

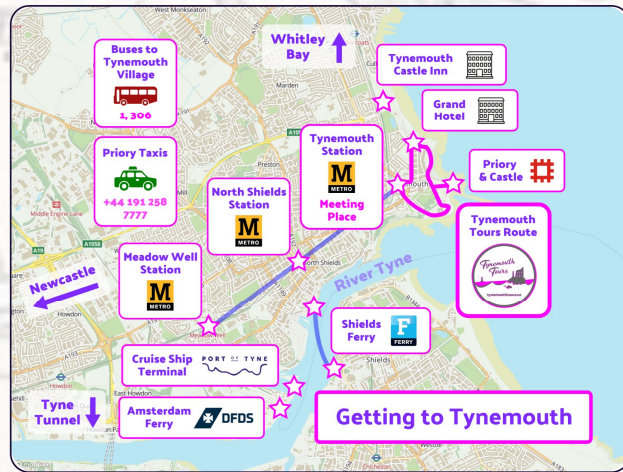
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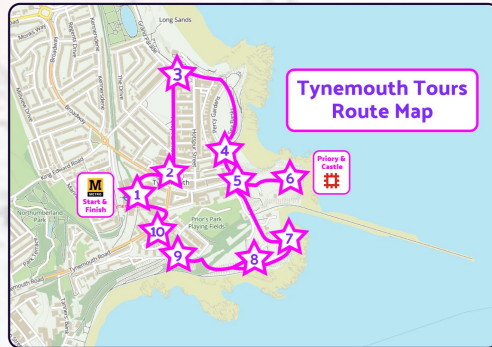
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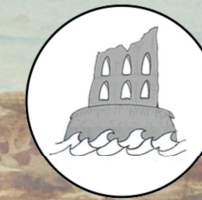


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THE TYNEMOUTH GUIDE



Tynemouth Station

The Railways

Tynemouth Station is one of the most glorious railway stations in the country. It was built by the North Eastern Railway in 1882 as a showpiece for their new passenger line from Newcastle to the Coast. This catered to the thousands of tourists who were now coming to Tynemouth, when for the first time people were able to easily reach the Coast and return in a day.

The Victorians didn't do things by halves and they built this station with scale in mind. They had a huge first class waiting room. They built four lines into the station and you can still see the original platforms that have been infilled. The west side of the station was mainly used as a goods entrance but passengers also disembarked there. On this west side, now Platform 1, they had a hydraulic lift for luggage, pulled by a wheel in the tower. They would load the lift with heavy trunks and these would then be passed over the bridge. The middle section of the bridge is flat so that the trunks could move across to the passenger side where people could pick them up and move out of the station.

The Victorians decorated the station with all kinds of foliage and flowers. There's also a wonderful tiled map of North Eastern Railway's vast network. The North Eastern Railway were a massive company at the time and they were pioneers of station design. They were very proud of their stations and Tynemouth was their jewel in the crown. The NER also built the very first station in Tynemouth, an elegant sandstone building which we'll come to at the end of this guide.



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Renovation

Unbelievably, Tynemouth Station decayed dreadfully between the 1960s and 1980s. The electrified trains that had come into use had been replaced with diesel trains and the place became very drab. There was asbestos roofing as all of the glass panes had been knocked out, and the whole place was filthy and very badly neglected. There was even an awful plan to knock it all down and this was, it seems, supported by the Council. Fortunately, a community group formed called 'Friends of Tynemouth Station' to save the place.

They were able to secure the station, refurbish it and put the glass roof back together, so that we now have this wonderful showpiece which is the pride of the Metro network and one of the best Victorian stations in the country.



Queen Victoria Park

King's School Doorway

This is perhaps the most interesting doorway in Tynemouth, with 1760 written on the pediment and beautiful ionic columns and a balustrade around the portico.



Originally the porch belonged to a Dutch trader who lived around the corner on Percy Park Road and built an octagonal lookout house so he could observe ships entering the harbour. This doorway was felt too large and grand for that street so it was moved here, brick by brick, to a more prominent position in the centre of the village. It features Flemish bond brickwork and it's a really fabulous piece and one of the finest doorways on this wonderful stretch of housing surrounding the Green.

