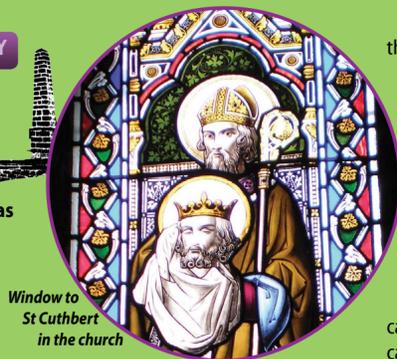
You can also see more information at www.leadinglink.co.uk

Connecting St Cuthbert

St Cuthbert's Church in Bedlington has a long history, but who is St Cuthbert and why is the church named after him?

St Cuthbert is often known as one of the most important saints of England. After his death in AD687 he was buried on Lindisfarne but, as a declaration of sainthood, his body was to be 'elevated' 11 years after the anniversary of his death.

However, to everyone's astonishment, when the coffin was opened an uncorrupt body was found instead of the dust and



Window to St Cuthbert in the church

bones everyone had expected.

St Cuthbert was reburied on Lindisfarne in a new oak coffin and pilgrims flocked to his shrine. However, the year AD793 saw the first recorded Viking attack on Lindisfarne, with raids set to continue

throughout the following century.

Fearing the destruction of the monastery and St Cuthbert's shrine, seven monks fled from Holy Island with the body of St Cuthbert in AD875, and sought refuge at Chester le Street. One of the monks, Eilaf, was to become the first Rector of Bedlington Church. But the connection between Bedlington and St Cuthbert does not end there!

In 1069-70, William the Conqueror carried out the "Harrying of the North", a campaign that was an attempt to bring the north of England under his direct control. Contemporary accounts speak of a death toll in excess of 100,000.

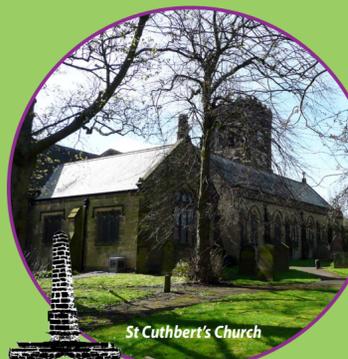
Under threat once again, the body of St Cuthbert was moved around to avoid William's ruthless campaign. It is believed

that on December 12th 1069, the body of St Cuthbert and the relics stayed in Bedlington Church. It is perhaps not surprising that Bedlington Church was to be named after St Cuthbert.

In April this year, Cuthbert was back in the news once again, when St Cuthbert's Gospel was purchased for the nation by the British Library for £9 million. The Gospel was written by a monk from Monkwearmouth-Jarrow, and probably placed in Cuthbert's coffin when he was reburied on Lindisfarne in 698. When his body was moved around the north to avoid William the Conqueror's campaign, the coffin was finally settled in Durham.

The coffin was opened once again, and it is believed that St Cuthbert's body remained uncorrupt and the Gospel was

discovered. Little is known about the book's whereabouts until the 18th century, when it was given to the Society of Jesus in Europe.



St Cuthbert's Church

The Gospel is in amazing condition, especially considering it is 1,300 years old. The decorated cover, made from animal skin, is even in near perfect condition!

The British Library describes the Gospel as "the earliest surviving intact European book and one of the world's most significant books." For one day only, nearly 1,000 years ago, the body of St Cuthbert and this actual book was in our church in Bedlington.

St Cuthbert's Gospel will be displayed to the public in London but will also be displayed in Durham, where the Gospel spent most of its life. After all these years, the Gospel could be returning to the north east, if only for a little while!

Barry Mead, Heritage Consultant
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Fantastic progress with town's THI building grants

Eleven properties have now been improved and the results can be seen throughout Bedlington's town centre. So what does the future hold?

Over the life of the THI, a number of building conservation grants have been awarded to a range of local businesses in the conservation area. But, in recent months, the tremendous progress has been fully appreciated as the town centre begins to transform.

So far, eleven grant schemes have benefited seventeen businesses, showing just what can be achieved from this fantastic project. D.J. Lynn & Son, the butcher which opened on

Front Street in 1976, is just one of the businesses that have been restored to their former glory.

Business owner David Lynn said, "We're delighted with the renovations and we've had good feedback from our customers. It's good that the whole block of shops has been improved, and Kevin Doonan Architects have ensured that the buildings complement each other."

The repairs and reinstatements of original features have helped to enhance the town centre's appearance, as well as attracting investment into vacant spaces to help bring them back into use.

A further five grant awards are underway or are in the pipeline, which will improve

a further eight businesses including Silver Cells and Hetherington's Shoe Service. No new grant schemes are being considered.

Richard Schofield, THI Project Officer, said: "The regeneration programme aims to give Bedlington town centre a new lease of life – making significant improvements to the visual aspects of the conservation area and also helping to boost local trade and bring more people to the town centre."

In total, £600,000 has been committed in grant awards, with a further £300,000 earmarked for projects in the pipeline. Local businesses have also committed around £350,000 of their own money to improving their businesses, showing a real dedication to Bedlington town centre and the retail economy.



22 - 32 Front Street West has benefited from vast improvements with four out of five businesses having had grant awards, which are now complete. The images to the left show D.J. Lynn & Son before and after the THI works were undertaken with more images of neighbouring properties to the right.

The fifth, Boots, is currently onsite with improvement works underway. The enhancements to the whole block are a perfect example of how the THI is transforming Bedlington's town centre.



The THI has made fantastic progress through building conservation grants awarded to local businesses. Check out the map above to see where improvements have been made and where future projects will be taking place. You'll be amazed just how much difference the THI is making to Bedlington's town centre!



