

5 COMMUNICATION



Plate 2: Milepost. Photo: I Davison.

Key Historic Landscape Characteristics

- Historic landscape types: road, railway, harbour, airfield
- Network of roads, some dating back to Roman period
- Pattern of railway lines follow routes of early mineral lines
- Major rail and road routes along the coastal plain and Tyne gap, converging on Tyneside

Northumberland is well-served by a network of communications. Most of the routes mapped by HLC are the product of the last 150 to 200 years and include the major trunk roads and railways, together with a small number of ports, harbours and airfields. The general network of road and rail routes is broadly similar following the coastal plain and the Tyne gap as both these areas are physically less challenging for building such routes and are where many of the main settlements occur; these routes all converge on the south-east of the county and neighbouring Tyneside. The major north-south routes lie in the coastal fringe and connect Newcastle and Edinburgh by means of the A1 trunk road and the East Coast Main Line (rail); the main east-west route is along the Tyne valley connecting Newcastle and Carlisle through the A69 trunk road and the Newcastle to Carlisle railway. Two other important roads connecting Northumberland with the Scottish Borders are the A697 and A68; the latter follows the line of Roman Dere Street for long stretches.

Elsewhere in the county the physical barriers presented by the uplands has constrained the development of a wider road and rail network, with routes extending into valleys like the Rede, North Tyne, and South Tyne. However, there is evidence of an earlier network of roads and lanes across some of these more inhospitable areas: for example in the Cheviots Clennell Street, now a green lane, was one of the most important medieval routes across the Anglo-Scottish border and later became one of the most important droveways for Scottish highlanders taking their cattle to the markets of London and the south; and in the North Pennines the Carriers' Way was connected with early lead mining and used by packhorses to carry lead ore for smelting. Earlier still are the roads of Roman Northumberland, with the Stanegate and parts of Dere Street still in use today, and others which are now tracks across the hills. The existence of even earlier routeways is also probable, for example in the northern Cheviots near Wooler, where grassed trackways seemingly connect prehistoric settlements.

The county's road networks were first mapped in the mid-18th century on maps such as Horsley and Cay's 1753 map of Northumberland and Armstrong's county map of 1769, and followed in the early 19th century by Fryer's 1820 map and Greenwood's 1828 map. They recorded droveways and other traditional routes as well as enclosure roads and new turnpikes. Greenwood's map of 1828 is one of the first to depict early railways and waggonways, the forerunners of some of the mineral and passenger lines that developed in the course of the 19th century.

The communication types identified by Historic Landscape Characterisation are: **airfield, harbour, railway, disused railway, and road**. These types occupy a total area of 1334ha (0.26% of the county) and comprise 43 polygons (0.27% of the total).

Although road and rail types only occupy narrow corridors, the communication types as a whole contain a range of archaeological sites. The period which is overwhelmingly represented is the post-medieval as this includes many of the road- and rail-side structures and components, such as mileposts, railway stations and signal posts.

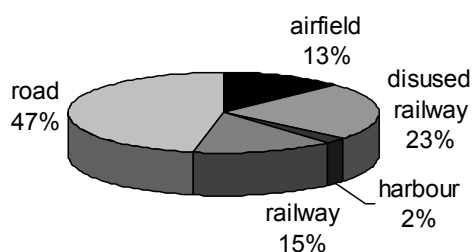


Figure 9: Proportions of Communication HLC types



Figure 10: Communication HLC types.

5.1 Airfield

Key Features:

- Few active airfields
- Region dominated by Newcastle Airport for commercial flights
- Former military airfields (see Military HLC type)
- Total area = 171ha
- Percentage of county = 0.03%
- Number of polygons = 2



A number of airfields were built in Northumberland in the 20th century for military use in the Second World War and are mostly considered in the Military HLC category. The only private airfield in the county which is still regularly in use is Eshott. Flying began here in 1942 when it was a training facility for Spitfire aircraft but although most of the war-time facilities have now been removed the original runways are now used for recreational flying. A very

small part of the grounds of Newcastle Airport lie just inside the county boundary and is also included in this type.

