

Dinnington (including Mason)

The earliest recorded evidence for early human activity at Dinnington is the recorded discovery of a bronze age gold earring (HER 779) in the village in 1861. A late prehistoric rectilinear enclosure (HER 1322) is known from aerial photographic evidence at nearby Gardener's Houses on the edge of Prestwick Carr (HER 1325), a marshland area drained in the 19th century where a hoard of Roman bronze vessels was found. A quern of late prehistoric or Roman date was found at South Brenkley Farm in 1963.

The medieval village of Dinnington (HER 1337) was established by the mid 13th century when it was a member of the barony of Mitford and held (in 1242) by the heirs of Henry de Ferlington. There were six taxpayers there in 1296, and ten in 1312. A rental of 1303 showed that 11 men each held a house with 1.5 acres arable land, and that there were in addition two other tenants. In the mid 15th century the manor was sold to the Heselrigg family and remained with them until sold to Matthew Bell in 1763. In the 18th century the village consisted of two rows of dwellings, set far apart, on either side of a green, with the east end of the green by this time largely closed off and partly covered by buildings. Although no medieval documentary evidence exists, the remains of what is thought to be a chapel, including pieces of masonry along with some human remains, were discovered in Back Yards Field (HER 1335). Modern Dinnington includes the lost medieval settlement of Mason (HER 1333 and 1334), first mentioned, as "Merdesfen", in 1190 when a toft there was granted by Sir Roger Bertram to St. Batholomew's Nunnery. There were 8 taxpayers at Mason in 1296, and 10 in 1312. In 1331 there were 7 occupied tenements, but by 1335 the 24 tofts listed there were probably abandoned, and it seems that the village did not survive the Middle Ages, its site being marked by North Farm (surviving) and South Farm (gone) at the north-east end of Dinnington. Brenkley was another site of medieval settlement in the area - Brenkley mill (HER 1334) is first mentioned in the early 13th century. Surviving farms in the area, some of which may have medieval origins, include Gardener's Houses Farm and Now Horton Grange Farm (HER 5084). During the 18th to 20th centuries, Dinnington was associated with coal mining which grew alongside the traditional farming economy and other activities, such as quarrying. The remains of early mining survive in the form of bell pits, but the original Dinnington Colliery was open by 1715. A later colliery of the same name, connected to the Dinnington Wagonway (HER 4243 and 1087), was opened by the Seaton Burn Coal Company in 1867 and remained in use until 1960. Brickworks were in use within the colliery from 1908 but closed in the 1960s. The colliery village was designed to the standards of a model village, but by 1873 only some houses had ashpits and privies. A number of terraces of the original village survive. The most recent colliery in Dinnington was the Havannah Colliery, which operated between the 1950s and 1970s before it was forced to close due to low coal reserves and operational problems. It was served by the Havannah Colliery Railway, a mineral railway from the Havannah Drift (HER 4354) to the site of Hazelrigg Colliery and the junction with the old Fawdon wagonway. Brenkley Colliery was another important mine of the later industrial period. Modern sites of importance to the local cultural heritage include a Second World War searchlight site (HER 5561).