



North Berwick

The Edington Hospital
North Berwick
A brief history

North Berwick Environment and Heritage Trust
Heritage Guide



The main entrance of the Edington Hospital, on St Baldred's Road

Founded by Elizabeth Edington, the cottage hospital opened as the Edington Home in October 1913. It is built in the Arts and Crafts style of the period and is a Listed Building (Category B, Historic Environment Scotland). The architect was William Ross Young, the Burgh Surveyor.

The cottage hospital movement developed in Britain during the mid-1800s in rural areas. The original concept was a small building having several beds. The advantage of a cottage hospital in villages and small towns was that it could provide care which avoided long journeys to county or voluntary hospitals, facilities to deal immediately with emergencies, and the knowledge that local doctors might have about the patients.

Elizabeth Edington and her brother Francis were related to the North Berwick Edington family who were prosperous grocers and spirit merchants. Their wealth, however, came from a different source. Francis worked in Leith Docks as a porter, a responsible job: 'The porter's province is to receive, weigh, and load off goods when so deposited, – his duty extends to their stowage in a warehouse and delivery to parties to whom they are designed . . .' (*Liverpool Journal*, December 1848). In 1841 he emigrated to Quebec, and by the 1850s had moved to New York where he worked as a porter for the Vanderbilt Company. Cornelius Vanderbilt was the richest man in America, owning a shipping and railway empire.



Francis Edington, 1819–1901

Francis returned to Scotland in 1855, a wealthy man. He had accumulated a fortune amounting to about one million pounds in today's money. In later life he said he had learned how to make money working for Vanderbilt. In the 1860s he extended the family house and shop premises upwards to form the Edington Commercial Hotel, now known as the County Hotel. The subsequent owner added the present façade.

Elizabeth and Francis played an active part in the town's affairs. Francis was Treasurer of the Royal Burgh of North Berwick Town Council and was made a Burgess and Freeman in 1860. He was a founder member of Bass Rock Golf Club.



Elizabeth Edington, 1833–1908

In 1884 Francis sold the hotel and retired to 7 Dirleton Avenue, North Berwick, a house called Ethandune (the Anglo-Saxon name for a 9th-century battle site in Wiltshire that corresponds with the modern village of Edington). He died on 24th August 1901. Elizabeth remained unmarried and died on 4th November 1908 at Ethandune. She is buried with her brother in the graveyard of old St Andrew's Kirk.

According to newspaper reports, Miss Edington had directed her trustees to pay the Provost, Magistrates and Town Council the sum of £10,000, free of legacy duty, in trust to erect and maintain a convalescent home to be called 'The Edington Convalescent Home'. It had to include provision for an accident ward and one solely for the inhabitants of the town, for sickness which was both non-infectious and curable.



North Berwick from the Law Mains Farm in the foreground Postcard, photo taken around 1912

North Berwick, and Craigleith island, looking from the Law – there are no houses on St Baldred’s Road and the Edington Hospital is the white building left of centre in the picture

The Edington Home was formally opened, in October 1913, by Miss Eliza F. Webster, a niece of Elizabeth Edington. Shortly after it opened, it was commandeered by the Army and served as a military hospital during the First World War. After the war, because the Home was often used for respite care for mothers who had had large families, it became known locally as ‘The Home for Tired Mothers’.

The Home joined the Scottish National Health Service in 1948 as the Edington Cottage Hospital. Today it is an NHS hospital run by the Lothian Health Board. The hospital, temporarily closed, provides medical care for a range of chronic conditions, mobility problems, respite and end-of-life care, together with a 24-hour facility to treat minor injuries.