

Crawcrook

No early human activity represented by archaeological finds is recorded from the centre of the village of Crawcrook, although it is reasonable to suggest that its location in the gently undulating river valley of major river, will have provided resources to sustain human settlement over several millennia. Indeed, the work of M. A. Cocks within 1 km of the village centre has produced abundant evidence, mainly in the form of flint artefacts, for the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods (e.g. HER 529-539 and 531), while bronze age and iron age finds are also known in the area (see Blaydon and Ryton). The first documentary references to Crawcrook are in the Boldon Buke of 1183, showing that the village (HER 521) was well-established by that time, and included a mill. In the 13th century the bishop of Durham granted the vill to Kepier Hospital, and later historians seem agreed that Crawcrook then came to be divided between the Hospital, and the Horsley family; the Horsleys holding, among other things, the manor of Bradley. In 1794, when the open fields were enclosed, there were said to be 12 ancient farms. Early maps show that the village was of two-row plan, which means that either side of the main street was lined with tofts, each of which represented one farmstead or cottage with a strip of land running back to a parallel back lane. A feature from medieval Crawcrook is Crawcrook Mill (HER 525), a water corn mill referred to in the Boldon Buke (above). In 1800 it was referred to in the enclosure award but has since been demolished. Coal mining was probably important as a supplement to the agricultural economy from the medieval period and was certainly a major industry by the early 17th century. The Crawcrook Wagonway, which ran from Crawcrook to Townley Main Colliery, is thought to predate 1640, therefore very early in the history of railway development, and remained in use until the 1850s. The Stanleyburn Bridge (HER 3627), still in use today, was built by 1766 to carry the Gateshead to Hexham Road across the Stanley Burn. It was the main point of crossing until the late 1840s when a new bridge was constructed, leaving the older one to be used by pedestrians. The later history of the village is dominated by coal mining, which in turn led to the increasing size of the village in the 19th and early 20th centuries as terraced housing for workers was erected. Other amenities followed, such as a Catholic church for the large number of Irish immigrants attracted to the coal mines.