

**David Petts**

## **COASTAL LANDSCAPES AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN ANGLO-SAXON NORTHUMBRIA**

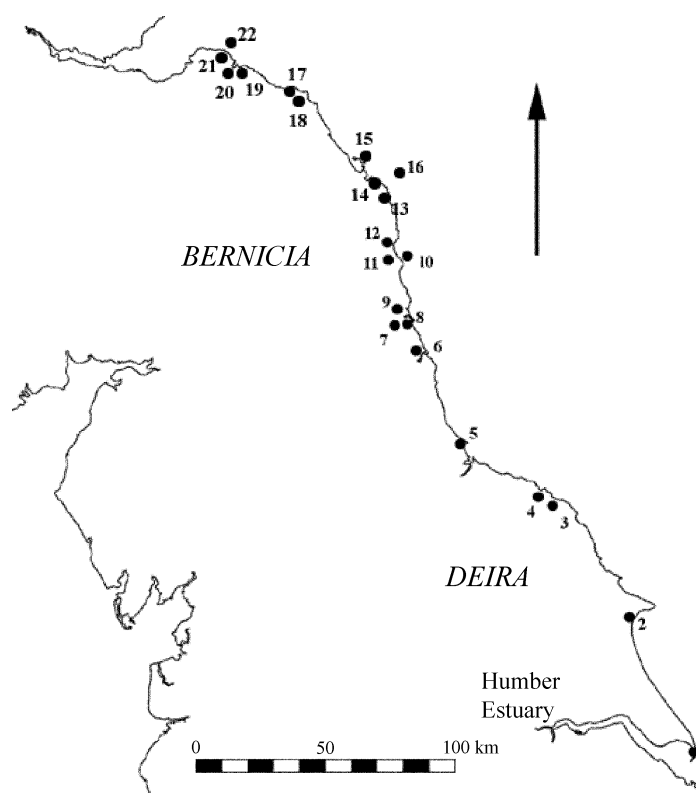
This paper explores the ways in which coastal landscapes were used by the early church in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. The coastal highways were a key element of the socio-political landscape of the Northumbrian kingdom, with many key secular and ecclesiastical power centres being located in proximity to the sea. However, the same maritime landscapes also provided the location of seemingly remote or isolated hermitages. This paper explores this paradox and highlights the manner in which such small ecclesiastical sites were, in fact, closely integrated into a wider landscape of power, through case studies exploring the area around Bamburgh and Holy Island in Northumberland and Dunbar in southern Scotland.

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### **Introduction**

The 8th and 9th centuries AD were the Golden Age of Northumbria, the period when the northern Anglo-Saxon kingdom reached its peak in political power, intellectual endeavour and artistic output (Hawkes & Mills 1999; Rollason 2003). The study of this period consistently highlights the importance of a series of key, mainly ecclesiastical, sites: Whitby, Hartlepool, Bamburgh, Lindisfarne and the twin monastery of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow. Even a brief look at a map of early medieval Northumbria will reveal that these sites have coastal or estuarine locations (Fig. 1).

The key importance of maritime power and coastal zones in the early medieval period is well established. The importance of networks of emporia, wics and other trading centres is attested both historically and archaeologically (e.g. Hodges 1989; 2000; Kramer 2000). Most of this work has focused on the southern North Sea zone, including southern and eastern England, northern France, the Low Countries and southern Scandinavia (e.g. Loveluck & Tys 2006). Parallel explorations of trade and exchange in western Britain and Ireland have also considered the archaeology of early coastal sites (Campbell 1996; Wooding 1996). However, there has been relatively little consideration of the coastal landscapes of Anglo-Saxon England north of the River Humber.



**Fig. 1.** Sites on the east coast of Northumbria mentioned in the text. 1 Spurn Head (*Cornu Vallis?*), 2 Filey, 3 Whitby, 4 Lythe, 5 Hartlepool, 6 Monkwearmouth, 7 Jarrow, 8 South Shields, 9 Tynemouth, 10 Coquet Island, 11 Warkworth, 12 Alnmouth, 13 St Ebba's Chapel, Beadnell, 14 Bamburgh, 15 Holy Island, 16 Inner Farne, 17 St Abb's, 18 Coldingham, 19 Dunbar, 20 Tynningham, 21 Auldham, 22 Bass Rock.

It is clear that the coastal zone of Northumbria was of key social and economic importance in the early Middle Ages. Monastic sites stood overlooking the mouths of most of the major rivers between the Humber and the Forth, and important secular centres, such as Bamburgh, and possibly South Shields lay in very similar locations. A notable exception is Yeaveering (Northumberland) although this site is only around twelve miles from the coastline (Hope-Taylor 1977). This reflects a wider pattern found in the North Sea area and the Baltic, with major polities being based in the coastal zone, and predicated on the control of sea power for both military and economic purposes (Haywood 1991; Kramer 2000; Bogucki 2004; Loveluck & Tys 2006). The central position of the North Sea as a means of communication and medium of interaction in Northumbria can be seen in a variety of ways, although direct archaeological evidence for maritime trade along the Northumbrian coast is limited. Although it is clear that York was a major centre for foreign trade throughout much of the early Middle Ages (Mainman 1993; Kemp 1996). There is very little evidence for imported continental ceramics,

beyond the southern area of the kingdom. It seems that few imports were being traded on beyond the borders of the kingdom of Deira, and the River Tees appears to form a northern boundary for goods arriving via the southern North Sea trading system. However, the recent discovery of walrus ivory from excavations at Bamburgh may suggest direct maritime links between Northumbria and northern Scandinavia (P. Gething pers. comm. 2007).

