

The Northumberland House Guide to Walking Through History

If you love walking in spectacular coastal and country settings, and you have a passion for history then Northumberland must be at the top of your places to visit. Castle names seem to appear in alphabetical order, Alnwick, Bamburgh, Chillingham, Dunstanburgh, Edlingham, Etal, Ford, Harbottle, Lindisfarne, Norham, Warkworth. If you then add Iron Age forts to the list such as Yeavering Bell and priories such as Brinkburn, Lindisfarne along with historic houses and gardens such as The Alnwick Garden, Belsay Hall, Cragside, Howick Hall Gardens, Wallington Hall and Gardens, Hulne Park, Preston Tower, it becomes even more satisfying.

Paleolithic – 450,000 – 10,000 BC

450,000 BC Evidence of man with bone and antler tools found at Boulmer.

30,000 BC Evidence of modern man with flint axes found at Howick and Bamburgh.

Mesolithic – 10,000 – 4,500 BC

8,000BC Hunter gatherers Arrowheads and small flint tools from the Mesolithic Period have been found by archaeologists in the Bamburgh area and an exciting excavation at Howick near Alnwick revealed a dwelling which has been radiocarbon dated to 8000 BC This was reconstructed for a tv....

6,000 BC Britain becomes an island

Neolithic – 4,500 – 2,300 BC

4,500 BC Cultivation of land, the erection of first monuments such as henges, stone circles, recognition of solstices, pottery fragments found

3,500 BC Use of the wheel

3,700 BC Monument known as the Coupland Enclosure, a massive circular earthwork enclosure on the Millfield Plain was constructed. Also the Duddo stone circle, Threestone Burn near Ilderton and Dod Law

2,100 BC At Roughting Linn is the largest carved outcrop in Northern England. Its name is from waterfall “roughting” that means bellowing noise and “linn” means pool. It is regarded as a very significant piece of rock art and in common with other similar markings consists of an inner cup surrounded by rings carved on sandstone during Neolithic and later incorporated into burial cairns. Others are at Morwick, Lordenshaws and Doddington Moor. Unclear whether they had spiritual significance, were boundary markers or some other purpose.

The Bronze Age – 2,300 – 700 BC

2,300 BC Stone circles and barrows with metalwork now in bronze and gold

Iron Age – 700 BC – 43 AD

700 BC This time is characterized by hill forts, larger agricultural settlements, iron tools and glass decorations.

600 BC An earthwork 60 metres across at Howick Burn is thought to be the remains of an Iron Age Settlement, there is also Lordenshaws Iron Age hill fort.

500 BC Iron Age hill fort built at Dunstanburgh on a huge volcanic Whin Sill outcrop

400 BC Hill forts within the College Valley include... Great Hetha, Little Hetha, Ring Chesters, North Blackhaggs, Sinkside, Midhill. The College Valley was created, 3 million years ago, by a geological fault and was later gauged out by a glacier flowing from the summit of the Cheviot that appropriately finishes at a place called Wilderness. If you wish to proceed by car into the college valley you will need a Car Permit from Sale and Partners in Wooler but in order to preserve...only 12 a day are issued but during the lambing season no permits are issued.

Romans in Britain – 43 – 410 AD

- 43 AD This time is characterised by stone forts, planned towns, cities and roads
- 122 AD Emperor Hadrian is said to have visited and made the decision, as the Scots were too fierce to contain, so a wall must be constructed. It is now known as Hadrian's Wall and in many places runs on top of the volcanic Whin Sill. Birdoswald includes a Roman fort, turret and milecastle. Housesteads is the most complete example of a fort in Britain and sits in a spectacular setting with wonderful views. Chesters with military barracks with a military bath house are the most picturesque of all the Roman forts in Northumberland and Corbridge. The Romans brought stability by introducing coinage and established conditions where people could trade with each other and prosper.
- 46 AD Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes (a tribe that ruled from the Humber to the Tweed) makes peace with the Romans, she betrayed Caractacus and he was put "on show" in Rome.
- 388 AD Romans are defeated in local battles
- 410 AD Romans leave Britain. Honorius is said to have written to the cities of Britain telling them they must now look after themselves.

