

Fenham and Spital Tongues

There is no recorded evidence for early human activity at, or in the immediate vicinity of Fenham prior to the construction of the Roman Wall (HER 206), although this is likely to be the result of lack of fieldwork opportunity in the area, rather than the absence of potential. It is known that Fenham Manor or Grange (HER 1350), of the manor of Elswick, was passed to the Order Knights Templars in 1185. However, the origins of the village and location of putative medieval buildings are unknown. Coal mining already had a long history in the area (see HER 4831) – indeed, it was recorded during the 14th and 15th centuries that coalmines were already long-established – before the period of greatest exploitation between the 18th-early 20th centuries. Coal was worked in the 19th century from pits such as Adam's Main Pit (HER 4068) and North Elswick Pit (HER 4076), although these had closed by the end of the century. In nearby Spittle Tongues, coal was mined from the Spittle Tongues Colliery (HER 4090) and transported via the Victoria Tunnel (HER 4091) to the River Tyne at Byker. Other industries included the Arthur's Hill brewery (HER 1801), the Spital Tongues ropery (HER 4089) and a furniture factory (HER 4318). The industrialisation of the area led to its development as a residential district for workers, managers and owners – the latter represented by residences such as Wingrove House, North Elswick Hall and Fenham Hall, with its substantial grounds, ice house, laundry (HER 4309) and boat house. today only its gate piers survive on Fenham Hall Drive. The grand residences gradually gave way to housing developments which included public buildings and facilities such as a workhouse (HER 6342), churches (e.g. HER 6304 and 6345) and schools. Some of these, including the library and swimming baths are recognised as important buildings and have been given protected status as Listed Buildings. The various areas of common and waste around Fenham and Spital Tongues, including Nun's Moor and Hunter's Moor (see HER 1356) formerly used for mining, farming and grazing, were gradually turned over to recreational use in the 19th century. The Nuns Moor, now an indistinguishable part of the Town Moor, played host to race meetings from the 18th century until 1881 (HER 4022), when racing moved to its present location in Gosforth Park. Modern sites of importance to the local cultural heritage include military sites such as Fenham Barracks (HER 4093), Second World War pillboxes and road block sites (HER 1797 5773).