

# THE FERRYHILL VILLAGE ATLAS

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## 'A SUMMARY'

### A HISTORIC LIMESTONE LANDSCAPE COMMUNITY

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Edited by Alan Rushworth  
with text and illustrations by  
Alan Rushworth & Marc Johnstone  
(The Archaeological Practice Ltd),  
Ivan Dunn, and Ian Kille



Limestone  
Landscapes



# The Village Atlas in Action



*Agricultural historian Ian Roberts visiting a farm at Thrundle to record an oral history interview.*



*Documentary Ingathering meeting in full flow*



*Example of a historic council map depicting Ferryhill.*



*Historic photograph of Ferryhill Station yard and Mainsforth Colliery.*



*A historic photograph of Ferryhill Cricket Team. An example of material collected during the 'ingathering' event.*



*Geologist Ian Kille examining an abandoned magnesian limestone quarry face in Ferryhill Gap.*

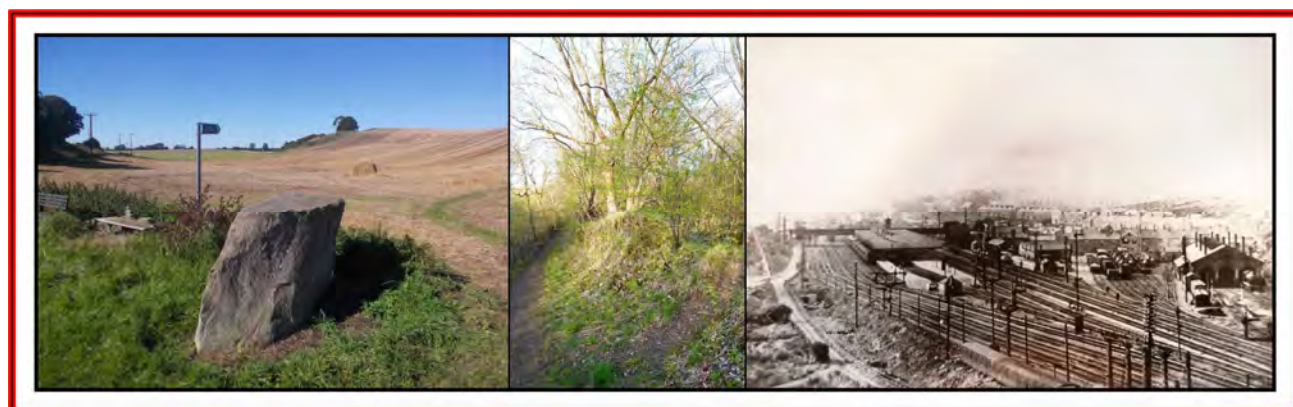


*Investigating the plants and wildlife of the Carrs with ecologist Ivan Dunn.*

# THE FERRYHILL VILLAGE ATLAS: A SUMMARY

## THE HISTORY, GEOLOGY & WILDLIFE OF A LIMESTONE LANDSCAPES COMMUNITY

Edited by Alan Rushworth with text and illustrations by Alan Rushworth and Marc Johnstone (The Archaeological Practice Ltd), Ivan Dunn, and Ian Kille



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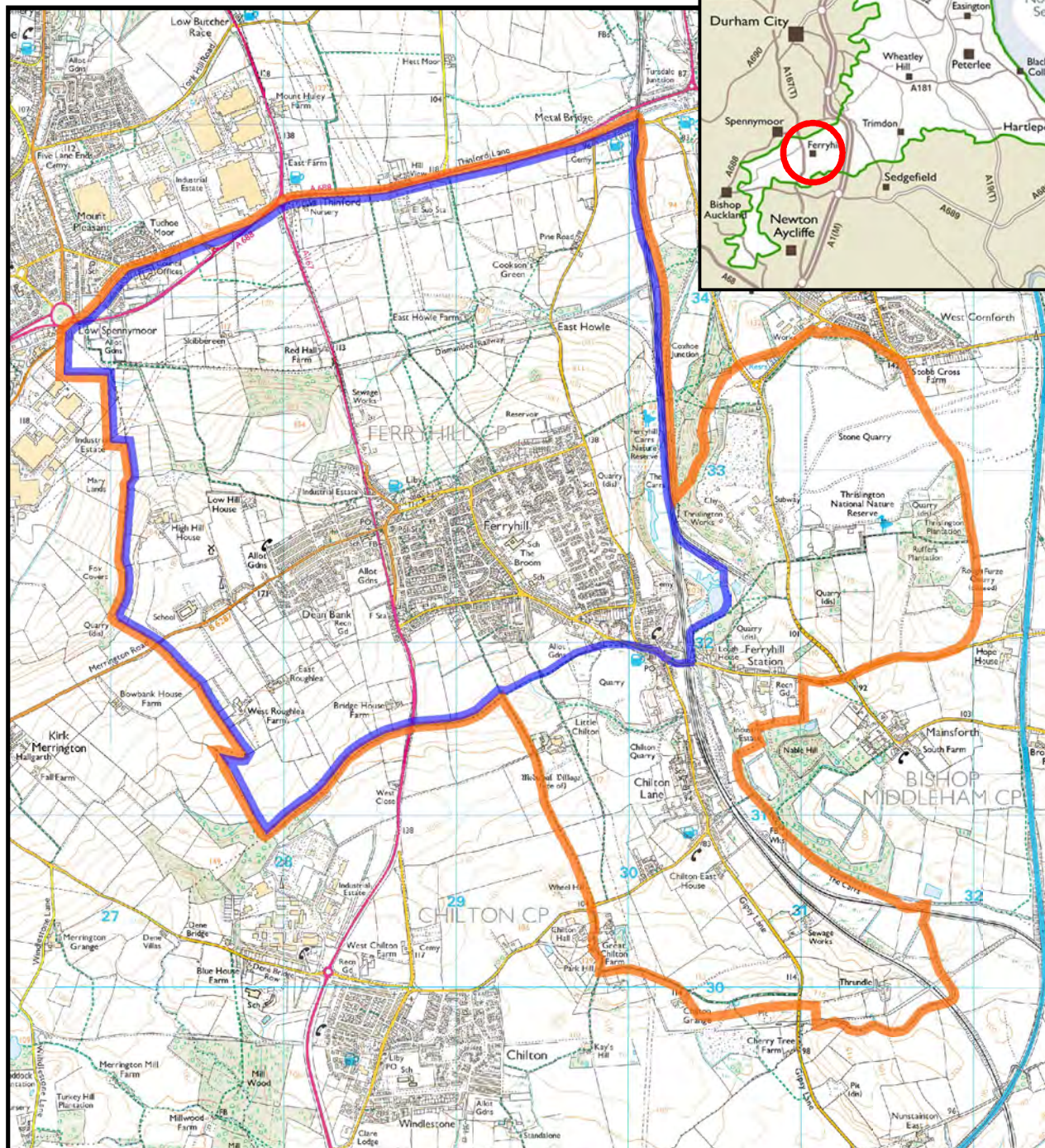
**Front cover:** *main picture* – The Town Hall; *upper right* – The Manor House from the S; *lower right* – the view from Cleves Cross towards Thrislington Quarry works.

**Back cover:** Plan of Ferryhill in 1765 (DCD/E/AA/17/1 – reproduced by permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral); The Manor House viewed from the NW; Cleves Cross Primary School pupils discovering wildlife in the school's grounds; Thrislington Quarry.

**Title Page:** *left to right* – Arable farmland near Great Chilton; Earthen bank along the boundary between Ferryhill and Mainsforth townships; Ferryhill Railway Station c. 1904, courtesy of the K Taylor Collection, FHS.



# Ferryhill Village Atlas Study Area



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- = Village Atlas Study Area
- = Historic Township of Ferryhill



# 1. INTRODUCTION: FERRYHILL AND ITS LANDSCAPE

## **The Ferryhill Village Atlas**

This booklet is designed to provide an accessible summary of the known history, ecology and geology of Ferryhill and its immediate surroundings. It draws on the work of the recently completed Ferryhill Village Atlas, a wide ranging programme of work undertaken by members of the local community and a team of specialists directed by the Archaeological Practice Ltd. The Atlas was one of many projects focussed on the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau fostered by the Limestone Landscapes Partnership with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Durham County Council, and this booklet is intended to publish the results of the Atlas programme in a more concise and readily available form than the main Atlas report. Copies of the main report may be consulted at the following locations:

*Ferryhill Library, Ferryhill Market Place; Ferryhill Town Hall; Ferryhill History Society; Durham County Record Office, County Hall; Durham CC Archaeology Section (HER), County Hall; Durham University Library Archives & Special Collections, Palace Green, Durham; Durham Local Studies, Durham Clayport Library, Millennium Place, Durham.*

Amongst the material contained within are summaries of the area's ecology and geodiversity, a selection of known historic sites, plus a snap-shot view of the historic buildings, along with treatment of a wide range of topics from Ferryhill's historic past. The maps and illustrations included here provide a detailed graphic portrayal of Ferryhill's historical development.

## **Landscape**

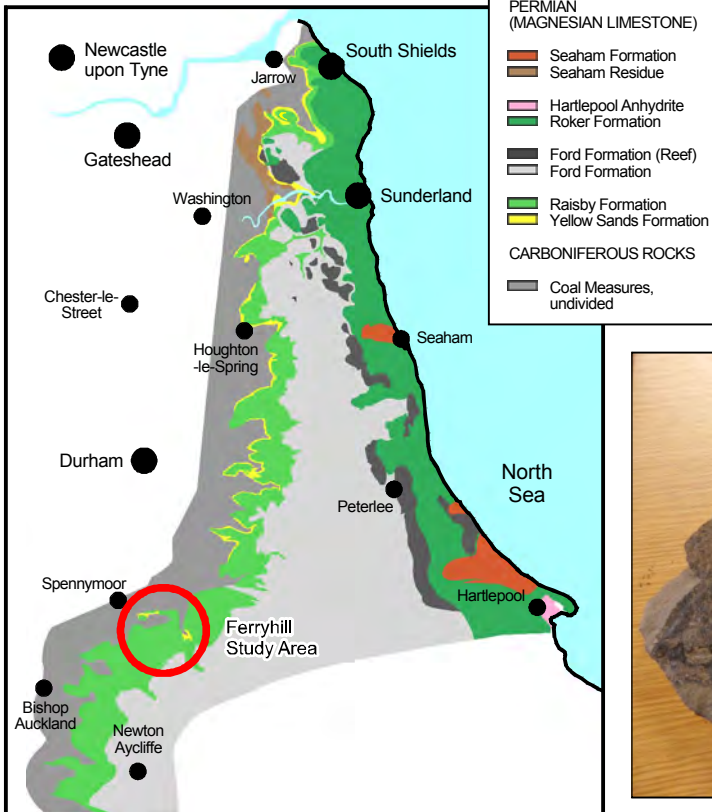
The study is not restricted to the built-up settlement of Ferryhill, but instead seeks to place the development of the settlement firmly within the context of its surrounding landscape. In relation to historic villages the wider contextual landscape is most readily defined by the demarcated territory, known as a **township**, which was attached to the village and exploited by its community. Townships formed consistent territorial units which can be analysed over long periods of time, eventually being transformed into the **civil parishes** of today.

In the case of Ferryhill, the surrounding landscape area, designated the **Village Atlas Study Area**, corresponds to the present Ferryhill Town Council area (or civil parish) shown on the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map, but augmented to the north-west to include the remainder of the former Ferryhill township, comprising Red Hall Farm, Skibbereen and part of Low Spennymoor. To the south-east, the study area extends beyond the traditional (19th-century and earlier) limits of Ferryhill to include the more recent ribbon settlements of Chilton Lane and Ferryhill Station, and the farmsteads and historic hamlets of Great and Little Chilton, Chilton Grange and Thrundle, all contained within the current Ferryhill Town Council district, and formerly part of Chilton and Mainsforth townships. In addition, notable topographic features such as the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment, the Ferryhill Gap and the Carrs, and, for the purposes of geological analysis, nearby Thrislington Quarry, are also relevant to any comprehensive understanding of Ferryhill's landscape.

The broader landscape terms, the ancient village crowns a long east-west ridge (over 160m above sea level), composed of magnesian limestone, which is known as the **Limestone Escarpment Ridge**, and forms a western offshoot of the **East Durham Limestone Escarpment**. The escarpment which generally runs north-south, overlooking the Wear Valley lowlands, forms the western edge of the **Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau**, a distinctive, low, upland plateau of Magnesian Limestone, extending from South Shields in the north to Hartlepool Headland in the south. This plateau falls eastwards from the escarpment to the sea and southwards to the Tees plain. The escarpment ridge of Ferryhill also forms a very clear watershed between the two major river drainage systems of County Durham, the Wear to the north and the Skerne/Tees basin to the south.



## Geology of the Magnesian Limestone area



## Ferryhill and the Magnesian Limestone Plateau and Escarpment - Landscape & Geology



Permian era fossil fish from the marl slate deposit in Thrislington Quarry

Looking across quarry rock face on the edge of Ferryhill Gap



Ferryhill Gap glacial meltwater channel now containing the Carrs

Looking across Thrislington Quarry



Section in Thrislington Quarry showing the sand dune deposits of the Permian era desert at the bottom with the darker band of fossil rich marl slate above overlain by magnesian limestone associated with the Zechstein Sea



## 2. THE GEOLOGY AROUND FERRYHILL

### Introduction

The bedrock of Ferryhill and the landscape in which it resides are the result of the inexorable operation of geological process over many hundreds of millions of years. They are also a fundamental part of the birth and development of the town.

The area's soils, and its consequent agricultural value, are governed by the rocks on which they sit. The presence of a wealth of coal within rock seams below the town has had a massive effect on Ferryhill's growth and social development. The major rail link, an artery for trade, running through Ferryhill Gap owes its position to a melt-water channel through the limestone escarpment. Latterly the town has been dominated by, physically if not in terms of employment, the extraction of magnesian limestone and the production of cement. The characteristic look of the older parts of the town is also created by the local stone and bricks, made from locally sourced clays, used for building.

The rocks which can be found around Ferryhill come from two major periods of geological time, the Carboniferous and the Permian. In addition to the rocks which were laid down in the Carboniferous and Permian periods, Ferryhill's landscape takes its current form in direct consequence of the geological processes happening during the Ice Ages.