Only seven entries in the HER are located in this HLC type. They range from a Neolithic axe and a series of undated cropmark enclosures, to a deserted medieval village at Bockenfield and post-medieval coal mining remains at Prestwick Colliery.

Rarity: very rare

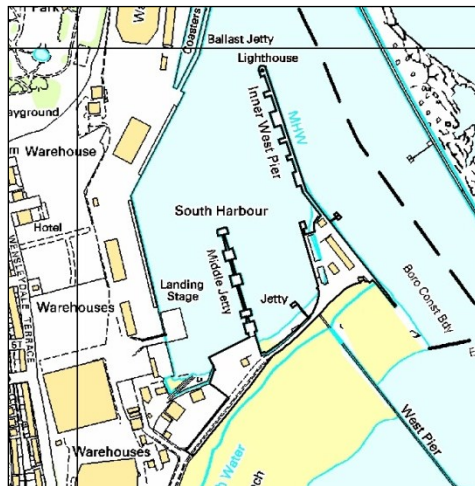
Trajectory of change: new

Susceptibility: low

5.2 Harbour

Key Features:

- Small number of 19th century ports
- Total area = 28ha
- Percentage of county = 0.005%
- Number of polygons = 2
- Occurrence = extremely rare



Northumberland has a small number of ports which all developed in the 19th century. Largest amongst them is the Port of Blyth, which has been mapped by HLC. Smaller ports and harbours exist at Tweedmouth, Seahouses and Warkworth (Amble), but are not of sufficient size to have been mapped in this project.

There has been a harbour at Blyth since medieval times but until the 17th century this was just a natural channel of the River Blyth. The growing coal trade and addition of a railway staith in the 19th century gave impetus to the development of the port and in 1854 the Blyth Harbour and Dock Co was

formed. Major developments took place from the 1880s and the harbour was deepened in 1912. More recently shipments have fallen and now bauxite imports are more important. Coal exporting at Amble ceased in 1969 and now boasts the region's largest marina (Grundy *et al* 1992, 103) (see Ornamental and Recreation HLC types).

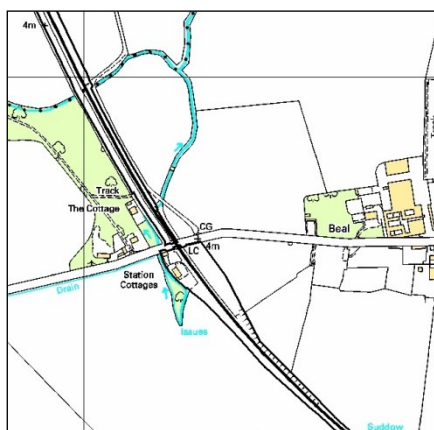
Some nine entries on the HER occur in this HLC type and all but one are post-medieval in date, the exception is an undated enclosure. The other HER entries are features associated with the port and harbour, such as a sluice, buildings, an inn, crane and berth as well as two wells.

Rarity: extremely rare
Trajectory of change: new
Susceptibility: low

5.3 Railway

Key Features:

- Northumberland played a key role in the early development of railways and locomotives
- Birthplace of George Stephenson at Wylam
- Total area = 507ha
- Percentage of county = 0.09%
- Number of polygons = 21



Northumberland has a long association with railways which have their origins in the horse-drawn waggonways used to carry coal from pit to staith. Railway engineer, George Stephenson, was born in the county at Wylam and his success in building railways and inventing the 'Rocket' locomotive led to the laying of railways and building of locomotives across the country. The pattern of public railways that was built in Northumberland followed quite closely that of existing mineral lines.

The main arteries of the railway network are the Newcastle to Carlisle line and the East Coast Main line, which are both still in operation after more than 150 years. In addition, a number of late 19th and 20th century mineral lines also operate in the south-east of the county serving Blyth Harbour and the Alcan works at Lynemouth.

