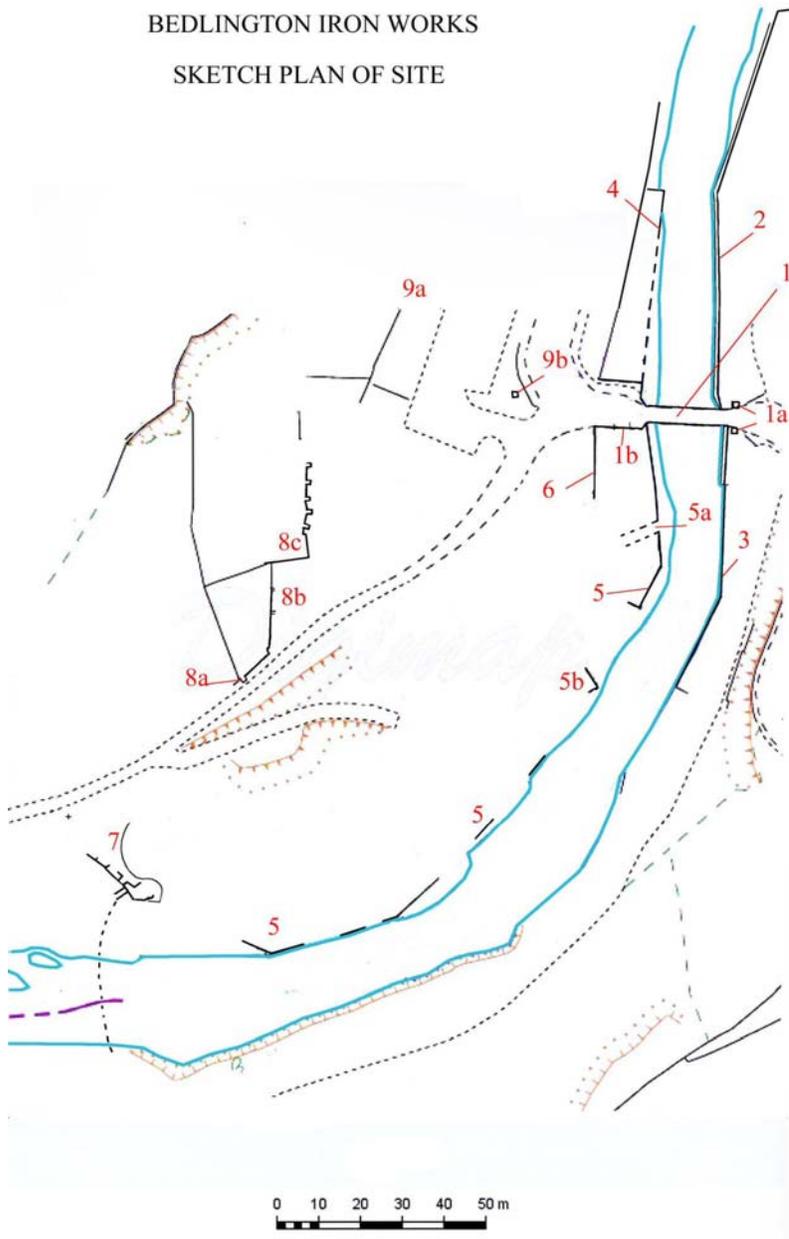


Description of standing remains at Bedlington Ironworks.

Historic maps and illustrations show an extensive series of buildings and other structures, many of them associated with the Bedlington Iron Works, centred on Furnace Bridge. Apart from the bridge and some retaining walls on each bank of the river, relatively little survives above-ground today. At the bridge the river is flowing north-south; to the south it swings south-west, so that at the dam it is flowing east-west. In the following description upriver is always termed south and downriver north. The description is keyed to a sketch plan of the site which uses historic and modern maps and was prepared following a site visit on March 2nd 2009.



1. Furnace Bridge

This is a road bridge, only wide enough for one vehicle; it slopes down from south to north and is constructed of large blocks of grey/buff sandstone, laid in courses that vary in height. The single segmental arch has squared voussoirs, now largely concealed by render, and a square-section arch ring, in stone with a parallel tooling characteristic of the late 18th or early 19th century. The panelled concrete parapet is of the late 19th or early 20th century. At either end of it are short wing walls, those on the south terminating in square piers (**1a**) c 2m high of rusticated ashlar, with square-section bands just below the rather flat caps, which have central bolts for some form of finials, now lost. On the south the bridge springs straight from the steep valley side but on the north there is a broader abutment, later extended to the north (downriver). The south face of the abutment shows evidence of considerable alteration; it contains a blocked opening 2.60 m wide (**1b**), which on the west shows one voussoirs of a former arched head, with one stone of an arch ring or label; some 19th century prints show an arched passageway through the abutment here. At some later date the opening has been heightened, but its later head has been lost in the rebuilding of the top section of the abutment wall in coursed and pecked stone; there is a square-edged coping and simple iron rails, probably of 20th century date.

2. Riverside Wall North-East of Bridge.

This is a well-preserved wall standing 13 courses high above a plinth of cut bedrock; after around 50 m there is a slight change in direction eastwards, then after another c 50m the wall angles back more sharply into the bankside and ends. Close to the end of the second length there are a vertical pair of rounded drain holes at mid-height in the wall face.