Statue

Almost every sizeable town in the Commonwealth has or had a Queen Victoria statue and we too have our own life-size bronze statue in Tynemouth. She has recently been cleaned and given a new coating. She actually had a number of parts stolen many years ago, including her crown, sceptre and two figures representing justice and peace on either side of her throne.

The statue was built by public subscription to the tune of £1,000 and was the second cast from the mould of the statue that was destined for Delhi, and which still sits in a corner of Delhi Art College today. The sturdy portland stone plinth is inscribed with the words:

VICTORIA.DELGRATIA
BRITANNIARUMREGINA
INDIAEIMPERATRIX



Garibaldi

Next to the King's School entrance we have the plaque honouring Garibaldi's stay in Tynemouth.

Giuseppe Garibaldi is known as the father of Italian nationhood. Italy became a nation state in 1862 and it was Garibaldi who galvanised the country, bringing the regions and the people together.

He came to Tynemouth in 1854 in order to gather support from industrialists around the North East who were like making a lot of money and advancing technology on the railways and in shipbuilding. He needed them to invest in his vision for Italy.

He was also connected with the Chartists, an important labour movement of the 19th century and precursors to the Labour Party. The Chartists were responsible for instituting a lot of reforms in British politics and society.

There are a few stories about Garibaldi's visit. One story is that of the 'Geordie Netty'. During their stay, Garibaldi's entourage were continually asking the cleaning lady, Dov'e gabinetti? — "Where's the toilet?" Eventually she cottoned on to the meaning and would shout at the men, "The netty's doon there!".



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The Longsands

Lost Features



Grand Hotel

On Grand Parade we can't miss the Grand Hotel with its mansard roofs as per the great Parisian buildings including the original Grande Hotel which inspired it. It was built in 1872 as a house for the 6th Duke's wife. The Duke was a keen yachtsman and it's said that while anchored in the bay he would communicate with his wife and would raise a red flag to show he was coming ashore, which she would reciprocate from her window on the top floor. The house was converted to a hotel 1877.



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This mile long stretch is one of the UK's best beaches. Before the railway arrived, Prior's Haven was the main bathing spot, but the massive influx of visitors meant the Longsands was the only place that could accommodate such crowds.

This beach has four famous features that are no longer there.

The first is the Plaza, which was built in 1878 and was burned down in 1996. It was a huge dance hall and it was very imposing as an icon and landmark of Tynemouth.

The outdoor swimming pool at the bottom of the beach is hopefully is going to be restored. That again in the 1990s was lost owing to a general pessimism at the time that caused it to be left to rot. Built in 1926, the pool was meant to promote exercise but at the same time keep people safe from the dangers of open sea swimming.

The third thing that once defined this beach were the Victorian bathing machines. These were donkey-pulled carts that were moved into the water and towards the water so that people could undress in private, which was very important to Victorian people who had a taboo about revealing any part of the body. This was a lucrative business promoted by the Linkleter and Fry families on the Longsands and Haven respectively.

Fourthly is the chalybeate spring that made Tynemouth famous. These iron-rich springs were favoured for two reasons: the distinctive taste and their health-giving properties in a time of mineral deficiency in people's diets. An ornate fountain with a lion's head spout was built around the Tynemouth spring and today we only see its outlet trickling into the sea. The spring was deemed undrinkable when the water was tested in the late 1960s, owing to nearby mine workings or because of its natural metal content. It was then left to be buried by sand and forgotten.

So these are the things that have gone, but this also makes the Longsands today a very natural expanse of pristine blue flag beach in a very urban setting.



1890-1900. The beach is full of Fry pleasure boats and Linkleter bathing machines.

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Sea Banks

The Short Sands

More commonly known as King Edward's Bay, this cove could well have been named after Edward I, the Hammer of the Scots, aka 'Longshanks', who is popularly portrayed in the film Braveheart. Edward was the first King to periodically base himself at Tynemouth and to muster his ships there, from whence he could invade our northerly neighbour. Edward's wife and her retinue would reside at the Castle while he was away on campaign. He was also the first ruler to have a wall built around the Castle, much of which remains intact and was almost 1000 yards in length.