Anglo-Saxon – 410 – 1,066 AD

- 430 AD Germanic (Angle) troops are hired for protection against the Picts and the Scots. In return they are given land which they call Angleland. This whole period is known for "raids and trade." Notable names include Beowulf.
- 537 AD King Arthur of the legend, is said to die on Hadrian's Wall, reputedly near Birdoswald.
- 547 AD The Angle chief Ida "the flame bearer" seized the coastal stronghold of Din Guyardi (Bamburgh), meaning "joyous guard" named after the fortress of Sir Lancelot. It is said that when King Penda from Mercia attempted to burn down Ida's fortification, the prayers of Bishop Aidan resulted in a fortuitous change in the direction of the wind.
- 575 AD Theodoric the son of Ida ??
- 615 AD The Bernician King Ethelfrith (Athelfrith), who ruled Northumbria from 593 to 616, married Queen Bebba and renamed Din Guyardi as Bebbanburg. Bamburgh is said to have been derived from her name. The castle stands on a huge Whin Sill outcrop.
- 616 AD Edwin takes the throne of Northumbria
- 627 AD Edwin becomes the first Christian king and is proclaimed at the (wooden) Minster in York.
- 628 AD Work begins on York Minster in stone
- 634 AD Oswald returns from exile on Iona to become king.
- 635 AD Oswald wins Heavenfield battle against Mercia and Wessex to become Overking (of all England). Before the battle he prays to his Christian God - to give thanks for his victory he requests the services of Aidan, an Ionian monk. Aidan establishes a monastery on Lindisfarne, becomes the bishop and it becomes the centre of Christianity.
- 642 AD Oswald completes the first York Minster in stone.
- 664 AD Following the first Synod at Whitby the Bishopric is transferred from Lindisfarne to York
- 651 AD Aidan dies in Bamburgh Church – a shepherd boy, Cuthbert sees a vision of his death and joins a monastery in Melrose.
- 687 AD St. Cuthbert dies a hermit on Inner Farne
- 698 AD Eadfrith commissions the Lindisfarne Gospels

Vikings – 700 – 1066 AD

- 721 AD Lindisfarne Gospels completed
- 731 AD The Venerable Bede finishes writing his history of the English people. It is here that we have written evidence of the beginning of Ida's reign from 547.
- 735 AD Bede dies at Jarrow
- 793 AD Vikings attack Lindisfarne, that shocks Europe. They begin to settle in eastern England, Scotland and Ireland.
- 843 AD Mcalpine unites Scots and Picts to form Scotland
- 911 AD Vikings settle in northern France and become known as "Northmen," which becomes "Norman"
- 948 AD Eric Bloodaxe becomes king and the Vikings settle in the Bamburgh area
- 954 AD Bloodaxe was overthrown in ??
- 999 AD Durham Minster is built in stone to house St. Cuthbert's coffin
- 1016 AD Cnut the Viking king forms a united England

Normans – 1066 – 1154 AD

- 1066 AD The defeat of Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings establishes William of Normandy (William the Conqueror, William I) as king of England. The Normans are a feudal society of aristocracy and peasants, which was resisted particularly in the north – hence the construction of many castles and forts. He recognises the threat posed by the Scots and confirms the rights and privileges of the Earl of Bamburgh
- 1069 AD William I is ruthless in dealing with the northern opposition to Norman rule and by...
- 1070 AD The north is subdued. St. Cuthbert's coffin is secreted away to Lindisfarne.
- 1072 AD William transfers the Bishopric from York to Canterbury.
- 1076 AD The "Revolt of the Earls" over this transfer is crushed with the execution of Waltheof, earl of Northumbria.
- 1080 AD Robert Curthose, son of William I, builds a wooden "New Castle" on the Tyne near Monkchester.
- 1085 AD The Domesday inquest was started (becomes the Domesday Book), but land to the north of the Tees was excluded – there are various theories for this.
- 1086 AD Landowners swear loyalty to William I
- 1093 AD Malcolm III of Scotland dies in Alnwick battle.
- 1095 AD As part of his bid to subjugate baronial rebels William II (Rufus) besieges Bamburgh Castle and Robert de Mowbray, the Earl of Northumbria was forced to yield and England unites.
- 1120 AD Flambard, Bishop of Durham founds the first Norham Castle, but it was destroyed by the Scots after only 20 years.
- 1131 AD Ivo de Vesci, a Norman, is given land and builds Alnwick Castle on the site of an earlier wooden motte and bailey castle.
- 1139 AD The Tees becomes the new Scottish border under David I of Scotland
- 1150 AD Motte and bailey castle built at Warkworth by Henry, Earl of Northumberland, son of David I of Scotland.

