

*Tunstall* Standing high above the surrounding countryside beyond the Tunstall hills, this medieval village was more prominent than its modern-day counterpart. Little survives from the middle ages but the green, from which routes east, west and south lead to Ryhope, Silksworth and Burdon. The road north towards the city centre follows an ancient, ill-defined field track leading out of the back lane (now Paddock Lane).<sup>i</sup>

Tunstall was once an estate of the bishop of Durham, its 110 acres let in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century to nine villagers. By 1534 it was in the hands of the Middleton family, the town leased for 70 years to Richard Middleton in 1550, at £16 a year. Before this term elapsed, the property was taken by Anthony Shadforth, Thomas Ayre and Robert Ayre, all tenants, who were then granted an 80-year lease by the Crown in 1603. A Robert Ayre had earlier been collector of Tunstall under the Middletons. It was alleged in 1603 that royal courtiers had taken and sold property in Tunstall over the heads of tenants; certainly there had been 'many conveyances'. These probably followed a partial inclosure, the division in c. 1591 of 380a. of Tunstall field and other lands, by agreement between owners and tenants. The moors were inclosed in 1671, by which time heirs to the Shadforth and Ayre properties had moved upwards, to the rank of gentleman.<sup>ii</sup>

Tunstall's cottages were arranged in two rows, facing across the green, their small tofts accessed from a back lane. The medieval form was still obvious in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the settlement had by then contracted dramatically. Perhaps half of the 10 or so garths on the northern side no longer held cottages, and the southern row was lost altogether. The date at which this shrinkage occurred is unknown, except that it happened after 1380. A shortage of tenants was doubtless the cause of this process, called engrossment, where holdings were combined. Whether the open fields were partitioned soon after the population fell, is not clear. Tunstall had few farmsteads outside the village, other than Elstob and Tunstall Hills Farms, some way north. The mill was also apparently situated away from the village, at Mill Hill on the road to Burdon.<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> DRO, EP/Biw 218/2; DULASC, DHC11/V/72.(82).1838.

<sup>ii</sup> *Origins* 55-8; Surtees, *History and Antiquities*, i, 249-51; Hutchinson, *History and Antiquities*, 678-9; 1<sup>st</sup> ed OS; DULASC, CCB B/23/7/28; DCL, Sharp 2, opp. p. 250; Hodgson, 'Coalmining, population and enclosure', ii, 6.1a & b; DULASC, Copies of Chancery Decree Awards, 54 (254582½); CCDBED 93201 D45.

<sup>iii</sup> Inf. Brian Roberts; DRO, EP Biw 218/2.