This beautiful bay has seen a lot of history: Vikings and various armies, shipwrecks and smugglers. Just imagine the camps with rows of tents and ships at anchor with all kinds of forces on the move over the centuries. There is a particularly famous painting by William Bell Scott, depicting savage Vikings attacking the beach and marauding up its banks to sack the Priory in 793. Imagine what a terrifying scene that would have been. The Viking invaders kept returning throughout the 9th century, with larger and larger armies each time.

Today, King Edward's Bay is a Blue Flag beach, but it hasn't always had lots of sand on it. When the Pier was built, a lot more sand accumulated here and in the same period, the river was dredged of 800 acres of sandbanks. Both of these feats were achieved by the newly-formed Tyne Improvement Commission and the spoil ground for the dredgers that frequent the river is still just two miles off the bay. These two undertakings have changed the nature of the way sand moves up and down the coast, so that now King Edward's

Percy Gardens

This is Tynemouth's grandest street. It was built to exceed some of the residential crescents found in seaside towns like Brighton and Scarborough but also to emulate the famous ones of Bath, Edinburgh and London. The symmetrical crescented terrace was an aesthetic that really appealed to the Victorians and as such, Percy Gardens is really our showcase street. There also happens to be a very curious WW1 lookout tower built behind it.

These originally three-storey houses were developed in the 1860s to accommodate people who for the first time were able to live at the Coast in this pleasant and clean environment, while working in overcrowded and polluted Newcastle. This was made possible by the first commuter railway in the world, which arrived in the late 1840s and which still runs today in the form of the Metro. By the 1860s, lots of wealthy industrialists and merchants were able to afford such luxurious residences and enjoy the benefits of a

This period of 19th century economic and technological advancement is when leisure became a concept for the first time in mainstream society. You could say that Tynemouth was quite a poor village prior to the railway, cut off from everything but the sea. So these Victorian people really did build something splendid and new.



Landslip

On the grass banks that enclose King Edward's Bay there have been a number of landslips, especially in 1913 when the entire roadway between Sea Banks and East Street was swept down the cliff. It took 10 years to rebuild the bankside and erect the massive arches that you can see supporting the road. Another little piece of Tynemouth folklore is that this landslip was triggered by a postman knocking on the door of one of the cottages on East Street. The Post Office did occupy No. 1 East Street back then, so who knows? Maybe there was a disturbance caused by the posties that led to the bankside tumbling away...

Sea Banks is still a problematic road and the landslip of 1914 was ultimately caused by an old well beneath it called the Bank Well. It was the continual seepage from this well that weakened the ground. So today, the road is still susceptible to breaking up and needs regular attention from the

When the landslip occurred in 1914, people said at the time that it briefly exposed some of the smugglers' tunnels that led to the cellars of the alehouses on Percy Street. Maybe there was a tunnel that went directly into the Gibraltar Rock at No. 2 East Street. We may wonder... But why is the pub overlooking the bay called the Gibraltar Rock? It's a very old pub, while the Rock of Gibraltar itself has hundreds of limestone caves and tunnels, many of which are unexplored. The Rock of Gibraltar is a mysterious and intriguing labyrinth used by 18th century pirates and smugglers, while fittingly the Gib was known in the past as a smugglers' pub...



Percy Gardens 1949

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DINGLING GEORDIE

If you look across the bay towards the Castle, you can see a doorway that's cut into the cliff. This is what remains of an old edifice called the Whitley Tower, built by a man called Guy de Whitley. It was ordered by Edward I (mentioned above). Longshanks needed the tower to be built in order to watch for Scottish invasions, which is why the whole Castle was fortified in stone by him.

This Whitley Tower became a notorious smugglers' den called Jingling Geordie's Hole. Jingling Geordie was rumoured to be a shipwrecker who would go out onto the treacherous Black Middens rocks and have lanterns posted together that would lure ships onto the reef. He would then steal their cargoes and hide away in this secret and inaccessible hole.

For 200 years it has almost been a rite of passage for Tynemouth children to go down there, although I'm not sure kids these days would attempt it, nor should be allowed to. It's a dangerous spot and a 19th century landslip took the roof off the inner section.



