

A Brief History of Warkworth

Warkworth lies on the north-east coast of England in mid-Northumberland with the River Coquet running west-east through the parish. The most prominent and well known monument is the medieval Warkworth Castle however the oldest known remains can be attributed to Bronze Age burial sites at Sturton Grange and at Walkmill. Warkworth is famous for an unusual Neolithic cup and ring marked cliff that rises from the River Coquet at Morwick. These motifs contain rare spiral forms as well as simple cup marks. Their exact meaning is unclear but they could have been religious or linked to tribal boundaries.

In the Iron Age there is thought that there was a fort on the site that is now occupied by the medieval castle. The original fort dominated the coast and also guarded the entrance to the Coquet and the horseshoe shaped river with the castle at its 'neck' protected the settlement. Warkworth lies north of the Roman Wall and there is no evidence of any Roman settlements remains in the area.



The first known settlers in Warkworth (or Wercewode as it was once called) were the Anglo-Saxons due to the fragments of a cross found in the River Coquet and other artefacts suggesting the presence of a church. The village was once of the five given to King Ceolwulph in AD 737 when he entered the monastery at Lindisfarne.

Warkworth flourished in the medieval period when it was a harbour and market town. As previously mentioned it lies in a loop of the River Coquet and still retains a basic medieval layout, having a medieval defended bridge together with a gatehouse at the north end of the village, leading up the main street to the imposing castle on the highest point at the south end of the village. The Church of St Lawrence is an excellent example of a Norman church and quite unique in the county.

Outside the medieval town there were rural settlements, including Sturton Grange which belonged to the Cisterian Newminster Abbey in Morpeth. Plans for a new settlement at Birling, just outside the village were begun but it didn't last long. Other villages and hamlets stood at Low Buston and Brotherwick. Warkworth has played an important role in the history of the area – for example in 1174 many men who followed William the Lion burnt down most of the village. In the post-medieval period the landscape changed in a number of ways. During the Dissolution of the

Monasteries in the 16th century, the Sturton Grange area was divided between a several landowners.

In 1715 the Jacobites under the orders of General Forster proclaimed the Pretender as King of Great Britain at the Market Cross. In the 18th and 19th century most of the buildings seen in Warkworth today were built. This was also a period of new ideas in farming and, as these developments spread, many farmhouses and farm buildings were built in the area, including Maudlin, New Barns, Northfield, Southside and Sturton Grange.

