

## POST MEDIEVAL TYNE AND WEAR

The medieval period is taken to end in 1540, on the death of King Henry VIII and accession of Elizabeth I to the English throne. In the north-east of England this period also marked the end of the succession of wars between England and Scotland which had blighted the region with insecurity and impoverishment since the 13th century. Following the Battle of Flodden in 1513, one of the largest and bloodiest battles ever to take place on British soil, no battles on the same scale occurred again, and most of the remaining confrontations were north of the Border.

Although border raiding continued, this was not warfare between or sanctioned by the nation states, but between families or clans either side of the border or within Northumberland. 'Reiving' is the term used to describe this small-scale raiding and warfare between the local family groups, but such activity was generally confined to upland Northumberland and the border region, rarely impacting directly on territories as far south as Tyne and Wear. The on-going violence led to the growth of a new form of defensive building, strongly built farmhouses now generally known as bastles. Although bastles were most common in the northern areas of Northumberland, where the reiving was heaviest, some are known south of the Tyne and elements of this kind of structure may have found their way into parts of Tyne and Wear. Relations between the two (now protestant-led) countries improved in the late 16th century and stabilised further with accession of the Scottish king James VI to the throne of England following the death of Queen Elizabeth I. Reiving finally came to an end at this time when the English and Scottish authorities began to take action against the lawless families.

The development of northern towns in the post-medieval period was greatly promoted by the normalisation in relations between England and Scotland. In Newcastle, this allowed the further development of large tracts of land that had become available for redevelopment when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries, followed by the nunnery of St Bartholomew at the end of 1539. The amalgamated site of the Nunnery of St Bartholomew and its neighbour, the Franciscan monastery (or Grey Friars) was acquired sometime in or after 1563 by Robert Anderson for his magnificent New House, completed with its extensive gardens in 1580. The earliest graphic indication of urbanisation in Newcastle is represented on Speed's map of 1610 which shows development, presumably mainly residential in character, spreading from the riverside core northwards along Newgate Street to the New Gate and beyond the walls to the north. This process was interrupted by the plague of 1636 and then the Civil War: in 1649 the suburbs of Newgate and Pilgrim Street are recorded as being 'ruinated in these late warres', and during the Civil War siege of Newcastle it is recorded that the defenders of the town, 'set on fire and burnt down al the streets and houses lying within the walls on the north side of the town'.

The final abandonment of many medieval castles also occurred in the mid-late 16th century, although some, such as the old keep at Newcastle, continued to serve as stores or gaols. In 1619 much of the redundant surviving castle, but not the Keep itself, was rented by James I to a courtier, Alexander Stephenson who encouraged settlement and the establishment of economic activities within the walls. This process was successful, and over the next two centuries the area continued to attract settlers and became a heavily built-up, largely self-contained community. Since it remained a possession of the Crown, the area particularly attracted those not practicing a recognised craft, such as cobblers, as well as immigrants,

itinerants, nonconformists and others who would have fared less well under the jurisdiction of Newcastle Corporation.

In 1640 King Charles I's attempt to impose a new prayer book on the Scots led to military conflict on 28th August at Newburn Ford, west of Newcastle. To avoid assaulting the strong defences on the north side of Newcastle, a Scottish army of up to 20,000 men under the command of Alexander Leslie decided to cross the Tyne and attack from the weaker southern side. Lord Conway opposed the crossing from the south bank of the Tyne, constructing fortifications to defend both of the fords where the Scots might pass at low water. The Scottish cavalry crossed the ford and eventually forced the English to retreat to higher ground where they made a last stand but were beaten off by the Scots' advance, who afterwards occupied Newcastle. The Battle of Newburn Ford was of the greatest importance. The cost to King Charles of raising the army and the need to buy off the Scots after their occupation of Newcastle forced the King to install the Long Parliament which sat through the Civil Wars until the Restoration.

