

Sedbergh (*pronounced 'sed – ber'*)

Sedbergh is the largest town in the Yorkshire Dales National Park but really it's a small place, cosy beneath the Howgill Fells. For centuries it was in the West Riding of Yorkshire, moving into Cumbria in 1974. The police station still displays the White Rose of Yorkshire. The town dates from pre-Roman times. Its name could be 'Sadda's beorgh' [hill top] or 'flat-topped hill'. In 1251 it was granted a market charter. Today it's dominated by Sedbergh public school, founded in about 1525 by Roger Lupton, Provost of Eton College and a 'Howgill boy'. The School's brown signs are everywhere.

Sedbergh School's song is *Winder*, named after the hill that overlooks the town. The song's refrain is:

*For it isn't our ancient lineage, there are others as old as we.
And it isn't our pious founders, though we honour their memory.
'Tis the hills that are stood around us, unchanged since our days began.
It is Cautley, Calf and WINDER, that makes the Sedbergh man.*

The School's motto is DURA VIRUM NUTRIX: 'a stern nurse of men'. Girls were first enrolled in 2001. It's a sporty school, seriously playing rugby union and cricket. The sports facilities are impressive. Old Sedberghians who excel at sport merit wearing a brown blazer. 'Browns' attend an end of season First Term dinner. The School holds an annual 10 mile cross country race – the Wilson Run – up and across Winder hill.

Since 2006 Sedbergh has been England's book town, like Hay-on-Wye in Wales. There are six specialist bookshops. The largest is Westwoods, at the east end of Main Street, in a former cinema. The Sleepy Elephant, Main Street, specialises in art, design, textiles and cookery. The Dales & Lakes Book Centre is good for nature, topography and local history. It houses the tourist information centre.

St Andrew's church was restored in 1886 by the Lancaster architects Paley & Austin. It has two modern embroideries by the Sedbergh Stitchers, a group of 15 local women. Paley & Austin also designed some of the houses of Sedbergh School and the School's chapel. The architect of the moving Memorial Cloister (1924) was Sir Hubert Worthington, an Old Sedberghian. About 1.5 miles west of Sedbergh is Brigflatts Quaker Meeting House built in 1675, restored in 1905. The grade 1 listed building has kept its original peaceful and tranquil interior. Brigflatts inspired a poem *Briggflatts* (spelt with two Gs) by the Northumberland poet Basil Bunting (1900-1985). The historic Friends' Meeting House is easily

reached by a pleasant walk, along the Dales Way, beside the lively River Rawthey which is joined on the way by Dentdale's River Dee.

The 1859-60 Rawthey viaduct, or 'Jackdaws' viaduct' [there were many jackdaws there when it was built], crosses the Rawthey. An impressive skewed single metal arch of 120 feet spans the river. It was constructed for the Lune Valley Railway, a lost route to Scotland. The line connected Ingleton to Low Gill on the West Coast main line. Until the Settle-Carlisle line opened in 1876 it was a main line to Scotland. Passenger services closed in 1954; freight ceased in 1964. The track was lifted three years later. The line was used for diversions when the Settle-Carlisle line was closed; the Thames-Clyde Express came this way. Sedbergh School once had special trains, rather like the Hogwarts Express, at the start of terms. Today the track bed is empty and wildflowers grow where, the *Flying Scotsman* locomotive once ran.

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