

## Medieval Hartlepool

The medieval settlement occupied the western scarp of the Headland, overlooking the future site of the harbour, shifting away from the top ridge occupied by the Anglo-Saxon monastery of St. Hilda. The town of Hartlepool was founded in the first half of the 12th century by the Brus family.

The surviving section of the medieval town wall, including the Sandwell Gate, is protected as a Scheduled Monument and as a Grade I Listed Building.

The wall served several functions, primarily as a defence against the Scots during the Scottish Wars of the 14th century, but also to highlight the importance of the town and to act as a coastal defence, allowing settlement closer to the seafront.

## Why was the town wall built?

The wall was built during the 14th century to defend against Robert de Brus and his Scottish army and not by Brus himself as is traditionally assumed. Once owned by Brus, Hartlepool was in serious danger of attack as the Scots raided northern England. Following a murage grant in 1315, a petition from Hartlepool to the King in 1319 stated, "...*Sir Robert de Brus had granted a truce to... Durham except Hartlepool, which he intended to burn and destroy... the mayor and commons... are building a wall to the best of their power...*"

## How was its construction paid for?

As hostilities with the Scots flared up, so murage grants were made to Hartlepool by the King and the Bishop of Durham. These allowed taxes on the sale of goods in Hartlepool to be spent on building the wall.

## Post-Medieval & Present Day

The defence and fortification of the Headland continued after the medieval period. During the English Civil War, earthwork defences were constructed to be used in conjunction with cannon. Gun batteries were established to protect from seaborne attack from at least the 19th century. The Hough Battery, a substantial defence and the Headland's only other Scheduled Monument, was built in the early 20th century.

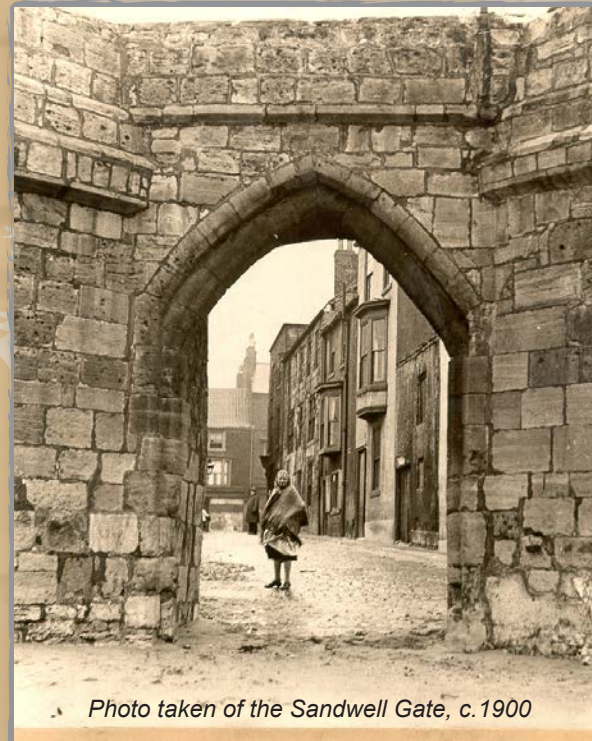


Photo taken of the Sandwell Gate, c.1900

# Hartlepool's Medieval Town Wall



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The History of the Headland's oldest  
Scheduled Monument



## The Headland, Hartlepool

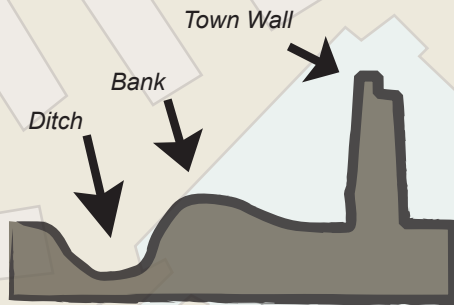
This map shows the position of the town wall overlying a modern map of the Headland. Only the south-facing part of the wall and the Sandwell Gate have survived into the modern age, now functioning as a sea defence.

Towers of varying shapes and sizes were built into the wall. Large round towers guarded the harbour entrance, whilst the rest of the wall contained a mixture of square, circular and semi-circular towers or bastions, none of which survive today.

Only short historical accounts are available, including those by local antiquarians. There is no plan of the fortifications of Hartlepool that can be fully relied upon for accuracy.

There were two main phases of defence of the town, with an initial bank and ditch followed by the wall and its towers.

The figure below shows a section through the town defences, with the earlier bank and ditch in front of the town wall. The section (below) has been pieced together from excavations along the west-facing length of the town wall in the grounds of St. Helen's Junior School in 1982 and on Graham Street in 1978.



### The North Gate

In 1816 Sir Cuthbert Sharp made an engraving of the town wall, including the North Gate (above). The North Gate was the main access into Hartlepool and was demolished along with the rest of the west-facing wall in the mid-19th century. The gate would have been heavily fortified, complete with a portcullis.

