

Whitburn

The earliest recorded evidence of human activity at Whitburn are from a Mesolithic harpoon head (HER 851), and Mesolithic flints with an associated structure (HER 1998) found in 1989 at Potter's Hole in a cliff face. Finds from later periods include Neolithic and Bronze Age flints (HER 841-846 and 857), cist inhumation burials with associated artefacts (HER 847-850) and Roman coins (HER 871). The first documentary references to medieval Whitburn village (HER 108) date from 1183 in the Boldon Buke. It was probably a 2-row village with a central green, but the green does not appear to have extended through the eastern half of the settlement, where the onetime hall garth projected north to reduce the width of Front Street. The parish church lies behind the south row. Today there are 18th century houses in the west half of south side of the village, and 19th century houses on the north side. The Hall was demolished in 1980 and the site built over. In c.1382 30 separate holdings are listed in the village which contained a windmill and a pound. Whitburn Church (HER 882) dates to the early 13th century, although it was altered in the 15th and 19th centuries. Medieval artefacts including a silver ring, belt buckle and bronze plaque have been found at Glebe Farm (HER 4613). Whitburn Mill (HER 1029) dates at least to the 1790s and was in use until the late 19th century, but later found use during World War Two as an observation post. Other (wind)mill sites (e.g. HER 962), some of which have survived, probably also have medieval origins. There is also a photographic record of a tithe barn at Whitburn which may have medieval or early post-medieval origins (HER 881). The industrial development of Whitburn, as elsewhere in the region was tied to the coal trade, although mining occurred rather later than elsewhere due to the depths at which workable seams occur there. A number of mine workings and features associated with the coal trade are recorded in the area (e.g. HER 2394-5, 2588 and 2466). Whitburn Colliery (HER 2493) was sunk in 1874 by Belgian miners for the Whitburn Coal Company and remained open until the mid 20th century, using the Marsden and Whitburn Colliery railway (HER 2466) to transport coal. A great many Limestone quarries were also exploited during the 19th century (e.g. HER 2325-8 and 2418-24). The rifle range (HER 2587) at Whitburn dates to the early 20th century and includes practice World War One trenches. A remnant of the Second World War is the Anti-Aircraft Battery (HER 1795) at Lizard Farm. The coastal location of Whitburn meant that it became important in the 20th century defence of Britain. A World War One command post is located there (HER 1835) along with numerous Second World War defensive sites, including pillboxes (HER 1833, 4668 and 5351-3), a gun emplacement (HER 1785), aircraft battery (HER 1795) and road block sites (HER 5847-9).