Church is built at Edlingham, porch and chancel are Norman in origin

The Benedictines founded a monastery on Lindisfarne

*Motte and bailey castle (mounds timber ramparts) at Wark these appeared after the Norman Conquest
Twelfth Century a major part of Bamburgh castle was built on a superb natural coastal site*

Middle Ages – 1154 – 1485 AD

- 1150 AD In the twelfth Century, Brinkburn Priory is built along with the story of the enthusiastic monks who rang the bells too soon – it is now restored and holds music concerts with wonderful acoustics
- 1173 AD William de Lion, king of Scotland seizes Warkworth
- 1174 AD Invading Scots massacre 300 men, women and children at the Church of St. Lawrence in Warkworth.
- 1174 AD William the Lion, King of Scotland attacks Alnwick Castle, but is taken prisoner. It is said that he rode too close to the castle in the fog.
- 1175 AD Westgate and The Bigg market established in Newcastle
- 1183 AD Hugh Pudsey, Archbishop of Durham starts the Bolden Domesday book
- 1200 AD The market place in Alnwick dates back to the 1200's
- 1204 AD Chillingham Castle becomes a fortified stronghold as a defence against border feuds. You can now take a night walk behind the closed doors of “the most haunted castle in Britain” and look out for the Blue Boy, Lady Mary Berkeley and John Sage the torturer.
- 1207 AD Alnmouth is granted a charter to have a port and a market
- 1209 AD The Scots kings submit to King John at Norham
- 1227 AD A leper hospital is founded to the north of Bolton, in the parish of Edlingham – here there is also a chapel with ancient foundations
- 1237 AD Treaty of York between Henry III and Alexander II of Scotland fixes the Tweed, Esk, Solway line as the Scottish border
- 1240 AD Hulne Priory is founded by William de Vesci who chose the site because it resembled Mount Carmel in Israel, which he had seen when he took part in the Crusades. It was one of the earliest Carmelite monasteries. Monks were called White Friars because they wore white vestments and they lived an austere existence.
- 1250 AD John de Edlingham, builds a large two storey Hall at Edlingham with a moated enclosure. Edlingham Castle started life as a manor house in the peaceful thirteenth century, but was progressively fortified during the turbulent fourteenth as the Scots became more rebellious.
- 1296 AD Edlingham taken over by Sir William de Felton
- 1299 AD During the thirteenth century, Hartley pans at Seaton Sluice were an important centre for salt production. Seawater was evaporated in huge pans and used in herring curing by Yarmouth and Norwich
- 1309 AD Alnwick and Alnwick Castle sold by Durham to the Percy family. The Castle is strengthened and becomes the seat of the influential Percy family (originally from Yorkshre).
- 1312 AD During the reign of Edward II, Thomas of Lancaster built Dunstanburgh Castle. Thomas was the most powerful baron in England but was so incensed at the favouritism the king showed to Piers Gaveston that he had Gaveston brutally murdered. The Scots took advantage of the ensuing turmoil and launched a series of attacks into Northern England. Dunstanburgh was built both as a retreat from the wrath of the king for Lancaster and perhaps as protection from the marauding Scots, but it was also possibly built as a grand status symbol. John of Gaunt, third son of Edward III (another Duke of Lancaster), built a second gatehouse 60 years later.
- 1327 AD Warkworth besieged by the Scots
- 1332 AD Edward II granted (sells) Warkworth to the Percy family as a stronghold against the Scots
- 1348 AD The Black Death (Plague) struck and Alnmouth was devastated
- 1377 AD Henry Percy given the title Earl of Northumberland
- 1381 AD The Percy's inherit Prudhoe
- 1388 AD Hotspur loses to the Scots at Otterburn (“Hotheaded” Hotspur fails to wait for re-inforcements).
- 1390 AD The keep of Warkworth Castle is built by the Earl of Northumberland. It's Living quarters have an impressive rainwater collection system enabling water to be fed to basins and latrines.

