

# Post-industrial sentiments in Newcastle

Like other European countries, England is divided. It suffers from a north-south divide that leads many people in the disproportionately affluent south to believe that the former industrial cities of the north, such as **Newcastle upon Tyne**, have nothing to offer. Consequently, the North East of England is a place where many have never been, or thought to go.

NEWCASTLE (UK) — TEXT: ISABELLE PRIEST, ILLUSTRATION: HARMEN VAN DER HORST

The media allows this attitude to spread, even seeping across national borders. The North East is represented by high unemployment, deprivation, industrial wastelands, call centres, public sector administration departments, cold weather and working-class camaraderie.

Whilst it is not clear how, when and why these founded a negative mindset, or whether it has always existed in various guises, the attitude is today untrue and outdated. The North East is a complicated, but beautiful (even awe-inspiring) region, and has stacks of history and triumph that, despite courageous efforts from within, is being forgotten.

Formerly famous for its coal mines and shipyards, the engineering feats achieved since 1775 on the mile-long stretch of river joining the region's capital, Newcastle,

to Gateshead are astonishing. Travelling by train across King Edward Bridge into Newcastle Central Station (1850), there is the most impressive vista of high-rise bridges to rival any great city. The seven existing bridges connecting either side of the gorge cause one to genuinely marvel at what it means to be human. For that rare and bracing experience alone, the city is a must-see.

And this is just the quayside.

Newcastle's extensive neo-classical centre is equally pleasing. Planned and built between 1824–1841 on 36 hectares, Grainger Town is a late Georgian masterpiece to rival Bath and Edinburgh New Town in soft-coloured yellow stone. The quarter is characterized by four-storey, terraced buildings with vertical dormers, domes, turrets and spikes. At its heart is Grey Street, described by Nikolaus Pevsner as one of the finest in England.

Like Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool, Newcastle – and its satellite cities, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Sunderland – has recently endured considerable post-industrial decline. The coal mines and shipyards had all closed by 1990 and its hustle and bustle has quietened to a comparative silence. Swathes of the city have been left seemingly deserted. Although it has a strong university, arguably this decline has wiped Newcastle off the map and now it is renowned only for its nightlife and hardy Geordie people.

What is of greater interest to this tour guide, however, is how the region has attempted to rebuild itself after such dramatic economic shift. Over the last twenty years, the North East has become a story of an evolving experiment in regeneration based on trial and error. With successes and failures, the region has made extraordinary efforts to redefine itself and survive – reminding us that places are not a premeditated collection of good and bad architecture, but an incredible montage of peoples' efforts and risks.

Seeing no future for large-scale industry, the initial approach was to develop the region's cultural side to attract tourists. Public artworks, sculpture parks, concert halls, museums and galleries were commissioned and hotels established for the expected tourist trade. Big names were flown in to design spaceship-like buildings such as **The Sage by Fosters + Partners (1)** and **Gateshead Millennium Bridge by Wilkinson Eyre (2)**.

As the 2000s progressed, and UK-wide recession approached, flashy commissions increasingly gave way to smaller, local, but still ambitious designs. Now the cultural centres are in place, there has been a transition from a situation where the city is dependent on external influences to one where the citizens are developing their own identity and purpose again at a grassroots level. The focus has, more sensitively, returned to their needs and desires – a criticism, perhaps, of the explosion of traditional middle-class cultural centres (concert halls, for instance) in the region. This has seen a shift from cultural buildings to expanding offices, schools and libraries by architects that infrequently venture beyond the borders of the region.

Most lately, the region is aiming to have grander and 'green' economic intentions, to once again literally become a powerhouse with, for example, Heatherwick Studio's design for a power station in Teesside (not yet built). Biomass-fuelled, this is a visionary statement in demonstrating the region's commitment to a long-term, successful and sustainable future. What's more, Heatherwick's design transforms the power plant site from a highly protected area to a landscape where people might walk, sunbathe, have picnics or go tobogganing, and makes the building itself a public venue and resource. Meanwhile Newcastle is planning an extensive programme of cycle routes. →

