

Elswick, Newcastle upon Tyne

Elswick is located in the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne on the banks of the river. Once a separate settlement the village was incorporated into Newcastle as the city grew.

The earliest evidence for human activity in the area can be found in the Bronze Age. In the late 1800s work in or near the Elswick Middle Quarry (HER 4103) discovered a Bronze Age burial cist (HER 1374). The cist contained a decorated food vessel (HER 1375), which is typical of the era known as the Beaker Period. This beaker was displayed in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1913. This evidence coupled with associated Bronze Age finds from nearby West Denton (HER 1250) and Benwell (HER 1376) could suggest prehistoric occupation in the area.

More reliable evidence for settlement at Elswick can be found during the medieval period. Elswick village (HER 1363) is named in a confirmation charter to Tynemouth Priory in 1189, yet the land may have been given to the priory as early as 1120. Elswick manor (HER 1366) was one of the buildings within the village, consisting of a farm and house, and was mentioned as one of the 10 listings in 1292. It was possibly located to the North-West of Elswick Hall (HER 1864) on the South side of Elswick Road. There was still a farm located there in the mid 19th Century.

The growth of Medieval Newcastle through coal mining seems to have also reached Elswick during the medieval period. Men were digging for coal on Elswick Moor as early as 1293. In 1330 the Prior of Tynemouth granted a formal lease for the coal mines (HER 1367). By 1387 the rental for the pits included the Staiths (HER 1368) on the bank of the Tyne for the transportation of the coal. The precise location of the Staiths is unknown. Quarrying also began in Elswick during this period (HER 1364).

By the 1700s the village (HER 1363) was growing. A map of 1780 shows two rows of houses on either side of Mill Lane which ran down the West side of Elswick Park. Elswick Quay (HER 4907) was constructed during this period and may have been associated with the ongoing coal mining in the area. The quay would probably have been used by the Elswick Lead Works (HER 4116). With the gradual industrial growth of Elswick came the development of workers cottages (HER 4896).

By the 1820s industry had arrived on a large scale in the local area making it unrecognisable from the previously largely rural area. By 1835 the boundary for Newcastle incorporated Elswick.

A number of pits and quarries had a physical impact on Elswick excavating a variety of raw materials such as coal (HER 4107, 4109, 4098), clay (HER 4119), gravel (HER 4117) and stone (HER 4103, 4104, 4320) for both local industries and for export. However, by the time of the 2nd Edition OS the majority of these pits and quarries were out of use.

The varying manufacturing industries including the Elswick Engine works (HER 4108), Elswick Lead works (HER 4116), Lead pipe mill (HER 4901), Elswick Iron foundry (HER 4113), Firebrick manufactory (HER 4111) and Richardson's Tannery (HER 4982) continued to develop.

The most significant manufacturer to be established in Elswick was the works of Sir W.G. Armstrong in 1847. Initially producing hydraulic cranes the advent of the Crimean War led to the production of armaments at the works. As demand grew so did Armstrong's works. In 1885 shipbuilding began on the

banks of the Tyne at Armstrong's Elswick shipyard. Between the 1850s and 1890s numbers of rows of streets appeared on the slopes off the Scotswood road, many built by Armstrong.

By 1907 the Armstrong's works employed over 25,000 people with the population of Elswick reaching almost 60,000.

By the 1930s Elswick was in decline, with the great depression hitting the industry of the area. The late 1980s saw the Armstrong's Elswick works awaiting demolition. The Tyne and Wear Development Corporation re-developed the site into a modern day business park.