

Hartlepool Through the Ages

Victorian 1857 AD

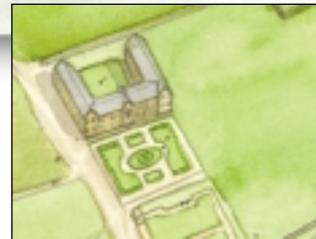
This is how Victorian Hartlepool looked in the year 1857 after 25 years of industrialisation. The building of a new railway and dock for the export of coal massively expanded the town's population, from about 1300 people in 1831 to just over 9000 by 1851. Building this new dock and harbour destroyed much of the medieval town wall, which was preserved only where it formed a strong sea defence.

While the middle classes bought "town houses" in streets constructed on what were once open fields, the poor lived in overcrowded slum conditions lacking basic sanitation. This situation was greatly improved in the 1850s due to the efforts of a new Town Corporation concerned to avoid further cholera epidemics like those of 1832 and 1847. The slums of the 1830s were demolished, new water supplies and sewers were constructed and gas lamps introduced to light the streets. The hated workhouse, situated in the old Elizabethan manor house built on the site of the Friary, would become the town's first hospital in 1867.

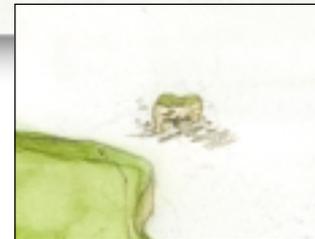
New places of worship in the 1850s included St. Mary's Catholic Church and several non-conformist chapels. There were also 20 schools, most run by private tutors for a handful of pupils from well-off families, although the larger like the Prissick charity schools taught 250 children a basic education for free. What limited leisure time people had was occupied by the traditional family walk on a Sunday afternoon, the occasional show by a troupe of travelling players, or a visit to one of the numerous public houses.



The Scots captured Hartlepool from the Royalists during the English Civil War. The defensive ditches around their camp were still visible over 200 years later.



In the 1560s AD local landowner Ralph Conyers built an impressive manor house on the site of the medieval Friary. Only one small part survives today.



The Elephant Rock was a natural rock formation resembling an elephant carved by the action of the waves. Sadly it collapsed into the sea during May 1891.



The original lighthouse on the Headland was built in 1846 at a cost of £5750. It was lit by natural coal gas.

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