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- 1399 AD Due largely to the efforts of Earl of Northumberland and his son Harry Hotspur, Richard II is forced to abdicate, is imprisoned and starved to death. Henry IV, son of John of Gaunt, is made King. Due to the intrigue surrounding this event, Shakespeare set scenes from Henry IV in Warkworth Castle.
- 1400 AD Preston Tower, Etal Castle and others are built, one of 78 towers, built as a response to the threat of the Border Reivers. Warkworth Hermitage is carved out of the rock with a tiny chapel. It contains the hermit's house, confessional and dormitory.
- 1400 AD The Pele tower at Elsdon with nine foot thick walls is one of the finest examples of its kind
- 1402 AD The Percy family fall out with the king over the issue of Scottish prisoners.
- 1402 AD Earl of Northumberland and his son Harry Hotspur attempt to depose Henry IV. Harry is killed at a battle in Shrewsbury.
- 1403 AD The King marches from Shrewsbury to Warkworth and blasts it with canon fire, the garrison surrenders. Warkworth is temporarily given to Duke of Bedford, but was soon restored to Hotspur's son.
- 1433 AD Alnwick was granted a licence to wall the town because the Scots persistently set fire to the town. By the time the finances were in place, the threat had largely disappeared and it is unclear how much of the 20 foot high and six foot wide walls were ever completed.
- 1450 AD Bondgate Tower in Alnwick was built soon after 1450. It was designed to have a portcullis and drawbridge and a deep groove inside the archway can still be seen and it is possible that the Allerburn created a small moat.
- 1455 AD Henry Percy is killed at St Albans supporting Lancaster in the very first battle in the war of the Roses. The Wars of the Roses lasts from 1455 to 1487 between King Henry VI from the house of Lancaster and King Edward IV from the house of York.
- 1464 AD Neville defeats Ralph Percy and Sir Ralph Grey at Hedgeley Moor near Wooler
- 1464 AD Castles at Alnwick, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh fall to the house of York for Edward IV and were given to John Neville (Lord Montagu). Bamburgh was the first castle ever to be overcome by gunfire. It was soon realised that castles were no match for this new weaponry.
- 1482 AD Richard of Gloucester takes and holds Berwick, it remains English from now on.
- 1499 AD By the end of the fifteenth century, Alnmouth was exporting coal, wool, etc.

Tudors – 1485 – 1603 AD

- 1487 AD Earl of Northumberland appoints Thomas Barker as the first hermit of Warkworth.
- 1502 AD Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry VII is recorded to have stayed in Belford on her way north to marry James IV of Scotland.
- 1513 AD King James IV of Scotland surrounds Norham Castle and the garrison surrenders just a few days before James is killed at the battle of Flodden field.
- 1513 AD In the battle of Flodden Field, near Wooler, James IV's Scottish army has the advantage over Surrey's English army, but is out manoeuvred by his enemy and has to hastily set up new positions on Branxton Moor. Eventually after a mighty battle the English are victorious.
- 1520 AD First mention of Lindisfarne Castle – it is begun during reign of Henry VIII
- 1532 AD The Earl of Northumberland goes rampaging in the Scottish borders destroying 192 castles
- 1547 AD Edward VI (aged 10) becomes king, he rules with the help of John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, who becomes the first Duke of Northumberland
- 1569 AD The Neville's of Durham and the Percy's of Northumberland march south to rescue Mary Queen of Scots. They are victorious at Barnard Castle, but many desert on the long march to Nottingham.
- 1572 AD Sir Thomas Percy is executed for his part in the plot to rescue Mary - against Elizabeth I
- 1580 AD The Elizabethan walls in Berwick are the finest preserved late medieval walls in Europe. They were completed during the reign of Elizabeth I as a defence against the aggressive Scots

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1603 AD Mary's son James VI of Scotland, is crowned James I of England and three hundred years of hostilities between the two countries has almost come to an end. This is formally the Union of Scotland and England. Berwick had changed hands thirteen times. Towers such as Preston tower lost their purpose and were pulled down and the stone used for farm buildings.

