



County Facts

County Name: from county town - from old English 'dun' (hill) and Norse 'holme' (island).

County Origins: following formation of City of Durham in AD995, the Bishops of Durham gradually acquired lands which eventually became the Liberty of Durham. During 13th and 14th centuries these became accepted as a separate shire known as the County Palatine of Durham.

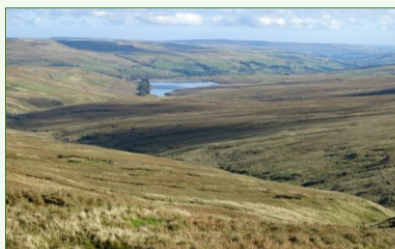
Area: 1,105 square miles

Population: 1,467,050

County Landscapes:

The county stretches from the North Sea coast up into the Pennines. The rivers Tyne and Derwent separate it from Northumberland. The border with Cumberland crosses the Pennine fells. The River Tees separates it from Westmorland and Yorkshire.

The Durham Dales, part of the Pennines, occupy the west of the county. The county top is Burnhope Seat eastern summit at 2,451ft.



Durham Dales

The south of the county lies within the broad open plain of the Tees Lowlands - much of it rural but with the industrial towns of Darlington, Stockton-on-Tees, Billingham and the port of Hartlepool.

Introduction

County Durham is a maritime county in the north-east of England. County Durham reaches from the North Sea coast up into the Pennines, separated from Northumberland to the north by the River Tyne and the Derwent and from Yorkshire by the River Tees from its source to its mouth.

The county was a county palatine under the rule of the Bishop of Durham from the Middle Ages until the palatine jurisdiction was merged with the Crown in 1836. The county is often still referred to as the County Palatine of Durham. The county is also popularly known as "the Land of the Prince Bishops".



The Angel of the North

Durham's history was forged by the troubles of the Middle Ages. The Industrial Revolution prompted exploitation of its extensive coalfield, dramatically changing its character. New mining villages were built. Its towns developed as centres of heavy industry, particularly iron and steel production and shipbuilding.

The decline of traditional industries has seen the character of the county change again, with the establishment of new towns, industrial and business parks, and a move towards light industry, technology, services and tourism.

County Durham has a rich heritage: natural, man-made and cultural. It possesses stunning countryside and coast and abundant wildlife. It has a long and complex history - from Anglo-Saxon times through the middle-ages and the industrial revolution to the present day - and a proud heritage which derives from that. Many historic buildings and landmarks from the county's past are preserved for present and future generations. Its sons and daughters have made major contributions to literature, the arts, science and sport. The county has a strong sense of identity and community.

County Geography

The Durham Dales occupy the west of the county, a landscape of high exposed moorlands, hills and mountains.

The River Tees rises in Cumberland before forming County Durham's border with Westmorland and then its long border with Yorkshire. County Durham's border with Cumberland runs across the peaks to where County Durham, Cumberland and Northumberland meet by Killhope Head. From here County Durham's border with Northumberland crosses the fells and thence along the rivers Derwent. Consett is perched on the steep eastern bank of the Derwent, on the edge of the Durham Dales. The River Tyne forms the border with Northumberland from near Ryton to the sea at South Shields.



Upper Weardale around Ireshopeburn

At Wearhead, the River Wear starts its long, meandering journey through some of the county's best-known towns and countryside. Upper Weardale is famed for its beauty, surrounded by high fells climbing up to 2,447 feet at Burnhope Seat (eastern summit), the county top, with heather grouse moors. The dale's principal villages include St John's Chapel, Stanhope and Wolsingham.



High Force waterfall on the Tees - Yorkshire on left bank, County Durham on right bank

Upper Teesdale is a landscape of unrivalled drama. At High Force, the Tees plunges 70 feet over a rock precipice in one of Britain's greatest waterfalls. Middleton-in-Teesdale lies a little downstream, amongst the hills.

The East Durham Plateau occupies the central part of the east of the county - falling from a prominent western escarpment eastward to the sea - a landscape shaped by mining, quarrying and industry.