The Carboniferous is so called because it contains rich reserves of coal. The period covers the time from 360 to 300 million years ago, although in the Ferryhill area only rocks from the latter part of the Carboniferous are found at the surface. These rocks are well known for the coal seams which have been exploited for much of Ferryhill's history. The coal seams are one of a variety of rock types which include sandstones, shales, clays and ironstones forming the Pennine Coal Measures which outcrop in an area stretching from Barnard Castle to Alnmouth and Wallsend to Allendale in the NE and across to Cumbria in the west. In addition to these surface outcrops, coal measures extend underground and under-sea to the south and east of the Durham coalfield, Ferryhill being one of the points at which the coal measures start to be covered by the more recent Permian

These rocks were laid down in a vast deltaic plain forming in a basin which covered the whole of Northumberland south of the Cheviots, down to Lincolnshire, west across to Northern Ireland and east out into a sea covering parts of mainland Europe. The rivers flowed into this delta from the highland massif to the north as well as from a developing upland to the south, known as the Wales Brabant High, running from Wales through Suffolk and out to towards what is now Belgium.

The basin under this deltaic plain was slowly sinking at a rate which, over time, matched the rate at which sediments were being brought in by the rivers. This allowed for very extensive waterlogged mires to form between the rivers in which the huge thicknesses of peat could be laid down which eventually were turned into coal. The mudstones in the cyclic sequences were laid down in lakes when the water table was too high for mires to form. Some of the sandstones were formed within the river channels, which switched location as the rivers shifted course over the flat plain, generating the locally thick sandstones. Sandstones were also laid down along with siltstones, where rivers disgorged into one of the lakes, or where a river broke its banks to form leaf shaped deposits (in plan) called crevasse splays. The occasional marine bands were formed when the whole area was inundated by the sea, probably in consequence of global changes in sea level.

The coal seam called "Main Coal" which was mined at Dean and Chapter Colliery was one of the most important and thickest of the Durham coal field at 2m thick and of high rank. Rank is a measure of the quality of the coal, the higher the rank the lower the volatile content and impurities (such as sulphur). The rank of the coal is dependant both on the quality and purity of the original material



laid down, but is also improved by deep burial and the consequent heating and compression that this causes. It is estimated that in order to form 2m of coal that the mires from which it was formed would have had to have laid down some 20m of peat, which was then compacted to form the coal. The sort of plants which this peat was formed from would have included trees such as *Lepidodendron*, a type of lycopod, a family which includes the present day club mosses, and *Equisetum*, a giant form of the present day mares-tails. In amongst the plants have been found fossils of giant insects and amphibians. These latter would have been the largest and most evolved creatures that lived at this time in an age before even the dinosaurs had arrived.

During the Permian era, which started at 299 Ma, with a change from a tropical to a hot desert climate, and finished at 250 Ma at a point which marks the biggest mass extinction that the world has seen, Ferryhill was located in the middle of the vast continent of Pangea, close to the equator, and slowly moved north. Hot desert conditions prevailed, and in the early to middle Permian wind-blown sands and flash floods were the major agents of sedimentation. The discontinuous Yellow Sands Formation, which can be seen at the base of Thrislington Quarry is the only remnant of this environment which reigned for the first 40 million years of the Permian. The sandstones have large scale dune cross-bedding and looking at the sand grains under a microscope shows them to be abraded and polished by wind.

Immediately above the Yellow Sands Formation there is a band of grey coloured rocks known as the Marl Slate Formation. This layer is found across all of the Permian rocks outcropping in the North East of England and marks the first incursion of what is known as the Zechstein Sea, which formed in an area broadly coincident with the present North Sea. Above the Marl Slate Formation there are multiple layers of limestones and evaporites, which have recently been divided into seven units. The first few of these units can be seen in the Ferryhill area and form part of the Raisby and Ford Formations, traditionally referred to as the Lower and Middle Magnesian Limestones respectively. The magnesian limestones, currently quarried at Thrislington, are within the Raisby Formation.

The Marl Slates have become particularly well known because of the remarkable fossil fishes and plants which have been preserved in them. It is thought that this first incursion of the Zechstein Sea, to a depth of 200-300m across the North East, had a layer of stagnant oxygen poor water at its base. This meant that fishes, sharks and plant material, amongst other creatures that dropped into the basal waters, did not decompose so quickly and were better preserved in consequence.

The Zechstein Sea rolled in over the uneven desert surface of the Yellow Sands, in some places eroding into these sands. This is seen in the uneven thickness of the Marl Slates and the wind-blown sand grains which can be found within the lower layers of the Marl Slates. In the succeeding Raisby formation the magnesian limestones were deposited on a sloping surface at the eastern margin of the Zechstein Sea in depths of water estimated to be between 100m and 300m.

Ferryhill Village is built on top of an escarpment formed by the Permian rocks described above, which have been extensively exploited, principally for the magnesian limestone which is used as a flux in the steel industry. The limestones are also used in the manufacture of cement and the sands for aggregate.

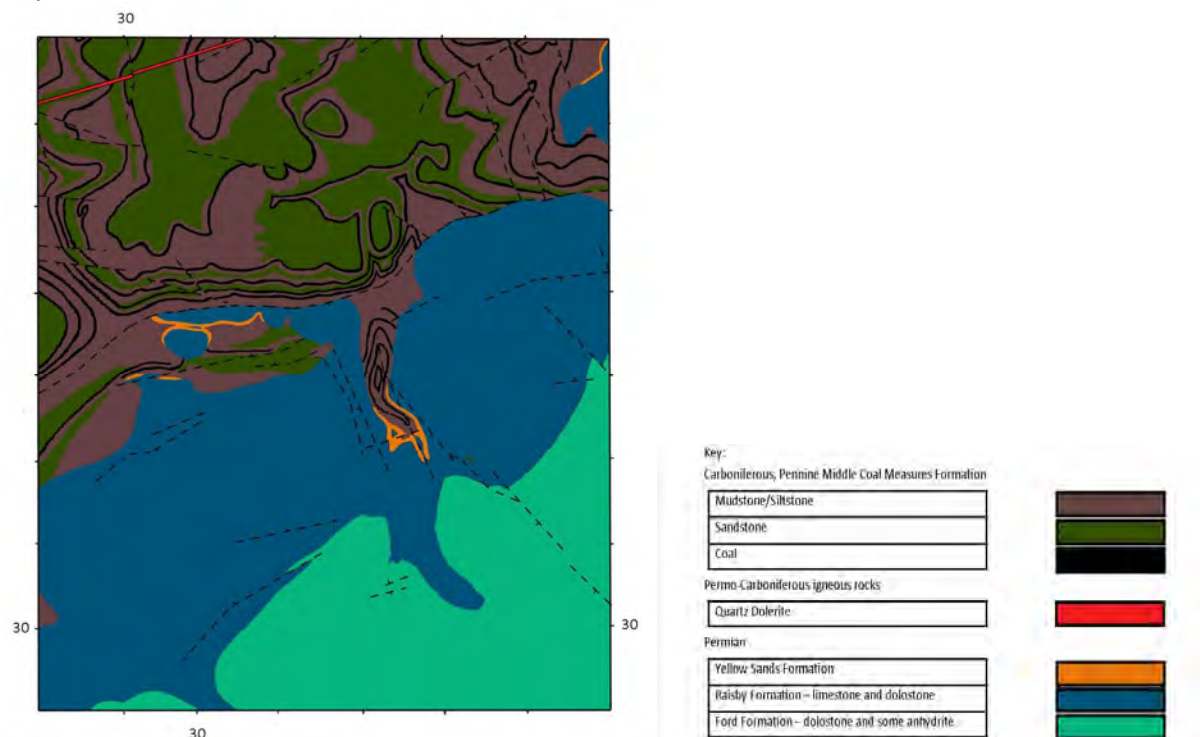
### **The Ice Ages**

Strictly speaking we are still in an ice-age, with large polar ice-caps and relatively benign global temperatures. Within the geological time-scale this ice-age is called the Quaternary Period, stretching back about 2.6 million years. During this period, owing to natural cycles in global temperatures caused by variations in the earth's orbit (cf. Milankovich Cycles), there have been a series of cold episodes creating glacial periods when the polar ice caps extended much further

towards the equator. We are now in a period of time between one of these cold episodes, known as an interstadial.

In Ferryhill, we are in an area which is temperate during an interstadial, but which was repeatedly covered by glaciers and ice sheets during the glacial periods. Ice sheets and glaciers have a very major effect on landscapes, grinding away softer rocks and redepositing the material as sediment at the base and edges of the ice sheet, but the evidence of previous glacial periods tends to get wiped out by subsequent glacial events. This is the case in Ferryhill where the most visible signs of ice impact are from the latest glacial period, the Main Late Devensian Glaciation. This glaciation started about 27000 years ago (27 Ka BP) and by 14 Ka BP the area was ice free. The area around Ferryhill was particularly interesting as it was located in an area affected by three ice sheets flowing from different sources. Ice builds up in mountainous areas and flows away from them.

Many of the general post-glacial features seen across the whole of the region can be found in the Ferryhill area including a covering of glacial sands, gravels and boulder clays left behind by the ice. A ribbon of river deposits wind through Ferryhill Gap. This feature is a consequence of the unique configuration of the three ice-flows described above interacting with the line of hills formed from the Permian limestones. The Cheviot ice travelling down the coast trapped both its own melt-water and that from the westerly Pennine ice in a series of glacial lakes. The massive glacial Lake Wear stretched from Newcastle to Sunderland extending up the current River Wear through Chester le Street towards Durham and up the Team Valley. Smaller lakes also formed south of Durham along the River Wear and to the west of Peterlee in what has been named Glacial Lake Edder Acres. The water from these lakes drained to the south in what must have been very significant rivers, and it was through Ferryhill Gap that this water was funnelled into an exit through the Permian limestone hills, scouring out a deep sided channel. It has been suggested that this channel was active in more than just the most recent Main Late Devensian Glaciation, with this last glacial event re-activating and deepening a pre-existing glacial melt-water channel. Certainly geo-physical and borehole data shows that the present day, relatively shallow, topography through which the main intercity line runs, has a much deeper channel now in-filled by glacial river deposits and by lacustrine and peaty deposits from the Carrs.



*Detailed map of the Solid Geology of Ferryhill*



### 3. THE ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY OF FERRYHILL

#### **The Landscape**

The limestone grassland of the Magnesian Limestone Plateau is one of the most important habitat types in the country providing homes to some of the rarest species. However only 336ha (0.76%) of the area can be categorised as Unimproved Calcareous Grassland , the majority being found along the western scarp, within disused limestone quarries or the cliff tops to the east. In addition to the scarcity of the underlying geology (magnesian limestone is only found in 1.5% of the UK mainland), another reason for the rarity of the species is that the area is situated on the most northern extremity of the range for certain plants, yet also being at the most southern point for other species. This overlap of ranges provides an interesting ecosystem, making it unique in the British Isles. One of the aims of the project was to map the species distribution to use as a base point to gauge the effect of climate change in the region.

While the majority of the magnesian limestone is more coastal, Ferryhill is situated along the northern edge of the spur that runs inland towards Shildon and Newton Aycliffe. This spur reduces the scarp effect found elsewhere but leaves Ferryhill standing high above the two flood plains of the River Tees and Wear.

The porous nature of the limestone restricts the number of rivers and streams over most of the area, however the glacial melt-water channel that is now Ferryhill Carrs is the largest swamp area within the magnesian limestone natural area. As this cutting is perpendicular to the limestone spur it forms the watershed of both the River Tees and the River Wear. The majority of the water flows south forming the River Skerne, which flows into the Tees.



Very wet areas prevent the same vegetation decomposition process that would in other areas become soil. Here the vegetation breaks down differently, releasing acids into the water by fermentation which helps to preserve organic matter by pickling. Over a period of time this becomes peat. As plant material isn't breaking down the levels of peat can build up quite dramatically raising the surface of the land. Once the land has raised sufficiently the water level falls further beneath the surface allowing subsequent decomposition to form soil. Ferryhill Carrs is still as the 'wet' stage, but as the conservation value is of such importance, small scrapes and ponds are maintained to keep areas of open water and marshland. Without such work the area would eventually build up to such a stage where wetland species could not survive. This is known in ecological terms as succession.

Ferryhill Carrs is atypical of the area and the majority of land around the village is very dry and suitable for intensive arable farming. The dryness is assisted by the fact that most of the fields are situated on rolling banks, where the steepness encourages draining. Having dry soil helps it warm up earlier in the spring allowing crops to grow over an extended season.

The most distinctive feature of the landscape is the tower at Thrislington Quarry. This can be seen from almost anywhere in the parish (and from quite a long way outside it in certain areas). This is a reminder of the industrial heritage of the parish. While Thrislington is just outside the designated village atlas boundary, the impact on quarrying in the area is obvious. Some of the best nature conservation sites in the county can be found in this area, most notably Thrislington National Nature Reserve and Bishop Middleham Old Quarry Local Nature Reserve. By removing the glacial deposits and top soil, old quarry areas have reverted back to true magnesian limestone grassland with very high wildlife value.

Industry needs an infrastructure to deliver the end product, and this is very obvious in Ferryhill as the railway line and terminal sidings show. The railway sidings have been so important that they influenced the village around Ferryhill Station. The railway line is also important for wildlife. Like the quarries, railway cuttings expose the limestone bedrock underneath providing calcareous conditions for lime-loving plants. It also acts as a wildlife corridor, allowing species to spread between similar habitats.

### **Ferryhill Carrs**

Or more accurately Ferryhill marsh and lakes, sits in the bottom of a shallow valley separating Ferryhill from Thrislington. There are remnants of Willow Carr along the woodland edge, but the majority of the site comprises of rush, with other wetland plants such as Yellow Flag Iris. However the site is still very important for wildlife, especially as wetland habitats of this size are scarce on the magnesian limestone, where the rocks being porous don't hold much standing water unless there is a suitably thick layer of boulder clay to support it.

To the north of the site is a wet meadow. In 2013 it was particularly impressive with good populations of Orchids as well as Adders-tongue.

The site forms the watershed between the River Wear and River Tees, with the majority of the outflow from the site heading south along the River Skerne into the Tees.

### **Schools Involvement**

The primary schools in Ferryhill were very enthusiastic about learning about their environment and we chose three different topics to look at.





Cleves Cross chose to look at their wildlife area within the school grounds. Here a mixture of imported and indigenous plants had been managed to provide habitats for insects and birds. The area had been fenced off to restrict access to the area by a single gate and bark-chip paths laid out to encourage people to stay off the wild flowers. The number of flowers we recorded were fairly extensive and included species such as Cowslip, Knapweed, Common Dog Violet and Meadow Cranesbill (hybrid). The bird feeding area also attracted a number of birds to the area. This included Chaffinch, Blackbird, House Sparrow and Starling.

Ferryhill Station chose to look specifically at the birds which visited their 'wild' area. We made some bird boxes, looking at the different requirements that different species of birds had and how these affected the type of nesting box that a bird would use. Over the two sessions we recorded a wide variety of birds that used the area. This included summer visitors such as Chiffchaff, Swift, Swallow, House Martin and resident species such as Wren, Blackbird, Jackdaw, Great Tit and Goldfinch. Pigeons, Doves and Gulls were also evident, flying over the school grounds.