Despite the relatively slight archaeological evidence for trade, the importance of the sea as a communications route in early medieval Northumbria is attested in documentary evidence. For example, the *Anonymous History of Abbot Ceolfrith*, written around AD 700, recalls Ceolfrith's voyage to Gaul. Ceolfrith took a boat from the monastery at *Cornu Vallis*, which can be identified as either Hornsea on the East Yorkshire coast, or possibly Spurn Head (AHAC 30 f.). The shipping lanes also ran north as well as south. Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert* records Cuthbert and two brethren travelling to 'the land of the Niduari' in Pictland, a journey that would have taken him north, passed the northern boundaries of Northumbria and the Firth of Forth to the coast of Fife and beyond (VSC 9). The sea and major rivers could also be used to transport goods, as well as people. Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert* includes a miracle performed by Cuthbert when he saved monks who had been bringing wood down the Tyne by raft from being swept out to sea (VSC 3).

Although there has been interest in the symbolic and ideological elements of early maritime landscapes, there has been relatively little exploration of this aspect of the early medieval coastal zone in Britain (e.g. Westerdahl 2002). The only real exception to this has been a consideration of the role of islands as suitable locations for hermitages and places of retreat, drawing on the association of the sea with the desert retreats of the early Christian fathers. Recent scholars have emphasised the way in which Britain and Ireland were conceived, conceptually and literally, as marginal zones, located on the edge of the known world and distant from the Christian centre of the world, Jerusalem and the Holy Land (O'Loughlin 1997; O'Sullivan 2001, 34 f.). This was made manifest in early maps of Christendom. The so-called T-O maps were centred on Jerusalem, whilst Britain was located in the sea that borders the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. One of the key factors in the representation of Britain and Ireland as liminal areas is the presence of the ocean surrounding the islands. For the early medieval mind, the sea was often imagined as a desert, a remote and terrifying place in which ascetic churchmen could challenge themselves spiritually and physically. The maritime landscape was a watery version of St. Anthony's Egyptian desert, where devils could be confronted and faith tested away from the more worldly influences of power and secular society (O'Loughlin 1997).

The tradition of coastal and maritime retreat was a particularly strong one in early medieval Irish Christian practice. There was the distinct Irish and Hiberno-Latin literary genre of the *immrama* ('rowing about'). The key structural element was the sea voyage on which further encounters were hung (Wooding 2000a; 2000b). The practice of locating hermitages or monastic sites offshore was wide-

spread in Ireland and areas influenced by the religious practices of the Irish church (Herity 1989; 1995). The major Scottish cult centre at Iona was located on an offshore island, and it has been argued convincingly that the choice of Lindisfarne as the site for a monastery by Irish churchmen was governed by both a desire to emulate Iona and a wider urge to link into existing concepts of island asceticism (O'Sullivan 2001, 37).

We thus have two contrasting images of the coastal zone and the sea in early medieval Britain: a thriving and important corridor for communication and trade, and a bleak zone of isolation suitable for hermits and holy men. Is it possible to reconcile these two seemingly opposed conceptualisations of the sea, one related to the secular world of power and economy and the other linked to the ecclesiastical world? What follows is a more detailed exploration of the coastal archaeology of Northumbria with two brief case studies of areas that have evidence for important secular and ecclesiastical activity: the Holy Island and Bamburgh area in northern Northumberland and Dunbar and Tynningham in east Lothian (Scotland).

### **The Northumbrian coast**

At its greatest extent the eastern coastline of Northumbria from the mouth of the Humber to the Firth of Forth runs over 200 miles. There is great variation in this coastline. At its southern end the coast has evolved considerably, with the North Sea and the Humber estuary constantly remodelling the coastline of the low-lying Holderness area of east Yorkshire; it is certain that there has been considerable retreat of the coastline in this area. Moving north, the nature of the coast changes, gentle beaches are replaced by clay cliffs reaching a height of 122 m at Flamborough Head. Despite their size, these cliffs are comprised of soft shale and clays and are vulnerable to erosion from the sea. They do not form a solid barrier. In places, such as Whitby, Hartlepool and Scarborough they are broken by river estuaries. Elsewhere, there are small valleys providing access to the coast. In Yorkshire, many of these, such as Robin Hood's Bay, Staithes, Runswick Bay and Saltburn have become the site of small fishing villages, which probably grew up in the 11th–12th centuries AD. However, access to the coast in County Durham is far more limited. The small valleys known as *denes* provide some access to the sea, but few fishing villages developed along this more exposed coast. As the coast heads north to the estuaries of the Wear and the Tyne the cliffs rise again and the coast becomes rockier. The Tyne estuary is dominated to the north by the rocky eminence of Tynemouth still surmounted by the ruins of its 12th century monastery. The coastline to the north of this remains rocky, but broken by a number of river mouths including the Blyth and Wansbeck, before becoming increasingly low-lying with developed dune systems and expansive sandy beaches. This is occasionally broken by rocky outcrops, such as at Dunstanburgh and Bamburgh, where the Whin Sill, a line of tough basaltic rocks projects into the North Sea. The Whin Sill is also responsible for the formation of a series of small

coastal islands, including Coquet Island, the Farne Islands and parts of Holy Island. After reaching the mouth of the Tweed, the cliffs reappear, and much of the south-east coastline of Scotland is dominated by high cliffs preventing easy access to the beach, before the cliffs once again fade away replaced by wide sandy beaches as the coast turns westwards into the Firth of Forth. In general, there have undoubtedly been some changes in the coastline of Northumbria in the millennium or more since the Anglo-Saxon period, particularly around Holderness and Cleveland, where there has certainly been some coastal retreat. Beyond this, though, there has been little major alteration in the broad course of coast, and the modern coastline broadly resembles that of Bede and Oswald.