## Tour Guide

Exploring a city, region, or theme



**1 THE SAGE (2004)**  
Architect: Foster + Partners  
Address: St Mary's Square, Gateshead Quays, Gateshead, NE8 2JR



**2 GATESHEAD MILLENNIUM BRIDGE (2001)**  
Architect: Wilkinson Eyre  
Address: Quayside, Gateshead, NE8 1AE



**3 MEMPHIS BUILDING (2009)**  
Architect: 3FOLD with SP&A Architects  
Address: Lingfield Point, Darlington, DL1 1RW



**4 INFINITY BRIDGE (2009)**  
Architect: Expedition Engineering  
Address: River Tees, Stockton



**5 MIDDLESBROUGH INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART (MIMA) (2007)**  
Architect: Erick van Egeraat Associated Architects  
Address: Centre Square, Middlesbrough, TS1 2AZ



**6 BOHO ONE (2010)**  
Architect: xsite architecture  
Address: Bridge Street West, The Boho Zone, Middlesbrough, TS2 1AE



**7 PASMORE APOLLO PAVILION (1969/2010)**  
Architect: original designer Victor Pasmore with refurbishment by Burns Architects  
Address: Oakerside, Peterlee



**8 THE PLACE (2008)**  
Architect: Sadler Brown Architects  
Address: Athenaeum Street, Sunnyside, Sunderland, SR1 1QV



**9 THRESHOLD SOUND SCULPTURE (2003)**  
Artist: Lulu Quinn  
Address: High Street, Gateshead, NE9 7JR



**10 TYNESIDE CINEMA (2005)**  
Architect: Fletcher Priest Architects  
Address: 10 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6QG



**11 BALTIC CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART (2002)**  
Architect: Ellis Williams Architects  
Address: Baltic Quays, Gateshead, NE8 3BA



**12 THE TOFFEE FACTORY (2012)**  
Architect: xsite architecture  
Address: Lower Steenbergs Yard, Quayside, Ouseburn, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 2DF



**13 SEVEN STORIES (2005)**  
Architect: GWK architects  
Address: 30 Lime Street, Ouseburn Valley, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 2PQ



**14 NORTHERN STAGE (2006)**  
Architect: RHWL  
Address: Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RH



**15 THE GREAT NORTH MUSEUM: HANCOCK (2009)**  
Architect: Terry Farrell and Partners  
Address: Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT



**16 NEWCASTLE CITY LIBRARY (2009)**  
Architect: Ryder Architecture  
Address: 33 New Bridge Street West, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8AX



**17 THE PERFORMANCE ACADEMY (2004)**  
Architect: RMJM  
Address: Newcastle College, Rye Hill Campus, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7SA



**18 THE LIFESTYLE ACADEMY (2007)**  
Architect: RMJM  
Address: Newcastle College, Rye Hill Campus, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7SA



**19 KNOP LAW PRIMARY SCHOOL (2010)**  
Architect: ADP Architecture  
Address: Hill Head Parkway, Chapel House, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 1DS



**20 WOODHORN COLLIERY MUSEUM (2006)**  
Architect: RMJM  
Address: Queen Elizabeth II Country Park, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 9YF



**21 DEWAR'S LANE GRANARY (2011)**  
Architect: Bain Swan Architects  
Address: Dewar's Lane, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 1HJ



**22 BERWICK WORKSPACE (2008)**  
Architect: Malcolm Fraser Architects  
Address: Boarding School Yard, 90 Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2BN



