

Bedale has been in existence for many centuries, growing as a result of being where the three medieval roads from Northallerton, Ripon and Wensleydale meet.

The finding of Roman stones and the early Saxon church also indicate a relatively thriving township before the Norman invasion.

Change came very slowly to Bedale and until 1716 many of the buildings in Bedale were of timber, wattle and daub construction.

Bedale was a busy industrial town before the 'Industrial Revolution' really began. In the latter half of the 1700s, some of the town's industrial wealth was spent on improving buildings and conditions and the Bedale to be seen today is still very much of that time.



Some notable characters from Bedale’s colourful history



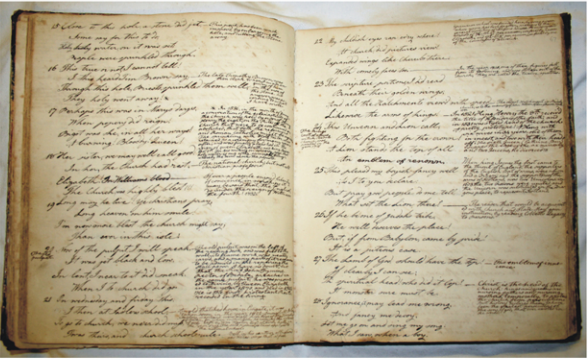
Sir Brian Fitzalan
Inside St Gregory's Church there can be found two recumbent effigies on the left. The male is presumed to be Sir Brian Fitz-Alan, known as Brian III. The female figure is older and could be his wife Maud (Matilda), sister to King John I of Scotland; or it could be his grandmother Muriel, the wife of Brian II.

Sir Brian was the most distinguished of all the Lords of the Manor of Bedale. He had succeeded his Father, Alan, by 1261. After contributing to the defeat of Llywelyn the Last of Wales in 1277 on behalf of King Edward I he is mainly associated with Scotland. He was appointed Guardian and Keeper of Scotland (the castles of Forfar, Dundee, Roxburgh and Jedburgh) and later became Custodian of Scotland in 1297. Sir Brian was present at the battle of Falkirk in 1298 where William Wallace suffered his first defeat.

At other times he probably lived in his castle at Bedale which stood to the west of St. Gregory's, though nothing remains today. Matilda survived him by several years and the custody of their two daughters was given to Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln.

Gustavus Katterfelto (d. 1799)
This infamous Prussian born 'quack' doctor, conjurer and self publicist ended his days in Bedale. He was well known for his acts of magic and even performed before the Royal Family in 1784. Katterfelto was an 18th century celebrity. His shows were a mix of magic, science and showmanship. And yet, apart from a few local historical references and being mentioned in 'The Annals of Bedale, and being buried in the church floor, he has remained something of a mystery until recently. Katterfelto's claims included inventing a cure for influenza and inventing the hot air balloon. However, it is known that he visited Bedale in 1770's and also performed in northern towns, including Thirsk, Northallerton, Richmond, Durham and York.

