

Shiremoor and Murton

The earliest recorded evidence of human activity at Shiremoor is a middle Bronze Age axe head casting (HER 4619) found in 1993 at Shiremoor Farm. Other finds of bronze waste have been found around the same area. A rectilinear enclosure of a possible late prehistoric date has also been identified from aerial photographs at Shiremoor (HER 750), while another of similar date, interpreted as an enclosed homestead has been recorded at Murton, with internal features including partitions and a roundhouse visible on aerial photographs. The earliest reference to Murton is mentioned in documents associated with Tynemouth Priory in 1189, and there were five tenants there in 1296. In the mid 14th century there are references to "Estmoreton" and "Westmorton", but it is not known which of these is the modern Murton - possible earthworks north-east of Murton Steads Farm may represent the missing village. In 1539 there were four tenants at Murton, each with a tenement, 42 acres of arable, 8 acres of meadow, and rights of common on Shire Moor, enclosed in 1790. In the mid-19th century Murton was a 2-row hamlet with a green, and at least 2 farms still on the main street. Today it largely consists of modern houses. Ridge and furrow survives as earthworks in pasture fields north-west and south-east of Murton, along with other features, perhaps including bell pits. Medieval ridge and furrow cultivation features also survive in the form of earthworks on Prospect Hill (HER 1573). Shiremoor village was not established until the modern period – the name Shiremoore refers to the common of the manor (shire) of Tynemouth, enclosed in 1790 by Act of Parliament (HER 1370). Early surveys recorded a pinfold and the herd's house on the moor. By the late 18th and 19th centuries quarrying and coal mining were taking place in the locality, contributing to the development of the settlement. The colliery (HER 2192) was linked to the North Eastern Railway by the Blyth and Tyne Railway (HER 1086), which included Prospect Hill and Backworth Stations (HER 1145 and 1146). Backworth Station opened in 1864 and is the best surviving station on the line.