The Battle of Newburn ford can be viewed as part of the build-up to the Civil War which culminated in the siege of Newcastle in 1644. The development of the Castle Garth area begun around 1620 (see above) was interrupted briefly during the Civil War period, when the castle was temporarily re-fortified and a number of houses were demolished to improve the field of fire. The Royalist garrison used the Keep as a place of last resort, holding on there for three days after the fall of the town on 19th October. For some years after, while the rest of the Castle Garth area quickly reverted to its previous, largely independent commercial and residential character, the Keep remained a Parliamentary garrison and magazine.

## **Religion**

Following the great religious changes of the Reformation instigated by Henry VIII the monasteries and convents of England were dissolved and their properties sold off. The Reformation also led to the formation of the Church of England and meant that parish churches and their communities fell under the new, protestant church. In the 16th and 17th centuries religious symbols and objects associated with the Catholic church, including stained glass, wall paintings and stone carving were damaged or completely destroyed by Protestant fanatics. However, many Protestants remained unsatisfied with the Church of England and several new churches were established, including the Quakers, a religious group founded in the mid-17th century which advocated worshipping in houses, but soon set up simple meeting houses.

Another important group were the Methodists, founded in the mid-18th century. Methodism in its two forms, Wesleyan and Primitive, took root particularly amongst working communities in the industrial areas, where networks of simple chapels were formed. Various other non-Conformist churches flourished in the north-east in the 18th and 19th centuries, often starting as a single congregation based in a house or small chapel, later developing into wider movements though a process of expansion or amalgamation, leading to churches such as the Presbyterians, the Scots Church and the United Secessionists. The increasing populations of the industrial areas were served not only by the growing Non-Conformist churches, but by the established church, which in the 19th century engaged in church building on a scale not witnessed since the middle ages. Many medieval churches were also restored or adapted during the period, principally in the 19th century, though many were badly damaged in the process.

## Industrial Growth

Coal working has a long history in the valleys of the Wear, Tyne and Derwent. There was almost certainly Roman and early medieval exploitation of surface deposits, but extraction did not begin on a commercial or organised industrial basis until the 13th century, from which time a number of documents show that licences for coal working on Tyneside were increasingly sought and granted. There are several records from this period to mining on Newcastle's town moor (HER 1356 and 4831) and mention of coalmines in the ownership of the priory at Marden in 1316 (HER 735), and. Much of this early coal working activity was for the purpose of supplying the London market, where the domestic use of coal had quickly developed, as indicated in a complaint by Parliament to the King in 1306 that coal smoke "infected the air in noxious vapours".

The post-medieval and early modern periods were marked by the increasing industrialisation of the north of England, with the development of large-scale industrial production and exploitation. Coal mining on an increasingly large-scale developed due to the significant rise in demand which occurred with the development of large-scale manufacturing industries such as iron, steel and glass production locally, as well rising domestic demand from London.

A mark of the increasing commercial importance of the industry was that in 1582 Queen Elizabeth obtained a 99 years' lease of the manors and royalties of Gateshead and Whickham at a yearly rental of £99. This was the origin of the Grand Lease which became central to the coal trade in this, the most productive coalfield in the world. By 1699 14,000 ships were engaged in the north-east coal trade, annually carrying to London about 200,000 chaldrons of coal from Newcastle - this, despite the complaint made in 1610 by Sir George Selby of Axwell, near Whickham, that the coal mines of Newcastle would not last for the term of their 21 year leases. Some of the best-preserved remains of early mining in the region are at Dunston Hill (HER 1666), west of Newcastle, some of which may be Elizabethan, but which also include late 17th and early 18th century waggonways.

Most workings before the 17th century were shallow, since deeper mines were impossible or much more costly to sink, certainly more costly to operate and liable to flooding. In any case, plentiful resources of coal at shallow depths were available in the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries. However, the higher seams of coal tended to occur away from the main river valleys and the coast, where the main markets for the coal lay, so one of the major limiting factors on coal production was not the means of extraction, but the means of transport. Early transport was by packhorse and cart to staiths main rivers, from which the coal was loaded on to keels (flat-bottomed shallow drafted boats) and moved downstream to local industrial sites, or loaded onto the larger colliers that transported the coal to other ports. From the early 17th century, however, the introduction of the wagonway enabled much greater efficiency in the transportation of coal, improving the potential profitability of the industry by increasing the quantities of coal that could be moved in a given season (early mining often being a seasonal activity, constrained by cold and wet weather). The resultant conflicts between pit and wagonway owners, and the owners of land through which wagonways ran, were a major feature of the coal industry throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries (before the deep mines were opened as a result of technological improvements closer to the coast).