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There is said to be a tunnel that goes into the Castle from the hole and this was blocked off by the Works Department in the 1940s. The tunnel was built so that Tynemouth Castle could receive supplies and weapons in the event of a siege. There were sieges at various points in Tynemouth Castle's history including a notable one during the Civil War.

Jingling Geordie's 'Cave' is probably the ultimate piece of Tynemouth folklore. He's said to have a ghost that wanders the rocks at night, and the reason they called him 'Jingling' Geordie was because he still had the chains from his imprisonment fixed around his ankle, so you could hear him coming a mile away...

There's been lots written about it and I've written a lot of about him here. There are lots of theories about who he really was (probably Cpt Thomas Armstrong from Cullercoats). But also, this was maybe just a spot for gambling and drinking for the youth of Tynemouth, and so in some ways things don't really change that much in all the centuries here.

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Tynemouth Front Street

Clock Tower and Drinking Fountain

Built in 1861 with a donation from a London businessman. It is built in the Venetian Gothic style, reflecting Tynemouth's status as a wealthy port.



Harriet Martineau

(1802-1876). From a wealthy Huguenot family, she was a pioneering Enlightenment thinker, feminist and abolitionist. She was at the centre of intellectual society of the day, was a friend of Princess Victoria and famous in both Great Britain and the United States.

She both educated the masses in political economy and sociology and influenced government policy through illustrated pamphlets, which outsold the works of Charles Dickens. She was plagued by ill health throughout her life

Among her circle were Thomas Malthus, John Stuart Mill, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Thomas Carlyle. She was also acquainted with Florence Nightingale, Charlotte Brontë and Charles Dickens.



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Tynemouth Castle & Priory

Battlements

The view we have of the Castle Gatehouse and its commanding battlements on either side, overlooking the moat and staring down Front Street, is not how the place looked in its early history. The Norman motte and bailey castle occupied a small mound in front of the present Gatehouse, and it wasn't until Tudor times that the Castle banks were built up to the height they are now.



Great Hall

The Castle Gatehouse is home to the Great Hall, which is where the medieval banquets took place. It was the main social space and a great deal of business would have taken place here. Those walls must tell some stories...

The Castle had to be fit for royalty, as nobility could arrive at any time and therefore it would have been decorated in the pinnacle of luxury for its day, with fine rugs, ornate tables and chairs and rich tapestries hanging from the ceiling. Above the Hall was the Great Bedchamber, and both the Hall and the Bedchamber featured huge roaring fireplaces. While to the side of the Hall is the Great Kitchen, where meats would be roasted in the massive oven and prodigious amounts of food prepared.



Inset from the Fryer Map of 1773

Crenellation

The walls around Penbal Crag were a thousand yards in length and fortunately a good amount of this structure remains. Edward I was the first King to grant a license to crenellate the Castle and much of the Castle's appearance dates from this time of the 1290s and early 1300s. Edward I of Braveheart fame is known historically as the 'Hammer of the Scots' and was the greatest castle builder in the history of Britain. He viewed Tynemouth Castle and the protection of the Tyne as vital to the kingdom and for this reason he spent a lot of time in Tynemouth and granted many rights and freedoms to the Prior.

Crenellation was a huge deal for the place, as it's potentially risky to fortify a site that an enemy could at some point occupy. The enemy at this time was Scotland. Scots armies were regularly raiding Northumberland and laying waste to its towns, including Tynemouth. Crenellation therefore not only protected Tynemouth, but gave King Edward a base. He mustered his ships here and the Castle was home to his wife and their entourage while he was campaigning against the old enemy.



Lighthouse

No lighthouse exists on Penbal Crag today, but there has probably been a beacon on the headland since at least Early Medieval times. It was known as Mary's Light after the chapel at the Priory. Stella Maris, Mary's Star, is the guiding light for seafarers.

The first lighthouse was built by Edward Villiers in the 1660s. It was rebuilt in the 18th century and was known for its red light. In the 19th century, the newly built North Pier made the lighthouse redundant, so on August 31st 1898 it was extinguished, as soon the gleaming state-of-the-art lighthouse on Bates Island to the north of Whitley Bay was put into service.