With Dean Bank Primary we looked at the wildlife growing in the playground and how the area could be improved for wildlife. As most of the school grounds are hard standing, the main species to thrive tend to be what most people class as 'weeds'. We found a variety of species growing in cracks in the wall, beside fences and hedges and creeping into the flower beds. The commonest species were Groundsel, Pineapple Weed and Daisy, but we also recorded a number of spiders and other mini-bugs. To help provide homes for wildlife the classes made a number of nest boxes and bee houses, which were to be put up in the school grounds.

### **Thrislington**

**Thrislington National Nature Reserve** is one of the crown jewels of the Magnesian Limestone. The populations of Blue Moor-grass and Small Scabious make it particularly important, and it is the largest area of this type of vegetation in the country. The eastern end of the site is undisturbed grassland, but in the western end the grassland has been translocated by the large excavators used in the nearby quarry. The turf and soil beneath was lifted, as intact as possible and put down in a patchwork effect to create a new meadow on an area that had been quarried previously.

The site has scattered trees and shrubs which are also important for birds. These included Greater-spotted Woodpecker and Tree Pipit.

The site is home to many rare species, including the Dark-red Helleborine, Mountain Everlasting and Perennial Flax. Rare invertebrates include the Durham Argus, Least Minor Moth and the Glow-worm.



## 4. METHODS AND SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

How we know what we know? A variety of source material provided the evidence used to compile the Ferryhill Village Atlas, including:

- Historic maps
- Old photographs, prints and documents
- Archaeology – known sites & monuments
- Aerial Photographs
- Analysis of Historic Buildings

Summary gazetteers were prepared listing all the sites of significant cultural heritage interest in the Ferryhill Atlas Study Area derived from the Durham Heritage Environment Record (HER) held in the Archaeology section at County Hall, Durham. The HER is also searchable online through *Keys to the Past* ([www.keystothepast.info](http://www.keystothepast.info)). A selection of these sites is set out on the accompanying map here.

Site visits were undertaken to examine and photograph all archaeological or historical features of interest in the settlements and wider township area, including the overall built environment and wider field systems. All the components of the ancient village core, in particular, were subject to detailed analysis, as were features of especial interest such as the Swan House. All buildings of note were examined and photographed in the course of site visits.



Extract from Christopher Saxton's Map of County Durham (Durham County Record Office D/CL 23/2), 1576, the earliest of the county maps. Reproduced by permission of Durham County Record Office

**Atlas activities: Walks, Talks and Visits:** Guided walks around Ferryhill village core, Dean Bank, and the settlements of Great and Little Chilton and the wider environs were undertaken to examine historic buildings, notable archaeological monuments, geological features and sites of ecological significance. A variety of ecological monitoring activities were undertaken. In addition, visits to various regional archives, including the Durham Historic Environment Record in County Hall, were organised. A **schools programme** of classroom-based and outdoor sessions was delivered to the pupils of Dean Bank, Cleves Cross and Ferryhill Station primary schools, which included **test-pitting** at the Manor House in Ferryhill and on the line of the Chilton Colliery waggonway near Little Chilton.



# FERRYHILL VILLAGE ATLAS

## - Selection from the Historic Environment Record -

- = Prehistoric
- = Romano-British
- = Early Medieval
- = Medieval
- = Post Medieval
- = Multiple Periods

**H1337 : Ferryhill, Andrew Mill's Stob**  
"About half a mile north of Ferryhill, a portion of a gibbet remained on what was common by the roadside. The spot is now ploughed and enclosed". It is named after a youth executed for murder in 1683

**H3923 : Roman Pottery at Strawberry Lane**  
A large mortarium sherd was found on a track known as Strawberry Lane.

**H3922 : Roman Brooch at Red Hall Farm**  
Metal detector find of a Roman Trumpet Brooch.

**H3927 : Spindle Whorl at Red Hall Farm**  
Medieval lead spindle whorl found by metal detectorist.

**H3928 : Post Medieval Coins at Red Hall Farm**  
Metal detector find of coins of James I, quantity unknown.

**Finds from the East of Durham Road:**  
**H3925 : Roman Coin**  
Copper alloy coin.  
**H3926 : Spindle Whorl**  
Medieval lead spindle whorl

**H376 : An Enclosure at Ferryhill, Bridge House**  
Rectilinear ditched enclosure. The source also identifies one or possibly two circular features east of the main road. The site is most likely to be a farmstead of the late Iron-Age or Romano-British period within a ditched enclosure.

**H1342 : Chilton, Little Chilton**  
The old manor house of Little Chilton stands on ground that slopes gently eastward towards the Skerne valley. The house did not arouse any antiquarian interest prior to the re-listing survey of the 1980s, when it was recognised as a medieval building. Although we do know that it is mentioned in 1271, and in 1619 when the house passed from the Emersons to Edward Cropley.  
Little Chilton is clearly a medieval house, doubtless with a wealth of features concealed beneath its external roughcast and internal plaster and stoothing. Its date remains uncertain; the arch of the main doorway might indicate a 13th or 14th century date, and the truncated principal roof (and hall ceiling beams) a remodelling in the later 15th or even early 16th century, dendrochronology could help here.

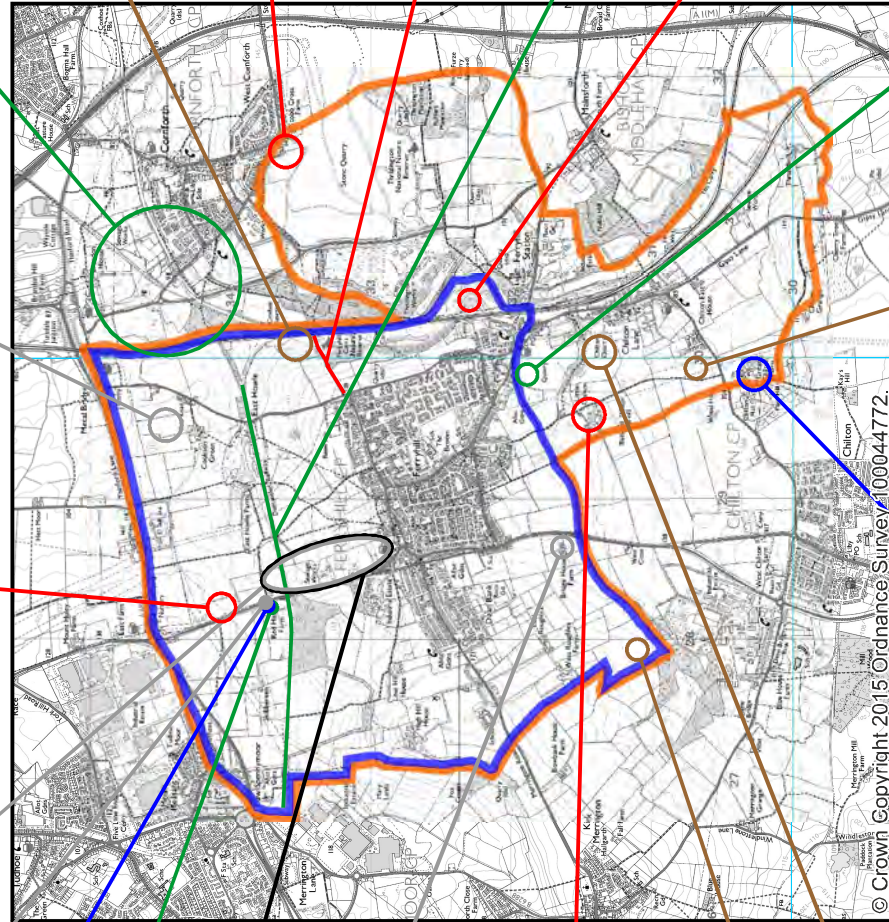
**H2136 : Chilton, Lithic Working Site**  
Small, later Mesolithic flint scatter including two delicate end scrapers and a core flint. Retained by the landowner. It also includes waste material.

**H240 : Bronze Spear at Chilton Quarry**  
A bronze socketed spear head discovered in Cleveland in soil brought from either Chilton Quarries or Redworth, Middlesbrough. Soil analysis locates it at the former. An oval spearhead with socket loops dated to 1600-1800 BC.

**H1330 : Medieval Village Site, Great Chilton**  
The probable remains of a deserted Medieval village. The earthworks (maximum height 0.5m) consist of low, wide banks dividing the land into plots, some of which contain rigg and furrow. There is no definite trace of buildings but the broken ground at grid reference NZ29953032, and irregularly shaped platforms and small level areas in other places, suggest buildingsteadings. No reason has been discovered for the depopulation, or information regarding date. No existing building shows any trace of antiquity. A confusing and inchoate site.

**H15777 : Enclosure, Great Chilton**  
(Site of Community-Based Archaeological Excavation). An aerial photograph shows a number of rectilinear enclosures including a large enclosure and a smaller one inside, which could be Iron Age or Roman. There is also two small circular enclosures inside.

**H4679 : Broom Colliery**  
This colliery site marked as already disused on the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey but not appearing on 1st Edition. Visible earthworks now apparently used as pasture. A wagonway appears to have lead south, and joined the mineral railway running east to Ferryhill Station. Two shafts were sunk, both 8 ft wide - one at NZ 29355 31986 (186 ft deep), and one at NZ 29845 31962 (141 ft deep). Broom Cottages, to the north of the site, may well have been connected to the mine.



**H412 : Roman Pottery at Thinford**  
A Scatter of Roman pottery.

**H2982 : Ferryhill, Iron works**  
Site, slag and tar remains of Ferryhill Iron Works.

**H254 and H1340 : Inhumations at Ferryhill**  
Four human skeletons found during quarrying operations. The bones lay in a rift in the limestone formation. Believed to be, "three adult boys and one female." The skulls are in good condition. Well stratified. These burials were only recorded as a short note in the Proceedings of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries in 1912. Possibly of Bronze-Age origin.

**H1110 : Cist, Spearhead and Burial at Stob Cross Field**  
In July 1822, in Stobcross Field on the Thrislington Estate a workman uncovered at c.18in. below the surface, a cist containing a human skeleton and the nearly 8in. long iron head of a lance or javelin with some wood adhering. A second skeleton with an iron spearhead 7in. long was found 20 yards, to the northwest. Later, 8 or 9 other inhumation burials were found, without grave-goods, around the crown of the field. "The graves were not dug east and west, but in various directions". The burials are believed to be pagan Anglo-Saxon. The field is now covered by a housing estate.

**H1105 : Medieval Road/Trackway at Thrislington**  
The paved pathway across the marsh from Thrislington Hall to Ferryhill is mentioned in an agreement of 1262. Perambulation of the area revealed what is probably the remains of the pathway, a track now partly overgrown and used as a footpath. Many large stones are visible on the surface and in some places form a rough paved area. It continues as a covered way with an average width of 7m and with banks on each side up to 2m high. Large stones are visible in the banks. The low ground is crossed by a causeway 10m wide with a maximum height of 1. Large stones are visible on the surface.

**H2987 : Ferryhill, Clarence Railway**  
Bridge abutments and traceable track of 1830 Byers Green Branch of the Clarence Railway.

**H1101 : Ferryhill, Swan House**  
A farmstead at Ferryhill is still called Swan House. The ruins of the Swan House of the Medieval swannery occupy the southeast corner of the hill above the marsh between the Ferryhill-Thrislington and the Ferryhill-Mainsthorpe roads. It is described as, "a sort of froggodye building, half practised in the rock." In 1262 the marsh was granted to the Prior and Convent of Durham, probably to increase their swannery. A former two-storey building, it is now in gross disrepair, built into a rock-face. The lower courses of the structure are of stone slabs, the upper of brick of various periods, giving a patchwork appearance. The roof and internal timberings, where remaining, are modern. There are no indications of a chimney, nor of domestic status. The latter use has been as a barn. No dateable architectural feature has been observed.

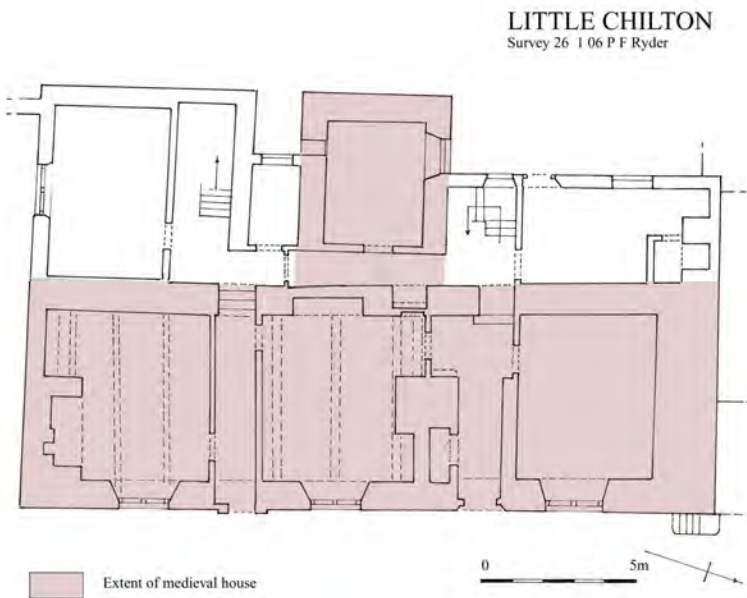


# View of Historic Buildings in Ferryhill Village Core





# Historic Buildings of Chilton



*Large medieval roof timbers over the hall of the medieval manor house at Little Chilton*



*General view of Little Chilton Hall from the south-east*



*The 17th-century farmhouse at Great Chilton from the south*



*The rear of Great Chilton Hall showing possible earlier parts of the building*



*The early 19th-century facade of Great Chilton Hall*



# Uncovering Ferryhill's Past



*Examining the remains of the Swan House with Atlas participant Michael Ord providing scale*



*Buildings archaeologist Peter Ryder describing the late medieval hall at Little Chilton to the village atlas group*



*Old farming equipment discovered inside a barn at Bridge House Farm, Ferryhill*

*Exploring the medieval layout of Ferryhill behind North Row*



*Possible remains of the original Swan House identified*



*Agricultural historian Ian Roberts talking to a farmer at Thrundle Farm*



# Atlas School Activities



Children from Dean Bank Primary School visiting Thrislington Quarry.



'The Classroom Dig' - learning about archaeology with Education Officer Paul Mercer.



Dean Bank School kids visiting an archaeological dig of an Iron Age settlement at Great Chilton.



Splitting pieces of Marl Slate to reveal intricate fossils of ancient fish within.



Keeley Bowe & Shannon Haswell of Ferryhill Station Primary School proudly display their finds from testpitting on the former Chilton Colliery railway line.



Examining the geology of Ferryhill in the classroom with expert Ian Kille.