The availability of cheap coal was the primary factor in stimulating the development of other industries on the banks of the Tyne and the Wear. Some medieval industries grew in scale as a result of the increased availability of coal. Amongst such industries, salt panning had been important on the coast since at least medieval times on the coast, particularly at North and South Shields on the Tyne (HER 736 and 946), and Wearmouth on the Wear (HER 80), but seems to have grown substantially in the post-medieval period. Documentary evidence records the introduction of salt pans at Cullercoats in the 1660's fired by coal from Whitley, and John Dove's local coalmines certainly supplied coal for this purpose in 1677. Quarrying and lime-burning can also be considered in this category - Whitley Quarry (HER 1193) began its working life in 1663 and lime-burning remained important on the coast until the 19th century. Similarly, iron smithing had always been a necessary feature of agricultural life, and small-scale smithies continued for this purpose into the post-industrial and modern periods, but larger concerns also developed to serve other industries as they developed. Industrial iron works were established at Winlaton in 1691 (HER 1006), at Winlaton Mill by 1719 (HER 5192), and the Tyne Iron Works was established at Lemington in 1797 (HER 4346). Sources of iron included Whitley links on the coast, where it was worked in galleries from shafts, some of which still survive (HER 1045-6).

Although there is evidence for the production of glass locally in the early and later medieval periods (HER 417), this seems to have ended by the close of the medieval period. The glass industry was one of the first new industries to develop on an industrial scale in the post-medieval era, with several works present in the Ouseburn on the east side of Newcastle by 1619 (HER 1913), and a works opened at Bishopwearmouth on the Wear in 1696 (HER 2863). In the 18th century the pottery industry was also revived from medieval and earlier origins, with the Newbottle and Pottery Bank works established at Sunderland by the early 18th century (HER 4408 and 4452), and the Wear Pottery at Southwick by 1753 (HER 2759). Shipbuilding is another industry that had continued from the medieval period on the lower reaches of the Tyne and Wear. However, since wooden ships continued to dominate the trade until after the mid-19th century, in the post-medieval period it was not dependent on coal or the products of coal-dependent industries, such as iron working. Shipbuilding was, however, dependent on the coal trade which required thousands of vessels for the transport of coal from staithes up-river, and for its onward export.

The dawn of the modern period is marked first by the enclosure, then by increasing industrialisation of the rural landscape. While small-scale fishing continued along the coast, along with farming further inland, industrial enterprises such as coalmines, quarries and waggonways encroached upon farmland, and encouraged the expansion of rural settlement. The wealth derived from industrial concerns such as the quarries and mines enabled the construction of grand residences for the entrepreneurial elite, while their thirst for labour encouraged the expansion of Newcastle and the development of other urban centres, notably Sunderland, South Shields, North Shields, Tynemouth and Gateshead.

## **War and Defence**

Although hostilities with Scotland largely ceased in the 16th century, the Civil War of the mid-17th century and second Jacobite Rebellion a century later showed that the threat of warfare, both from north of the border and elsewhere remained throughout the post-medieval period. The introduction of guns and canon meant an end to the old style medieval castles, but new fortifications were built, either as additions to existing structures, as at Tynemouth castle in the 16th and 17th centuries (HER 134), or completely new

structures, notably at North Shields in 1642 (HER 151, Sheildfield in c.1643 (HER 285), Sandgate (Newcastle) in 1644 (HER 1 500), and Clifford's Fort in 1672 (HER 149). Towards the end of the 18th century there was increased worry about possible invasion from across the sea, and although there were few defences to protect against the threat of attack by Napoleon, a number of barracks were built (as at Sunderland – HER 2870) or enlarged (at Fenham – HER 4093) in response to this threat.