

Ryhope

The earliest recorded evidence of human activity at Ryhope is a group of Mesolithic flints (HER 227) found at Ryhope Dene in the 1930s. Finds from later periods include a Neolithic arrowhead and flints (HER 228) and Roman pottery and coins (HER 229 and 267). The first documentary references to Ryhope date from around 930 A.D. when King Athelstan gave "South Wearmouth" and its appendages, which included "duas Reofhoppas", to the see of Durham. Ryhope is also mentioned in the late 12th century Boldon Buke. In Hatfield's late 13th century survey, Ryhope is listed with two free tenants, 18 messuages each with 30 acres held by tenants; 3 cottages each with 12 acres, together with other lands and holdings. Ryhope was a 3-row village around a triangular green, and its basic shape survives, although there has been much development. It is recorded that limestone quarries, a smithy and windmill were in use during the medieval period in Ryhope, suggesting a farm-based economy. Suspected medieval burials were found in Ryhope Dene in 1987 (HER 5225) and in Ryhope Cave (HER 160) in the 1860s. Ryhope was not heavily industrialised during the 18th-20th centuries - by 1840 there were still five farms of 91-143 acres each, and 21 of 17-64 acres - but it did benefit from the improved communications that developed as a result of the coal trade, notably when Ryhope Station (HER 2957) opened in 1854 as part of the Londonderry, Seaham and Sunderland Railway. Ryhope served its industrial neighbour, Sunderland as the site of a Pumping Station (HER 4964) which operated between 1868-1967 as part of the Sunderland and South Shields Water Company. The engines remain in perfect condition, but the Pumping Station is now a museum.