Children from Cleves Cross School working hard during testpitting at the Manor House, Ferryhill, as part of the Village Atlas celebratory event in September 2014.



# Archaeological Testpitting at The Manor House

Pupils from Dean Bank and Cleves Cross Schools explored the history of the town over two days in June 2013 as part of the Ferryhill Village Atlas.

The children dug four 1m square test pits in the garden of the Manor House Inn, with the help of archaeologists from The Archaeological Practice Ltd. Further pits were dug by Ferryhill's schoolchildren in September 2014 during the Atlas celebratory event. Permission to dig up the lawn had very kindly been given by successive owners of the hotel, Mr James Gray and Arthur Scott & Julie Donoghue.



The archaeologists were amazed by the children's enthusiasm as they dug away with trowels and shovels.

Finds included two pieces of medieval pottery (see below), the bowl of a clay pipe, broken fragments of more recent pottery vessels and glass bottles, plus lots of coal, brick and ash.



Archaeologist Richard Carlton explained *'the idea of test-pitting is to gather a representative selection of finds reflecting local settlement going back through time. The more recent finds should lie nearer the surface and the older ones further down'*.



He concluded *'based on what we've found, it looks as though generations of people living at the Manor House have been burning their rubbish and throwing the remains into the back garden'*.





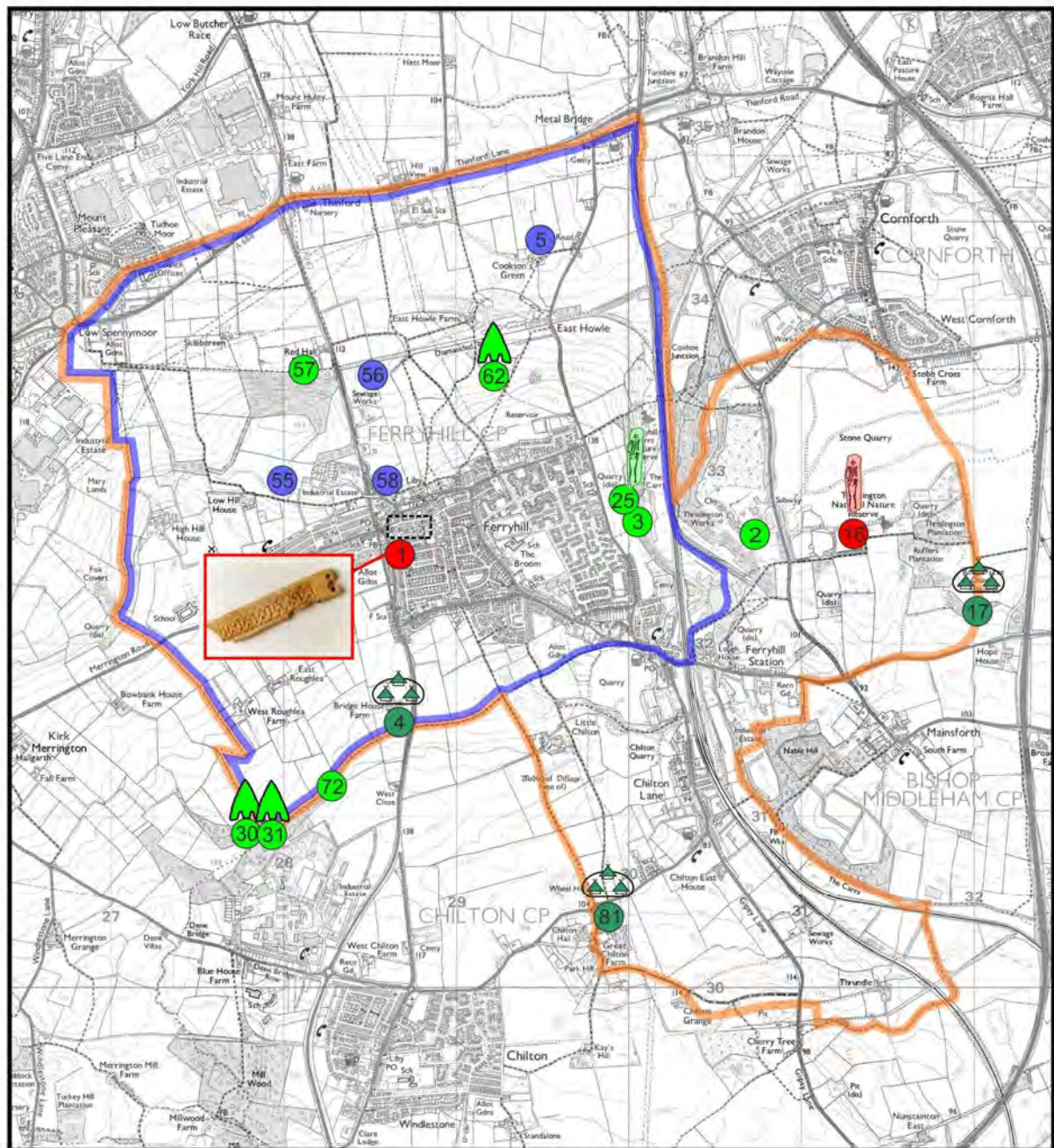
## 5. ORIGINS: THE PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN PERIODS

The earliest evidence of human occupation around Ferryhill takes the form of a few stray finds – a small scatter of flint tools and waste material, including two delicate end scrapers and a core trimmer, left by **Mesolithic** (Middle Stone Age: 10,000 – 4,000 BC) hunter-gatherers in the south-west corner of the study area (Sites 30, 31) and a single badly damaged scraper from East Howle (62), which probably belonged to a **Neolithic** (New Stone Age: 4,000 – 2,300BC) farmer. A similar picture applies to the succeeding **Bronze Age** (2,300 – 700 BC) when metal tools first came into use. Finds include a bronze socketed spearhead, probably from Chilton Quarries, and a crude copper alloy artefact, possibly an axe, uncovered north of Red Hall Farm (57). Also attributed to this period, though with far less certainty, are the burials found in vertical crevices of the magnesian limestone during quarrying on the edge of Ferryhill Gap, overlooking the Carrs, at the beginning of the 20th century (3, 25). Four or five entire skeletons were found but no accompanying diagnostic grave goods which would confirm their date.

In contrast substantial settlement sites of probable **Iron Age** (700 BC – AD43) and perhaps Romano-British date, have been identified as cropmarks on aerial photographs (4, 17, 81). These take the form of large, rectilinear, ditched enclosures containing round houses built of timber and wattle-and-daub. One example has been spotted on the east side of the A167 near Bridge House Farm (4), and another, located just north of Great Chilton (81), was the subject of a **community excavation** in 2012 and 2013 providing a fuller picture of local life in the Iron Age. At the heart of the Great Chilton site was a large sub-rectangular or trapezoidal enclosure, its enclosure ditch apparently displaying three phases, which was in turn enclosed by an even larger trapezoidal enclosure extending further westward and containing a large ring ditch structure some 18m in diameter positioned on the highest point. Surrounding these was a complex pattern of enclosures, perhaps representing fields, paddocks or different phases of settlement enclosure, plus traces of two possible further round houses. Excavation in the first season focused on the one of peripheral round houses, and a transect across several of the enclosure ditches, whilst the second season concentrated on the large ring ditch. Excavation confirmed the settlement had multiple structural phases with the ring ditch of the peripheral round house cutting the neighbouring and presumably earlier one, whilst the large ring ditch also cut the remains of an earlier round house. The function of the ring ditch was unclear as few internal post holes were uncovered. It may have been a turf-built round house or an open ditched and banked enclosure for corralling livestock or perhaps for ceremonial or ritual purposes. Finds included quern stones for hand-grinding grain, one upper stone forming part of a beehive quern being almost complete, pottery of characteristic late prehistoric type, a piece of a jet bangle and a link from a iron snaffle horse bit, perhaps dating to the 5th century BC. However no Roman pottery was found nor any other indication the Great Chilton settlement continued on beyond the Iron Age into the Roman period.



A **Romano-British** presence in the environs of Ferryhill is nevertheless implied by the discovery of various artefacts, particularly in the area north of Ferryhill village. These include Roman coins (58) found just east of Durham Road (A167), a trumpet broach near Red Hall Farm (56), a large mortarium sherd on Strawberry Lane (55) and a scatter of other pottery south of Thinford Lane (5). As yet there is no indication what form of settlement may have been associated with this scatter of artefacts. However such finds distributions often cluster along Roman routes and it has also been suggested that a Roman road may have run along the Limestone Escarpment Ridge, connecting the Roman fort at Binchester, on Dere Street to the west, with another north-south road, known as Cades Road, to the east and perhaps even continuing on to a port at the mouth of the Tees. This would have run through the present Kirk Merrington and Ferryhill villages and crossed the Carrs at the same point as the later medieval causeway between Ferryhill and Thrislington and might have attracted settlement along its course. As a classic 'ridgeway' it could perhaps originate even earlier, in prehistory.


## Prehistoric, Roman and Early Medieval Sites and Finds recorded in the HER (Historic Environment Record)





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0 400 800 1200 1600 2000 m


 = Village Atlas Study Area  
 = Historic Township of Ferryhill


 = Roman findspot


 = Anglo-Saxon burial

 = Early medieval building

 = Early prehistoric burial

 = Early prehistoric flint tool/scatter

 = Other early prehistoric site/findspot

 = Late Bronze Age/Iron Age/Romano-British enclosed settlement



## Iron Age / Romano British Settlement around Ferryhill



*Aerial photograph showing the cropmarks of a probable Iron Age / Romano British settlement near Bridge House Farm, viewed from the south-east.*



*Aerial Photograph of the Iron Age settlement near Great Chilton.*



*Children from Dean Bank Primary School working enthusiastically on the archaeological dig at Great Chilton Iron Age settlement.*

## 6. EARLY MEDIEVAL FERRYHILL (AD 410 – 1100)

Following the collapse of Roman imperial authority in Britain in the early 5th century AD many Roman forts, such as Binchester, appear to have continued to be inhabited, but the overall settlement pattern is unclear. Some of the best evidence for the period comes from cemeteries, with both cremations and inhumations (the burial of the deceased's intact body) being found. These were often accompanied by grave goods in the 5th to 7th centuries AD, such as elaborate broaches, used to fasten women's clothing. One inhumation cemetery consisting of 10 or 11 burials of 5th- to 6th-century date was found in Stob Cross field, Thrislington, in 1822 (Site 16, DCHER 1110; Surtees 1823, 397), the bodies being laid in stone cists (where the sides of the grave were lined with stone slabs). Iron spearheads were found in two of the graves, whilst the bones of a horse and perhaps a dog were found in another. Furthermore metal detector finds collated by the Portable Antiquities Scheme hint at the existence of a cemetery of similar, early Anglo-Saxon date near Ferryhill itself.

### Ferryhill emerges

Ferryhill is first documented historically in a cryptic entry, dated c. 994, in the *Liber Vitae Dunelmensis*, which records that Earl Northman granted the fourth acre at Feregenne (*æt Feregenne*) to St Cuthbert (LVD, 57). The place-name Feregenne, from Old English *ferġen* – 'hill, mountain' (Watts 2002, 43) – is an appropriate derivation as any traveller on the Great North Road struggling up to the summit of the ridge with a laden ox cart would doubtless have testified! The reference to the fourth acre may mean the Community of St Cuthbert was assigned a quarter of the land in Ferryhill – every fourth acre – and the produce or rent deriving from it. At any rate this implies that Ferryhill was a distinct place with a defined territory by the end of the 10th century AD.

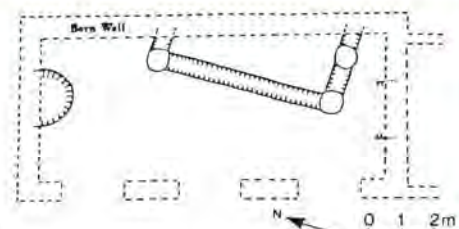
The context for this record is the rise to prominence of the religious Community of St Cuthbert, originally comprising the bishop and monastery of Lindisfarne, guardians of the uncorrupted body of St Cuthbert. As Northumbria was convulsed by Viking raiding in the late 9th century, the Community re-established itself further south, at Chester-le-Street in 883 and then at the better protected site of Durham in 995. Granted vast estates over the following centuries, by kings and nobles, like Earl Northman, anxious to curry favour with the powerful saint, the community had become the dominant landowner between the Tyne and the Tees by the 11th century.

Remarkably, possible traces of this 10th-century Ferryhill were uncovered at the west end of Church Lane in 1982, during the conversion of a barn into the new police station (Site 1). A bone strip, decorated with ring plait interlace of Anglo-Scandinavian or 'Viking' style and probably 10th-century in date, was found in the fill of a pit cut into the bedrock at the north end of the barn. The decorative strip had probably originally been fastened to a box or chest. Also intruding into the site were the remains of a rectangular timber building marked by a foundation trench and substantial post holes.