It is important to explore the human geography of the early medieval Northumbrian coast. It is possible to identify key early medieval sites along the coast using both archaeological and historical evidence. The writing of Bede, based at Jarrow, particularly his *History of the English Speaking Peoples* (HE) (AD 731) provides a useful and contemporary record of key locations in the political and ecclesiastical geography of Northumbria; many sites are also recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and a number of other Anglo-Saxon texts, such as Bede's *Prose Life of St Cuthbert* (Colgrave 1940). The evidence from archaeology mainly takes the form of carved stone, primarily of an ecclesiastical nature, supplemented by excavation at a series of important sites, including Whitby, Hartlepool, Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, Lindisfarne and Bamburgh (Cramp 1984; Lang 1991; 2001).

There is little evidence for any mid-Saxon coastal settlement in Holderness. This is not surprising, due to the significant retreat of the coastline in this area. It was recorded in Alcuin's *Life of St. Willibrord*, that Wilgils settled as a hermit at the tip of Spurn Head in the mid-7th century (Levison 1946, 55). This hermitage may have been identical to, or connected to the *Cornu Vallis* from where Ceolfrith set sail for Gaul. There is evidence from *Heimskringla* that the remnants of Harald Hardrada's army re-embarked on their ships at Spurn Head following their defeat at the Battle of Stamford Bridge (1066) (King Harald's Saga Ch. 98). It is not until that Filey is reached that there is further evidence for ecclesiastical sites in the form of a single 8th-century stone grave cover from the church of St. Oswald (Lang 1991, 130). Filey sits in a shallow bay, and a number of narrow valleys lead down to the beach. The beach is protected to the north from prevailing winds by the headland known as Filey Brigg, and provides an excellent and sheltered location to beach ships.

Standing prominently on the headland above the estuary of the river Esk lies Whitby, the site of a major Anglo-Saxon double monastery founded by Hild in AD 657. Well-attested in the documentary evidence, it is best known as the site of the Synod of Whitby in AD 664. It has also been extensively excavated, and much Anglo-Saxon sculpture has been recorded at the site (Peers & Radford 1943; White 1984; Lang 2001, 231 ff.). A short distance north, across Whitby Strand is the intriguing site of Lythe. Although best known for its extensive collection of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture, there are fragments of 7th or 8th century date

(Lang 2001, 153 ff.). It has been suggested that this site was possibly a cell of Whitby Abbey (Cambridge 1995, 140 ff.), and David Stocker has argued that there was an association between the church and a putative beach market at Lythe (Stocker 2000, 200). Another major monastic site lay on the headland at Hartlepool. Bede records its foundation in AD 640. This site has also seen extensive excavations revealing significant structural and artefactual remains (Daniels 1988; 1999), and has also produced plentiful pre-Viking carved stonework (Okasha 1999).

At Monkwearmouth, one element of the twin monastery founded by Benedict Biscop in AD 674, the site sits on the north side of the mouth of the river Wear. Although the topography of the area has been substantially changed in the post-medieval period by the dumping of ballast on a colossal scale, it is still clear that the monastery would have had an excellent view of traffic in the river, and easy access to a landing area. The site has been extensively excavated by Rosemary Cramp and has also produced much stone sculpture (Cramp 1984, 122 ff.; 2005; 2006). Jarrow also lies close to a river mouth; despite substantial reshaping of the area by post-medieval industry, it is evident that the monastery stood right on the river edge (Cramp 1984, 106 ff.; 2005; 2006). It was also adjacent to the small inlet known as Jarrow Slake. It may have been here that the Viking leader, Halfdan, took winter quarters on the Tyne in AD 875 (ASC sa. 875).

Just 3 km to the north-east lay the site of the Roman fort of South Shields (*Arbeia*). Although abandoned in the 5th century, it was probably reused as a royal *caput* in the 6th century, and there is a tradition, recorded by John Leland in the 16th century that King Oswine was born here (Bidwell & Speak 1994, 46 f.). Recent re-analysis of the finds from excavations on the Roman remains has also revealed previously unrecognised early medieval material (Alex Croom pers. comm. 2007). Somewhere in this area also lay the monastic site of *Donamutha*, which according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was sacked by the Vikings in AD 794 (ASC sa. 794). The 12th-century Symeon of Durham locates this site at Jarrow; it may have lain at the mouth of the small river Don a short-distance downstream from the monastery. An alternate suggestion places it at South Shields (Wood quoted in Cramp 2005, 29). However, it may have in fact been at an entirely different location, possibly on the River Don in south Yorkshire (Rollason 2003, 211).

