

## Topic Page: [Newcastle upon Tyne \(England\)](#)

Definition: **Newcastle upon Tyne** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

City and major port on the River Tyne, NE England; administrative centre of Tyne and Wear. The site of a fort in Roman times, Newcastle acquired a Norman castle in the 11th century. It was a major wool-exporting port in the 13th century, and later became a coal-shipping centre. Its shipbuilding industry is in decline, but heavy engineering is still important. Industries: pharmaceuticals, engineering, aircraft. Pop. (2001) 259,573.

Summary Article: **Newcastle upon Tyne**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

City and metropolitan borough in Tyne and Wear in northeast England on the River Tyne opposite Gateshead, 17 km/10 mi from the North Sea; population (2001) 259,500. It is the administrative centre of Tyne and Wear and a centre for retail, commerce, communications, and the arts. Newcastle first began to trade in coal in the 13th century, and was an important centre for coal and ship-building until the 1980s. Other industries include engineering (including offshore technology), food processing, brewing, and the manufacture of electronics. In 2001 only 10% of the workforce was in manufacturing, and more than 80% was in the public or service sectors.

**Features** Parts are preserved of a castle keep built by Henry II in 1177 on the site of an older castle, dating from 1080. Other landmarks include the cathedral of St Nicholas, formerly the parish church, which is chiefly 14th-century; the 12th-century St Andrew's church; and the Guildhall (1658).

Museums and galleries include the Laing Art Gallery, which is the North East's principal art gallery with extensive collections of paintings, watercolours, costume, silver, glass, pottery, and sculpture; the Military Vehicle Museum, located in the last

remaining pavilion of the 1929 North East Coast Exhibition; the Newcastle Discovery Museum; the Hancock Museum; and the International Centre for Life. The quayside area, with its historic buildings, underwent restoration in the 1980s and 1990s and became a fashionable waterside area known for its nightlife. Newcastle is connected with the neighbouring town of Gateshead by a tunnel and eight bridges, including the distinctive single-span Tyne Bridge (1928). The University of Newcastle was founded in 1963, and the University of Northumbria (formerly Newcastle Polytechnic) in 1992. A statue and garden memorial to Cardinal Basil Hume, who was born in Newcastle in 1923, was inaugurated in 2002.

**From Roman times to the 18th century** Newcastle stands on the site of a Roman settlement, **Pons Aelius**, of which several relics are exhibited in the Museum of Antiquities. On the foundations of this bridge the Normans built another, with a castle (1080) rising above the bridge on the steep river bank. The town grew along the riverside and northwards across the plateau (35 m/115 ft) above the river. There are traces of the medieval street pattern and building plots on the steep slope down to the Tyne. From the 13th until the 18th century, Newcastle was walled and traces of the western wall and isolated towers remain. It was a military base for English troops during intermittent wars with Scotland and was occupied

by the Scots in 1640 and 1644–47. The Newcastle merchants, or Hostmen, maintained a monopoly of the coal trade from 1220 until the 18th century.

**19th-century development** In 1826 ironworks were established by George Stephenson, and the first engine used on the Stockton and Darlington railway was made in Newcastle in the same year. During the early 19th century the section of the town on the plateau was drastically rebuilt. The walls were partially replaced by wide streets and ravines were filled in to allow new roads to be built, including Grainger Street, Clayton Street, and the curvilinear Grey Street (1834–39) with its impressive Regency architecture. This work was carried out by the architects Richard Grainger and John Dobson, and John Clayton, the town clerk. Grey's monument, at the junction of the main streets, commemorates the Reform Act of 1832. At the opposite end of Grainger Street, Dobson's Central Station (1850) complements Robert Stephenson's high-level bridge (1849) which carries the railway and road 34 m/111 ft above the river, and was the largest bridge in the world at the time of its construction. Over the next 60 years a swing bridge (1876), the Redheugh road bridge (1871), the King Edward railway bridge (1906), and the Tyne Bridge (1928) were built within 1 km/0.6 mi of each other.

**The 20th century** The northern part of the city was rebuilt from the 1960s. A motorway circles the east and northeast of the town and there is an underground rapid transit system, the Tyneside Metro (1980). North of the shopping centre lies the administrative and educational precinct with the civic centre (1963) situated between Newcastle University and the Royal Grammar School (1525). The Town Moor and associated parks, occupying an area of 375 ha/937 acres, separate the commercial town from its northern suburbs in Gosforth. The 19th-century housing has been replaced in Scotswood and Elswick to the west by high-rise flats. In Byker, to the east, the 'Byker Wall' provides low-rise accommodation. A genetics institute and exhibition centre, the International Centre for Life, opened in 2000. Designed by Terry Farrell, it was a Millennium Commission Landmark Project. The Millennium Bridge (2001) – a steel footbridge which opens like the visor on a motorcycle helmet – links the quayside with the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, a new international arts complex in the old Baltic Flour Mills at Gateshead, and the Regional Music Centre (2002).

**Churches** Tradition has it that the church of St Nicholas, now the cathedral, was founded by Osmund, bishop of Salisbury, in 1091, but it is believed that a church was standing on the site long before then. The Norman church was destroyed by fire in 1216 and was replaced in the 14th century by a building in the Early English style, with the exception of the Perpendicular tower and steeple, built about 1430. St Mary's Roman Catholic cathedral was built in 1844 from the design of Pugin, and its tall, graceful spire was added in 1872. Other churches include All Saints' church, completed in 1796 on the site of an earlier church which had been demolished; St Andrew's church (12th Century); the church of St John the Baptist (14th–15th centuries); and St Ann's church, built in 1768 with stones from part of the town wall.

**The castle** Today the expression 'the castle' denotes only the keep was built by Henry II in 1177. The original appearance of the building has been entirely altered by the erection of battlements in 1810. The Black Gate is a later addition built by Henry III in 1249. The great hall of the castle has a modern roof, but the chapel is a fine example of late Norman architecture.

**The Guildhall and its surroundings** The Guildhall on the 'Sandhill' is the ancient centre of municipal government of the town. There is evidence of the existence of a guildhall as early as the 13th century. The old Guildhall was rebuilt and enlarged in the middle of the 17th century by Robert Trollop, and most of the interior of the present building dates from 1658. In the hall on the upper floor the freemen of the city still hold their annual Michaelmas guild meeting, and the commissions of assize are opened here by the circuit judges, though all cases are normally tried at the County Moot Hall (1810); since 1952 the guildhall has served as an overflow court. The many public buildings include the Mansion House and the

new city hall and baths (1928).

Nearby is the site of the Barras Bridge, the site of the single combat between Harry Hotspur and the Earl of Douglas before the Battle of Otterburn (1388), now Newcastle's civic centre. The Hancock Museum of Natural History in Barras Bridge contains the collections of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle, and also a large series of original work by the wood engraver Thomas Bewick, who was born near Newcastle.

**Engineering project** Newcastle University opened a centre for the computer-aided design of complex marine engineering projects in 1990. The Engineering Design Centre for Marine and Other Made-to-order Products is funded jointly by industry and the Economic and Social Research Council, and is concerned with the computer-aided design of one-off projects such as oil rigs, floating production plants, floating hotels, and land-based power-generating plants.

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