

Northern England

Formed in 1660. 2025 population: 20 million.

Background

Following a period of unrest in the 1600s which included multiple civil wars, the recusancy acts of 1558 that criminalised Catholicism in England were paused. In 1660 when the Stuart restoration began and the monarchy was reinstated, these acts came into power once more. The area that now comprises Northern England had a large number of Catholic recusants who refused to comply with these laws or be ruled by those imposing them. To prevent further war, when the Commonwealth structure was abolished the country of Northern England became its own separate country without these laws.

History

The Brigantes were a Celtic tribe that occupied much of what became Northern England in pre-Roman times. The Romans conquered much of the region, establishing forts like Eboracum (York) and Mamucium (Manchester) and Hadrian's Wall. Roman roads, towns, and infrastructure left a lasting impact on the landscape and culture.

After the Roman withdrawal, the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria emerged and became a region of great learning, art and culture. The modern day border of Northern England is very similar.

The North West had its own Celtic language, Cumbric (similar to old Welsh) which was spoken until the 12th century.

From the late 8th century, Viking raids and settlements transformed the region, particularly in areas like York (Jorvik). Danelaw brought significant influence to the North East and Yorkshire. Remnants of Old Norse can be heard in the modern Yorkshire dialect.

The last Anglo-Saxon king was defeated by William The Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings (1066). The Northern aristocracy resisted the Norman conquest leading William to order the Harrying of the North. Many towns and villages were destroyed. Famine spread. Eventually the area experienced immigration and Catholic missionaries settled. The North then became a battleground between England and Scotland, with frequent raids and conflicts. Thousands of Scots settled below the border.

The Wars of the Roses were fought at the end of this period. The House of York fought against the House of Lancaster. Victory went to Henry Tudor of Lancaster, who married Elizabeth of York and united both sides into what became the Tudor dynasty.

The region then experienced huge political and religious upheavals, including the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the English Civil War.

The North of England strongly resisted the English Reformation, marked by Catholic uprisings like the Lincolnshire Rising, Bigod's Rebellion, and the Pilgrimage of Grace against Henry VIII, and later, the Rising of the North against Elizabeth I. This resistance led to the area becoming a center of recusancy, as prominent Catholic families in Cumbria, Lancashire, and Yorkshire maintained their faith, refusing to convert to Protestantism. These events ultimately lead to the creation of the two separate countries of Northern England (Catholic) and the Kingdom of England (Protestant).

Northern England's industrial era, fueled by abundant coal, iron, and textile innovations, saw its cities like Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield surge. Ports such as Liverpool and Newcastle became critical for global trade, driving the region to become the British Empire's industrial heartland. While this boom brought immense wealth and technological progress, it also led to harsh living conditions, significant immigration for work or refuge, and substantial emigration from poorer areas.

Due to the famine many Irish migrants settled in industrial Northern cities. The familiar Catholic culture in the North meant that many people chose to settle in Northern England rather than the Kingdom of England. Liverpool's population was over 30% Irish by the time of the 1851 census with Manchester, Leeds and the surrounding towns and cities also having significant numbers.

The Great Depression had a large impact on Northern England. Trade declined and demand for ships, steel, coal and textiles all fell. During WWII major raids were carried out by the Luftwaffe on the industrial cities. Hull and Liverpool were the worst hit cities outside of London. As the cities were rebuilt, deindustrialisation occurred and migration from the Indian subcontinent brought many new cultures to Northern England, particularly in cities such as Bradford.

Margaret Thatcher's government openly favoured the Kingdom of England and clashed with Northern England's socialist leaning parliament, particularly over the mining industry which led to calls for full independence from Westminster. Many riots occurred during this period which occurred alongside The Troubles in Northern Ireland. People in Northern England initially sympathised with the Catholics in Northern Ireland and some even joined IRA factions. In return the Irish migrants joined the picket lines with the striking coal miners. Calls for full independence lessened after Thatcher left government. The union of Northern English coal miners and Irish Republicans came to an end when the IRA bombed Manchester in the 90s. Appetite for independence dropped further in 1997 when Northern England gained further devolved powers under the New Labour government.

Government

Northern England is part of the UK. It has a devolved parliament which is situated in Leeds. It is often referred to as "Armley" in a similar way to Scotland's parliament being referred to as Holyrood. It's located in Armley Mills on the river Aire.

The UK parliament is sovereign and therefore, like with Scotland's parliament or the Senedd, holds ultimate supremacy over the Northern English parliament.

Borders

Northern England's borders comprise the Lancaster, Hexham & Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Leeds, Salford and Hallam dioceses. The area roughly corresponds to the Celtic territory of Yr Hen Ogledd or the medieval Kingdom of Northumbria, although it does not stretch into Scotland.



Geography

The Pennine mountain chain divides the country. To the west, the Lake District's fells and lakes create a stunning landscape attracting tourists. To the east, the Yorkshire Moors and Dales provide expansive picturesque moorlands. Major rivers, such as the Tyne, Tees, Wear, and Mersey, carve through the landscape. Coastal areas feature both sandy beaches and dramatic cliffs with the Jurassic coast in North Yorkshire attracting fossil hunters.

Capital city: Leeds



Leeds is the capital of Northern England, chosen for its proximity to major cities Liverpool, Manchester, York, Newcastle, Sheffield and Hull.

Culture

Religion plays a significant part in the culture of Northern England, specifically Catholicism. Although fewer people practise faith with each generation, many traditions are still continued.

Patron saint: St Cuthbert

St Cuthbert's day is celebrated on 20th March and is a bank holiday in Northern England.

Sport is an important part of Northern English culture with association football being the most popular. There are many North/South rivalries such as Leeds United and London based Fulham FC with them both representing their country's capital city.

Northern England has a rich history of artists, poets and writers such as Turner, Lowry, Hockney, William Wordsworth and The Brontë sisters. Many musicians hail from Northern England and their influence has been felt around the world. Notable acts include The Beatles, Oasis, Arctic Monkeys, Sting, and Joy Division.

Symbolism

Celtic symbolism is important to people in the west with Norse or Viking symbolism more important to those in Yorkshire and the east.

Catholic symbolism is important to all.

The Angel of The North, York Minster and Royal Albert Dock are important landmarks to the people of Northern England.

The national animal is the red squirrel. The national flower is common heather. The national plant is the bilberry.