

Explore Alnham

St Michael And All Angels Church



The first record of St Michael's dates from 1135 when the church was given to the monks of Alnwick Abbey. However it is likely there was a church here before this, as three Saxon stones can be found in the churchyard.

If you go around the back of the church you can see some arches that have been filled in. At some point the church has been made smaller. In the past the population of Alnham was greater than it is today when farms required lots of labourers and skilled workers.



Inside the church, on the floor at the east end near the altar, are two grave stones; one has a sword carved on it and the other has a pair of shears. The sword marks the grave of a man and the shears, the grave of a woman.

The Vicar's Pele Tower

Next to the church is a 'pele' tower. Pele was an old English word for a fortress. The borderlands between England and Scotland were dangerous places to live. Armed gangs on both sides carried out raids on their enemies and so many people lived in fortified houses like this. This was once the home of the vicar but is now a private house.

Missing Medieval Castle and Village

Across the road from the tower there are two fields that have lots of lumps and bumps in them. These are the remains of a medieval castle and village. It is possible the village was abandoned after an attack by the Scots. A raid was mentioned in a letter to Henry VIII in 1532, when "all corne, hay and householde stuff in said town and also a woman" were destroyed by fire on the 10th of October.

Salters Way and the Great Drift Road

If you walk past the pele tower and turn left there is a track that may be thousands of years old. In the days before lorries and trains, drovers walked livestock to market from the Scottish Borders, through the Cheviots, to be sold in Morpeth. Cattle were a precious commodity. If they walked too quickly they would lose weight on the way to mart and be worth less money, so Alnham was an important stop on the way. Goods went the other way too; gin and salt were smuggled to Scotland from Boulmer, to avoid paying taxes. And in a field just off the Salters Road, there is a stone with Bronze Age cup and ring markings on it.