### Viking Age finds at Ferryhill



Drawing of the bone strip, with cross-section. Scale 1:1

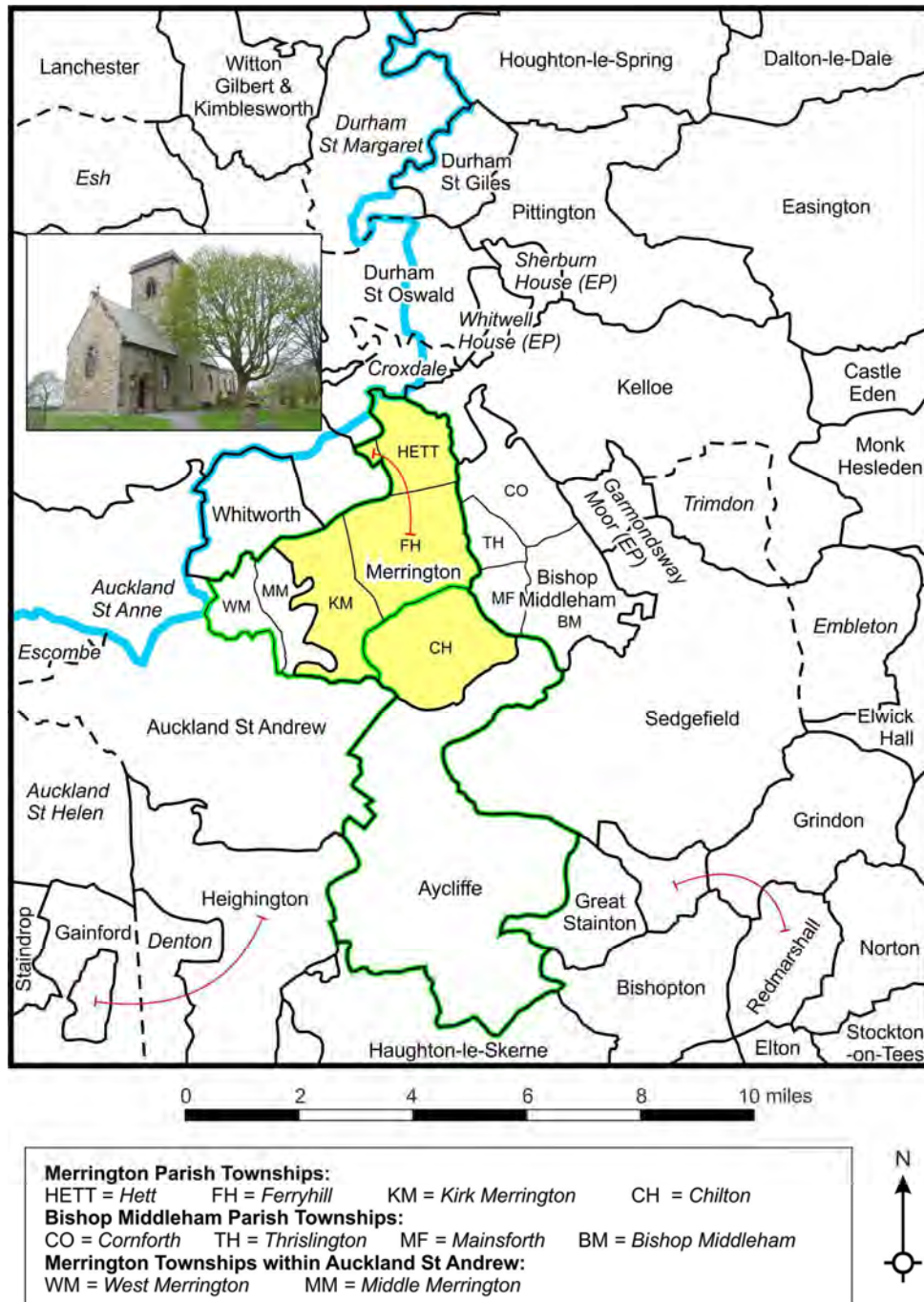


Excavation Plan showing archaeological features underlying the Police Station site, Church Lane, Ferryhill. DAJ 6/1990/32



## 7. PARISHES AND TOWNSHIPS

Each village community, like Ferryhill, was the focus of a defined territory, known as a **township** or **vill**, which the settlement's inhabitants exploited. The townships were grouped into larger ecclesiastical territories, termed **parishes**, for the purposes of religious worship. Ferryhill township formed part of Kirk Merrington Parish. Like many parishes in Northern England, Kirk Merrington encompassed several township communities.



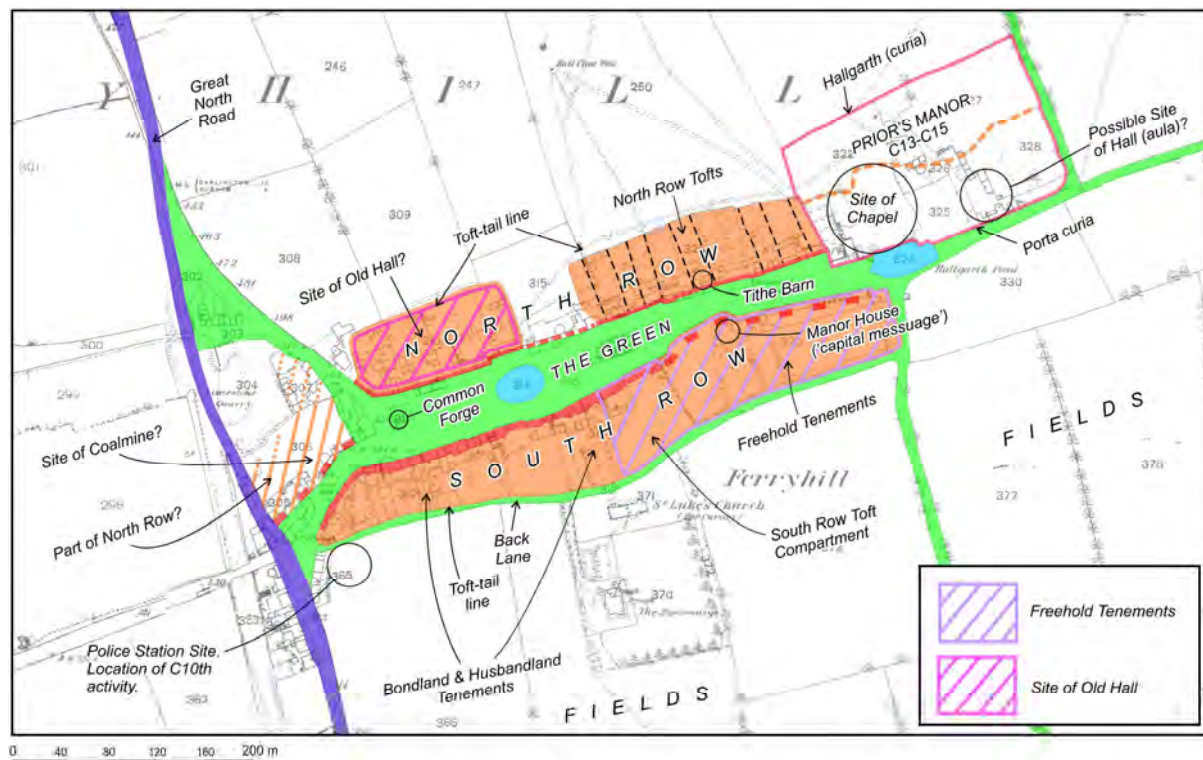
The ecclesiastical parishes and chapelries (*italicised*) of Durham c.1800 with Merrington parish highlighted in yellow and its constituent townships abbreviated, and a view of the parish church, St John the Evangelist, inset. Alternative parish boundaries recorded in the 1424 Gilly-corn schedule are outlined in green. (EP) = extra-parochial.

## 8. FERRYHILL IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Ferryhill was a sizeable and important village in the Middle Ages, adjoining the region's principal highway, the Great North Road. Following the Norman Conquest the Community of St Cuthbert's great estates were divided between the Bishop of Durham and the newly established priory of Benedictine monks attached to Durham Cathedral. Ferryhill was amongst the holdings assigned to the priory and figures in their records from the mid-12th century onwards.

A great many of the Priory's documents have been preserved by the Cathedral down to this day and are now housed in Durham University Library. As a result there are abundant records relating to medieval Ferryhill, including numerous charters, from the 12th century onwards, as well as 14th-16th century accounts, surveys and rentals. These can in turn be correlated with the evidence derived from the historic maps of more recent centuries. Consequently we can say a great deal about the structure and layout of the settlement, including the identity of the tenants who lived there, the possible stages in its development and the location of key elements such as the priory's manorial hall and farm, set in its enclosure or *hallgarth*.

Surrounding the village, in the wider township, were large open fields of arable land, subdivided into flatts or furlongs, as well as areas of enclosed meadow and pasture. Beyond the flatts and ox pastures, were the areas of common moor, extending around the edges of the township, which all the tenants could access to pasture their livestock, including part of the great moor to the north-west, known as **Spennymoor**, which was originally shared with many neighbouring townships. Other features to note are the early development of **coal mining** in the vill, including one pit on the edge of the village itself, and the **swannery** run by the Durham monks in the Carrs – the swans being watched from a small building known as the swan house located on a headland overlooking the southern Carrs, where successive ruined structures can be seen – and **Cleves Cross**, a standing stone where, according to local folklore, Roger de Fery trapped a ferocious wild boar known as the Brawn of Brancepeth.



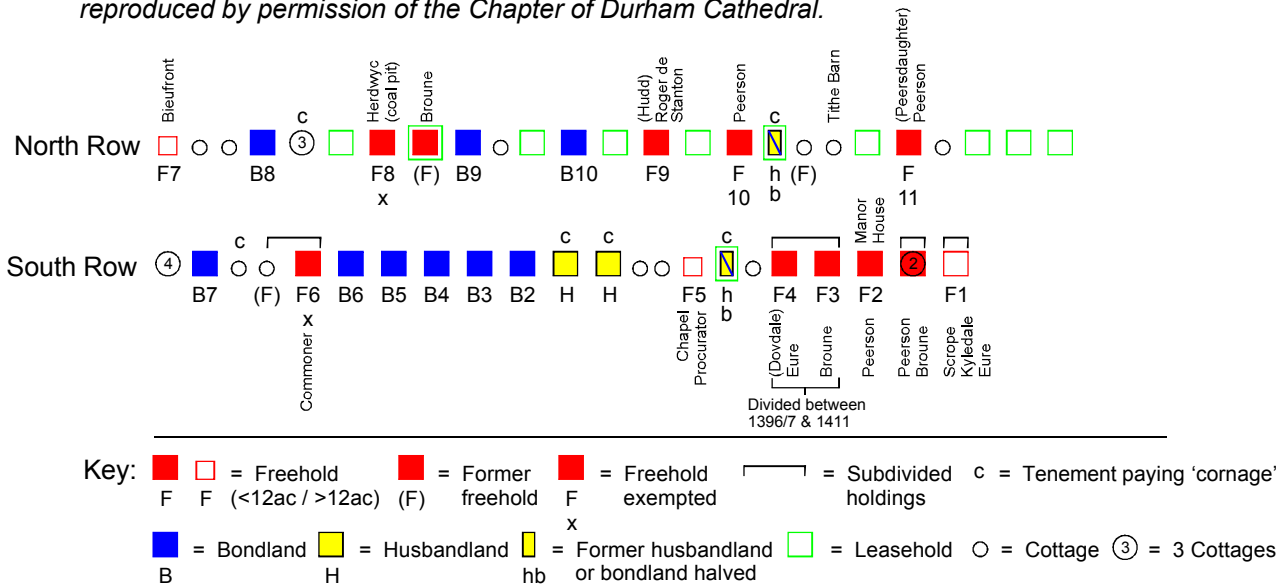
The Medieval Layout of Ferryhill Village shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Base.



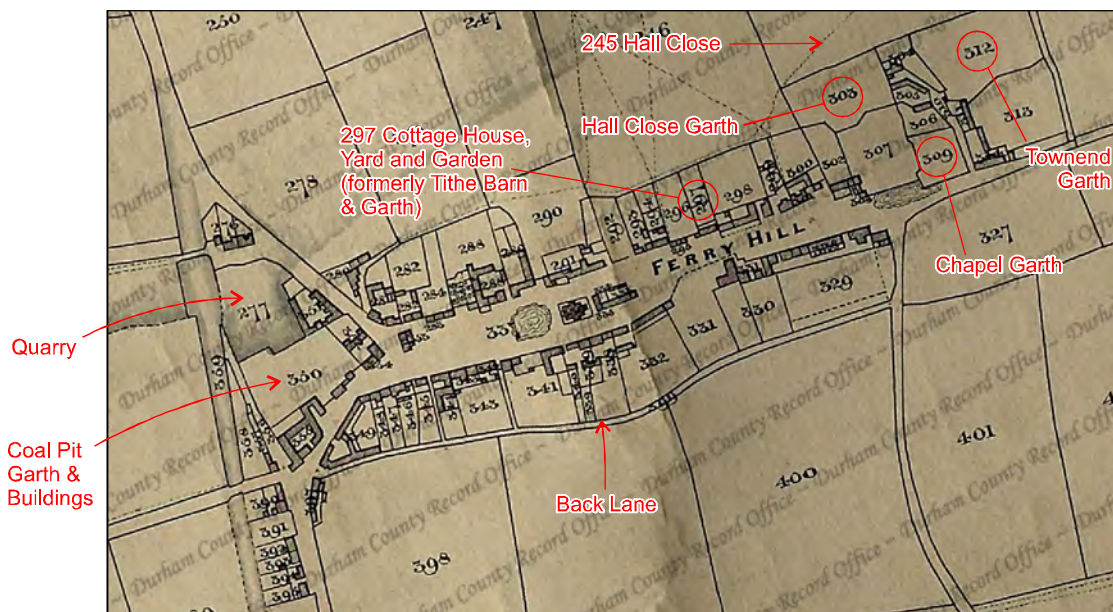
# Evidence for the Medieval Village Layout



Extract from *The Dean & Chapter Estate Plan, 1765 (DCD/E/AA/17/1)*, reproduced by permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral.

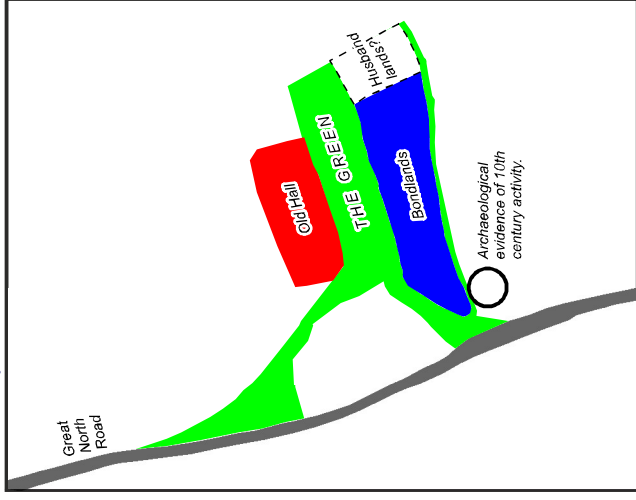


The layout of Ferryhill tenements according to the 1411 survey (DCD Bursars Book E ff 1-22; Campey 1987, 178-81)

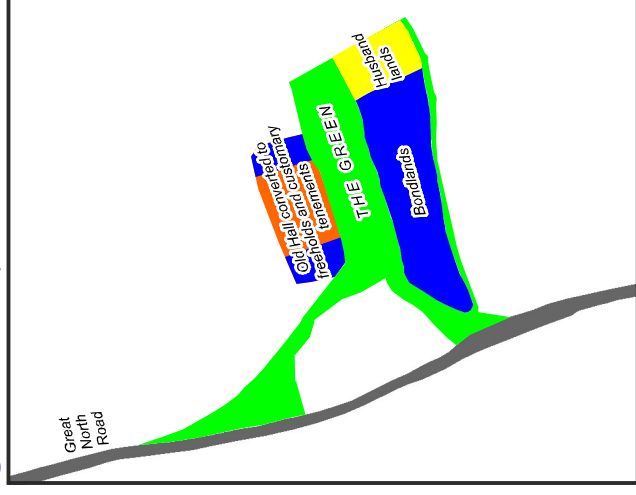


Extract from the *Tithe Plan of Ferryhill, 1838 (Durham County Record Office EP/Mer 41/1)*, reproduced by permission of Merrington Parish and Durham County Record Office.

