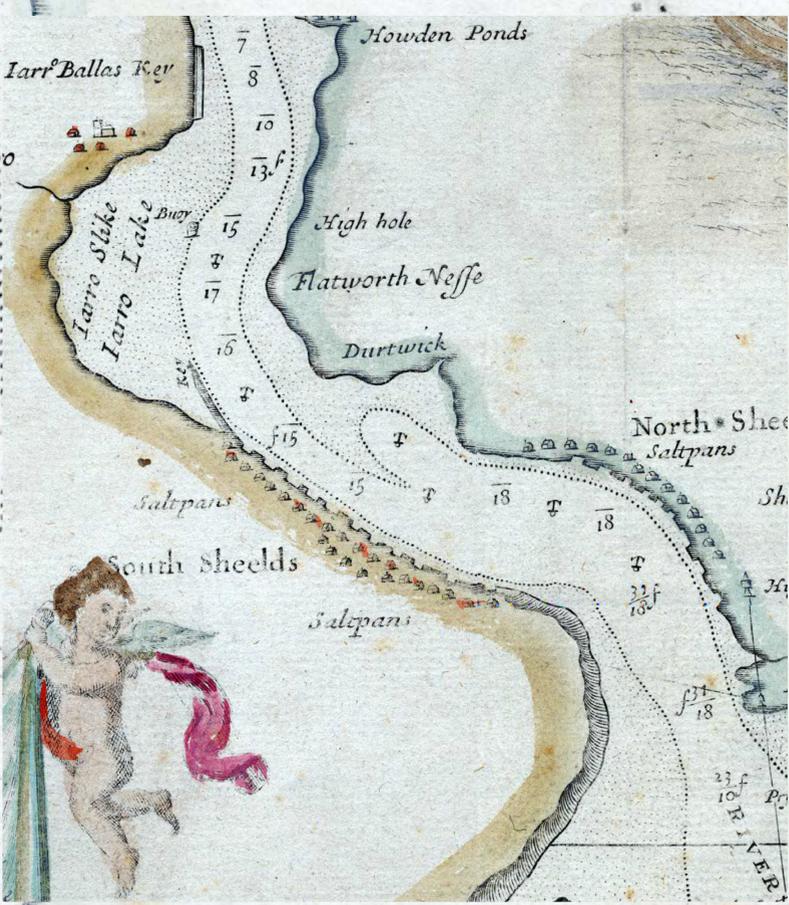


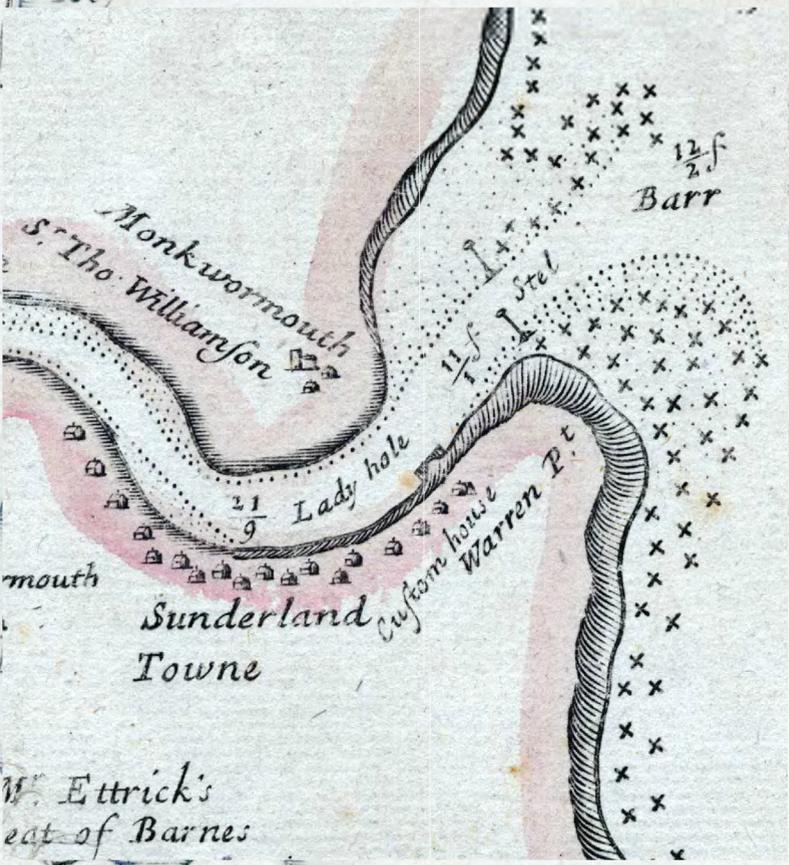
*'both communities were ideally placed to take advantage of the estuary mouths'*

Although today visitors can see the remains of these first monastic communities within the boundaries of the current churchyards, evidence points to the Anglo-Saxon monastic sites as more extensive. At one level, we know that the lands granted to the monasteries extended from the River Tyne to the River Wear. At a more site-focussed level, each monastery was situated to take advantage of a spur or tongue of land. At Jarrow St Paul's took advantage of the natural harbour of the Slake and both communities were ideally placed to take advantage of the estuary mouths and rivers as well as the immediate shore and coast. Estuaries are particularly productive places at which to catch migratory fish such as salmon and sea birds and have been exploited by humans as rich niche-environments for many thousands of years. The sites gave these communities ready access to food resources, to coastal and sea routes and to river crossings. Documents indicate that Benedict Biscop was quick to secure control over these crucial points of communication.

Extensive geo-prospection and survey, combined with environmental sampling and retrogressive map work is helping our project reconstruct the environment and landscapes that preceded each foundation and map how these monastic communities used, exploited and changed it. The Anglo-Saxon communities would have drawn resources from the immediate and wider estates including grain and meat, fish and shellfish and birds. However, the productive activities at each site also required raw materials. Sheep skin or vellum was required for creating manuscripts. Stone was needed for sculpture and wood for carpentry and other crafts. There is only limited evidence for the processing of raw materials from the sites themselves and some processing may have taken place outside of the immediate monastic precincts. These monasteries therefore had extensive resource zones and hinterlands and their archaeology is likely to extend beyond the known core sites. Our project, through survey in these hinterlands is showing that in situ archaeology survives in the open spaces around each site and work with historic maps is helping us reconstruct the environment and landscape of the wider monastic estates.



map of 1693 showing St Paul's in relation to Jarrow Slake and the Tyne



map of 1693 showing St Peter's in relation to the mouth of the Wear



GPR survey at St Peter's, winter 2009/10

