

1 - The Map of the Region

The geography of the North East of England has been central to its history and the development of its communities and industries over the centuries..

WE SHOULD LOOK FIRST AT THE GEOLOGY OF THE REGION

Refer to GEOLOGICAL MAP

- I. Volcanic lava block of the Cheviots.
- II. Volcanic basalt ridge of the Great Whin Sill.
- III. Sandstone, shale and limestone in north Northumberland.
- IV. North Pennine Limestone Measures containing lead, iron and some coal.
- V. The main coal measures lie in a triangular basin with its northern apex at Amble - the coal measures slope eastwards under the North Sea.
- VI. In the East Durham Plateau, the coal measures lie concealed beneath a cap of Magnesian Limestone.
- VII. The most fertile agricultural land lies on the East Durham Plateau, along the coastal plain of Northumberland and in the lower river valleys of the Tweed, Tyne and Tees.

THE NORTH SEA HAS BEEN ANOTHER MAJOR INFLUENCE

- I. The major settlements and industries grew on the coast and beside the rivers that run into the North Sea.
- II. The rivers and the sea provided trade links to the rest of Britain and to the Continent.
- III. The North Sea also provided a route for raiders, invaders and settlers from northern Europe.

THIS WAS A FRONTIER LAND FOR CENTURIES

Change to - A MOVING BORDER

The Border between Scotland and England was fluid until well into the late Middle Ages.

The natural Frontier Lines in North Britain are

- I. The Clyde/Forth line, where the Romans built the short-lived Antonine Wall.
- II. The River Tweed and the Cheviot Hills, where the Anglo-Scottish Border runs today
- III. The Tyne/Solway line, guarded during much of the Roman occupation by Hadrian's Wall
- IV. The Tees, which marked the southern extent of the Palatinate of Durham.

2 - Settlement and Growth

What were the main factors that affected the choice of settlement sites in the past?

1. **Resources** - The primary need was access to water and food, provided by the fertile river valleys and coastal plains on the North East. The region was also rich in mineral resources including lead, iron and coal.
2. **Defence** = Early settlers established themselves in strategic positions such as high ground for a hill-fortress or a peninsula protected by a river, such as at Durham or Warkworth. In the Middle Ages, a township might flourish under the protection of a baron's castle.
3. **Communication** – townships also grew up where roads or tracks met, at crossing places on rivers or beside natural havens on the coast.

In the days before maps, places were given names that referred to a particular feature of the settlement or its location, or contained a reference to its head man.

A surprising number of Early English place names have survived from Anglo-Saxon times to the present day.

TOWNSHIP NAME EXERCISE

3 Settlement Expansion

There was a substantial increase in the population of the North East during the 12th and 13th centuries that led to the expansion of existing settlements and the creation of many new ones.

There were several ways of expanding existing settlements and creating new ones:

- i. Existing tenements within a settlement could be divided. This type of settlement formation was common in the south of England, but was less usual in the North East because a far greater quantity of land was available.
- ii. New freehold tenements were created in existing settlements, which brought in considerably more rent for the landlord.
- iii. New types of tenure were invented, such as Exchequerland on the estates of the Bishop of Durham. These were smallholdings of about one acre each, which were held for life in return for payment of rent direct to the episcopal exchequer.
- iv. New villages could be created by dividing existing townships in two. For example, Rainton in County Durham was described in 1195 as the Two Raintons and in the 13th century as East and West Rainton.
- v. Other new villages were created in the uncultivated waste or woodlands attached to existing townships. This process was called assart. These new villages can often be identified by place names such as Newlands, Newtown, Newton or Newbiggin, or placenames ending in "ley", the Old English word meaning "a clearing". There are at least 80 examples in Durham and 70 in Northumberland, including Beanley, Bishopley, Shotley and Hedley.

4 Who Held Power In The North East?

Distance from central government resulted in great power being allowed to the prince bishops of Durham and the great Border dynasties (*e.g. the Percys and the Nevilles*).

The Norman colonisation of Northumbria took over a century to complete. William the Conqueror created numerous baronies throughout England where he installed his loyal followers. In the North East, a handful of old Northumbrian families managed to keep their lordships, thegnages and drengages under the new Norman feudal system, the Nevilles being perhaps the most notable example.

It was not until the reign of Henry II, in the mid-12th century, that the Anglo-Scottish frontier was firmly set along the Tweed rather than the Tyne, or even the Tees. Until the end of the 13th century, under a succession of kings of England and Scotland, it was common for Norman lords to hold estates and titles in both countries.