**23 OBSERVATORY (2008)**  
Architect: Charles Barclay Architects  
Address: Kielder Water & Forest Park



**25 BELVEDERE (1999)**  
Architect: Softroom Architects  
Address: Kielder Water & Forest Park



**24 JANUS CHAIRS (2009)**  
Architect: Ryder Architecture  
Address: Kielder Water & Forest Park



**26 FREYA'S CABIN (2009)**  
Architect: Studio Weave  
Address: Kielder Water & Forest Park



**27 SPECERE (2009)**  
Architect: Adjaye Associates  
Address: Kielder Water & Forest Park



**28 ROBIN'S HUT (2009)**  
Architect: Studio Weave  
Address: Kielder Water & Forest Park

## (Post-industrial sentiments in Newcastle)

This guide begins in the cities of the North East and finishes in the wilderness of the North West – a popular destination for its natural beauty and wordsmiths. These regions are linked as a mutually inclusive pair of opposites. Their lasting significances were forged between 1800 and 1840, with poets like William Wordsworth popularizing the Lake District, and the Romantic movement emerging partly as a reaction against the perceived horrors of the Industrial Revolution in the swelling northern urban centres like those here. This is a journey demonstrating historical cause and effect. What is strange today, however, is that these post-industrial landscapes have inspired Romantic sentiments of their own. There is now something sublime and nostalgic about industrial ruin, as can be seen at RMJM's Woodhorn Colliery Museum in Ashington (20) and further afield, perhaps most famously at Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex in Essen (DE).

### Day One: River Tees

Starting with the cities one hour (by car) south of Newcastle, begin on the River Tees at Darlington – famous for its links to the railways. There you find a pleasant town with an impressive market hall (Alfred Waterhouse, 1860) and **Memphis Building by 3FOLD with Shuttleworth Picknett Associates (3)**. Surprisingly, this is a much-updated 1950s former textile factory where the existing gable walls have had steelwork inserted to form a new overhang and full-height glazing with brise-soleils to provide views out and light throughout the building's 100-metre depth.

Travel by train to Thornaby (the route of the world's first passenger train), or drive half an hour by car. This town was once known for rope making, then for its iron ore blast furnaces lining the riverbank. Cross the 125-metre pedestrian **Infinity Bridge (4)** designed by **Expedition Engineering** in 2009. This is a beautiful bowstring bridge with two continuous, differently-sized structural steel arches with a suspended precast concrete deck. Continue into Stockton town centre to catch the train to Middlesbrough downstream.

In Middlesbrough, visit the **Institute of Modern Art (MIMA)** finished in 2007 by Dutch practice **Erick van Egeraat (5)**. MIMA is a huge, glazed two-piece building set in generous landscaping and containing work by such artists as Paula Rego, Jacob Epstein, David Hockney and Tracey Emin. Also visit **Boho One (6)** by **xsite architecture**. With its three components and 'bridges' to encourage networking and knowledge sharing, Boho One provides high-quality workspace to act as an 'accelerator' for an emerging digital sector. Containing a ground source heat pump, wind turbines, natural lighting and ventilation, the building is, like Teesside Power Station, a response to longevity. When making your way out of Middlesbrough, take Tees Transporter Bridge – one of only a handful ever constructed (William Arrol & Co, 1911). Its fascinating principal is to carry land-based traffic using a hanging, moving segment of roadway suspended from a tall frame.

### Day Two: South of Newcastle

If by car, go north to **Pasmore Apollo Pavilion**, Peterlee, originally designed by Victor Pasmore (1969) and refurbished

by **Burns Architects** in 2010 (7). This is a rare example of a large-scale experiment in the synthesis of art and architecture in the UK. A pedestrian link between the halves of Sunny Blunts Estate, it comprises large, geometric planes of reinforced *in situ* concrete that capture light in magical ways. Afterwards, continue to Sunderland to enjoy tea at **The Place (8)** whilst admiring the building's blue artwork-printed glass louvre facade, developed in 2008 by **Sadler Brown Architects in collaboration with artists**. Millions of pounds are being invested in this part of Sunderland to restore its historic streets to their former glory.

Catch the train to Heworth, the metro to Gateshead Stadium, and walk to Gateshead High Street via the park. Follow the path to the giant, mirror-finished stainless steel **doorway** accomplished by **Lulu Quinn** in 2003 (9). Hear the sound of a door and stop. Listen to some of the 500 personal stories and ambient sounds reflecting the character, humour and song of Gateshead. Cross the River Tyne by train and stay in the new Sleeperz Hotel. In the evening, watch a film at one of the UK's few remaining Art Deco cinemas, **Tyneside Cinema (10)**, restored and extended by **Fletcher Priest Architects** in 2008. Two additional screens and a 'digital lounge' showing locally produced work have joined Dixon Scott's auditorium (1937). Be sure to have a drink in the translucent, ephemeral bar.