Civil War – 1603 – 1714 AD

- 1604 AD James I deports the Border Reivers to Ireland ensuring peace within five years
- 1640 AD The Scots and the Parliamentarians seize Newcastle from Charles I
- 1649 AD Twenty women are killed as a result of the Newcastle witch trials
- 1650 AD Henry Ogle is reputed to have quarrelled with Oliver Cromwell at Eglington Hall
- 1660 AD The Duke of Abermarle marches from Coldstream to London to restore Charles II as king. The part of the army that doesn't return becomes "The Coldstream Guards."
- 1673 AD Huge storms destroy 40 ships off the north east coast.
- 1678 AD The Crookham affray was the last border skirmish between the English and the Scots.
- 1697 AD Northumberland MP, John Fenwick is beheaded for plotting against King William III
- 1699 AD Dorothy Forster married Lord Crewe Bishop of Durham

Empire – 1714 – 1837 AD

- 1715 AD George I is king, Tom Forster of Bamburgh raises an army and marches south for the Jacobites, supporting James Stuart of Scotland. His army grows bigger everywhere except Newcastle who were therefore called Geordies (supporters of George I). He is captured during this Jacobite rebellion - his escape from Newgate before his trial for treason was said to have been carried out by his eleven year old sister Dorothy.
- 1716 AD Lancelot "Capability" Brown was born at Kirkharle, went to school in Cambo and later helped to develop the gardens at Alnwick Castle and Wallington hall in Northumberland and amongst many others around the country. These include Althorp, Belvoir Castle, Blenheim palace, Burghley House, Chatsworth, Coombe Abbey, Harewood House, Longleat, Milton Abbey and Milton Abbas, Temple Newsam, Syon Park and Warwick Castle.
- 1727 AD Daniel Defoe (Robinson Crusoe) visits Newcastle where he says they build perfect ships.
- 1742 AD John Wesley preaches at Newcastle for the first time, where he remarks on much drunkenness, cursing and swearing.
- 1748 AD John Wesley visits Alnmouth and describes it as "famous for all kinds of wickedness"
- 1753 AD A turnpike road was constructed that ran all the way from Hexham to Alnmouth with a toll booth at Lesbury.
- 1747 AD John Wesley preaches in the churchyard in Blanchland
- 1761 AD Forty miners killed in gunfire as the army suppresses Hexham conscription riots
- 1766 AD Sir Hugh Smithson gains vast estates and properties through marriage to his wife, Elizabeth Seymour. Elizabeth, who was very proud of her Percy ancestry, causes Sir Hugh Smithson to change his name to Percy. The Percy family name had ceased due to the 11th Earl only producing female offspring. Hugh set about restoring Alnwick castle and transforming it into the luxury family home required of the 18th century aristocracy. Robert Adam worked on Alnwick castle and brought an uncharacteristic romantic Gothic style rather than the neo-classical style he is usually known for. Hugh eventually becomes the first Duke of Northumberland. A little recognised son (not through Elizabeth) - James took advantage of his father's lucrative American connections – when he dies, his fortune founds the Smithsonian Institute.
- 1766 AD The first Duke of Northumberland deprives the local people of their route to Denwick by extending his parkland – in recompense he commissions the Denwick bridge.
- 1771 AD A great flood destroys all the bridges on the Tyne, Wear and Tees
- 1779 AD American John Paul Jones bombs Alnmouth from his boat in his attempt to support the American War of Independence

