

Welcome to historic Bishop Auckland. Throughout the town there are a number of information boards, linked by walks, bringing to life our cultural and natural heritage, from the Romans to Stan Laurel. We hope that this series of leaflets describing the walks and points of interest will help you enjoy discovering County Durham's "best kept secret".

Bishop Auckland Town Trails



Bishops & Merchants

A Stroll Through Bishop Auckland Town Centre

The first people to make their mark on the town were the Romans, who built Dere Street, now Newgate Street, being the main route from the Scottish Borders to York, with an important cavalry centre at Binchester. From The Boldon Book, a record of land-holdings, we know

A bustling Newgate Street in the 1960s.



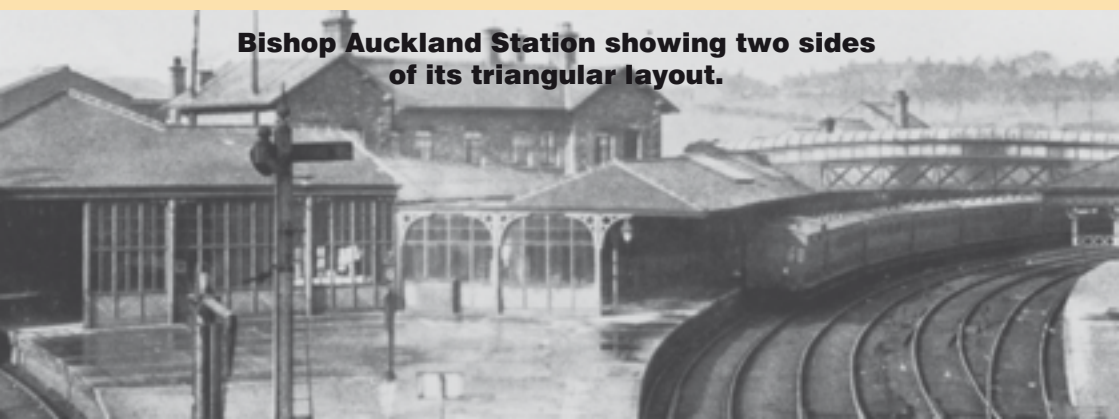
that in 1183 there was a Bishop's manor in the town and there was almost certainly a manor here for many years before that. Under the Prince Bishops the town enjoyed prosperity and wealth. Later, with the surrounding area providing ready resources in lead and coal, Bishop Auckland became a centre for commerce and industry.

Roads & Railways

In the 18th Century the old Roman road became a toll road, part of the route between Barnard Castle and Durham. The toll booth was at Cabin Gate. The road then ran along Newgate Street to Durham Chare. The horses and carriages then had to negotiate the steep bank down to the River Gaunless. The next toll booth was at Coundon Gate.

The Darlington and Stockton Railway had to bypass the town until 1843, when the engineering difficulties of crossing the River Gaunless were finally solved. During the 1850s, the station developed with its unique triangular layout, and later became the hub of a network of seven different lines. This contributed greatly to the town's increasing prosperity.

Bishop Auckland Station showing two sides of its triangular layout.



Look around you:

1. Beginning your walk at the Four Clocks Centre, a Methodist Church converted to community use, you will be close to the once vibrant railway hub of the town that spurred its development in the 19th Century. As you walk down Newgate Street to the historic Market Place, you are treading in the footsteps of the Romans, and those of the bishops, merchants and generations of others who established and developed Bishop Auckland.
2. Peel Street. Notice the cast iron street sign, characteristic of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.
3. Turning left you will notice the single storey shops, once the homes of railway workers, and typical of the North East.
4. Flintoff Street. Contrast the cast iron sign with the stone street sign, dated 1842, coinciding with the coming of the railways. On the opposite corner was the Mitre Hotel.
5. The building on the corner of Newgate Street and Princes Street was originally a temperance hotel, there being a strong temperance movement in the town in the 1870s.
6. This is the site of the Eden Theatre, built and managed by Stan Laurel's father.