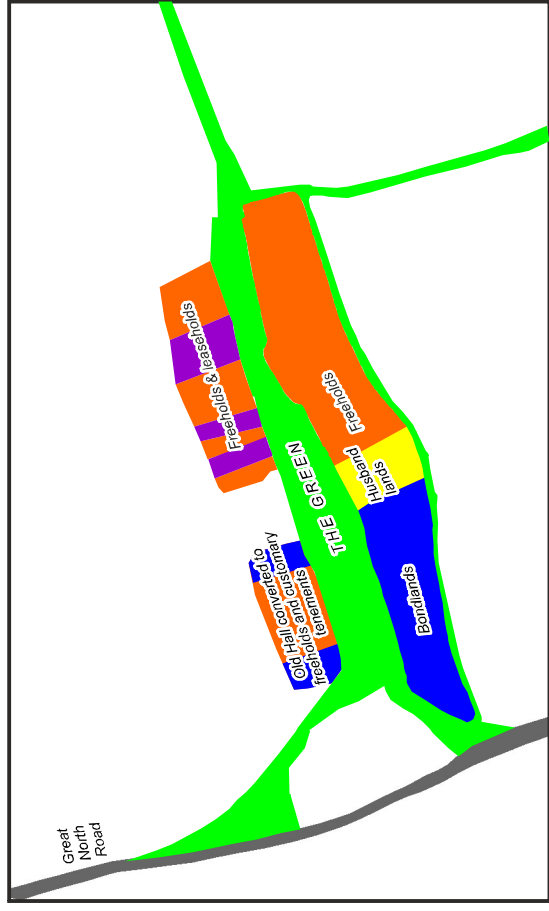
# Schematic simplified outline of the village's development in the Middle Ages



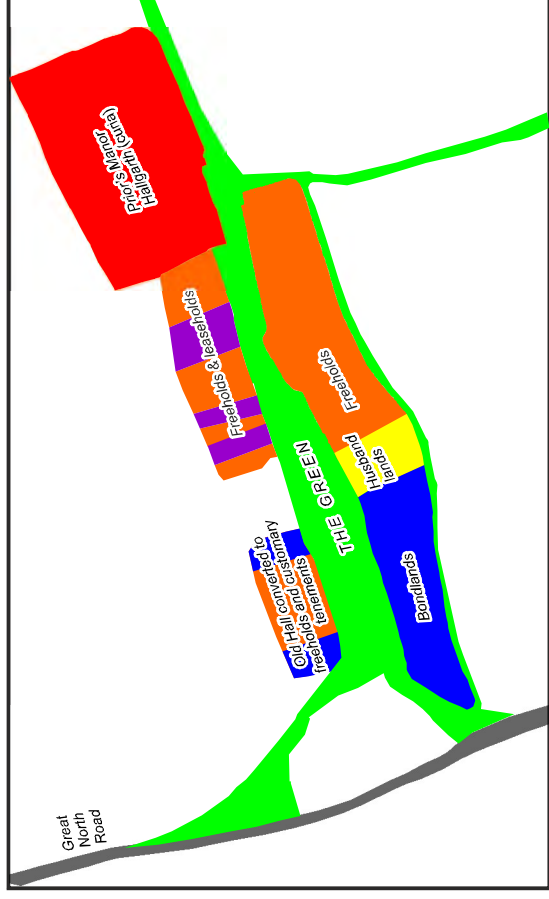
1. Late 11th / early 12th century



2. Mid 12th century



3. Mid-late 12th century



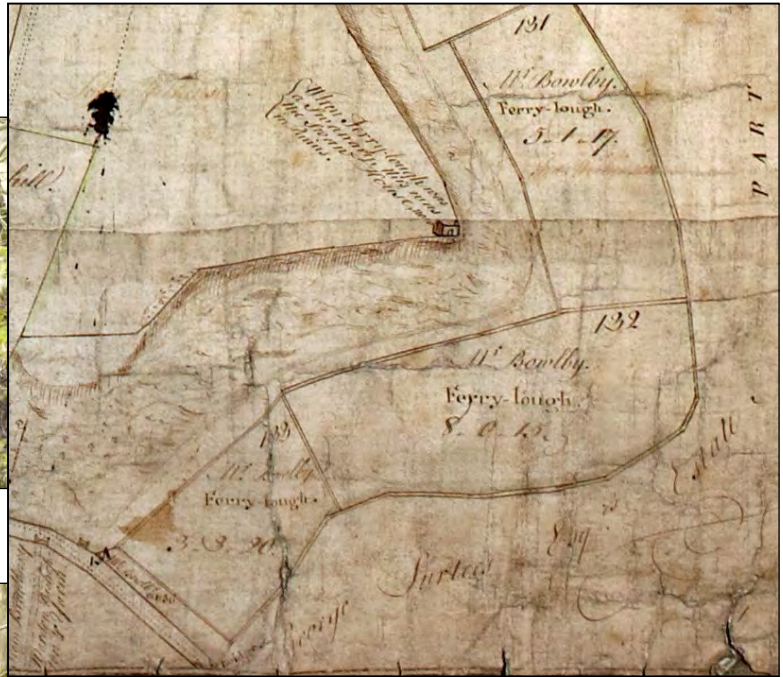
4. C.1200



# The Swan House



*Views of the ruined brick and stone swan house built into the summit of the hillside*



*Swan House depicted on 1765 Dean and Chapter estate plan (DCD E/AA/17/1). Reproduced by permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral*



*Earthworks of the possible original swan house*



*Swans in the pool below Swan House*



*A nesting Mute Swan in the reedbeds below Swan House*



# Cleves Cross



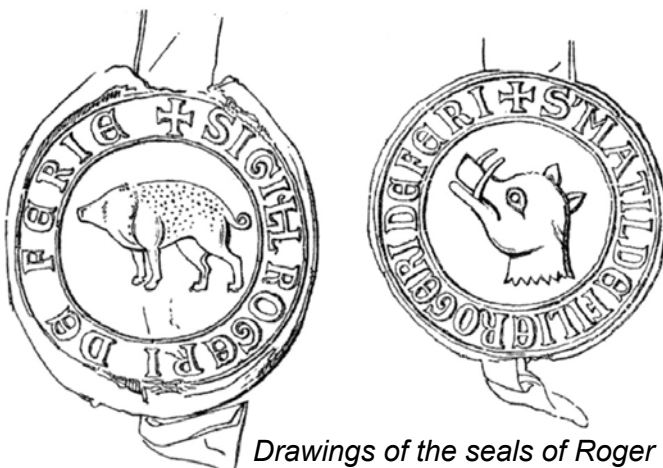
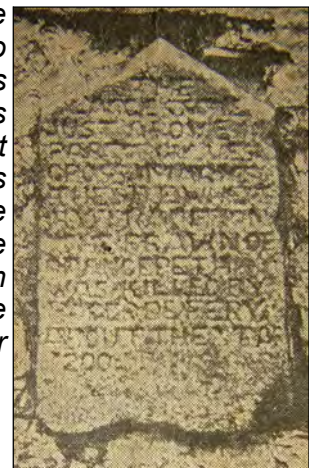
Cleves Cross depicted on 1765 Dean and Chapter estate plan (DCD E/AA/17/1). Reproduced by permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral



Cleves Cross shown on 2nd Ed OS 1:2500



Photograph of the earlier tablet built into the wall of Cleves Cross Farm. It reads 'The large stone just above, part of Cleves Cross, marks the site where by tradition the Brawn of Brancepeth was killed by Roger de Fery about the year 1200'.



Drawings of the seals of Roger de Fery (left) and his daughter, Matilda (right), both featuring a wild boar.



## 9. THE 16TH TO 18TH CENTURIES

Ferryhill was still predominantly just an agricultural village in 16th-17th centuries, now held by the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral (which had replaced the Prior and Convent during Henry VIII's Reformation of the English Church). The Manor House, standing at the east end of the village, provides a tangible link with this period. First documented in 1603, when a messuage (house) and land in Ferryhill were purchased by Lawrence Wilkinson, it probably dates back to the late 16th century, but may stand on the site of a medieval manor house ('capital messuage') mentioned in 15th century surveys. It would have been one of the largest houses in the village at the time, the residence of a prosperous free tenant and yeoman farmer. In the wider environs Great Chilton Farmhouse represents a fine example of a large 17th-century farmhouse.

Initially, as in the Middle Ages, settlement was concentrated in the village itself and there were no farms scattered around the wider township. The key change was the enclosure and division of the open townfields (the community's arable land) and its common moorland in 1637. A landscape of hedged fields and closes was created, replacing the tenants' scattered arable strips and common grazing rights with coherent holdings and paving the way for the dispersal of farmsteads throughout the township. This is apparent in a fine 1765 plan of the township (DCD/E/AA/17/1) which also, very faintly, records the tenant holdings set out by the 1637 enclosure award. One of these farms was the site of the most infamous event in Ferryhill's history in 1683, when a servant, Andrew Mills, murdered his employer's three children at Brass Farm, now High Hill House Farm, west of the village. Mills was tried and executed at Durham and his corpse hung in irons on the gibbet beside the Great North Road, north of the village, the site now being known as Andrew Mill's Stob (HER 1337).

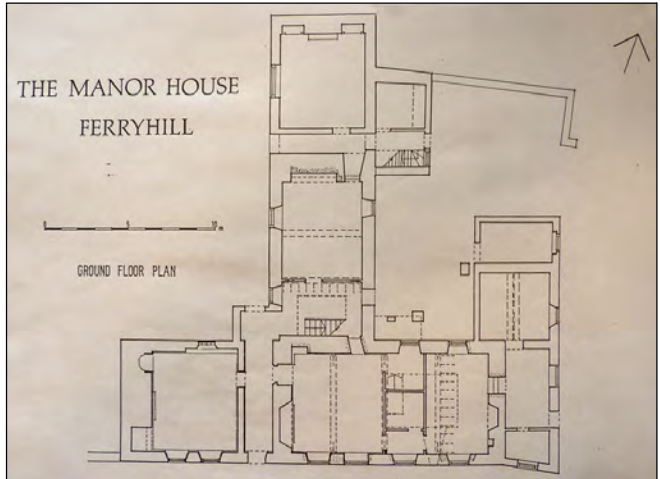
Ferryhill must also have derived a degree of prosperity from its position on the Great North Road, which received a boost with the establishment of the Boroughbridge, Darlington and Durham turnpike trust in 1745. Armstrong's 1768 county map (see below) marks the road's superior status as a turnpike by highlighting it in a deeper tone and bounding it with thicker lines to make it stand out. The mileage along the route is also noted and the position of turnpike toll-bars occasionally marked. Turnpikes were part of a nationwide improvement in transport infrastructure during the 18th century, bringing down journey times and increasing traffic along these roads, which would have generated considerable income for the inns, hotels, smiths and farriers in places like Ferryhill.



Extract from Armstrong's 1768 Map of County Durham - 1791 revision (Durham County Record Office, Londonderry Estate Archives D/Lo 239). Reproduced by permission of Lord Londonderry and Durham County Record Office.

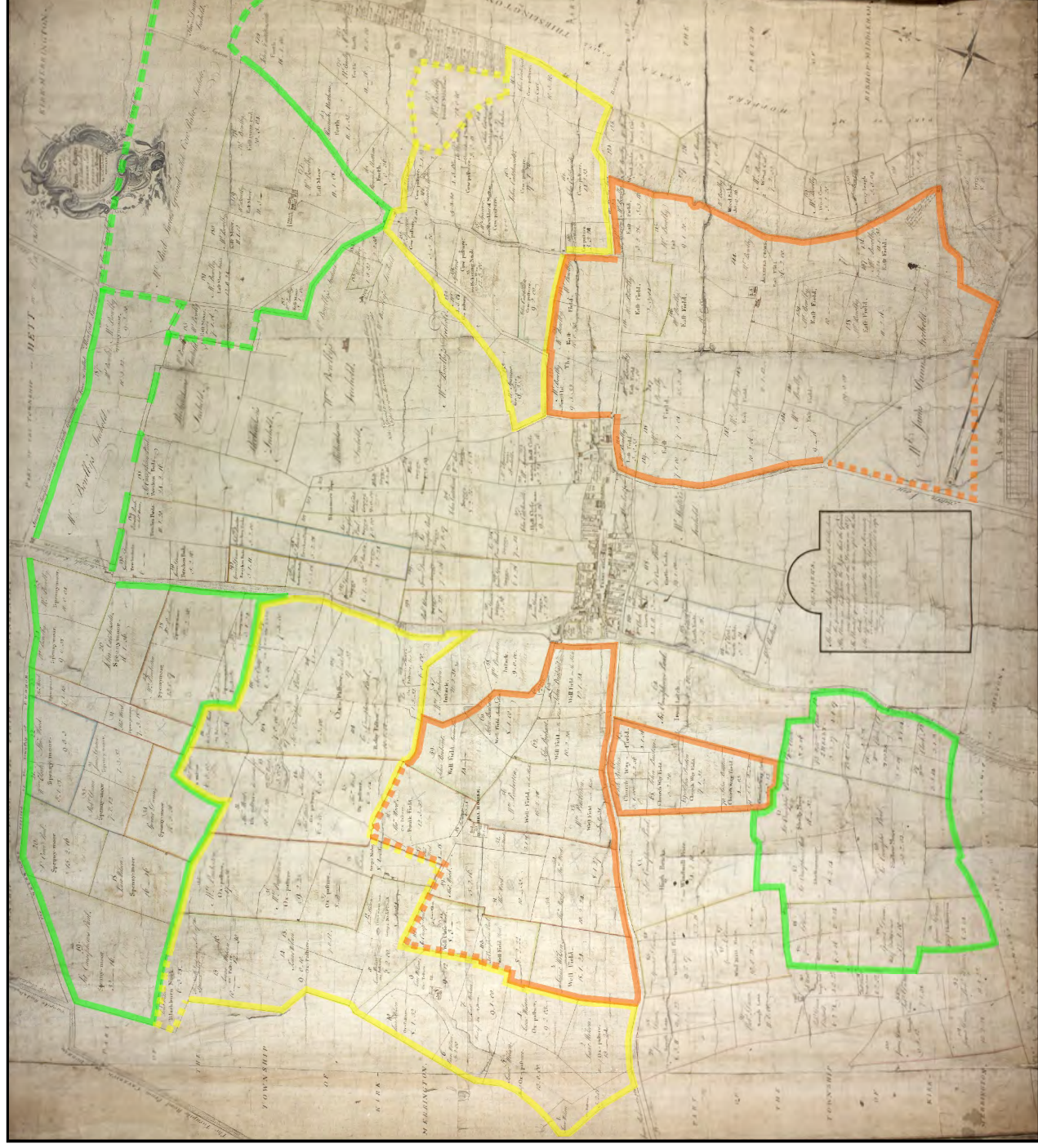


# The Manor House, Market Street, Ferryhill





# Ferryhill Township in 1765



Pre-enclosure (i.e. pre-1637) land-use indicated by fieldnames

- Open arable fields
- Ox & Cow Pasture
- Moor
- Uncertain

Field use transposed on the Dean and Chapter Estate Plan of Ferryhill, 1765, (DCD/E/AA/17/1), reproduced by permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral.