Across the Tyne stand the remains of the monastery of Tynemouth. Whilst the standing ruins are of 12th century date, an Anglo-Saxon monastic site is recorded there (HE 5.6). The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* lists it as the burial place of Osred, the King of Northumbria (ASC sa. 792). Early medieval activity is indicated by sculptural material (Cramp 1984, 226 ff.; Trench-Jellicoe 1991).

Just over 30 km north, on the mouth of the river Coquet, lies Coquet Island. A small ecclesiastical site was recorded here by Bede (VSC 24). A late 7th- or early 8th-century grave slab was found here in 1969 (Cramp 1984, 170), and a brooch and buckle of early medieval date have also been found. Under a mile upstream lies the settlement of Warkworth. King Ceolwulf gifted Warkworth, its church 'with its appurtenances' to the community of St. Cuthbert at some point

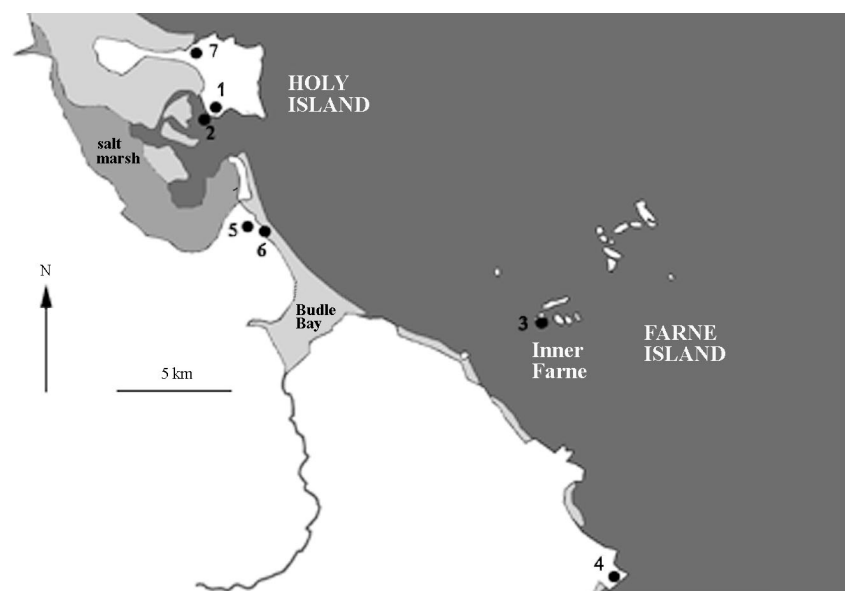
before AD 737 (LE ii.1). At Alnmouth, on the mouth of the River Aln, stands a further important Anglo-Saxon church. Although now largely disappeared, the site of the church overlooking the river is known, and in the late 18th century a substantial stone cross was recovered from the immediate surrounding area (Cramp 1984, 161 f.; Aspinall et al. 2000).

### *Lindisfarne and Bamburgh*

A major nexus of early medieval features can be found at Lindisfarne and Bamburgh (Fig. 2). The Island of Lindisfarne, or Holy Island, is a well-documented monastic site. It is barely 2 km offshore, and at low tide is accessible by foot across a causeway.

In addition to extensive documentary evidence for the Anglo-Saxon monastery, the site has produced a large corpus of stone sculpture (Cramp 1984, 194 ff.; O'Sullivan 2001). Significant early medieval activity has been identified on the island, though there is no certain evidence as to the location of the early monastery which is presumed to lie beneath the later Benedictine Priory.

The major secular power centre of Bamburgh lies just 8 km across the water from Holy Island, and the two are clearly intervisible. Bamburgh is recorded in Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as a major Anglo-Saxon *caput* (e.g. HE 3.16; ASC sa. 547). Bede also records that the relics of St. Oswald lay in a church



**Fig. 2.** Holy Island and Bamburgh. 1 Lindisfarne: monastery, 2 Lindisfarne: St Cuthbert's Isle, 3 Inner Farne: Cuthbert's hermitage, 4 St Ebba's Chapel, 5 Bamburgh Castle, 6 Bowl Hole cemetery, 7 Green Shiel.

dedicated to St. Peter at Bamburgh (HE 3.6). Excavation in the 1960s and more recently has revealed evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity and a substantial cemetery at Bowl Hole in the nearby sand dunes. Fragments of a carved stone chair were also found at Bamburgh in the 19th century (Cramp 1984, 162 f.).

Also offshore, Bede records a hermitage on Inner Farne which was home at different times to both Aidan and Cuthbert, as well as other monks following the eremitical lifestyle (HE 3.16; 4.30; 5.1). Surviving are the remains of a small 13th century hermitage, which was home to monks from the Benedictine community at Durham. Opposite Farne Island, on a headland at Beadnell, lie the poorly preserved remains of Ebba's Chapel. Although limited excavation has revealed no definite evidence for its date, its name suggests that St. Ebba founded it, probably in the early 7th century (Fowler 1992).