However, the outbreak of war between the two nations from 1296 led to dramatic changes in land ownership.. Some families lost everything, such as the Umfravilles, while others gained land and riches through the conflict, like the Percies who rose to become one of the most powerful dynasties in medieval England.

The region's isolated situation resulted in a handful of great landowners ruling with almost regal powers throughout this turbulent period.

Among the greatest of these land-lords were the Bishop of Durham and the Prior of the Abbey of Durham Abbey. I

The power of the Prince Bishops of Durham grew under successive Kings of England and was founded on the vast wealth generated by the lands gifted to the Patrimony of St Cuthbert since pre-Conquest times. As Earls Palatine, the Prince Bishop exercised temporal rights within their Liberty that elsewhere in England were reserved for the King alone. They controlled more than 140 knights' fees, had the ability to mint coins of the Realm, grant charters for boroughs and markets, levy tolls and duties, appoint justices of the peace and administer their law within their own courts.

The great Abbey of Durham, with its daughter houses at Finchale, Wearmouth, Jarrow and Holy Island, held a near-monopoly in the North East throughout the Middle Ages and few other large monastic houses were established in the area.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Abbey's substantial estates, mineral rights and parish revenues continued to provide a substantial source of income for the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral.

So, until the 16th century, the region continued to be controlled by a few great individuals and institutions: Claims were made that "There were two sovereign lords in the land: the Lord King of England and the Lord Bishop of Durham" and that "Northumberland knew no prince but a Percy".

5 Changes In Population

Change to - POPULATION TRENDS

A variety of factors resulted in changes in population levels in the North East during the 900 year period we are exploring.

There was a strong rise in population in the region until the end of the 13th century. Then a combination of crises during the 14th and 15th centuries led to a drastic decline in the population of the North East:

WAR WITH THE SCOTS

King Edward I's invasion of Scotland in 1296 began three centuries of almost constant Anglo-Scottish conflict, which obviously had an effect on the population of the region. BUT there were only some periods when warfare made a marked impact on population and recovery was often quite rapid.

The first half of the 14th century was a period of particular hardship, particularly following the English defeat at Bannockburn in 1314 and the years of chaos under the poor government of Edward II.

Local records from the period show the effects of the chaotic situation.

The Proctor of Norham's Rolls for 1313, the year before Bannockburn, show revenue income of £313 while the accounts for the five years from 1316 to 1320 show a **total** revenue of only £71.

In 1315, the Prior of Durham gave a "contribution" of £46 5s to Robert de Brus and William de Prendergast as protection money.

In 1322, 1000 acres of arable land at Wark-on-Tweed, formerly worth 12d an acre, was now worth nothing as "no one dare till the land for fear of the Scots".

The accounts of the parish of Norham for 1333-34 record "The tithe corn of Tweedmouth, Orde and Allerdean, destroyed by the Scots. Of the land of the Smith of Shoreswood nothing, because he has been murdered by the Scots".

And the 1339 Holy Island Rolls show Scremerston and Barmoor laid waste and Tweedmouth burnt by the Scots.

FAMINE

To add to the hardship, between 1316 and 1322 Europe suffered a desperate agricultural crisis when a continuous period of bad weather resulted in successive harvest failures and the appearance of a virulent disease among livestock, known as murrain.

Contemporary documents provide evidence of the effects of famine and disease.

In 1317, "There was a grievous famine and mortality at Newcastle, insomuch that the quick could hardly bury the dead, and a great corruption of cattle and grass. Some eat the flesh of their own children, and thieves in prison devoured those that were brought in, and greedily eat them half alive".

All the oxen being led to the siege of Berwick Castle in 1319 died suddenly and in the same year, all of Hexham Priory's draught oxen and dairy cattle were lost through disease.

THE BLACK DEATH

The region's population was already declining through years of conflict and famine, but collapsed in the mid-14th century following the arrival of the Black Death in the North East in 1348/9.

Again, contemporary documents provide evidence.

The 1347 Rent Rolls for 28 villages belonging to the Priory of Durham record a total of 718 tenants.

The 1349 Rent Rolls record that 56 tenants had died in the same 28 villages - a 51% mortality rate. However, there was a great variation in mortality rates, even in neighbouring townships. For instance, in Jarrow the death rate was as high as 78%, but only 21% in neighbouring Monkton

Fifty years later, the 1396 Rent Rolls for the same 28 villages list 407 tenants - a 43% decline on the 1347, pre-Black Death total.

