

Hartlepool Through the Ages

Saxon 700 AD

This reconstruction shows the Anglo-Saxon monastery in the year 700 AD. In common with early Christian sites like Lindisfarne or Tynemouth it was located on a natural spur of land, surrounded on most sides by the sea. The unfamiliar shape of the coastline is accurate for the time.

A nun named Heiu established the monastery at Hartlepool in the early 640s AD. At this time the area was called Heruteu, which means "the Isle of the Hart". Its most famous resident was St. Hild, who at one time ruled as Abbess over both Heruteu and the monastery at Whitby. The monks and nuns who lived in the monastery occupied small timber buildings, many of which had just one room. Low fences and ditches kept different living and working areas separate.

The most important area of the monastery would have been the large main church, built of stone, near which the nuns and monks were buried. A stone carved with the person's name marked each of these graves. Important local families who had converted to Christianity were buried in a separate area close to the main entrance.

Heruteu was a place of prayer and learning that attracted pilgrims from all over Britain and Ireland. The inhabitants spent their time in devotion, writing religious books and spreading their faith throughout the North. This work went on until the 9th century AD, when the monastery was abandoned during the decline of the Kingdom of Northumberland.



Travel between Anglo-Saxon monasteries was usually by boat along the coast.



Was there a small settlement just outside the monastery? Burials have been found at Gladstone Street.



This specific area of the monastery was used to produce metalwork, including jewellery and decorations for the covers of books.



Archaeologists speculate that there was a large early church north of the main cemetery.

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