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- 1781 AD George Stevenson born in Wylam and doesn't learn to read and write until he is 19
- 1799 AD During the eighteenth century, the barracks at Berwick along with its associated warehouses and factories supplies over half the country with shoes
- 1806 AD A massive storm in Alnmouth on Christmas Day changes the course of the river and brings the end to Alnmouth as a profitable port.
- 1812 AD William Hedley born at Newburn, produces an engine called Puffing Billy
- 1816 AD The Tenantry Column (also known as the Farmer's Folly) is built in Alnwick. It is said that after the Napoleonic wars the local farmers were losing income because of a fall in the prices they were paid. The duke apparently decided to help them out by reducing their rents and the grateful farmers decided to erect a monument at a cost of £2,770, to be topped by the Percy Lion. The Duke then decides they have no need of his generosity and raises their rents. It is said that the farmers then place the lion with its rear toward the castle as a sign of their displeasure and as an insult to the Duke.
- 1826 AD Longstone lighthouse is built marking the outermost of the Farne islands. This group of islands is of national importance as a home to puffins, guillemots, kittiwakes, eiders and terns and seals.
- 1832 AD Charles the second Earl Grey was the Prime Minister responsible for passing "The Great Reform Bill" which at the time increased the size of the electorate by 50%. It also established roughly equal sized constituencies, one man one vote and the basics of the electoral system we know today. He was also famous for the scented tea created for him by a grateful Chinese Mandarin. He took the tea to Twinings, who name the blend after him. He extends Howick Hall and starts the gardens particularly planting timber (mainly oak and beech) that are needed by the navy for the Napoleonic wars. A monument to him stands in Grey Street, Newcastle.

Victorians – 1837 – 1901 AD

- 1838 AD Grace Darling rescue, original boat is in the museum at Bamburgh
- 1840 AD Queen Victoria marries her first cousin Albert. Lady Louisa Waterford who lives in Ford Castle is a bridesmaid. Ford village is built as a memorial to Lady Waterford's husband who dies in a riding accident.
- 1850 AD John Dobson's magnificent railway station is opened in Newcastle
- 1858 AD Charles Dickens stays at The King's Arms hotel, Hyde Hill in Berwick, later in 1861 he gave a reading at the same address
- 1878 AD Lord Armstrong built Cragside, the first house in Britain to be lit by hydro-electricity.
- 1869 AD Alnmouth Golf Club was formed
- 1885 AD Berwick loses special parliamentary status
- 1890 AD Lord Armstrong purchases Bamburgh castle in the late 1890's and sets about its restoration.

World Wars – 1901 – 1945 AD

- 1903 AD Lindisfarne Castle was restored by Edwin Lutyens for Edward Hudson, the founder of Country Life magazine
- 1913 AD Emily Davison the suffragette was killed by the King's horse at the 1913 Derby. Her grave is in Morpeth
- 1928 AD Dorman Long's Tyne Bridge is opened
- 1932 AD Dorman Long's Sydney Harbour Bridge is constructed in the north east and shipped to Australia
- 1936 AD Team Valley trading estate opened as an attempt to beat the recession
- 1937 AD Newcastle Scandinavian ferries commence
- 1940 AD During World War II, Colonel Henry Milvain commands the home guard in Eglington. There is still a bunker down Tarry Road.
- 1941 AD An enemy bomber drops bombs on Alnmouth

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Modern – 1945 – present

- 1955 AD Tyne Tees television starts broadcasting
- 1961 AD Alnmouth Friary is bought for a group of Franciscan Friars. The building was originally built as a grand house for a ship owner from Newcastle. It's the huge house, to the left, on the top of the hill as you enter by road.
- 1963 AD Beeching axes many local lines and the North East is especially hit.
- 1980 AD Tyneside Metro rail system opens
- 1987 AD Metro Centre opens
- 1998 AD Antony Gormley's Angel of the North erected
- 2002 AD The Alnwick Garden was opened by The Prince of Wales in April
- 2003 AD Jean and Mike Cockerill open "The Northumberland House"

The Alnwick Garden
Doxford Hall
Weddings
Alnwick Castle
Ford Castle
Etal