## 10. COAL AND RAIL: FERRYHILL IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The 19th century brought further dramatic change to the landscape around Ferryhill with the rapid expansion of coal mining, as improving technology meant shafts could be sunk to much greater depths to exploit previously inaccessible seams. Railway lines were constructed from the 1830s to serve the new pits, again using new technology, in this case locomotive haulage developed first on the Hetton Colliery Railway and the Stockton & Darlington Railway. The impact of these developments is graphically summarised in maps of the period notably Bell's detailed plans of the Hartlepool (1843) and Auckland (1852) districts of the Great Northern Coalfield. Collieries are shown at Thrislington, Little Chilton and Chilton Buildings ('Mason's Pit') and railway lines – branches of the Clarence Railway – slice through the landscape to the north, south and east of Ferryhill. Most important of all was the section of what was to become the East Coast Main Line, which, like the Clarence Railway, used the natural north-south corridor provided by the Ferryhill Gap to cross from the Tees basin into the Wear Valley. Built by the Newcastle & Darlington Junction Railway in 1844, through a series of amalgamations this became the flagship line of the mighty North Eastern Railway and a major link in the national transport network. A station was provided for Ferryhill by 1840 at the point where the Ferryhill to Mainsforth road crossed the Carrs, south-east of the village, and a large goods yard grew up beside the station to marshal the line's freight traffic. Several other coal mines opened in the vicinity during the 19th century, notably Broom Colliery, East Howle and Mainsforth, but many had relatively short lives. Also of note in this process of industrialisation is the Ferry Hill Ironworks (actually between Thrislington and West Cornforth) which opened in 1859 and finally closed in 1895, to be replaced by the Ferryhill Engine Works.

The arrival of the railways, and in particular the public lines, which carried passengers and general freight as well as mineral traffic, meant that for the first time the Great North Road's importance as a transport artery was overshadowed. Major improvements to the road had been envisioned by the turnpike trust in 1831-2, involving widening the Ferryhill Gorge, the narrower, shallower ravine at the west end of the village, to form the Ferryhill Cut, and embanking and straightening the road to the north, all designed to reduce the severity of the road's gradient. However the scheme was abandoned, incomplete, in 1835, as the finance for such expensive roadworks dried up in the face of competition from railways which provided a more attractive return for investors.

The 19th century saw new civic, religious, and educational institutions established in the village. A church dedicated to St Luke, designed by Ignatius Bonomi, was built at the east end of the Market Place in 1829. This had a fairly short life, being replaced by the present St Luke's Church on the south side of the village in 1853, after Ferryhill was promoted to a full ecclesiastical parish (a vicarage had been built in 1846). Methodist chapels were also opened. In 1867 the present Town Hall was erected near the site of the original St Luke's Church, housing a library, reading room and concert hall. A Church School was also opened in a house at the east end of the village in 1847 and enlarged in 1870 to hold 250 pupils. A second community had grown up around Ferryhill Station, extending southward along Chilton Lane, and a Mixed School was opened here too in 1876, built at a cost of £5000 to house 400 children. Water supply and sanitation were also improved. A reservoir was built to the east of the village by the Weardale & Shildon Waterworks Co., and hand water pumps installed around the village in the later 19th century.

Despite all these developments Ferryhill village itself scarcely expanded at all over the course of the 19th century. Instead two new settlements had grown up at Ferryhill Station/Chilton Lane and beside East Howle Colliery. However, the opening of the 20th century was to see this pattern begin to alter dramatically.



# Coal, Rail and Road in the 19th Century



Colliery and railway development around Ferryhill shown on Bell's Map of the Great Northern Coalfield Auckland District, 1852 (CCB/MP/508/1). Reproduced by permission of Durham University Library Archives and Special Collections.



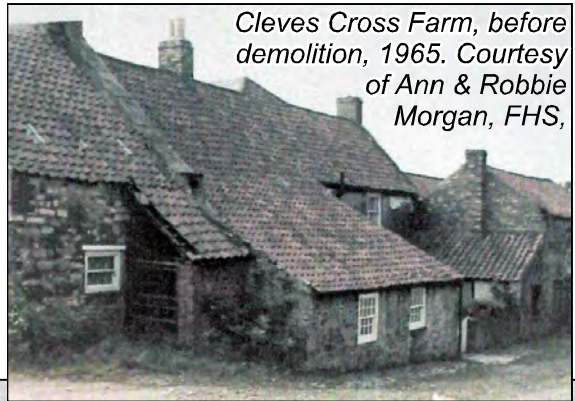
The abandoned embankment of the turnpike improvement works with the cut in the distance. Courtesy of Ferryhill History Society.



# Farms and Farming



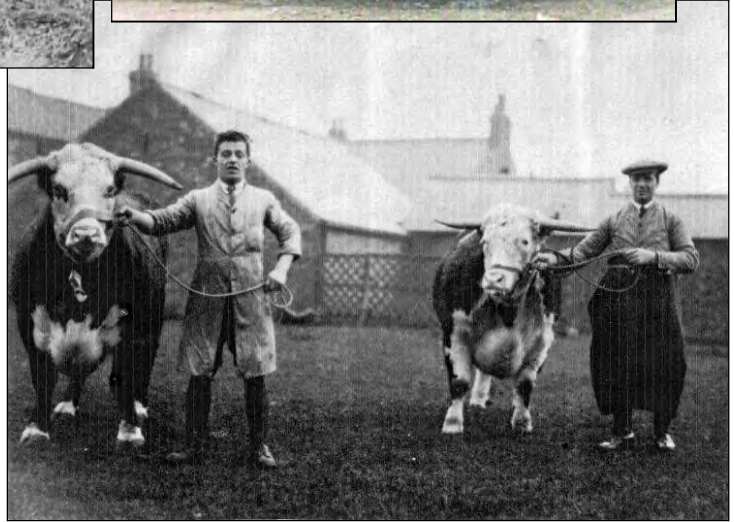
Harvest time at Rough Lees Farm, Ferryhill - cutting corn with a Hornsby Self Binder. Courtesy of Harry Walker, FHS.



Cleves Cross Farm, before demolition, 1965. Courtesy of Ann & Robbie Morgan, FHS,



Horse and trap near Ferryhill. Courtesy of Michael Ord.



Ferryhill, Derek Race's Prize Bull. Courtesy of John Allison, FHS.



Ferryhill Village, Hepplewhite & Etherington, threshing corn, c.1920. Courtesy of John Dinning, FHS.



Cleves Cross Farm, Ferryhill. Photograph of Mr. Morgan. Courtesy of Ann & Robbie Morgan, FHS.



Thinford, driving stock on the Great North Road, c.1920. Courtesy of George Crowe, Spennymoor, FHS.



Cleves Cross Farm, Mr. Morgan, training a horse. Courtesy of Ann and Robbie Morgan, FHS.



## 11. THE 20TH CENTURY

As the 20th century dawned Ferryhill still essentially retained its medieval plan, with two rows of tenements enclosing a roughly oblong green, a classic County Durham green village. The green was now a market place and some infilling had occurred towards its eastern end, where the town hall and other buildings now stood, but the village had scarcely expanded beyond its medieval limits. However, developments over the course of the first decade were to transform its character.

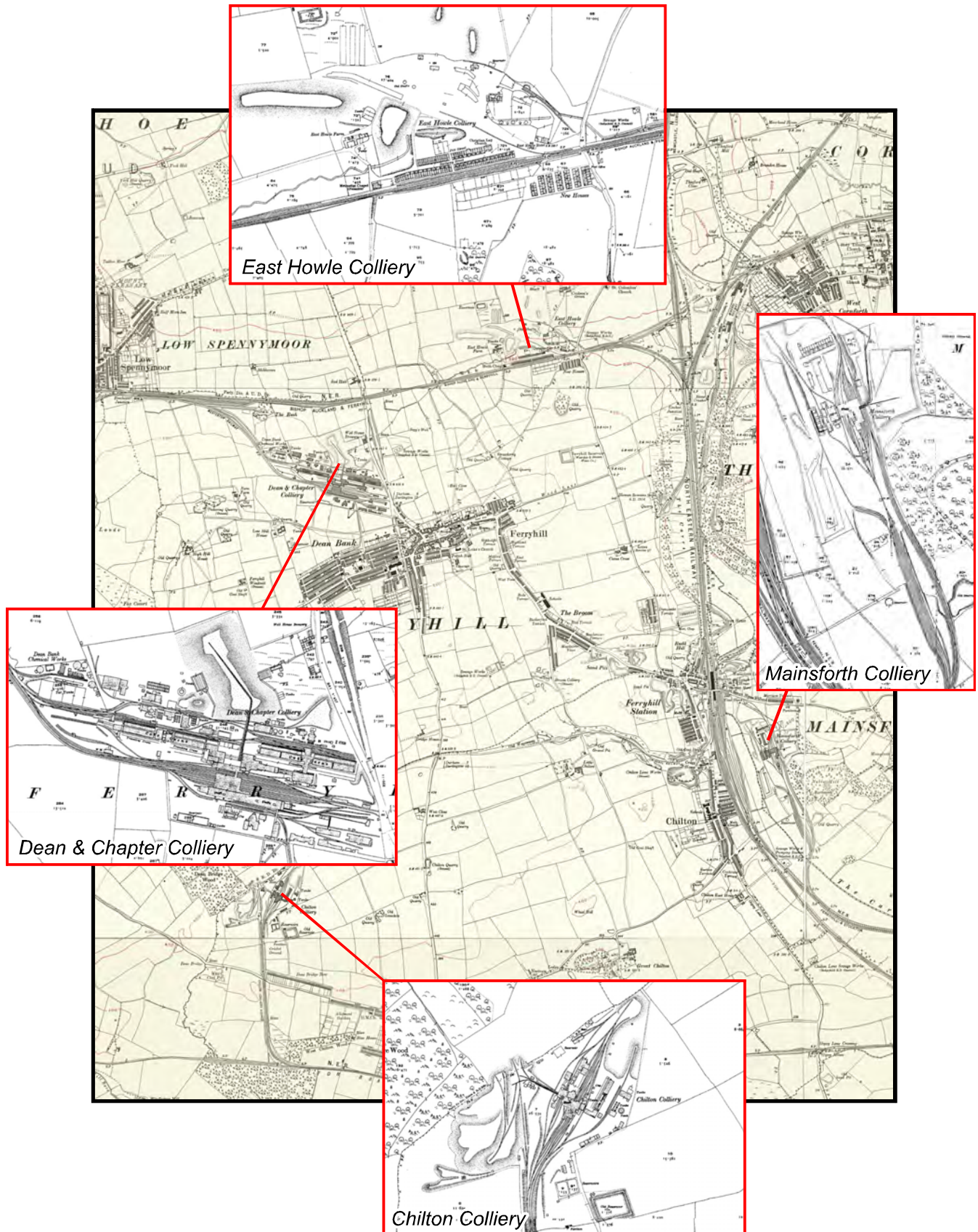
The key change was the sinking of a new pit, the Dean and Chapter, just NW of the village, by the Bolckow Vaughan Mining Co. in 1902-3. Production commenced in 1904 at what was then the largest and most modern mine in the area. At the same time Mainsforth Colliery was reopened by the Carlton Iron Co., having lain abandoned since 1876/7 due to flooding. This re-energised the Ferryhill Station-Chilton Lane settlement where vacant cottages could be refurbished. However, to meet the housing needs of the Dean and Chapter's new workforce a new pit village, Dean Bank, was needed, laid out on the west side of the Great North Road and attached to Ferryhill by bridges across the abandoned turnpike cut. Dean Bank may be seen as a model pit village in miniature, with a range of housing from the colliery manager's house, Deanhurst, and the senior supervisors' terrace, The Villas, down to the ordinary terraced houses of the miners, with allotments to the south. It was furnished from the start with all the facilities such a settlement was deemed to require, including a council school (1), Miners' Welfare Hall and Reading Room (2) with attached cinema, police station (3), Baptist church (4) and Primitive Methodist chapel (5), all grouped around St Cuthbert's Terrace. With the exception of the cinema these all survive today – though the police station and churches have been converted to other uses – making it one of the finest groupings of its kind.

In addition to the creation of Dean Bank, terraces were built along Broom Road, so that there was an almost continuous strip of ribbon development south-eastwards linking the old village to Ferryhill Station, including another new school, Broom Cottages, built in 1913. Other terraces extended southward from the west end of the village along Darlington Road. Here the roadworks in the Cut finally resumed after World War I and opened to traffic using the Great North Road, renamed the A1 (now A167), in 1923, a delay of only 88 years! From the interwar period onwards the intervening area, south of the old village, was gradually filled up with council housing, largely consisting of the new popular semi-detached houses with attached gardens. In the decades following World War II housing development extended eastward, beyond Broom Road, right up to Cleves Avenue. This cumulative growth has produced the sizeable settlement, indeed town, that is Ferryhill today.

Although there were ups and downs in production with prolonged strikes in 1921 and 1926 (the General Strike) and economic slump in the 1930s, Dean and Chapter and Mainsforth Collieries remained the mainstays of employment in Ferryhill throughout the early to mid-20th century. In 1929 the Bolckow Vaughan Mining Co, owners of the Dean and Chapter Pit, merged with Dorman Long and Co, which had already acquired Mainsforth Colliery in 1923, becoming the dominant mining company in the area up until nationalisation in 1947, when all the pits were vested in the National Coal Board. The railway goods yards and engine shed at Ferryhill Station were also important employers. However, by the 1960s both the collieries and station were under threat as a result of efforts to reduce the losses made by these nationalised industries. Dwindling coal reserves and consequent unprofitability led to the closure of Dean and Chapter Colliery in 1966 and Mainsforth in 1968. This in turn reduced the traffic in the railway goods yards at Ferryhill Station, but the writing was already on the wall there in any case with the opening of Tyne Yard, a huge automated yard at Lamesley, in the Team Valley, which took over marshalling of most of the region's freight traffic. As a final blow the passenger service was withdrawn from the station in 1967 as a result of the Beeching Axe'. This combination of blows delivered in short succession left Ferryhill facing an uncertain future in the later 20th century.