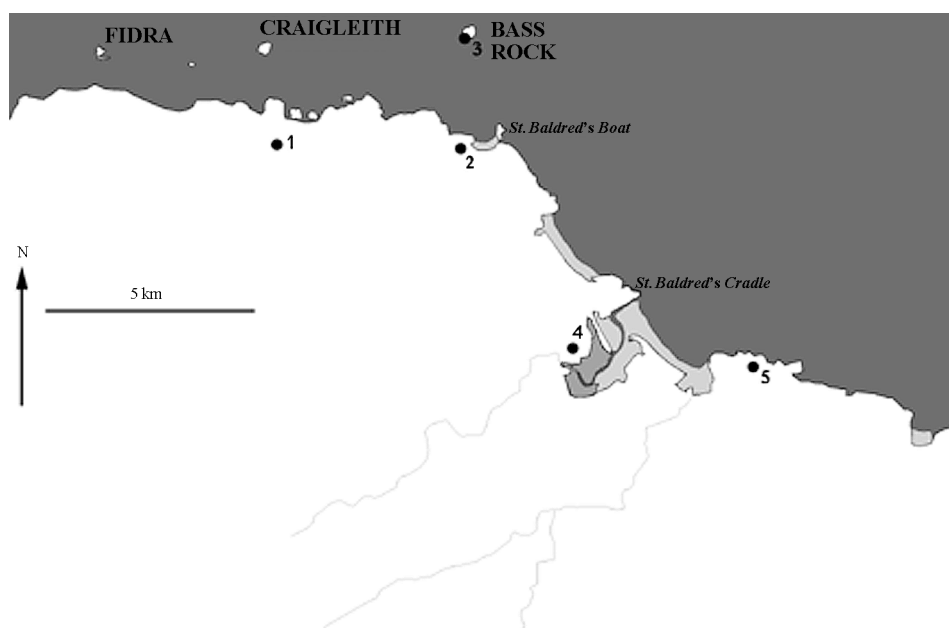
Cuthbert's motivation in seeking an island hermitage was an attempt to avoid distraction and by restricting his gaze. According to Bede, when Cuthbert was building his hermitage on Outer Farne 'Out of piety, he made the walls higher inside by cutting away the solid rock at the bottom, so that with only the sky to look at, eyes and thoughts might be kept from wandering and inspired to seek for higher things' (VSC 17). Despite his attempt to seek solitude, it is clear that he regularly received visitors from the monastery at Lindisfarne and elsewhere (VSC 22). Cuthbert struggled with this: 'He used to keep the window open and enjoy seeing his brethren and being seen by them, but in the end he blocked it up and opened it only to give a blessing or for some definite need' (VSC 18). As well as regular visits, it is apparent that there were other systems of communicating between the islands; Cuthbert's death was signalled by a monk at the hermitage and seen by a monk in a watchtower at Lindisfarne (VSC 40). Other off-shore hermitages could also be the sites of meetings, such as that between Cuthbert and Aelfflaed which took place on Coquet Island, rather than the nearby mainland *vill* at Warkworth (VSC 24).

These islands were not only retreats; they were also probably key navigational points. The Farne Islands lie in the main deep-water coastal shipping lane. Early pilot manuals to the north-east coast of England note that Inner Farne, the nearest and largest island, was marked by a lighthouse from as early as 1693 and it is likely that the medieval building known as Prior Castell's Tower, which dates in part to at least the late 15th century, was used as a navigational mark and lighthouse. The Farne beacon was not only used to steer traffic away from dangerous rocks, but also provided a key point by which to navigate some approaches to the harbour on Holy Island. Coquet Island also provided an important navigational point, and in the 17th century the tower on the church was used as a way mark (Collins 1767).

#### *Dunbar, Auldham and Bass Rock*

A similar arrangement of power centre, monastic site and offshore hermitage can be identified further north, on the coast of East Lothian (Fig. 3). Dunbar,





**Fig. 3.** Dunbar and Bass Rock. 1 North Berwick Law, 2 Auldhame, 3 Balthere's Hermitage, Bass Rock, 4 Tynningham, 5 Kirk Hill, Dunbar.

recorded by Eddius Stephanus in the Life of St. Wilfrid as *Dinbaer*, a British name, probably originated as native British power centre. However, it became an Anglo-Saxon *caput* and in the Life of Wilfrid it is noted that it possessed a *prefecti* (VSW 38; Alcock 1989; Perry & Blackburn 2000). Around 7 km to the west, close to the mouth of the Tyne, lay Tynningham, an ecclesiastical site closely associated with St. Balthere. It appears to have originated as a hermitage for Balthere whose death is recorded in AD 756 (LE ii.2). Carved stonework has been found at the site and there are documentary references to the continued presence of an ecclesiastical site at Tynningham (Weatherhead 1993).

The nearby offshore island known as Bass Rock, a volcanic plug sited in the entrance to the Firth of Forth, has been identified as the site of Balthere's hermitage (Bullough 1981, 349 ff.). This rock is identified as the outcrop now known as St. Baldred's Boat, which lies just off the coast of the mainland at Auldhame. This site was identified in later sources, such as the 16th-century *Breviary of Aberdeen*, as the place where Balthere died. At Auldhame itself recent excavation has uncovered the remains of an early Christian cemetery. Its location, so close to Bass Rock suggests that the site had some relationship with Balthere's offshore hermitage (Hindmarch & Melikian 2008).