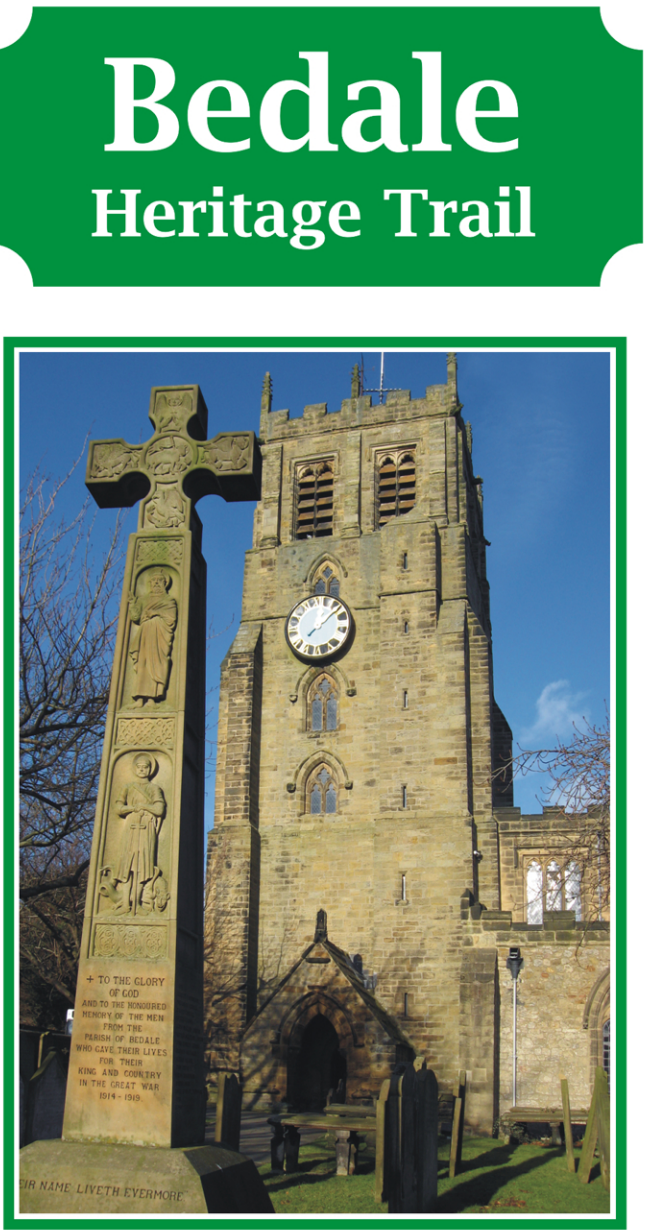
Harry Houdini described him as 'one of the most interesting characters in the history of magic' and now he is the subject of a biography entitled 'Katterfelto: Prince of Puff' by the Rev. David Paton-Williams, a rector of St. Gregory's where the Georgian showman now lies, in pride of place, in the chancel.



Robert Hird (1768 - 1841)
Hird's family were originally skinnners from Arkengarthdale who settled in Bedale in 1709. His trade was that of a shoemaker. As a boy he was educated at the Old Master and Mistress Sadler's school and later went to what is now known as the Old Grammar School near the Church. In 1808 he began to write an account of his life in rhyming verse. In 1812 he wrote a second and they became known as 'The Annals of Bedale'. Hird made shoes for the gentry and lived in Emgate, with enough space to keep a few pigs and probably a garden because he acted as judge at flower shows. His two original notebooks are now held at the County Records Office in Northallerton - one is shown above with their kind permission.



Eva Askquith (1905 - 1985)
Eva was a remarkable woman who achieved great success in the male - dominated world of speedway racing. She was a butcher's daughter from Bedale who raced at Wembley and won many cups and medals around the world and was one of only four British speedway women racers at the time. She was known as The Yorkshire Rose in South Africa and as Miss Eva in Spain.
Her motorcycling skills proved useful as a member of the wartime Auxiliary Fire Service. Eva was also a highly accomplished horse rider, winning cups in local shows and at point-to-point events. Ironically, she was never injured until she was knocked down by a motor car in her retirement. Since 1968 a cup in her name is given each year to the overall winner of monthly point to point competitions.
Archive photograph courtesy of the Bedale Museum Trust



The Bedale Heritage Trail takes you around the town and points out many interesting features and stories through a series of information panels and blue plaques.



Bedale Hall is a Georgian house "Palladianised" in 1730. It was much improved and extended from 1777, possibly by John Carr of York. A guide about Bedale Hall is available from the Tourist Information Centre.

St. Gregory's Church dates from Saxon times and has the strongest fortified tower in the North of England. Inside the churchyard gate is a small double fronted stone building which is the old Grammar School. A free Grammar School existed in Bedale before the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536.



The cobbled building next to Chantry Hall was enlarged and improved in 1716 by Thomas Plummer. Note the dates on the drainpipes. One to the right of the door dated 1586 the other on the side of the building dated 1716 and initialled T.P.

The Archway with a keystone dated 1786 and its adjacent buildings known as Clarks Buildings, were part of what was at the time an unpopular improvement carried out by the brother of the rector, Mr Clark.

At 27-29 North End hidden behind the shop frontages exists a Mediaeval Cross-Wing Timber Framed Hall, no later than about 1500. It gives us a clear picture of the mediaeval timber framed building method and style used in Bedale, although the Georgian facades give no indication of this. This building was overlooked by the Royal Commission survey in the 1950's and only came to light in 1982 when the owners spotted an old timber.



