

Benton and Longbenton

Apart from a single flint flake (HER 1410) there is little recorded evidence for early human activity at, or in the immediate vicinity of Benton or Long Benton, although this is likely to be the result of lack of fieldwork carried out in the area, rather than the absence of potential. The earliest reference to Benton village is in a document recording John of Little Benton, dated c.1161. Four taxpayers were listed in 1296 and 1312, and three in 1336. A map of 1654 shows an east-west, two-row village street, but by 1745 only two houses are shown; and in 1769 only one. The location of the village is uncertain, but may be around the present Little Benton farm, where there are earthworks on the north side, or on the east side of Coach lane. The village of Long Benton (HER 786) was a member of the Barony of Morpeth, which dates from the early 12th century, and when the barony was divided after 1266 so was Benton, one half ending up with the Brandlings of Gosforth, the other with the Stotes of Jesmond. It appears to have been a large village in the Middle Ages, with 14 taxpayers in 1296, and 18 in 1312. It was an exceptionally long, two-row, settlement, stretching from Four Lane Ends on the west side to the modern Tynedale Terrace on the east, and even in the 19th century included several farms. Though a number of 18th and 19th century stone houses survive, the north row has been broken by large pubs and car parks, and the village as a whole has been heavily developed. It is thought that a mill (HER 1413), possibly a watermill, was present in Long Benton in the 13th century but its date and location are unknown. The Church of St. Bartholomew (HER 785) also has medieval origins, although it has been significantly altered and rebuilt since being described as ruinous in 1663. The medieval nave was demolished and rebuilt in 1790-91, and subsequently there were restorations in 1842, 1855 and 1873-5. Although farming persisted on the fringes of the urban area (HER 1594), the area became heavily involved in the coal trade from at least the mid-18th century. Billy Pit (HER 4179), Benton Colliery (HER 4030) and Meadow Pit (HER 5103), the latter sunk around 1850, are some of the 19th century workings recorded (see also HER 1115-6, 1118, 2165 and 2193). Wagonways (e.g. HER 1132, 1141 and 1155) provided transport from the pits to Walker Staith on the Tyne. Other industrial sites include sand pits and quarries (HER 1094, 1099, 1100 1122 and 1124), smithies (HER 1084-5 and 1093) and a mill (HER 2166). During and following the industrial period, the area became largely residential. Later monuments of cultural heritage significance date mainly from the two world wars of the 20th century and include pillboxes and an aircraft hanger (HER 5372, 5433-6, 5673 and 5783-5).