Check out the THI schemes



- 1) 2 Market Place before THI works with vacant units
- 2) 2 Market Place, Beat Hair and Orange Moon after THI works, which attracted new businesses to the properties as well as improving the appearance.
- 3) 30-32 Front Street West before works
- 4) 30-32 Front Street West after THI works with new traditional shopfronts, repaired stonework and sliding-sash windows reinstated.
- 5) 10 Vulcan Place before works began
- 6) 10 Vulcan Place after THI works, with windows and stone lintels reinstated and stonework repaired.
- 7) 76a Front Street West before works
- 8) 76a Front Street West, Rook Matthews Sayer, after THI works which saw the installation of a new traditional shopfront and other reinstatements.



Gary Simpson, from Heritage Consolidation Ltd, delivered the training to a keen audience of six members of Bedlingtonshire Development Trust. When repairing historic buildings, lime pointing lets air circulate through a building, allowing it to 'breathe'. This prevents more serious problems in the future, which that are often caused by unsuitable modern materials. The training took place on an old stable to the rear of Market Place post office, which is being targeted by Bedlingtonshire Development Trust. The Trust wants to restore the building and bring it back into use as part of their aims to help promote, suggest, deliver and be a catalyst for all sorts of



regeneration for Bedlingtonshire. Malcolm Robinson from Bedlingtonshire Development Trust said, "The Trust wants to show that these old unused buildings can be adapted and brought into modern use by community groups. This not only tidies them and their sites, it can also bring major community benefits. It will show just how the old and new can be brought together and made into a useable and accessible contemporary structure."

For more information, contact: bdt@bedlington.co.uk

COMMUNITY CENTRE

Community centre saved

Bedlington Community Centre is back in Bedlington ownership, so what are the plans for the future?

The community centre was transferred back into Bedlington ownership in September 2011, after growing uncertainty about its future. West Bedlington Town Council became the owners and, after volunteers stepped forward to become Trustees, the centre will be leased to them as soon as possible.

Currently undergoing partial refurbishment to be completed in June,



Bedlington community centre

the community centre is now open and will resume its normal activities, as well as providing some computer courses for local people.

The Trustees want to make Bedlington Community Centre the heart of the local area. Councillor Arthur Pegg said, "The community centre is a valuable asset to local people and it's fantastic news that we can keep it open for the benefit of the community".

DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

New drive for development

Arch, The Northumberland Development Company, has been established by Northumberland County Council as an arms-length development company to drive capital economic development, physical regeneration projects and business growth in Northumberland. Arch is bringing together four subsidiary companies to deliver services in housing, commercial enterprise facilities and physical regeneration. The company has a clear economic focus and will help Northumberland develop credible sites

and propositions to win new jobs and businesses for the area.

In Bedlington, Arch is now delivering the THI and Council's interest in the Tesco redevelopment on Market Place, where discussions are on-going with Tesco about their start date and programme.



More details, call 01670 528 400 or, visit www.archnorthumberland.co.uk

New local experts on Bedlington's heritage

Year 5 pupils from Meadowdale Middle School became local historians for their spring term, through exploring Bedlington's heritage. The THI funded a range of activities and workshops to get the young minds of Bedlington thinking about their local history.

The activities kicked off with a heritage day touring the town centre, with local historian, Barry Mead, to guide them. The day ended with a visit to St Cuthbert's Church and a fascinating journey along the Heritage Trail.

A Hands-on Heritage Skills Day followed the walkabout, organised by the Heritage

Skills Initiative at North of England Civic Trust (NECT). The pupils were able to have a go at cobbling, lime pointing, stonemasonry, pottery and willow weaving, all whilst learning the importance of traditional skills in looking after our historic environment.

To follow the skills activities, the Heritage Skills Initiative organised a 'Bedlington Conservation

Area Discovery Trail', giving the pupils a chance to reflect on all they had learned. Walking around the town centre allowed them to link it back to the town.

Teachers from the school were very supportive of the activities, "It inspired several students, and the children learnt a lot and enjoyed themselves". The children also thoroughly enjoyed the activities, with excellent feedback on all the activities.

For more info, contact NECT on the details below.



PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN

The THI is run by people with the drive to enhance the area. The next in our series profiling some of those involved is the architect for several THI schemes.

Ray Connell, Reavell & Cahill Architects



Ray Connell has worked at Reavell & Cahill Architects since 1974, and has received numerous Civic Trust Awards for his work in the sector. "The improvement of Bedlington has always seemed to me to be long overdue. It was, therefore, a great pleasure to be invited to use my experiences in helping to make the most of this opportunity." "The regeneration scheme is now well underway and it's delightful to see the impact it is making. The theme of my design has been to retain or restore the original character of Bedlington. Of special importance has been the removal of steel shutters from the shop windows. From an architectural viewpoint, the use of traditional detailing enhanced by pleasant colour schemes and good shop signs has been a great success." Ray has been part of 7 schemes to date, including Tallantyre & Ladbrokes, Beat Hair & Orange Moon and many more.

Walk & Talk

Barry Mead took the Year 5 pupils on a tour of Bedlington's town centre. They discovered startling facts and episodes in Bedlington's past and Barry shared the town's history, warts and all!



Skills activities

The Heritage Skills Initiative organised a day of fun, with hands-on experience for 110 pupils in a variety of traditional skills, to show just how important these skills are.



Discovery trail

The pupils were challenged to spot stone carvings and local history facts around the town centre. Back at school, they



constructed a wall showing what had been learned, to be displayed in their school.



Contact us!

Get in touch if you'd like to know more about grants or activities:

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NORTH of ENGLAND CIVIC TRUST