Gunnery

Penbal Crag has always been a dual purpose site. It is both a place of religious significance and a defensive stronghold. At the east edge of the headland you can explore the old HM Coastguard building and the WW2 gunnery, where the freight work of loading shells into the great cannons that covered the Tyne entrance took place.

Despite bombs being dropped in Tynemouth and North Shields at various times during the War, no shots were fired in anger from the Tynemouth batteries, although the defences at South Shields did see action on one occasion.

Both the Castle gunnery and the Spanish Battery on the other side of Priory's Haven were cleared of their barracks, searchlights and gun emplacements by the MoD in 1956. The Coastguard building to the south of the gunnery, built in 1982, is very much a Cold War edifice and was decommissioned in 1997.

Tynemouth Castle & Priory

Iron Age Settlement

The entire lump of earth the Castle and Priory sit on is called Penbal Crag. This is a Celtic name meaning 'Strong Head Rock'. At one time what is now the Welsh language was spoken all across England, and we know that the Celts were living here before the Roman period.

In 1963 there were two large Iron Age roundhouses uncovered on the Priory site, and there are probably more of these under other parts of the headland hitherto unearthed.

The archaeologists found a lot of shellfish, so it's clear the people here were living on mussels, welks and oysters. At a certain point there's an amount of Roman pottery on top of these remains, so it's suggested that the settlement became Romano-British.

Except for these pieces of pottery and some coins, we don't have evidence of a large Roman settlement here, and Hadrian's Wall didn't go to the sea, so it can be assumed that the people of Tynemouth were friendly and civilised. These people obviously had some interaction with the Romans and there would have been some trade, perhaps trade in wine. Tynemouth then, may have been a peaceful, religious or even recreational place.

The Penbal Crag settlement consisted of roundhouses where you'd have several families living inside one dwelling. Of the two roundhouses excavated, the larger had a diameter of 15 metres and the smaller one next to it had a diameter of less than 10 metres. I imagine there was a sturdy stockade protecting the headland, within which cattle could graze.

All along the Northumbrian coastline you find similar peninsula and island settlements at places like Warkworth, Dunstanburgh and Bamburgh. Penbal Crag was practically an island back then and South Shields Lawe was an island as well. These Celtic marine settlements had the benefit of being isolated and easily defended, but still connected to communities inland.

The highest point inland the Tynemouth Iron Age people would have been able to see would have been Marden, and we know that people have been living in Marden for a very long time, since the Stone Age. There were probably Stone Age people living on Penbal Crag too.

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3 Kings

The famed 3 Kings that were once buried at Tynemouth are:

651 – King Oswin of Deira, born at Arbeia. He was murdered by soldiers loyal to King Oswy of Bernicia. In 664 the two kingdoms were merged to form Northumbria, covering all of the territory from the Forth to the Humber and west to the Mersey. Oswin's grave was a shrine for pilgrims from across Europe. He was a pious king, but weak, as described by Saint Aidan, the Bishop of Lindisfarne and friend of the King

792 – King Osred II of Northumbria. Osred was deposed and exiled to the Isle of Man. When he attempted to return to the kingdom he was, like Oswin, abandoned by his soldiers and slain on the order of King Æthelred. This was in the year before the Vikings arrived in Northumbria for the first time. Æthelred was himself murdered four years later at Corbridge by a group of conspiring nobles.

1093 – Malcolm III of Scotland. 'Canmore' (Great Chief) was killed in the battle of Alnwick and was interred at Tynemouth before reburial at either Dunfermline or on the Isle of Iona, but his body was said to be discovered in the Priory in 1275 along with his son. The renowned chronicler, Matthew Paris, had previously claimed that the Scots were given the body of a peasant from Monkseaton instead of their king. His name is immortalised in Shakespeare's, *The Tragedie of Macbeth*, as he kills Macbeth and his son at the end of the play.



Dissolution

In 1538 Henry VIII began the Dissolution of the Monasteries, taking power from the English Church and reorganising everything in the realm. Tynemouth was no exception to this and the hitherto all-powerful Prior was kicked out, given a pension and told to live in Benwell. All of the literature and wealth of the monastery was confiscated.