Again, in later periods, Bass Rock was used as an important navigational way mark for ships sailing along the coast towards the Firth of Forth (Collins 1767). Balthere appears to have been associated with aiding navigation in these waters. Later sources refer to the saint's miraculously moving a rock, now known as

St. Baldred's Boat, on account of it causing a navigational hazard. His name is also used to describe another geological feature, St. Baldred's Cradle, a rocky headline just to the north of Tynningham. It is noticeable that in Alcuin's *Sancti Eboricensis Ecclesiae* his passage on Balthere is imbued with imagery of guiding ships to safety in a storm: 'I pray preserve and guide by frail craft through the ocean depths among the sea-monsters and waves as high as cliffs that it may safely reach harbour with its cargo' (BKSJ 1320 ff.).

### *Hermits, islands and landscapes*

We have seen that the coastal zone of Northumbria was occupied by hermits and anchorites. A series of island or coastal retreats can be identified along the coast from *Cornu Vallis* to Bass Rock. However, these retreats are all in a close relationship with major coenobitic monasteries, geographically, ideologically and visually. This complex of monasteries and hermitages that lay along the Northumbrian shoreline constituted a rich symbolic landscape. It is evident, however, from the documents and the archaeological evidence for secular centres, that this symbolic landscape was draped over a vibrant coastal zone which contained key power centres and major communications routes. Despite the rhetoric of isolation and retreat, ascetic practice took place under the gaze of the kings, nobles, travellers, traders and sailors who moved through and around the coastal landscape of Northumbria. The fact that most of the island retreats were also significant navigational features for coastal shipping serves to emphasise the extent to which these retreats would have formed key nodal points in the coastal vistas of the kingdom. Whilst Cuthbert and other early hermits may have seen the move to an island retreat as an attempt to avoid human contact, paradoxically, they retreated to sites clearly visible from major secular power centres, major ecclesiastical centres and on islands that would have been closely observed by coastal shipping.

Not only did these hermits not escape the gaze of the surrounding world, it is also clear that these islands were frequently visited by other monks and pilgrims. Despite a search for isolation, hermits, by the very virtue of their ascetic practices become key social actors. Peter Brown in his explorations of holy-men in Syria in the 5th–7th centuries has explored how such figures became 'arbiters of the holy' and had a role in mediating social conflict at a local and regional level (Brown 1971; 1995, 55 ff.). The conflict between ascetic desires and pastoral responsibilities has also been explored with reference to Cuthbert himself (Stancliffe 1989). Hermits provided leadership by intervention into secular affairs and internal ecclesiastical politics, as well as acting exempla for all Christians. This helps underscore how offshore retreats were not simply remote places of isolation, but key nodes within the physical and symbolic landscape. Despite an almost ostentatious remoteness, in practice these Northumbrian coastal hermitages were relatively accessible.

The close relationship between major religious sites, hermitages and key communication routes is not only found in maritime contexts in early medieval Northumbria. There is a similar arrangement between the distribution of ecclesiastical establishments and major terrestrial route ways. Lastingham (N. Yorkshire) was an important monastic site established by Cedd, a monk from Lindisfarne in AD 654. The narrative for the foundation provided by Bede implies that the location of the site was remote in the extreme and deliberately chosen for its situation: 'Cedd chose himself a site for the monastery amid some steep and remote hills which seemed better for the haunts of robbers and the dens of wild beasts than for human habitation' (HE 3.23). However, whilst Lastingham certainly lay on the edge of the North York Moors it was also only a few miles from Ryedale, a fertile agricultural area, which was the location of important occupation in the Roman period, and in the Middle Saxon period saw extensive ecclesiastical activity at a series of locations, including a major cult centre at Hovingham and other probable monastic sites at Kirkdale, Stonegrave, Gilling East and Oswaldkirk. It is likely that Lastingham may have stood on an important route between the upland areas of moorland used for pasturing cattle and sheep and the lower lying arable land of the valley of the river Rye.

Further north in Northumbria a series of monastic sites are located along the line of Dere Street, the Roman road that ran from York to Corbridge on Hadrian's Wall. Whilst established as a military communications route in the early Roman period, the road remained in use throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. Symeon of Durham first recorded the name Dere Street in the 12th century, but it is highly probable that he was drawing on late Anglo-Saxon documentary sources (HSC 9). A series of monastic sites lie on or extremely close to the line of the road, including Gainford, Chester-le-Street, Ebchester and Corbridge itself.

It is also noticeable that there is a lack of early medieval hermitage sites known at truly remote locations in Northumbria. For example, Brignall (Co. Durham), which has been suggested as a small hermitage, lies under a mile from the line of a major route across the Pennines into western England (Coggins & Fairless 2003). Falstone (Northumberland), where ecclesiastical activity is indicated by the presence of stone sculpture (Cramp 1984, 172 f.) lies in a seemingly remote location in the Cheviot Hills. However, it is close to the course of the post-medieval Great Drift Road, an important route for droving cattle from Scotland to England, which probably has a medieval or even prehistoric origin (Charlton & Day 1976, 229). John Blair has emphasised the close link between hermitages and monastic communities in both Anglo-Saxon, and Irish and Western British monasticism, with a centre-periphery structure, citing examples from Hexham (Northumberland), Lichfield (Staffordshire) and Melrose (Scottish Borders), where close to the main monastery lay a 'more remote' house (HE iv.3, v.2, v.12, 336 ff., 456, 488, 496; Blair 2005, 217 f.). This pattern clearly has its origin in continental practice, such as at Lérins in Southern France, and even St. Martin of Tours own hermitage which, according to Sulpicius Severus, was only two miles outside the city (VSM X, 3 f.).