River Wear near Washington

The River Wear flows across almost the entire breadth of the county through the county town and reaching the sea at the port of Sunderland. Many ancient towns and historic sites lie along the Wear Valley including Crook, Bishop Auckland and Chester-le-Street.

The Durham Heritage Coast, between Sunderland and Hartlepool, is a spectacular landscape of cream-coloured cliffs reclaimed in recent years from the "Coal Coast".

The north-east of the county is formed by the lowland plain south of the River Tyne and dominated by the towns which line the river's southern bank including the former mining towns of Ryton and Blaydon on Tyne; the major urban centre of Gateshead - famous for its architecture; the shipbuilding town of Hebburn; Jarrow with its remarkable history; and the port town of South Shields.



South Shields Pier and Lighthouse

Main Towns:

Barnard Castle - market town with medieval castle

Billingham - industrial town - Anglo-Saxon church tower

Bishop Auckland - market town - links with Bishops of Durham

Blaydon - former mining town - basis of song "Blaydon Races"

Chester-le-Street - Roman town - St Cuthbert's bones 883-995

Consett - market town high on edge of the Pennines

Crook - market town - the "Gateway to Weardale"

Darlington - market town with famous railway heritage

Eaglescliffe - large village on Tees - Tetley's Tea factory

Gateshead - major town on Tyne - iconic architecture

Hartlepool - large port town - Hartlepool Marina

Hebburn - former mining town - proud sporting heritage

Hetton-le-Hole - former mining town - notable wind farm

Houghton-le-Spring - town with traditional Houghton Feast Oct

Jarrow - former shipbuilding town - famous for Jarrow March - home of the Venerable Bede

Newton Aycliffe - Beveridge's flagship post-war new town



Newton Aycliffe War Memorial

Peterlee - post-war new town named after miners' leader

Ryton - former mining town turned commuter village

Barnard Castle, famous for its Norman castle, lies on the edge of the Durham Dales. Bowes Museum has a renowned art collection housed in a 19th-century French-style chateau. 14th-century Raby Castle, near Staindrop, is famed for its size and art.



Barnard Castle from the Tees

The **Tees Lowlands** - a broad, open plain dominated by the meandering River Tees - occupy the south-east of the county. Much of it remains a rural landscape of scattered small villages. Unspoilt villages, including Gainford, Carlbury, High Coniscliffe, Hurworth-on-Tees, Neasham and Middleton-one-Row, lie along the Tees.

Much of the Tees Lowlands is heavily urbanised. Newton Aycliffe was founded in 1946, one of the first of the post-war new towns. Darlington's development owes much to the local Quaker families of the Georgian and Victorian eras, who were instrumental in creating the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the first railway in the world to operate freight and passenger service with steam traction

Stockton-on-Tees developed as a market town around the manor house and later castle of the bishops of Durham. The town later grew on ship building, steel and chemicals. Its importance as a port was enhanced by its connection to the Durham coalfield by the Stockton and Darlington railway in 1825.

Billingham was founded circa 650 by a group of Angles known as Billa's people. The chemical industry has played a key role in the growth of modern Billingham. St Cuthbert's church has an Anglo-Saxon tower and element of an 8th century nave.



Hartlepool Marina

Hartlepool was founded in the 7th century around Hartlepool Abbey. The port grew with the development of the Durham coalfield. A portion of the docklands has been converted into Hartlepool Marina.

The East Durham Plateau occupies the central part of the east of the county - a low upland plateau of Magnesian Limestone falling eastwards to the sea and defined in the west by a prominent escarpment, from which there are panoramic views across the Wear lowlands to the Pennines.

The heavy clay soils of the plateau support mixed, predominantly arable, farmland in an open rolling landscape. The landscape has been heavily influenced by mining, quarrying and industry, its scattered mining towns and villages and busy roads giving it a semi-rural character in places.

Sedgefield has the county's only racecourse. Houghton-le-Spring and Hetton-le-Hole are large towns with long histories, but which grew around the mining industry in the 19th century. Peterlee was a new town founded in 1948 and named after the celebrated Durham miners' leader Peter Lee.