The Castle was then set on a programme of modernisation. Sir Richard Lee, Henry's chief engineer, hired two Italian military engineers, Giani Scala and Antonio da Bergamo, to fortify the headland. We have a map of Scala's designs for the Castle and the Spanish Battery. Henry wanted the whole area militarised, so there was a long curtain wall enveloping the two places and lots of new gun ports and battlements built, including the main ramparts either side of the Gatehouse.

But the Castle was never used or improved to its full potential. There was another early fort at the Narrows of the river mouth where the Low Light and High Light are situated, the first instances of which were also built on the King's orders at this time. As time went on, this bastion which would later become Clifford's Fort, became more strategically critical, while Tynemouth Castle was somewhat left to crumble.

A little later in 1564, Henry Percy, the 9th Earl of Northumberland, was born in the Castle and he became its owner. Percy is interesting because he was he was one of the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. He managed to extricate himself from the plotters, but he remained persona non grata for some time.



Monk's Stone

This is an Anglo-Saxon stone that may have originally formed the main shaft of the medieval village cross. There have been other pieces of stone from Anglo-Saxon and Viking times found in the Priory, but the Monk's Stone is very famous and has a legend connected with it.

There is a faint hunting scene depicted on the stone, which you can view under the correct lighting, and there is also an inscription that states, "O horrid deed to kill a man for a pig's head". The story behind this concerns Lord Delaval from the noble family that lived at Delaval Hall. The tale goes that a monk from Tynemouth Priory stole a pig's head from the hall kitchen while he was travelling around the area. The head of the family caught up with him on horseback and beat him to death, but this violent act occurred inside the Prior's land, that is, beyond the boundary marked by what would later be called "The Monk's Stone". The mighty Lord Delaval then had to repent for the sin of murdering a lowly monk and doing so on Church ground. He lived the rest of his life in shame trying to make amends for this crime.

It's worth noting for context that in the old days, the Prior was pretty-much all-powerful in the area. He could try, jail and execute people, he could tax and fine people, he had rights on every shipwreck, and he had bands of fugitives who would be his armed thugs. When felons wanted sanctuary, they could come to Tynemouth and once they were inside the Church lands, they couldn't be pursued. Tynemouth was holy ground and the Monk's Stone marked its limit. The stone stood about a mile to the north of the Priory on land that became part of Monkstone Farm near the junction of Beach Road and the Broadway. In 1935 the stone was placed inside the Castle because the farmer wanted it moved.

Another interesting thing about the stone is if you draw a line from the Monk's Stone to the Prior's Stone, which stands just off the Black Middens, Lord Collingwood's Monument sits at the exact mid-point on this line.



Saint Mary's Chapel in the Priory

Prior's Haven

Early Days

Today, people mainly associate the Longsands with Tynemouth. But in the past, the Haven was Tynemouth's most popular spot for visitors and bathers. This is because before the railway was built, getting to Tynemouth was a rather more difficult task and was the preserve of people with higher incomes and leisure time at their disposal. In the 18th and 19th centuries, people would typically arrive at the Haven by boat and when vessels were in use, they would land at either Rogerson's Jetty that ran out from the Spanish Battery, or at the Pier, just past where the four posts remain today.

The Victorians understood the health benefits of hold and cold bathing and the Haven was home to two immensely popular enterprises related to this. These were the donkey-pulled bathing machines and covered boats owned by the Fry family (see also: Longsands Lost Features), as well as the hot and cold salt water baths which were situated on the grassy area behind the Sailing Club. There is still a cast iron pipe for the baths that you can see on the beach at low tide.



Pier

In total it took 56 years to complete the North Pier. The first one was started in 1854 and took 44 years to build, but it was destroyed in a storm. The Tyne Improvement Commission, forerunner of the Port of Tyne Authority, then had to start construction from scratch, so it wasn't complete until 1903.

The scale of the structure and the adversity involved made the building of the North Pier one of the most mammoth engineering feats in the country at the time. Because the Pier takes the full force of the North Sea, it had to be made significantly bigger than the slightly longer South Pier. The distance between the two at the entrance is 360 yards.

