

SEATON HOLME AN ANCIENT MANOR

Seaton Holme the former **Rectory of Easington** is located in the heart of Easington Village, just off the A19 directly opposite St. Marys Church. It is a 13th Century, Grade I listed building and is said to be one of the oldest domestic buildings in England. Once the Rectory of Easington it was built by Nicholas de Farnham in 1247 and has a long and interesting history. For nearly 600 years it was the home of the Archdeacons of Durham, who were Rectors of St Marys church.

In 1989, Easington Village Parish Council purchased the building, which had fallen into disrepair and was boarded up, from Durham County Council for the princely sum of £1 but almost half a million pounds was found for restoration. His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester officially opened the renovated building in 1992

Carefully restored to its former glory with the aid of various grants and is now the now the headquarters of Easington Village Parish Council and houses a Discovery Centre, art gallery, a function room, offices for Groundwork East Durham and the constituency office for the local MP John Cummings and a community building used regularly.

There is very little documentary evidence of Seaton Holme as much must have been destroyed in 1921 when the building was sold. Over the years the rectory was extensively altered and had many different uses, but renovation work in 1990 unearthed many old features. The removal of old plaster work to the interior and exterior showed the original windows of a late 13th century aisled hall, with six large, round headed arched windows set between the buttresses. The buttresses to the North side are thought to be older than the south.

Major rebuilding work was carried out in the 15th century, with the upper stories being rebuilt. The layout of this period is primarily preserved in the building, with its large central hall, eastern service wing and western residential range. The Function Room shows two of the original doorways.

Surtees writing on Easington Rectory in 1816 describes it as *a little to the North of the Church, shaded by a grove of sycamores, has been extremely improved by the attention of the late and present Archdeacon and is now one of the most convenient parsonages in the area.*

We have no way of knowing how long there have been buildings on the site of Seaton Holme. Bishop Richard de Marisco founded, or endowed, the church of St. Mary of Easington, before 1222. In that year he granted to John de Romsey, Rector of Easington, and his successors various tracts of land. It became the main church residence in the ward and a principal residence for the Archdeacons of Durham, who held the Rectorship of Easington from 1256 until 1832. During restoration work, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments took detailed records and the Cleveland Archaeological Society asked if they could dig trial trenches to the east of the building. They found evidence of a Saxon manorial site, with post holes indicating timber buildings from before 1200.