The Durham Heritage Coast

The coast between Sunderland and Hartlepool used to be called the "black coast" following decades of coal waste being dumped onto the beach. Following a lengthy clean-up operation, the coast has been reborn as the *Durham Heritage Coast*. The magnesian limestone that underlies this area has given rise to a spectacular landscape of cream-coloured cliffs intersected by denes.

Seaham is a seaside town based around its harbour, constructed in 1828. At Seaham Hall, in 1815, Lord Byron married Anne Isabella Milbanke. Their short-lived union produced the mathematician Ada Lovelace.



Church of St Mary the Virgin at Seaham

Seaham - seaside town with 19th century harbour



Seaham Harbour

Sedgefield - market town with Sedgefield Racecourse

Shildon - small town - 'Locomotion' railway museum

South Shields - coastal town at mouth of Tyne - Roman fort

Spennymoor - former mining town - Durham Mining Museum



Spennymoor Cemetery

Stanley - former colliery town - Causey Arch railway bridge

Stanhope - market town - Weardale Railway terminus



Stockton Town Hall

Stockton-on-Tees - market town and former port - famous railway heritage

Sunderland - famous port city at River Wear's mouth

Washington - large 1960s new town - 17th century Old Hall

Whickham - suburban town on high ground overlooking Tyne

Attractions:

Angel of the North - sculpture by Antony Gormley opened in 1998 - iconic symbol of Gateshead, County Durham and the wider north-east of England

Auckland Castle - former official residence of Bishops of Durham

Bowes Museum - purpose built (1892) art gallery with renowned collection



Causey Arch

Causey Arch - world's oldest single-arch railway bridge

Durham Castle - Norman castle high above River Wear opposite cathedral

Durham Cathedral - seat of Bishop of Durham. St Cuthbert's remains, St Oswald's head, Bede's remains

Durham Mining Museum, Spennymoor - covers mining throughout the northern counties



Escomb Saxon Church

Escomb Church - one of only four complete Anglo-Saxon churches in England

Finchale Priory - remains of 13th century Benedictine priory

Head of Steam, Darlington - railway museum on route of the Stockton and Darlington Railway

High Force - spectacular waterfall on River Tees on the County Durham / Yorkshire border

The **Wear Valley** consists of lowlands between the Durham Dales and the East Durham Plateau. The former mining town of Crook lies just north of the Wear at the edge of the Dales.

Bishop Auckland lies on the Wear a few miles further south. Much of the town's early history was shaped by the Bishops of Durham who established a hunting lodge which later became their main residence, the splendid Auckland Castle. The route of the Roman road Dere Street passes through the town on its way to the Roman Fort at Binchester.

The nearby village of Escomb has an Anglo-Saxon church built between 670 and 690.



Durham Cathedral from the River Wear

The City of Durham rises magnificently on a hill surrounded by the River Wear, crowned by its huge Norman Cathedral. This site was chosen in troubled times as a defensible spot by the guardians of the bones of Saint Cuthbert, which now lie within the Cathedral. Their settlement here was the effective foundation of Durham and its status. Durham Castle is a Norman castle which was previously the residence of the Bishops of Durham. The cathedral and castle form a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Finchdale Priory

The remains of Finchale Priory, a 13th-century Benedictine priory, are sited by the Wear four miles from Durham. Some remains of the early 12th-century chapel where Godric of Finchale was buried exist.

The Wear flows north to the ancient town of Chester-le-Street. Here the Roman's built the fort of Concangis. This Roman fort is the "Chester" of the town's name; the "Street" refers to the paved Roman road that ran through the town. The parish church of St Mary and St Cuthbert is where the body of St Cuthbert remained for 112 years before being transferred to Durham Cathedral, and the site of the first translation of the Gospels into English.

Washington was designated a new town in 1964, though based around and retaining the older village of Washington. Washington Old Hall is an early-17th-century manor house, with a 13th-century Great Hall. The manor was the ancestral home of the family of George Washington.

At the mouth of the Wear lies the city of Sunderland. Sunderland began as a fishing settlement before being granted a charter in 1179. Sunderland grew as a port, trading coal and salt. Ships began to be built on the river in the 14th century. Since the decline of the city's traditional industries, the area has become a commercial centre for the automotive industry, science and technology and the service sector.