### Day Three: River Tyne and Culture

Return to Gateshead to The Sage by Foster + Partners. This curved glass and steel structure encloses three structurally separate performance halls which prevent travelling noise and vibrations. A special 'spongy' concrete mix was used with a higher-than-usual air capacity to also improve acoustics. Move to the adjacent **Baltic Centre of Contemporary Art (11)** – a former flour mill, closed in 1981 – redesigned by **Ellis Williams** in 2002. Have lunch at Six, the restaurant in the glazed top-floor addition, for spectacular views.

Cross Millennium Bridge (2001) by Wilkinson Eyre Architects. This bridge adds to the North's extraordinary collection of movable bridges (Newcastle Swing Bridge, Armstrong, 1876) by being the only tilt bridge in the world. Its incredible butterfly wing shape tilts to a 45-degree angle three times a week using six hydraulic rams for spectacle or passing ships.

Walk the quayside downstream to a tributary on the left to find an exciting, brightly coloured refurbishment called the **Toffee Factory (12)**, also by **xsite architecture** (2012). A refurbished, flexible workspace for freelancers, creative and digital businesses in a brick factory, the building has sparked the construction of 70 new homes on the derelict site opposite. Continue along this tributary, reading the historical information plaques en route, to another converted flour mill. Now a museum for children's books, **Seven Stories (13)** was

designed by former practice **GWK**, since absorbed by **ADP**. Its witty front elevation and entrance abstracts its form from the pages and spine of a book, although the interior is slightly disappointing. Spend the evening at a show in the transformed and enlarged **Northern Stage (14)** by **RHWL**. Above the main brick facade, which although modern in style, discretely merges into the surrounding cityscape of Gothic university buildings, is *Escapology* by Cath Campbell.

### Day Four: Newcastle and Education

Starting where day three left off, visit the **Great North Museum (15)**, making an effort to see **Terry Farrell's** 2009 **extension** from outside and in. The internal architecture evokes a modern interpretation of an 18th-century private collection or museum, like the Teylers Museum in Haarlem (NL). Walk to **Ryder Architecture's** 2009 **Newcastle City Library (16)**, which brings light, air and openness into the library, and then out to Newcastle College to find two huge **RMJM** buildings – the **Performance Academy (17)**, with its transparent screen (2004), and the **Lifestyle Academy (18)** from 2007. Grey and imposing, these certainly reject a trend in other English schools to use colour as a means of distinguishing buildings for children. Rent a car before stopping off at the excellent **Knop Law Primary School (20)** by **ADP Architecture (19)** and continuing to **RMJM's Woodhorn Colliery Museum** in Ashington (20), which celebrates the North's coal mining heritage with a building inspired by its machinery.

### Day Five: Berwick-upon-Tweed

For a slice of ancient history, and how new architecture interacts with it, visit Berwick-upon-Tweed, north of Newcastle. It's really worth the 1.5-hour drive. The town has been swapped frequently between the former kingdoms of England and Scotland, and therefore has 14th-century defence walls, ramparts and barracks. Here, architects are using glazing and timber to respect existing materials – see the **Dewar's Lane Granary (2011)** by **Bain Swan Architects (21)** and **Malcolm Fraser Architect's Berwick Workspace (22)** from 2008. The latter, an office operating in a similar way to Toffee Factory, takes the vernacular form and transforms it by timber cladding.

### Day Six: Kielder Water & Forest Park

Instead of returning to Newcastle you could treat yourself to a peaceful day discovering **landscape installations** in Kielder. **Charles Barclay Architects** (2008) and **Ryder Architecture** (2009), as well as well-known **Softroom Architects** (1999), **Adjaye Associates** (2009) and **Studio Weave** (2009), all designed marvellous constructions to attract more tourists to the region (24–28). ←

Mi Tour Guide

## → MIMOA and A10 will soon be working together!

Starting with the next issue, readers can suggest projects for 'MI Tour Guide', which will be published both in A10 and online at MIMOA. Since Ireland will soon host the presidency of the Council of the European Union, we would like to know: Which exemplary or innovative, hidden or spectacular buildings in Dublin should be included in the MI Tour Guide? Upload the project with images and text (free of copyrights) at [www.mimoo.eu](http://www.mimoo.eu). A10 correspondent Emmett Scanlon will make the final selection. Deadline for submissions: 15 January 2013.