

Historic County Boundaries

The historic counties dataset has been produced by Ordnance Survey in collaboration with the Department of Communities and Local Government and represents those counties based on historic records /mapping circa 1888 and using the primary sources of the Local Government (England and Wales) Act 1888, the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1889 and the Sheriffs Act 1887.

The historic counties dataset shows the county boundaries in place in 1888 in England and Wales and those established a year later in Scotland. The alignments of the counties for England and Wales are derived from mapping sourced from the National Archives and dating from 1890. The most recent available mapping dates for Scotland are from 1940.

The content of the relevant legislation is outlined below.

Sheriffs Act 1887

This Act consolidated the Law relating to the office of the Sheriff in England, including their appointment and functions and repealed certain enactments, relating to Sheriffs which ceased to be in force or have become unnecessary. It defined counties for such purposes.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ENGLAND AND WALES) ACT 1888: 51 & 52 Vict C41 (as enacted)

This Act is generally known as the Local Government Act 1888.

This Act changed the style of local governance in England and Wales and created elected county councils to take over the administrative functions of the magistrates of the Quarter Sessions courts, that ten large cities should be "counties of themselves" for the purposes of local government and that each county was to be divided into urban and rural districts, based on existing sanitary districts governed by a district council.

List of counties and county boroughs created in 1889

ENGLAND

Historic county	Administrative county	County boroughs
Bedfordshire	Bedfordshire	
Berkshire	Berkshire	Reading
Buckinghamshire	Buckinghamshire	
Cambridgeshire	Cambridgeshire	
	Isle of Ely	
Cheshire	Cheshire	Birkenhead, Chester, Stockport (part)
Cornwall	Cornwall	
Cumberland	Cumberland	Carlisle
Derbyshire	Derbyshire	Derby
Devon	Devon	Devonport, Exeter, Plymouth
Dorset	Dorset	
Durham	Durham	Gateshead, South Shields, Sunderland
Essex	Essex	West Ham
Gloucestershire	Gloucestershire	Bristol (part), Gloucester
Hampshire	Hampshire †	Portsmouth, Southampton
Herefordshire	Herefordshire	
Hertfordshire	Hertfordshire	
Huntingdonshire	Huntingdonshire	

Kent	Kent	Canterbury
Lancashire	Lancashire	Barrow, Blackburn, Bolton, Bootle cum Linacre, Burnley, Bury, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, Preston, Rochdale, St Helens, Salford, Stockport (part), Wigan
Leicestershire	Leicestershire	Leicester
Lincolnshire	Lincolnshire, Parts of Holland	
	Lincolnshire, Parts of Kesteven	
	Lincolnshire, Parts of Lindsey	Lincoln
London	London	City of London: remained a separate county, but returned members to the London County Council, which exercised some powers within the City.
Middlesex	Middlesex	
Monmouthshire	Monmouthshire	Newport‡
Norfolk	Norfolk	Norwich, Great Yarmouth (part)
Northamptonshire	Northamptonshire	Northampton
	Soke of Peterborough	
Northumberland	Northumberland	Newcastle upon Tyne
Nottinghamshire	Nottinghamshire	Nottingham
Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire	Oxford
Rutland	Rutland	
Shropshire	Shropshire	
Somerset	Somerset	Bath, Bristol (part)
Staffordshire	Staffordshire	Hanley, Walsall, West Bromwich, Wolverhampton
Suffolk	East Suffolk	Ipswich, Great Yarmouth (part)
	West Suffolk	
Surrey	Surrey	Croydon
Sussex	East Sussex	Brighton, Hastings
	West Sussex	
Warwickshire	Warwickshire	Birmingham, Coventry
Westmorland	Westmorland	
Wiltshire	Wiltshire	
Worcestershire	Worcestershire	Dudley, Worcester
Yorkshire	Yorkshire, East Riding	Kingston-upon-Hull, York (part)
	Yorkshire, North Riding	Middlesbrough, York (part)
	Yorkshire, West Riding	Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Leeds, Sheffield, York (part)

† From 1 April 1890 the Isle of Wight was separated from the County of Hampshire to form an Administrative County.

‡ Newport became a county borough in 1891

WALES

Geographic county	Administrative county	County boroughs
Anglesey	Anglesey	
Brecknockshire	Brecknockshire	
Carnarvonshire	Carnarvonshire	
Cardiganshire	Cardiganshire	
Carmarthenshire	Carmarthenshire	
Denbighshire	Denbighshire	
Flintshire	Flintshire	
Glamorgan	Glamorgan	Cardiff, Swansea
Merioneth	Merioneth	
Montgomeryshire	Montgomeryshire	
Pembrokeshire	Pembrokeshire	
Radnorshire	Radnorshire	

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1889: 52 & 53 Vict C50 (as enacted)

The Act provided that a county council should be established in each county, consisting of elected councillors. The county was to be divided into electoral divisions, made up of groupings of parishes, each returning one councillor. In addition police burghs in the county were also regarded as electoral divisions, though the councillors for these areas were co-opted by the members of the burgh's town council.

The chairman of each county council, elected by the members, was given the title "Convenor of the county".

List of counties created in 1890

SCOTLAND

Administrative county 1890
Caithness
Sutherland
Ross and Cromarty
Inverness-shire
Nairnshire
County of Moray (also known as Elginshire until 1918)
Banffshire
Aberdeenshire
Kincardineshire
Angus (Forfarshire until 1928)
Perthshire
Argyll
County of Bute
Ayrshire
Renfrewshire
Dunbartonshire
Stirlingshire
Clackmannanshire
Kinross-shire
Fife
East Lothian (Haddingtonshire until 1921)
Midlothian (County of Edinburgh until 1890)
West Lothian (Linlithgowshire until 1924)
Lanarkshire
Peeblesshire
Selkirkshire
Berwickshire
Roxburghshire
Dumfriesshire
Kirkcudbrightshire
Wigtownshire
Zetland (Shetland)
Orkney

Further information

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has created in conjunction with the Association of British Counties a web application displaying current ceremonial and historic counties of England and Wales. Please note there may be differences on the historic counties web

application used by DCLG and that on the Ordnance Survey website as they were created from different sources. This information sheet documents how the historic county boundary dataset has been created. Source information for the DCLG current and historic counties web application can be found on the Association of British Counties' website. Specifically the section titled The Historic Counties, <http://gazetteer.org.uk/notes.php#section4.3>