3. Riverside Wall South-East of Bridge

On the south of the bridge is a length of c 15m of wall similar to that on the north, with the bedrock plinth, and then comes an irregular vertical joint; the long section of walling beyond, probably later in date, is c 3 m high and consists of 10 courses of close-jointed well-squared stone; the first, fourth and seventh courses from the base have wider joints every 2 m or so, to act as drains. Around 50m from the bridge this walling ends, and is replaced by a lower wall, its face set a little further forwards, of irregular blocks, much eroded, carrying a ruinous drystone wall; after 30m or so there is a short length of taller and better-quality wall that then angles back into the bankside; the steep and craggy river bank beyond seems devoid of any further structures.

4. Riverside Wall North-West of Bridge

This is in poor condition, and difficult to inspect in any detail . It extends for c 45 m from the bridge; much of it has collapsed but the end sections stands 8-10 courses high; it then returns for c 2 m at right angles, and is replaced by a relatively modern retaining wall, directly below the road.

5. Riverside Wall South-West of the Bridge

This is the wall that ran along the river frontage of the main part of the Iron Works, and only here is enough relatively level ground to accommodate such a complex of buildings. The wall abutting the bridge, built of large squared blocks with a rough pecked tooling, only rises c 1.8 m above the river, and has a top course of large blocks with both upper edges rounded; 25 m from the bridge is the arched mouth of a conduit (5a), still emitting a trickle of water. The segmental arch is 2 m wide and rather less than 1 m high, and has a keystone and arch ring; the subterranean passage might be explorable but would entail flat-out crawling over silt and debris.

Beyond the conduit the wall, more ruinous now, continued c 15 m before angling gently to the west for another c 12m before it returns up the river bank at right angles for 3 m or so. Then comes a gap of a little of 20 m, before one reached a substantial section of walling c 2 m (7 courses) high set at around 45 degrees to the river bank (5b), perhaps intended to support one corner of an adjacent building. Around 20 m beyond remains of a riverside wall commences again with a short well-preserved section 1.5 m (5 courses) high, again of roughly-packed stone; it intermittent remains (rarely more than one course is visible) continue for c 60 m to the point where it angles westward again, and then for a further c 30 m to a second sharper angle, and a final 6 m length which looks as if it has been recently disinterred. The end of this is only 25 m from the remains of the Dam.

6. Wall attached too the west end of the western abutment of the Bridge

This c 15 m length of wall runs parallel to and 10.5 m west of the riverside wall attached to the bridge; it stands c 1.5 m high (on the east) and like the riverside wall is more or less a retaining wall to the valley; it has been heightened in 20th century brick.

7. The Weir

This was quite a major construction, and extended the full width of the narrow valley; the remains, although substantial, are not easy to understand. What remains is a little under 20 m of walling which revetted the west/north bank of the river; it is constructed of massive sandstone blocks, some on the face showing a rock-faced finish. The ruinous rear face - perhaps exposed by later ground works - is protected and to some extent obscured by a more recent wall, partly of snecked stone, 1 – 1.5 m high. The better preserved front face stands to almost 3 m high at its east end, beyond a short length of wall which marks the north end of the weir proper; this has a battered downstream face to the river and massive coping stones, rounded on both upper edges, held together with iron clamps. Only a short length of this wall, c 1.9 m thick, now remains intact, and a few metres more as ragged core. A millrace has passed through the main wall in a channel 1.6 m wide (apparently a secondary insertion) which is now walled up flush with the southern (upstream) face; the blocked section has rebates in each jamb for some sort of structure, and on its inner face is a deep slot, clearly for a sluice gate of some sort. There seems to have been a second opening, now blocked with 5 courses of massive tooled-and-margined blocks, 3.2 m further west.

8. The Kilns and Associated Structures.

A modern tarmac cyclepath runs up-valley from the carpark at the west end of Furnace Bridge, to pass c 10m west of the remains of the dam; a modern sculpture ('Janus') stands at this point. Around 50 m north of the sculpture what appears to be an old gatepier (8a), with a low pyramidal cap and an iron loop for a gate, projects from the bankside alongside the track; north of this there is a ruinous wall (with some big trees growing out of it) running alongside the track for c 10m, and then this angles north-west for c 30 m. The initial part of

this section (the upper part of which is completely obscured by ivy) has a pronounced batter; then, after a collapsed section, comes what looks like the back wall of a small building c 5 m long (8b) ; the stubs of its end walls (the southern of stone, the northern of brick) survive. Then, after a further 8 m, the wall butts up against the south side of a former limekiln (8c). This is c 9 m wide by 4.5 m high, and seems to have had three roughly segmental arches, all now blocked; the eastern has lost its arch and east jamb when a plain square-headed opening was inserted. The kiln seems to have been c 6 m deep; beyond it is a convex section of wall, with three buttresses, then a further straight length with two more, all much overgrown; at the end this has collapsed; another overgrown length of retaining wall follows, a little further up the valley side. The area above the kilns is heavily overgrown, but the pot or posts seem to have been completely infilled.

9. Features around the Car Park

A modern car park adjacent to the west end of Furnace Bridge occupies the site of the former Dene House, demolished in the 1950s; old photographs show it as a handsome Regency-style structure, perhaps of the second or third decade of the 19th century, with two shallow segmental full-height bays. On the west of the carpark a short line of old trees are presumably associated with the garden of the house; to the north is a retaining wall (9a), largely fallen or covered by ivy; the valley side above may have other features, but is heavily vegetated.

At the south end of the car park is a solitary stone pier (9b), which has the look of being reassembled from old fragments; this presumably relates to the garden of Dene House.

Peter F Ryder