## Conclusion

This paper has tried to show the key role the maritime landscape took in structuring the northern areas of the Kingdom of Northumbria. Despite being beyond the traditional edges of the North Sea zone that enabled key interactions between the early medieval kingdoms of North-West Europe, the sea was an important arena with political, social and religious transactions. The Irish-influenced Christianity that was prevalent in the kingdom, drawing on concepts of desert and remoteness ultimately derived from Eastern Mediterranean ascetic practices, undoubtedly contributed to the spread of coastal and offshore religious sites along the Northumbrian coast. However, this was a special kind of remoteness; holy men were isolated yet also visible, remote yet in close proximity to the ebbs and flows of society. It is essential when exploring early medieval landscapes not to separate religious landscapes with the more mundane landscapes of power, warfare and trade. These Christian landscapes were indeed predicated on the presence of an observer and easy accessibility by secular and ecclesiastical visitors.

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**David Petts**

**RANNAMAASTIKUD JA VARANE KRISTLUS  
ANGLOSAKSI NORTHUMBRIAS**

*Resümee*

8. ja 9. sajandit peetakse Northumbria kuldajastuks, mil sealsed põhjapoolseimad anglosaksi kuningriigid saavutasid oma tippaseme nii poliitilise võimu, intellektuaalsete saavutuste kui ka kunstilise väljenduse alal. See oli ühtlasi aeg, mil

hästi korraldatud merenduslik võim ja väljakujunenud kultuurmaastik rannaaladel olid saanud ühiskonnas tähtsateks teguriteks. Nii ajalooline kui ka arheoloogiline allikmaterjal annavad tunnistust *emporium*'ide, *vic*'ide ja kaubitsemiskeskuste võrgustikust. Paraku on anglosaksiaegse Inglismaa merenduslikud kultuurmaastikud Humberi jõest põhja pool leidnud seni akadeemilises uurimistöös vähest kajastamist.

Pole kahtlust, et just rannaalad olid varakeskaegse Northumbria sotsiaalses ja majanduslikus elus võtmetähtsusega. Peaaegu kõikide tähtsamate jõgede suudmesse Humberist Forthini olid püstitatud kloostrid, mille lähikonda jäid olulisemad ilmalikud keskused. Samasugune asustusloogika iseloomustas ka teisi Põhja- ja Läänemere-äärseid alasid, eriti ühiskondi, kus rannaalad võimaldasid kontrolli merendusliku tegevuse üle nii sõjalises kui ka majanduslikus mõttes.

Viimase aja uurimistöös on käsitletud üsna rohkelt seda, kuidas kujunes ajalooliselt ettekujutus Britanniast ja Iirimast kui perifeeriast, seda nii otseses kui ka kaudses tähenduses. Visioon perifeersusest baseerus eelkõige geograafial: Britannia ja Iirimaa paiknesid tuntud maailma äärealadel, ristiusus keskse tähtsusega Jeruusalemmast ning Pühast Maast kaugel. Varakeskaegsetel kaartidel on see seisukoht selgelt väljendatud. Eriti iiri varases kristluses oli juurdunud traditsioon käsitleda mereäärseid rannaalasid kui kohti, kus oli võimalik muu maailma eest spirituaalseid pelgupaiku leida. Sama kehtis ka Northumbria kohta, mille kristlik praktika oli iiri kirikust tugevasti mõjutatud.

Varakeskaegses Britannias kehtis seega mererannast kaks vastandlikku käsitlust. Neist ühe kohaselt oli tegu koridoriga, mille kaudu toimus kommunikatsioon ja kaubandus; teisalt oli see kõle ning eraldatud ala, mis sobis elamiseks üksiklastele ja pühameestele. Omaette küsimus on, kas neid kaht silmanähtavalt vastandlikku kontseptsiooni merest oleks võimalik omavahel sobitada, arvestades, et üks neist on seotud sekulaarse maailma, võimu ja majandusega, teine aga kirikliku maailmaga. Sellele küsimusele vastuse leidmiseks on artiklis esitatud ülevaade Northumbria ranniku arheoloogilisest ainesest, käsitledes lühidalt kaht konkreetset uurimispiirkonda (joon 1). Need on Holy Island (Pühasaar) koos sellel paikneva Lindisfarne'i kloostri ja Bamburgh' kindluse ümbruskond Põhja-Northumberlandi rannikul ning Dunbar ja Tynningham Ida-Lothianis Šotimaal. Mõlemalt näidisel on teada üsna rohkesti andmestikku nii ilmaliku kui ka kirikliku tegevuse kohta varakeskajal.

Antud uurimistöös on peetud oluliseks pöörata tähelepanu varakeskaegse Northumbria ranniku inimgeograafilistele aspektidele. Olulisemad kohad varakeskaegsel rannikul on tuvastatavad nii arheoloogiliste kui ka ajalooliste meetoditega. Kasulikke infot Northumbria poliitilise ja kirikliku geograafia kohta võib leida Bede varakeskaegsetest kirjutistest. Bede elas Jarrow's ja antud teema puhul pakub erilist huvi tema 731. aastal valminud "Inglise keelt kõnelevate rahvaste ajalugu" ("History of the English Speaking Peoples"). Mitmeid kohti on mainitud ka "Anglosaksi kroonikas" ja mitmetes teistes anglosaksi tekstides, näiteks Bede "Püha Cuthberti igapäevases elus" ("Prose Life of St Cuthbert"). Arheoloogi-

giline aines koosneb eelkõige kiriklike motiive kujutavatest raidkividest, mida täiendab väljakaevamistel Whitbys, Hartlepoolis, Monkwearmouthis, Jarrow's, Lindisfarne'is ja Bamburgh's kogutud materjal.