## FERRYHILL VILLAGE ATLAS

- Collieries Visible on the 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1915 -  
Scale: 6in to the mile for base map, 1:2500 for extracts





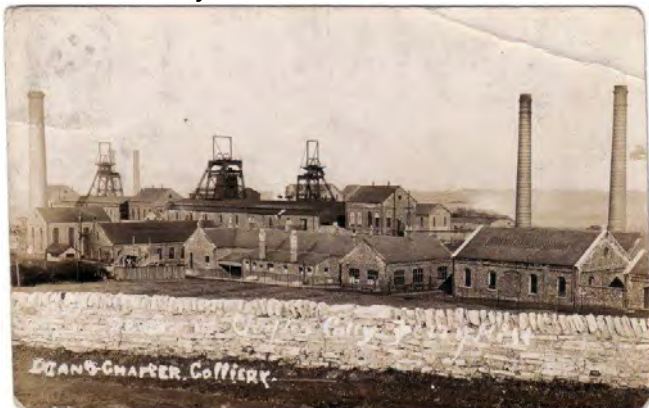
# Mining in Ferryhill



Photograph of Mainsforth Colliery, taken in c.1920.



Mainsforth Colliery, showing workshops, headgear and two chimneys.



Dean & Chapter Colliery showing workshops, offices and shaft headgear, courtesy of Ann Lake & FHS.



Miner digging out a seam of coal.



Left to right - Tibby Cooper - Billy McCormack - Jimmy Target - Jimmy Askwith - Derek Dickson - John Gardner - Joe Berriman - Tommy McCrone - Bobby Stonely

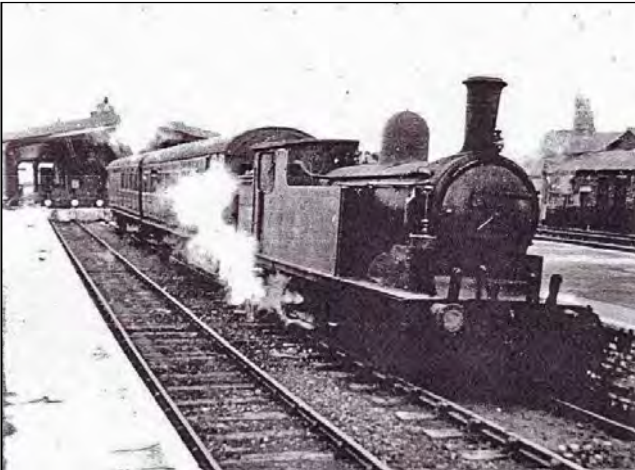


Dean & Chapter Colliery, Saint John's Ambulance Team in the 1940s, displaying the Dorman Long, Corona Graham and other shields. Courtesy of Tony Nicholls & FHS.

All images courtesy of Ferryhill History Society (FHS)



# Railways



Ferryhill Station, Platform 5a, with an ex-NER G5 0-4-4T tank engine ready to take a branch train out.  
Courtesy of George Lamb, FHS.

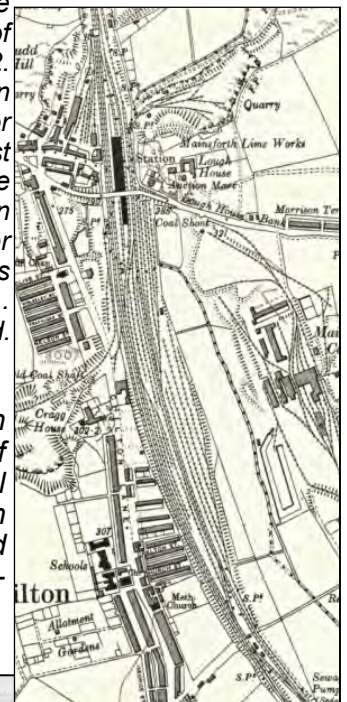
Ferryhill Station, Station Staff c.1910.  
Geoff Wall, FHS.



Ferryhill Station, the last post, 1970s.  
Courtesy of the Dick Sewell Collection, FHS.



Above: Coxhoe Junction north of Ferryhill in 1952. A push-pull train from Spennymoor to Ferryhill has just crossed over the East Coast Main Line on the flyover from the Byers Green Branch.  
Courtesy of Michael Ord.



OS 6in plan of Ferryhill Station and Yard in 1913-1915



Waggons in the goods marshalling yard at Ferryhill Station.  
Courtesy of the Tweedy Collection, FHS.



Cornforth - railway bridge - south elevation

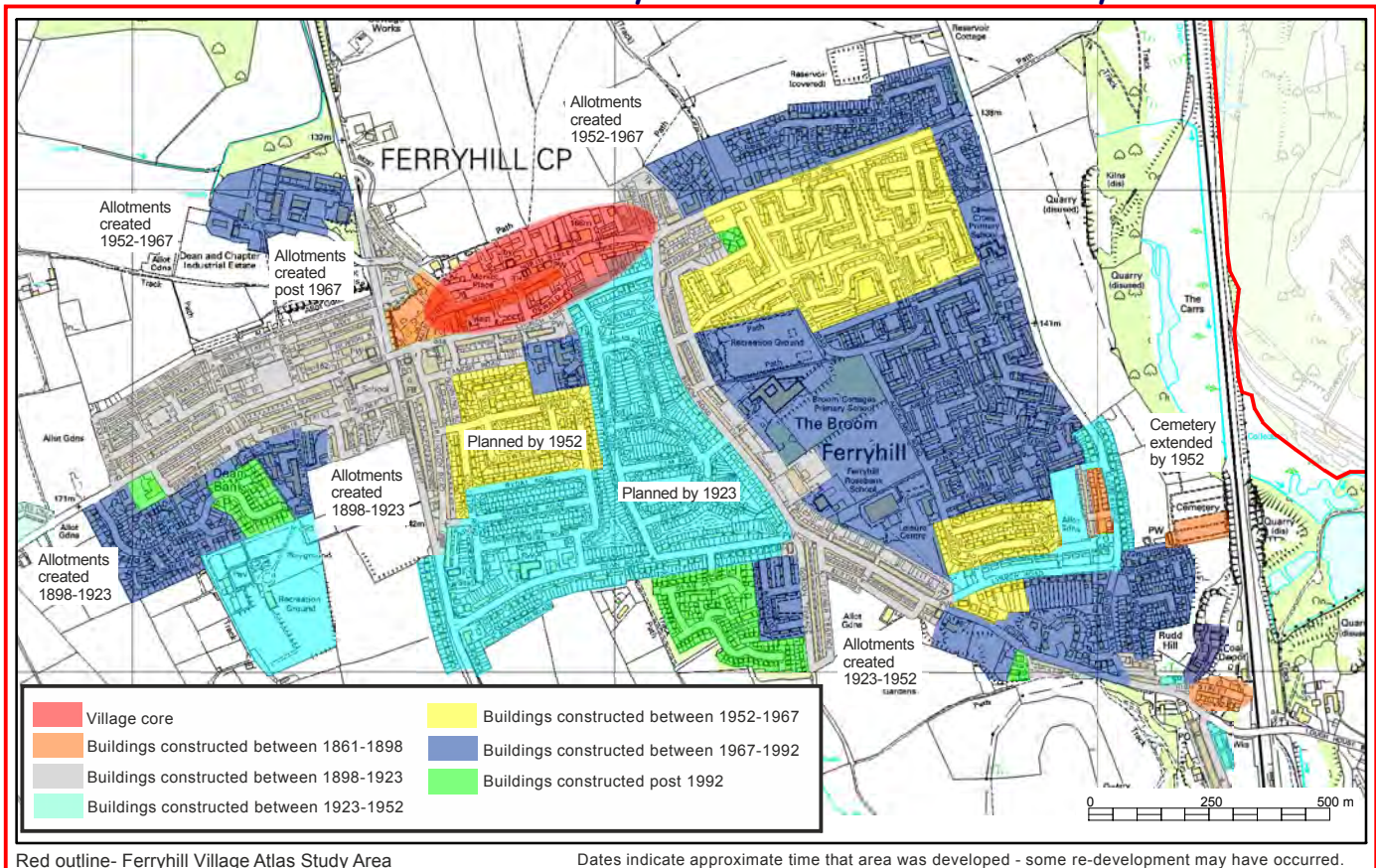


## The Buildings of Dean Bank Colliery Village



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## The Growth of Ferryhill in the 20th Century



Red outline- Ferryhill Village Atlas Study Area

Dates indicate approximate time that area was developed - some re-development may have occurred.

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# Schools and Education



*Ferryhill Village, The National School.  
Courtesy of the Tweedy Collection,  
FHS.*

*Photograph taken in 1959, when there were  
seven sets of twins in Dean Bank Infant's School*



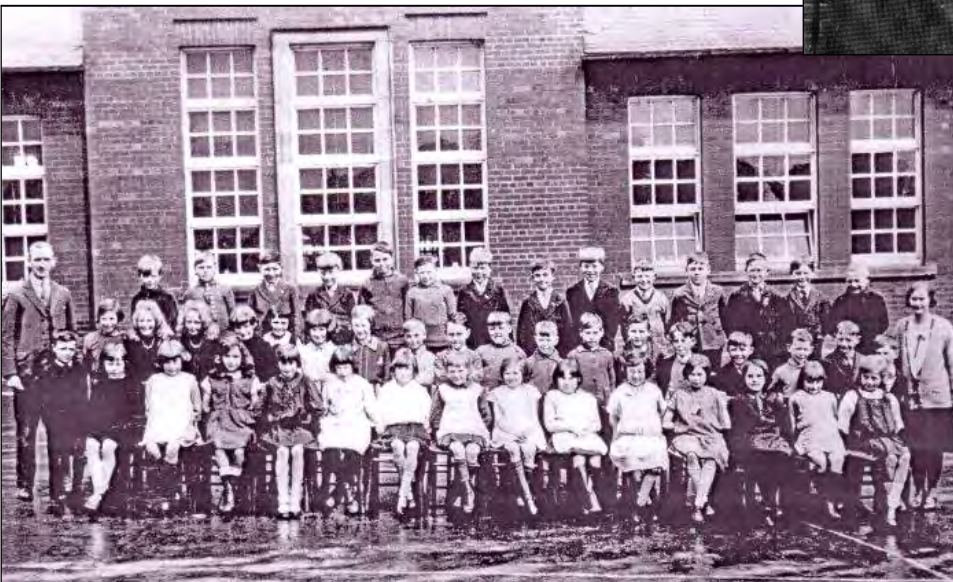
Stephen and Helen Chilton   Alan and Ann Chaplin   Janice and Norma Wilson   James and Margaret Fowler   Keith and Lynne Myers   Jessie and Margaret Holmes   Peter and John Flanagan



*Dean Bank School,  
May Day Celebrations.  
Courtesy of John Walton, FHS.*



*Ferryhill Station School  
Centenary Publication,  
Staff, 1917. Courtesy of  
FHS.*



*Broom School, Ferryhill,  
1932. Courtesy of Mr Arthur  
Stevenson, Stockton, FHS.*



## 12. FERRYHILL TODAY

Today Ferryhill looks very different from industrial community devastated by the repeated closures of the 1960s. The massive pit heaps of the Dean and Chapter Colliery, which were such a landmark for anyone driving along the old A1 (A167) have been removed as have all the pithead buildings, replaced by the Dean and Chapter Industrial Estate. Mainsforth Colliery has likewise been erased from the landscape and it now takes the eye of the archaeologist to detect the remains of the coal mining industry which was once so important in the area. However mineral extraction is still a key industry for the area, in the shape of Thrislington Quarry. This provides both sand and dolomite (magnesian limestone), the latter used as a flux by the steel industry, and now has an assured future, having obtained permission to expand on the east side of the A1M. The quarry's processing plant is a major landmark rising above the woodland on the east side of the Ferryhill Gap, with its tall chimney being visible over an even wider area, whilst, in a further echo of the past, lines of huge hopper wagons used to transport the dolomite are often to be seen in the railway sidings at Ferryhill Station.

Nor were the 1960s all doom and gloom. The decade did see considerable investment in Ferryhill's education, so vital to its present health, with the opening of Ferryhill Grammar School beyond the Aged Miners Homes on Merrington Road and the corresponding secondary modern school, Broom Modern, next to Broom Cottages School in 1965. Another junior and infants school, Cleves Cross, was built in the same period to take the children from the new housing estates built on the east side of Ferryhill. Subsequently enlarged and converted into a comprehensive school, the ex-grammar school is now the well-regarded Ferryhill Business and Enterprise College (FBEC).

Ferryhill has now grown to become a small town, with a population of over 11,000, served by a Town Council rather than a parish council. Positioned alongside the A167 and close to the A1M Ferryhill has good transport links which are so vital for a prosperous future. Perhaps the town will eventually even see its railway station reopened, as would be merited by its current size. Yet, though a town in name, in some ways Ferryhill more closely resembles a collection of distinct villages joined together – Dean Bank, Broom, Ferryhill Station, Cleves Cross and the old village. The town centre, the Market Place, once the medieval village green, overlooked by the splendid little Town Hall, actually lies on the northern edge of the built-up area of modern Ferryhill, a result of the gentler southern dip slope being much more suitable for house building than the steep northern slope of the magnesian limestone ridge on which the settlement perches. However such qualities surely only add to the charm of the place.

Despite the challenges of austerity and cutbacks the town has thus far succeeded in maintaining those facilities such as the library, leisure centre and literary institute, which help to sustain the vibrancy of the community. In particular the Dean Bank and Ferryhill Literary Institute was saved from demolition around the turn of the millennium by the dedicated endeavours of the local trustees who secured funding from several grant-giving bodies and oversaw the complete refurbishment of the building, with its ample meeting spaces for community events. Another new initiative is the E-Café opened in 2002 on Market Street and popular with young people. Special attention and investment has gone into improving local sporting facilities, notably the construction of the award winning Mainsforth Sports Complex on the site of Mainforth Colliery and development of a £1.1million sports facility at Dean Bank Recreation Park, complete with new changing rooms, toilets, new and upgraded football pitches, plus hopefully more to come.

In closing, it is clear that Ferryhill has a fascinating heritage with much to celebrate and it may be hoped that a justified pride in that past will help to sustain the community going forward.

# Views of Bygone Ferryhill



*The Black Bull Hotel*



*An early photograph showing the Town Hall*



*The west end of the village.*



*Mainsforth Road, Ferryhill Station, with the bridge over the railway station beyond the three men.*



*Shops and shoppers on Darlington Road*



*Ferryhill Station, Railway Yard & Mainsforth Colliery in the early 20th century.*

*Images courtesy of Ferryhill History Society*

## FURTHER READING:

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## - The Ferryhill Village Atlas -

This booklet, a summary of the main Ferryhill Village Atlas report, explores the landscape and history of Ferryhill from its geological origins to the present day. Ferryhill has a rich and fascinating heritage, with something to satisfy every interest, whether it is the remains of Iron Age settlements beneath fields of corn and traces of its medieval origins in the modern town centre, the complex industrial history of railways, collieries and quarries, the wetland wonder of the Carrs and flower-rich grasslands of Thrislington Nature Reserve or the fossil evidence of past geological aeons preserved in quarry faces. In sum, as the community enters the 21st century, it is clear that the people of Ferryhill have good cause to be proud of their heritage.