The Newcastle to Carlisle line, built in 1834-9, runs along the Tyne valley and lays claim to a number of 'firsts': the first railway built across England, the first to use what became standard gauge throughout, the longest railway in the world at that time, and the first railway line to provide proper passenger facilities at intermediate stations (Grundy *et al* 1992, 91-2); it was followed by the Newcastle to Berwick railway in 1847.

The development of these lines provided the springboard for construction of branch lines deep into the Northumberland countryside, such as the Border Counties Railway in 1862 and the Alnwick to Cornhill line in 1877. Unfortunately these branch lines did not survive the closures brought about by the Beeching Report (1963) and none are now in operation except for the South Tyne Railway which is operated by a railway preservation society. Their remains often survive as substantial earthen embankments running across the landscape and are marked on modern mapping and are clearly visible on aerial photographs.

This railways included in this HLC type include passenger and mineral railway lines over 20m wide, including sidings, junctions and embankments. A distinction has been made between those which are still commercial lines and those which are disused.

The range of HER entries in this HLC type is dominated by entries for post-medieval elements of the railway, such as stations, signals, viaducts and bridges. The medieval sites associated with railways include a settlement and the remains of the castle in Berwick. The prehistoric entries are all finds of weapons or tools.

Rarity: rare

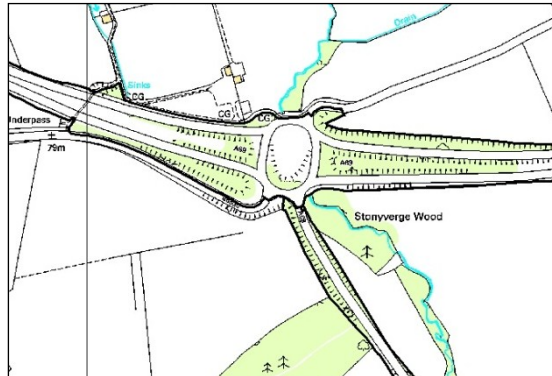
Trajectory of change: increasing rapidly

Susceptibility: low

5.4 Road

Key Features:

- Network of 18th and 19th century turnpikes
- 20th/21st century widening and bypasses
- Increase in road infrastructure, eg service stations
- Total area = 627ha
- Percentage of county = 0.12%
- Number of polygons = 18



The county's road network largely developed over the 18th and 19th centuries through the creation of turnpikes. The earliest turnpikes were mainly trunk routes like the Great North Road (now the A1) and other routes radiating out of Newcastle (Grundy *et al* 1992, 89); later turnpikes filled in the gaps. The modern A1 still follows the line of the old Great North Road, although a few stretches have been by-passed and now serve as local routes or lay-bys. The A69 in contrast largely follows a new route, bypassing settlements in the Tyne valley with Haydon Bridge the latest to be relieved of its heavy traffic as a new by-pass is under construction in 2007-9. A number of stretches of dual carriageway in the south-east of the county are also included that have been built to serve the growing population and industry in and around Cramlington, Ashington and Blyth.

All the roads included here have been widened and improved in the 20th or 21st

centuries, although their origins are in some cases much older. This type includes roads over 20m wide, including embankments, service areas and junctions, which are largely dual carriageways; there are no motorways in the county.

Two other important routes to the Scottish borders are the A696, A697 and A68, the latter following the line of the Dere Street Roman road for much of its way; however, these are single carriageway roads, less than 20m wide, and were not recorded by HLC.

The range of entries in the HER is largely post-medieval mileposts as well as a number of buildings, gates, bridges and signposts. Earlier sites include a shrunken medieval village, and a number of Roman features and finds, including a temporary camp, milestone, altar and culvert. Most prehistoric entries are finds of flint tools.

Rarity: rare

Trajectory of change: increasing significantly

Susceptibility: low