The Market Cross is 14th Century. The Market Charter was granted to Alan son of Brian Fitzalan by Henry III in 1251.

Emgate leading down from the Cross is one of the oldest streets in Bedale and in the past was a busy manufacturing area. Robert Hird (1768-1841) the author of "The Annals of Bedale" lived and worked in this street.

The Archway, under which the old Lancaster coach road passed, was closed by Henry Peirse in 1777 as part of the improvements to the Hall.



The inn beside the arch was incorporated as the kitchen quarters of the Hall.



Amen House built about 1770 and the coach house opposite were part of the once famous Peirse Racing Stud. Mr. Peirse won the St Ledger Stakes in 1817 with Ebor, in 1818 with Reveller, and in 1819 with

Wrangler. Following an objection the 1819 race was re-run and Wrangler lost. But for this, the St. Ledger would be known as the Peirse Stakes. In the copse to the rear of Amen House is the Ice House, a large underground structure built in the late 1770's for the storage and preservation of food. It is no longer accessible.

The Bothy was originally the summerhouse of the very fine garden of the Rapers House, No. 8 North End. It was converted into a dwelling in 1809 by Henry Peirse.



built in 1888, in the "Tudor Style" an acknowledgement to Queen Elizabeth1, who made an endowment of £7 11s 4d in 1588 to re-establish the original Grammar School near St. Gregory's Church.

The Bowling Green was established on its present site in 1792. The bowling club is one of the oldest in England.



The Pump on Wycar Green is the only one left of the many that were in use in Bedale at the turn of the 19th century.

Also at Wycar is the Methodist Chapel and to the left are two cottages and the Smithy (now a gunsmith's workshop) which have been there since about 1750.



The chemist's shop on the corner of the Wynd was formerly a public house "The Boar's Head" up to the 1920's, the buildings running behind the shop date from the 14th century.

Next to the Green Dragon was a fine town house residence up to the 1820's. To the right of this house was a shop which had a fine pair of bow windows. The original windows are now preserved in York museum. All along the Market Place are fine georgian facades above the shop fronts which point to the prosperity of Bedale at that time. The houses at North End on the top flags give the best impression of that period, the most notable is "Stabaan", considered "probably the best Georgian vernacular facade in Yorkshire".



The Town Hall, pictured left, at No. 29 Market Place, was built in 1840 and the upper storey has the original sash windows. At the rear of the Hall, (accessed via the side ginnel) are the former Assembly Rooms which held dances, showed films and staged plays.

The King's Head Hotel, has a Georgian facade and boasts a fireplace dated 1690.

The Masonic Lodge was originally built by public subscription in 1880 as a Young Men's institute which housed a fine library and many fine paintings.

Along Southend the buildings are mainly Victorian Terraced dwellings, the most attractive of which is "Victoria Terrace".



Mowbray Grange was built in 1839, as a Poor Law workhouse. It was later used as a hospital and is now small apartments.

The area around the weir is known locally as 'The Harbour'. It is in reality a canal basin, which was to be part of the navigation linking Bedale to the River Swale and on to the Ouse.



The navigation was commenced in 1767 but never reached fruition due to lack of money and was abandoned with the arrival of the railway in 1855 when the Bedale - Leyburn branch line opened.



The original crossing of Bedale beck was a ford with a footbridge beside it. In 1740 a five arched bridge with wooden rails was built by Thomas Thompson. This was replaced in 1828 and the

present bridge was erected in 1913 incorporating the earlier masonry.

The Leech House is a Grade II listed building and is believed to have been used by the local Apothecary for the storing of leeches which were used to draw blood from patients as a cure for many ailments. Visitors are welcome to use the garden.



The railway station has been serving passengers between Redmire in Wensleydale and Northallerton since 1856. The line was closed to passenger traffic in 1953. The transportation of limestone from Redmire to the iron works of Teesside continued until 1992. The Wensleydale Railway Association re-opened the station in 2005.

For more information about Bedale contact the Bedale Tourist Information Centre, Bedale Hall, North End, Bedale, DL8 1AA Telephone: 01677 424604 Email: mail@bedaletic.org.uk Open from April until the end of October Or log on to www.visitbedale.com