

Hylton

The earliest recorded evidence of human activity at Hylton are prehistoric flint tools (HER 343-4) at North Hylton and Hylton Grange. Other finds from early periods include a perforated stone axe hammer found in North Hylton, a log boat, a number of bronze swords from the River Wear and a Beehive Quern (HER 346, 386-88, 4649). Finds from later periods include Roman coins (HER 31, 32 and 4606), a Roman milestone (HER 4991) and masonry from a possible Roman bridge or dam across the River Wear (HER 4623). An Anglo-Saxon brooch has also been discovered (HER 347). The first documentary reference to Hylton Chapel (HER 13) dates from 1157, but the first reference specifically to a village (HER 14) is from 1323 in a grant by Robert Hilton which refers to the freemen and cotmen of Hilton. In the 15th century Sir Robert Hilton granted the prior and convent of Durham a place in the vill on which to build a tithe barn. Fryer's map of 1800 shows buildings on the east side of the south end of Hylton Lane, and perhaps a farm on the south side of the road from Southwick. Field names here, such as Town-end field, suggest this as a possible site for the village. Hylton Castle (HER 12) built by Sir William Hylton, dates to the late 14th or early 15th century. It remained in the Hylton Family until 1746, since when various owners made alterations until the 1950s when it went into state guardianship. A ferry crossing site (HER 446) on the River Wear is also said to be of medieval origin and continued in use until 1957. Hylton was the site of Civil War skirmishes in 1644 (HER 24-26), but the 18th and 19th centuries saw its development as an industrial centre. The coal trade was an element of this industrial development (HER 1713), though not as important as elsewhere in the region (more important were the nearby mines of Washington and the Washington staithes). One of the earliest modern industrial concerns listed at Hylton is a copperas works established around 1750. Subsequently, however, pottery was particularly important, with the opening of Low Ford Pottery or Dawson's Pottery at South Hylton in 1794, and of Maling's Pottery Works at North Hylton in 1762 (HER 2645 and 4969). The Maling Family also bought the Wood House estate in North Hylton from the Hylton Family in 1743, turning it into a small industrial and agricultural complex. As well as pottery, brick-making was also practiced at several sites (HER 2634, 2637 and 2646-7). Shipbuilding was also very important at Hylton, but most of the known shipbuilding concerns are early, wooden shipbuilding yard (HER 2638, 2640-1, 2643, 2651-2, 2672) which it appears did not successfully make the transition from wooden ships to iron, although various iron works and possibly related furnaces and smithies are also recorded there (HER 2643, 2650, 2654-6 and 2658). The importance of Hylton declined when the shipbuilding and pottery industries transferred to locations on the lower Wear and Tyne in the second half of the 19th century.