Suurepärane varakeskaegne kompleks moodustub Lindisfarne'ist ja Bamburgh'st (joon 2). Lindisfarne'i saarel, mis ühtlasi kannab Pühasaare nime (Holy Island), paiknes üks paremini dokumenteeritud varakeskaegseid kloostrid. Saar jääb rannikust vaevalt 2 km kaugusele ja on mõõna ajal jalgsi ligipääsetav. Sealse anglosaksi kloostriga kohta on teada palju kirjutisi ja väljakaevamistel on sealt leitud rohkesti kiviskulptuure. Olulise tähtsusega ilmalik keskus paiknes 8 km kaugusel üle väikese lahe Bamburgh's. Mõlemast nimetatud kohast avanes teisele suurepärane vaade.

Bamburgh' lähedalt liivaluidetelt on arheoloogiliselt teada anglosaksi kalmistu. Bede andmetel jäi lähedusse, Inner Farne'i saarele, erakla, mis leidis eri aegadel kasutamist nii Aidani kui ka Cuthberti poolt. Nimetatud saare vastas Beadnelli neemel asuvad Ebba kabeli halvasti säilinud varemed. Kabeli nimi näib osutavat, et selle rajas Püha Ebba, mis võis toimuda 7. sajandi algul.

Kui Püha Cuthbert läks pakku väikesel saarel paiknevasse eraklasse, oli tema eesmärgiks tagasitõmbumine ilmalikust maailmast ja liigse tähelepanu vältimine. Hoolimata püüdlustest üksinduse järele on aga teada, et eraklat külastasid tihti mungad nii Lindisfarne'i kloostrist kui ka mujalt. Lisaks korrapärasele külastustele toimus suhtlus nimetatud saarte vahel ilmselt ka muul viisil – näiteks signaalseeriti teade Cuthberti surmast ühe munga poolt eraklas ja võeti vastu teise munga poolt Lindisfarne'i kloostriga vahitornis. Need saared polnud seega mitte üksnes maailmast eemalolemiseks, vaid toimisid edukalt ka navigatsioonipunktidenä. Eriti Farne'i saar asub kaldalähedasel sügavama veega liiklemiseks ja on varastes lootsikäsiraamatutes mainitud kui maamärk.

Sarnane, ilmalikust võimukeskusest, kloostrist ja rannalähedasest eraklast koosnev kompleks on teada natuke põhja pool, Ida-Lothiani rannikul (joon 3). Dunbar oli tähtsaks keskuseks ilmselt juba brittide ajal ja hiljem kujunes seal välja anglosaksi *caput*. Viimasest umbes 7 km lääne poole jäi Tynningham, Püha Balthere'iga (surnud 756) tihedalt seotud kiriklik keskus.

Püha Balthere'i erakla arvatakse olevat paiknenud samas lähikonnas, rannalähedasel Bass Rocki saarel Forthi jõe viiva kitsa lahe suudmes. Selle kõrval Auldham'e is kaevati hiljuti varakristlikku kalmistut, mille lähedus Bass Rockile lubab oletada seost Balthere'i rannalähedase eraklaga. Ka siin on Bass Rocki kalju-saar hilisematel aegadel tuntud kui oluline meremärk teel avamerelt Forthi jõe suudmesse.

Piki Northumbria rannikut on teada saari või rannikueraklaid, mis kõik on seotud tähtsamate kloostritega. Sellist kloostrite ja eraklate sümbioosi võib käsitleda kui kristlikest sümbolitest rikastatud kultuurmaastikku. Samas selgub kirjalikest allikatest ja ilmalikest keskustest kogutud arheoloogilisest materjalist, et see sümbolne maastik oli vaid dekoratsiooniks vilka elutegevusega rannaaladele, kus paiknesid mitmed tähtsad võimukeskused ning mida läbisid olulised ühendus-



teed. Hoolimata eraklikkust ja eemaletõmbumist rõhutavast retoorikast, toimis sealne asketism kõigi nende kuningate ja ülikute, reisi-, kauba- ning meremeeste silme all, kes liikusid ringi Northumbria vetes ja rannikul. Asjaolu, et enamik saartel paiknevatest eraklatest oli ühtlasi kasutuses navigatsioonimärkidena rannalähedases meres, rõhutab neid kui olulisi sõlmpunkte kuningriigi rannaaladega seotud poliitikas. Kuigi Cuthbert ja teised varakristlikud erakud võisid saartele eemaldumises tõesti näha võimalust vältida kontakti ilmaliku maailmaga, kolisid nad mõneti paradoksaalselt just sellistesse kohtadesse, mis olid hästi nähtavad nii olulisematest ilmalikest kui ka kiriklikest keskustest. Need olid ühtlasi saared, mis sobisid kõige paremini maamärkideks kohalikus mereliikluses.