

Archaeological and historical research suggests that Aberlady was an important location in North Britain throughout the Early Historic period and beyond. Various indicators suggest it has been a site of Christian worship since at least the 8th century AD.

The intricate carving on the 8th century Anglian cross fragment discovered in the garden wall of the former manse (immediately to the east of our church) in 1863 bears a strikingly close relationship to the illuminated artwork of the Lindisfarne Gospels made on Holy Island in c.720AD and today one of Britain's national treasures.



Images courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland

In the early 1990s, a large number of metal finds was recovered from the Glebe Field, to the immediate north of the church. It included a quantity of 8th-9th century Anglo-Saxon coins and a variety of decorated mounts and pinheads, including a rare and particularly high quality disc-headed pinhead featuring an open-work interlaced animal. Together they represent the largest concentration of Anglo-Saxon stray finds yet discovered in Scotland, and further identify Aberlady as an important centre during this little understood period. The carved metallic tip of a Bishop's decorated crozier, or shaft, was also recovered from the Glebe.



Images courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland



EARLY HISTORIC ABERLADY AND PEFFERHAM

The 12th century *Historia Regum Anglorum* includes a 9th-10th century list of the main churches in the diocese of St Cuthbert, which extended across kingdom of Northumbria. The churches it identifies on the southern coastline of the River Forth are Abercorn, Edinburgh, Pefferham, Auldham, Tynninghame and Coldingham. All of these, save Pefferham, can be found easily on any modern map. Scholars noting the extent and nature of the archaeological and other evidence from modern day Aberlady believe this to be the lost monastic settlement of Pefferham.



Such large skilfully crafted and embellished crosses would only be erected on Christian sites viewed as particularly important by the ruling elite. A full-scale interpretation of how the original five metre cross might have looked was erected by the local community in the

village Memorial Garden (to the immediate west of our church) in 2011. It was carved using the same basic tools that the early craftsmen would have employed. You have to imagine it painted in vivid blues, golds, greens and reds. Reflected light from amber and blue glass inserted into the eye sockets of the interlaced birds and animals would have added to the overall spectacle.

Place-name research locates the settlement on an early pilgrimage route between Iona and Holy Island. Historians consider it quite likely that St Aidan, the 7th century



Illustration by David Simon

Ionan monk invited by King Oswald to establish a monastery of the Celtic church in Northumbria (Northumbria stretched from the Humber to the Forth during its Golden Age from the 7th to the 10th centuries) would have travelled via Aberlady. The location St Aidan chose for this monastery was the tidal island of Lindisfarne. Traffic between the two monastic powerhouses would have endured over time.