If you keep your eyes peeled as you walk along the Pier, you will come across a ceramic doll's head buried in the cement between two of the granite blocks. It was inserted there by the Victorian builders as a little curiosity and it is apparently good luck to touch it. There's a very worn counterpart at the end of the South Pier as well.

Spanish Battery

The original name for the headland is Freestone Point, but is known as the Spanish Battery because in Tudor times it was first fortified and manned with a garrison of Spanish mercenaries. This was during the Rough Wooing, whereby England were allied with Spain against France in order to force Scotland to come under the sway of Henry VIII. The Spanish officers, Julian Romero, Pedro de Gamboa and Pedro de Negro were all in the employ of Henry at this time and in total there were 1300 Spanish soldiers at various points in Northumberland.

These early defences are depicted on the earliest map of Tynemouth, the Scala Plan from 1545. It is also in this year that the famous flagship, Mary Rose, is recorded as having anchored in the Haven (pictured?) as part of Henry's fleet for the invasion of Scotland.



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Collingwood's Monument

Cuthbert Collingwood

Cuthbert Collingwood was born in 1748 in Newcastle on the Side. He went to RGS school briefly and then went to sea when he was 12 and spent most of his life at sea. He lived to the age of 61 and is buried next to Lord Nelson at Saint Paul's Cathedral in London.

His connection to the area is that he married the daughter of John Blackett, who was a Newcastle mayor and merchant, and the couple lived at Chirton House, which was owned by the Blacketts and is not far from Tynemouth. The other famous person from Chirton of this period is the renowned architect, John Dobson, who designed the massive and perfectly proportioned plinth on which Lord Collingwood's statue stands.

Trafalgar

Collingwood was older than Nelson, but Nelson was promoted above him because Nelson was just so brilliant. But it was Collingwood who fired the first shot at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Having had a new copper bottom fitted to the hull of his flagship, Royal Sovereign, he was able to sail much faster into the French lines, leading the first column, while Nelson led the second column.

Collingwood's first broadside was fired from the 32 pound cannons that you can see on the monument, 50 of them at one go. But, he double-shotted these guns, which means the cannon ball was put in and then the barrel was stuffed with chains, shrapnel, nails and any old iron they could find, and then another cannon ball was put down on top of that. This broadside at short range, just 50 yards or so, ripped through the line and began a long duel with the Spanish flagship, Santa Ana. This action set the course for the whole battle and Nelson exclaimed, "See how that noble fellow Collingwood carries his ship into action!"

When Nelson was killed, Collingwood commanded the British fleet. He countermanded Nelson's order to anchor the ships overnight at Trafalgar, owing to which there were no British ships lost in the subsequent storm that arose.

Collingwood was given a barony after the battle, but only remained in England for a year. He died from cancer a few years later in Menorca in 1810. If you look at him here in Tynemouth, he's looking out to sea towards Trafalgar.



Black Middens

The notorious Black Middens rocks were the reason the leading lights of North Shields were built in 1539 on the orders of Henry VIII, the same year as the Dissolution.

This dangerous reef has been the demise of many a ship and sailor through history, but nowhere more so than during appalling weather in November 1864 when 5 ships were wrecked in 3 days with the loss of 34 lives. These included passenger steamer Stanley, the schooner Friendship and three other ships. 26 deaths were from the SS Stanley, which broke in two. This tragedy prompted the immediate creation of the Tynemouth Volunteer Life Brigade, the first land-to-sea rescue brigade in the world, as these deaths were in close sight of land and could have been prevented from land. The Cullercoats VLB was founded 3 days after Tynemouth's.

Prior's Rock at the outer edge of the Middens has been used as a tide gauge since time immemorial. It's full height is 6ft and it is called the Prior's Rock because the Prior had a fishing weir there. A big salmon fishery operated from the Black Middens in the 18th century using nets and above the rocks at the top of the bank is the Salmon Bailiff's Cottage, originally owned by and operated for the Duke.

Many ships have hit Priors Rock and there is an iron ring attached to it so stranded boats can moor to it if need be. Ships have been striking the Middens up until the 1970s and other such rings were in place along the edges of the rocks for the same purpose.



