

# Churches

## **The Anglican Church of St Lawrence**

is a Norman structure (located in Dial Place) in the centre of the village and is adjacent to the River Coquet, The name Warkworth appeared in Anglo-Saxon history during the twelfth century as Wercewode. Werce was the name of an Abbess who gave

linen to the Venerable Bede to be used as his shroud. The word 'worth' means a palisaded enclosure. There has been a church on this site of St Lawrence for more than twelve centuries. The first mention is in 737 when the King of Northumbria gave Wercewode and its Church of St. Lawrence, to the Abbot and monks of Holy Island.



The King was Ceolwulf and two years after the death of St Bede, Ceolwulf entered Lindisfarne as a monk. This event is depicted in one of the panels of the pulpit in the church. In 875, the monks fled from Lindisfarne with St.Cuthbert's body and a Danish King –Halfdene totally destroyed the land and the church. The next church was

of stone, and its foundations have been traced beneath the present Chancel arch. A small cross marks the spot where the altar stood.

Saturday July 13th 1174, was a black day in the history of Warkworth when Duncan, Earl of Fife, along with the Scottish King William the Lion, entered Warkworth, set fire to the town and killed three hundred of its citizens who had taken refuge within the walls of the church.

The present Norman Church was built not only as a place of worship but also as a refuge in time of danger. It originally consisted of a Chancel with a stone roof and then the nave which was a long narrow space enclosed by two thick stone walls. The windows, set high in the walls were only slits which kept out both enemies and



the weather. Glass was scarcely used in those days, and the church must have been a very uncomfortable place, with no light, no seats and with an earth floor; but it sheltered the altar and the people. The south wall was later taken down and the aisle was built.

In 1120, Henry I gave the churches of Warkworth, Whittingham, Rothbury and Corbridge to his Chaplain, Richard de Aurea Valle, Later, when he died the four churches were endowed for the newly formed Diocese of Carlisle and remained so until Newcastle became a diocese in 1882. The church was seized by forces loyal to the Old Pretender in 1715 and prayers were offered for him as King James III by the Rebel's chaplain, following which Warkworth became the first market town in England to proclaim him as King at the Market Cross and on Saturday May 16th 1761, John Wesley preached to a congregation in Warkworth. In many churches Wesley was refused permission to speak but this was not the case in Warkworth. The church was able to hold a big congregation and the parish included Amble, Acklington and Chevington. Wesley later in the day crossed over the river and visited the Hermitage.

Today St Lawrence Church Warkworth is one of the finest examples of a Norman Church and is still part of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.



**The United Reformed Church** in Warkworth is a much more modern building and is located on The Butts, close to the River Coquet. Many visitors will probably walk past it without realising it is a church at all. It was established in 1828 as a Presbyterian Church and is much smaller than St

Lawrence Church. The church was enlarged in 1860 and the interior was remodelled in the 20th Century. It is a Grade II listed building.