

*'In the sixth and seventh centuries Christianity was re-introduced to England.'*

Northern England in the sixth century was a place inhabited by people with British and migrant ancestry. Excavated cemeteries show that communities buried their dead with objects, dress fittings and jewellery. People lived in small settlements on well-drained and fertile soils. They lived in timber-built halls and used smaller structures called sunken-featured buildings for industry and craft activity such as weaving or iron working.

These people had beliefs and traditions that we would today term pagan. These centred on animals, the natural world and ancestors but also involved deities and gods such as Woden, Thor and Tiw.

In the sixth and seventh centuries Christianity was re-introduced to England. Missionaries came from Rome to Canterbury in 597 and sent people north to convert the Anglian communities beyond the Tees, but Irish monks were also present. Lindisfarne was founded in the early seventh century by Aidan, an Irish monk from the monastery of Iona in the western isles of Scotland. The monastic houses of Wearmouth and Jarrow were established between c. 670 and 685 by Benedict Biscop on a continental model. New masonry structures were built including parts of the churches that we can see here today. Timber buildings and workshops were present and the monastery became an active place of industry and production. This monastery, its churches and monks would have served the newly converted populations that lived on the lands between the Rivers Tyne and Wear.



reconstruction of a sunken featured building at Bede's World



Anglo-Saxon porch and tower Wearmouth



Aidan travelled from here at Iona to found Lindisfarne