Knott's Flats

Sir James Knott

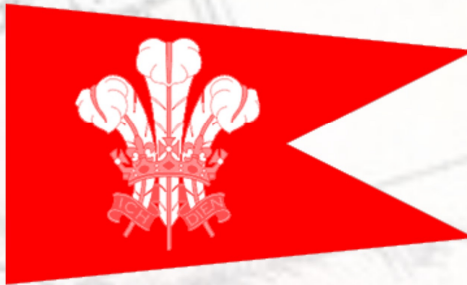
This enormous landmark dominates the harbour and is named in memory of Sir James Knott (1855-1934), a local philanthropist who rose from humble beginnings to become one of the richest men in the country through his Prince shipping line, which he began with one vessel.

Knott's Flats were built during the Depression of the 1930s in order to accommodate families from the slums that were cleared on the Fish Quay. The flats were built in the style of the first large scale social housing in London at the time, incorporating balconies with panoramic views while employing fire resistant blocks and high strength concrete to make the building ultra safe and practically impregnable to air raids that were feared could occur if war broke out again.



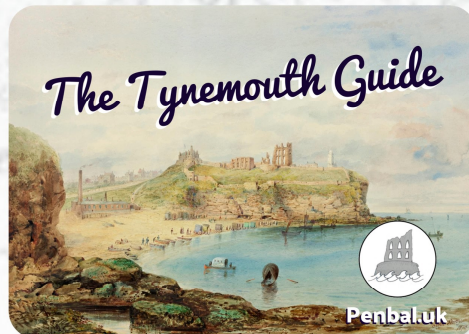
World War 2

There is a piece of modern Tynemouth folklore which states that during WW2, the Luftwaffe were expressly commanded to avoid striking Knott's Flats, as the building had been earmarked as billets for officers of the Kriegsmarine, should Operation Sealion, i.e. the invasion of Britain, have been enacted. It is possible that Hitler viewed the Tyne region, directly opposite the German coast, as his base from which to conquer the North. In this scenario he could have even occupied the Grand Hotel straight down the road as his HQ (replete with outdoor swimming pool on the Longsands!). Here we may be getting carried away with hypotheticals, but still we may wonder why these standout structures, along with the Plaza, were left untouched...



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MESSIS AB ALTIS
HARVEST FROM THE DEEP

First Tynemouth Station

The railway between Newcastle and Tynemouth is the oldest commuter line in the world and it is still used as one. However, the jewel in the crown that is Tynemouth Station, which we covered at the start of this guide, was not Tynemouth's first station. The original, around the corner on Oxford Street, was smaller but featured an elegant and proportioned sandstone frontage with an oriel window and the crests of Newcastle and Tynemouth above its triple-arched entrance. The station was opened in 1847 and today this Grade II Listed frontage serves as a retirement home.



Benjamin Green

As with all the main stations between Newcastle and Berwick, it was designed by Benjamin Green in the Tudor-Jacobean style. Green designed many signature buildings including the Theatre Royal in Newcastle. He was arguably the foremost architect of his time in the North East and his work was often favoured by the Duke.

North Eastern Railway Company

In the 1850s, shortly after this early period of railway expansion, the various independent lines in the region were acquired by the North Eastern Railway, with the exception of its rival for the Tyneside coastal tourism trade, the Blyth & Tyne Railway.

If you look at the ceramic tiles map on the wall of Tynemouth Station you can see all of the lines that belonged to the NER. They were a formidable corporation and they pioneered station design as showcases of their prestige.

As such, after the new Tynemouth Station came into being, the First Tynemouth Station primarily functioned as a goods terminus. It was completely closed in 1959 and in the 1980s the space was infilled for housing.



Roman Road?

It may be speculated that the oldest road into Tynemouth is not the Broadway or King Edward Road, but the route along Tynemouth Road, as this follows the direct line west out of Wallsend following the Tyne. This would have ran through a site called Adrian's Mound which stood below the site of the milestone in Northumberland Park today.

The Romans almost certainly did have a road to the Coast and it probably ran along the ridge on which Tynemouth Village is built. However, rather than running down the main avenue of Front Street, it likely took a straighter line along today's Bath Terrace.



Thank you for reading the Tynemouth Guide
If you want to enjoy the full 2-hour tour

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