

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



Theatre Corner

Eden Theatre

Can you imagine the queues of people who would have stood here, dressed up to go to the theatre? You are standing close to the site of the Eden Theatre. Formerly the Theatre Royal, it was rebuilt in 1892 by the father of Stan Laurel, who managed it. As theatre became less popular, the Essoldo chain bought it in 1947 and eventually converted it into a cinema. It finally closed in 1969 and was demolished in 1975. All that remains today is the 'Theatre Corner' and the commemorative plaque on the wall.

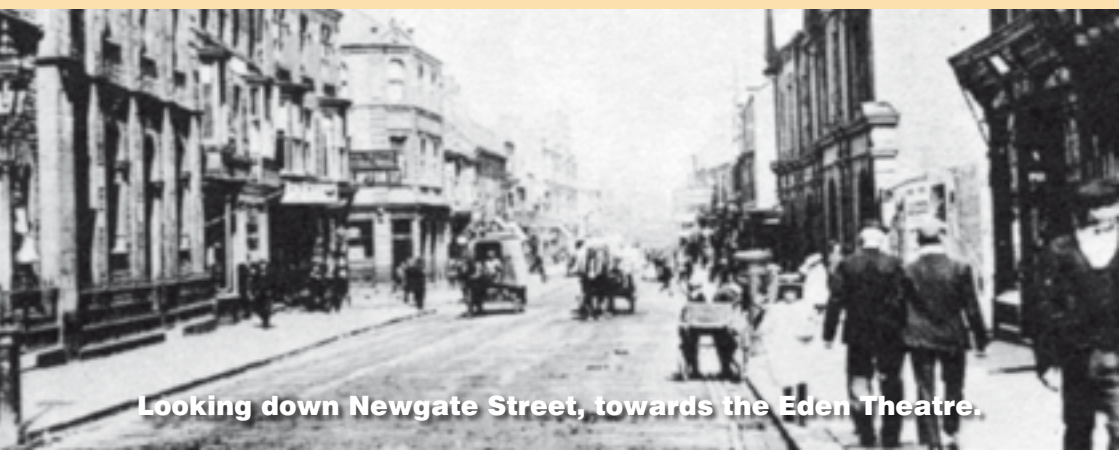


Stan Laurel

Stan Laurel was born Arthur Stanley Jefferson in 1890, to parents who managed and acted in the Theatre Royal, later the Eden Theatre. He came to live in the family home, at 66 Princes Street, and was christened in nearby St. Peter's Church. Stan, who was for a time a boarder in King James Grammar School in the town, began his acting career at sixteen, in music hall and repertory. In 1910, he left

for the United States with Fred Karno, a theatre impresario, whose slapstick comic routines were popular in the music halls.

Changing his name, Stan began a film career in the United States in 1917. Later he teamed up with Oliver Hardy, with whom he made both silent and "talkie" films for over 20 years. In 1960, he was awarded a special Oscar "for his creative pioneering in the field of theatre comedy." He died five years later.



Looking down Newgate Street, towards the Eden Theatre.

Look around you:

1. Theatre Corner 1963. The road improvements carried out in the early 1980s have radically altered the street-scene.
2. Here you can see the plaque on Theatre Corner, commemorating the site of the Eden Theatre.
3. Bob Hardisty. On Saturday 13th April 1957, Bishop Auckland beat Wycombe Wanderers by three goals to one, to win the FA Amateur Cup Final. The legendary Bob Hardisty played for the town in that team and later for Manchester United. The nearby relief road built in 1980 bears his name, commemorating his contribution to the town's footballing heritage.
4. Gregory's Butchers is a typical Victorian shop front. Note the mirrors, stained glass and lettering from the 19th century.
5. Finlay's Jewellers was established in 1892. As you can see from the photograph, the shop still has its original front; see its green tiles and lettering on the glass. Inside the shop they still have the original shop fittings.
6. The Bishop Auckland Co-op Store. Originally opened in 1860, the store has gradually grown over the years. You can see the dates of this growth above the first floor.