THE IMPACT OF A REDUCED POPULATION

These crises and the consequent decline in population produced a number of effects:

1. Less manpower forced decline of demesne farming and changing landlord/tenant relations. Paid labour replaced 'boon work' for the lord and demesne lands were rented out to tenant farmers rather than worked directly for the lord.
2. With the population halved through famine, plague and conflict, there were not enough hands to work the lords' fields or tenants to hold all the available tenements. The new circumstances forced landlords to offer new tenancies, replacing onerous burdens of work and service on the lord's lands with money rents. Many freemen and bondmen held more than one tenement and became substantial farmers, a process called "engrossing", while their landlords had to pay cash for the labouring services of their tenants. As a result, the 15th century is known as "The Golden Age of the English Peasant".
3. To ensure the continuing availability of an armed defensive force on the Border, a unique form of land tenure known as Border Tenure applied in the northern part of the region. Border Tenure gave a guaranteed right of succession to the next generation in return for a small rent together with military service. In some areas close to the Border, there was a method of inheritance known as "gavelkind", or "partible inheritance", by which the land was divided equally between all the sons on the death of the tenant. This resulted in an over-population of freeholding "gentlemen", each with a horse and weapons, but hardly enough land to support his family.

6. 16TH to 18TH CENTURY POPULATION RISE

Change to - ESTIMATED POPULATION

There was an accelerating recovery of population levels in the period between the 16th and the late 18th century.

The increasing population had two major effects:

1. More food was required, so more land was improved and put into agricultural use
2. More manufactured goods were demanded, resulting in expansion of coal-mining and the development of new types of industry and manufacture.

Change to - COMPARISON PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN POPULATION

There was a national increase in population in the 19th century.

However, the population of the North East increased at a rate far faster than the average for England and Wales.

The rise was greatest in Newcastle and in County Durham, until the expansion of industry in South East Northumberland at the very end of the century.

EFFECTS OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND 19TH CENTURY POPULATION CHANGES

Change to - SIZE GROUPS OF SETTLEMENTS

The population of the remoter rural and upland areas declined substantially during the 19th century. For example, Wooller's population increased in the first half of the century, but dropped dramatically in the second half as mechanisation reduced the agricultural workforce and the growing industries attracted migration of workers from the countryside to the towns and cities.

Change to - INDUSTRY AND POPULATION CHANGE

The expansion and contraction of coal mining and other industries was a major factor affecting settlement growth. Some areas saw rapid changes in population levels as people moved to areas where demand for labour outstripped supply.

Refer to - INDUSTRY AND POPULATION CHANGE

THEN CHANGE TO - INWARD MIGRATION

Opportunities for employment in the new and expanding industries encouraged migration from other parts of the UK and Ireland, where demand for labour outstripped local supply. The 1871 census shows that one third of the population of Northumberland and Durham had been born outside these two counties

Change to - EFFECTS OF HARBOUR AND COLLIERY RAILWAY LINKS

The development of harbours and railways increased the ability of the North East to supply the rest of Britain and generated extra demand for minerals, products and engineering expertise.

This resulted in a greater percentage increase in the population of the North East than the United Kingdom average due to the region's mineral wealth and the expansion of its industries.

The development of the railways, in particular, was a major factor in opening up new employment opportunities, leading to spectacular increases in the population in some areas.

7. The Role of the North East in the Industrial Revolution

The agrarian revolution was stimulated by the need to provide food for the increasing population in the towns and rapidly growing industrialised areas, particularly on Tyneside.

Those towns and industries were expanding thanks to the mineral wealth of the region: *Lead, iron, limestone and coal.*

By 1800, the region was producing 50% of the total world output of lead, by 1900 North Eastern pits produced 25% of UK coal output.

Coal shipments to London made fortunes for owners of Northumbrian coal manors, good profits for ambitious businessmen willing to invest in mining technology, and a decent living for the skilled engineers and miners who won the coal.

New uses for coal, for gas lighting, coke ovens and blast furnaces led to greater demand. New industries added to the region's prosperity.

By 1860, 40% of the country's glass and 50% of UK chemicals were produced in the North East. To meet the need, collieries were opening up further and further from the navigable rivers.

The network of waggonways linking the pits to the staiths grew ever more complex. The work of great Northumbrian railway engineering pioneers, like Hedley, Stephenson and Hackworth led to the replacement of horsepower by steam locomotives on the waggonways.

Collieries and railways attracted inward investment to the region from London speculators and commercial bankers. The railways themselves created more demand for coal and iron, as well as providing a means to transport it to the new markets.

Railway engineering skills were transferable to ship-building and North Eastern shipyards rapidly overtook the Clyde, the Thames and the Mersey in the construction of iron-hulled steamships.

By 1850, the region was building 50% of UK tonnage, by 1892 42% of world tonnage.