St Peter's Church, Monkwearmouth

Monkwearmouth, north of the Wear, is the site of St Peter's Church, founded in 674 as part of the Monkwearmouth-Jarrow Abbey. Bishopwearmouth lies south of the Wear on the west of Sunderland. Sunderland Minster church has stood at its heart since the Middle Ages.



Whitburn Windmill

To the north of Sunderland are the resort town of Seaburn, a favourite place of painter L.S. Lowry, and the village of Whitburn, with its 18th-century windmill looking out to sea.

Locomotion, Shildon - award winning railway museum



Raby Castle - famous for its art works collected by Vane family

St Paul's Church and monastery ruins, Jarrow - home of the Venerable Bede

St Peter's Church, Monkwearmouth - originally abbey church of Monkwearmouth Abbey

Seaham Hall - 18th century house where in 1815 Byron married Anne Isabella Milbanke

Souter Lighthouse - most advanced lighthouse ever when built (1871)



RSPB Saltholme with Tees Transporter bridge

Tees Transporter bridge - connects Middlesbrough (Yorkshire) to Stockton-on-Tees (County Durham)

Tyne Bridge - through-arch bridge (1928) linking Gateshead to Newcastle upon Tyne.



Washington Old Hall - ancestral home of George Washington's family

Witton Castle - 15th-century castle

Famous Names:

The Venerable Bede - "Father of English History" b. Jarrow 806

Cecily Neville - "the Rose of Raby" b. Raby Castle 1415



William Emerson - mathematician - *The Principles of Mechanics* - b. Hurworth 1701

Thomas Wright - astronomer - idea faint nebulae are "island universes" - b. Byers Green 1711

Jeremiah Dixon - astronomer, surveyor - Mason-Dixon Line b. Cockfield 1733

Edward Pease - "Father of the Railways" b. Darlington 1767

Joseph Pease - activist, abolitionist b. Darlington 1772

Anne Isabella Milbanke (Lady Bryon) - mathematician b. Elemore Hall 1792



Elizabeth Barrett Browning - poetess b. Kelloe 1806

Jack Pease - politician b. Darlington 1860

Peter Lee - trade unionist b. Trimdon Grange 1864

Jimmy James - comedian b. Stockton-on-Tees 1892

The north-east of County Durham is formed by the lowland plain south of the River Tyne and dominated by the towns which line the river's southern bank. At the west of this stretch of the river are the former mining towns Ryton and Blaydon-on-Tyne. Whickham is a prosperous commuter town. Near to the former mining town of Stanley is the Causey Arch, the oldest surviving single-arch railway bridge in the world.



Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead

Gateshead lies on the Tyne, opposite Newcastle upon Tyne and joined to it by seven bridges, including the landmark Gateshead Millennium Bridge. The town's economy is still based around the Team Valley trading estate, established in the 1930s. Gateshead is known for its iconic architecture, e.g. The Sage Gateshead, the Angel of the North and Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art.

East of Gateshead lies Hebburn with its proud shipbuilding heritage. East of Hebburn is the former shipbuilding town of Jarrow, starting point of the Jarrow March against unemployment in 1936.



Monastery site and St Peter's Church, Jarrow

Jarrow is also world famous for its association with the Venerable Bede who lived, worked and died at St Paul's monastery here. The monastery was founded by Benedict Biscop in 682 and a companion to the St Peter's monastery he founded at Monkwearmouth in 674. Bede composed the first book of English history here; the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, creating the narrative which all future works were to follow.

Both houses were sacked by Viking raiders and abandoned, but re-founded as cells of Durham Priory in the 14th century.

South Shields lies at the mouth of the Tyne, built on its docks and the industry that came with them. It remains one of the most important ports in the kingdom. The town's North Sea coast has extensive beaches as well as the dramatic magnesian limestone cliffs of The Leas (NT).



Souter Lighthouse

Marsden Bay, with its famous Marsden Rock, is home to a huge seabird colony. Souter Lighthouse (NT) (1871) was the first lighthouse in the world designed and built to be powered by electricity.

County History

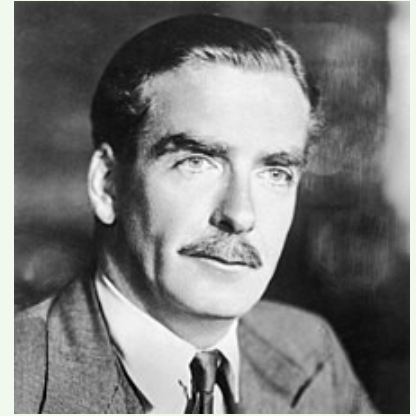
The lands of County Durham were part of the Kingdom of Northumbria from its foundation until the Viking incursions. At the height of Northumbrian power it became a centre of learning and ecclesiastical development, in particular at the Monasteries of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow.

Once the City of Durham had been founded, the Bishops of Durham gradually acquired the lands were eventually given the status of a liberty, known variously as the "Liberty of Durham", "Liberty of St Cuthbert's Land" "The lands of St Cuthbert between Tyne and Tees" or "The Liberty of Haliwerfolc".

When the county of Northumberland was formed in the 12th century, the bishops disputed that their land formed part of it, eventually putting their case before Parliament. By the 14th century Durham was accepted as a liberty which received royal mandates directly, effectively a private shire with the bishop appointing his own sheriff. The area became known as the County Palatine of Durham. The palatine jurisdiction was merged with the Crown in 1836 though the title is still commonly used.

Durham's history was forged by the troubles of the Middle Ages. The Industrial Revolution prompted exploitation of its extensive coalfield, dramatically changing its character. New mining villages were built. Its towns developed as centres of heavy industry, particularly iron and steel production and shipbuilding. Sunderland, Hartlepool and South Shields became major ports.

The decline of traditional industries from the later 20th century has seen the character of the county change again, with the establishment of new towns, industrial and business parks, and a move towards light industry, technology, services. Tourism is an increasingly important industry.



Sir Anthony Eden - politician b. Windlestone Hall 1897

Dame Catherine Cookson - best-selling writer of historical fiction - b. South Shields 1906

Sid Chaplin - novelist, essayist, screenwriter b. Shildon 1916

Norman Cornish - famous artist of mining community life b. Spennymoor 1919



Berriman's Chip Van by Norman Cornish

Sir Bobby Robson - football manager b. Sacriston 1933

James Bolam - actor b. Sunderland 1935



Rowan Atkinson - actor, writer b. Consett 1955

Stephen Tomkinson - actor b. Stockton-on-Tees 1965

Mark Gatiss - actor, writer b. Sedgefield 1966

Paul Gascoigne - footballer b. Gateshead 1967



County Flag in Sunderland



County flag at Ferryhill Town Council on County Durham Day



County flag near Stanhope on County Durham Day



County border sign with county flag motif at Eaglescliffe



County Durham Flag in Parliament Square on Historic County Flags Day

County Durham Flag

The County Durham Flag is a community flag proclaiming the unique identity of the historic county. The flag is a free, public symbol. The design is based on St Cuthbert's cross, counter-charged between the County Durham colours of blue and yellow.

The flag was chosen via an online competition and designed by James, Katie and Holly Moffatt of Chilton. The flag was registered with the Flag Institute on 21st Nov 2013. An unfurling and first-raising ceremony took place at Durham Cathedral on that day.



Unfurling the County Durham Flag at Durham Cathedral

The flag can be seen flying across County Durham and is widely used by sporting teams, on bumper stickers, on town and village signs, on food and drink packaging

County Durham Day

County Durham Day is celebrated each year on 20th March - the feast day of St Cuthbert. It is a day for people throughout the historic county to show their pride in their county and celebrate all they love about County Durham.



County flags on County Durham Day at Seaham and Stanhope

Further Information

- [County Durham Flag](#), UK Flag Registry, Flag Institute
- [County Durham Day](#), Association of British Counties
- [Celebrating the historic counties of England](#), UK Government HMSO