

# NEWCASTLES OF THE WORLD

People in the United Kingdom who live in Manchester or London or Liverpool will know that theirs is the original and most important city that bears that name - but that there are also others places around the world that have taken the name. You will find them particularly in the USA, Canada or Australia where expats have settled from the UK and created new communities or influenced the name of an existing community to take the name of their own place of origin.

Nowhere is this truer than Newcastle, where coal miners from Tyneside and the wider North East settled across the English-speaking world. Often, mines were established with the help of skilled engineers from the coalfields of the North East of England – and the community that grew up around the collieries took the name of Newcastle or New Castle. The name also exists in many other languages too, for the same reason that Newcastle upon Tyne has its name – a “new castle” replaced a former defensive fortification that had been damaged or needed strengthening.

What makes “Newcastle” unique is that many of these towns and cities that share the name have come together to create a network, or alliance, through which they create links and work together on projects in the fields of culture, education, business and tourism. “Newcastles of the World” holds a conference of its members every two years, and in October 2018 the twentieth anniversary conference was held in Shinshiro City (“Newcastle”) in Japan. This was a return to where the first conference was held in 1998.

Although there are over 100 different “Newcastles” in all languages and on all continents, sixteen partner “Newcastles” make up the core of the network which is coordinated by a small secretariat in Newcastle upon Tyne. The partners are all equal members but vary greatly in size, from a couple of thousand inhabitants in Jaunpils, Latvia or Nové Hradky in the Czech Republic to over a quarter of a million in Kota Bharu (Malaysia), Newcastle upon Tyne and Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa. The Greater Newcastle metropolitan area in New South Wales, Australia has a population of over half a million, and the city of Newcastle within it has both the largest coal exporting harbour in the world and the finest surfing beach in Australia. More recent joiners such as Nyborg in Denmark (the historic former capital of the country) and Nové Zámky in Slovakia bring fascinating heritage to the network and are already enthusiastic participants.

Neuchâtel in Switzerland and Neuburg an der Donau (north of Munich in Germany) are among the original members of the network who have been represented at every conference and continue to be closely involved in projects, for instance the “Newcastles Passport” which promotes tourism between different member of the alliance. The “Passport” provides special offers to visitors from other Newcastles, for example discounts at hotels and restaurants or hosted experiences such as a tea-making ceremony in Shinshiro, Japan or guided Amish tour in New Castle, Pennsylvania, USA. In all cases, should the tourist wish it, he or she can have a customised and hosted programme for their visit to cover any particular interests – perhaps to follow their own family history – and the local Mayor is at hand to provide a personal welcome.

The network’s website contains not only information about the visitor attractions of each Newcastle but an Events Calendar where each Newcastle posts details about major events in their town or city, helping potential visitors to pick the best time to attend – examples are the “Chocolatissimo!” festival in Neuchâtel (the home of Suchard) or Europe’s largest hat festival every September in Neuburg an der Donau!

Business people have always been among the delegations at conferences – and often this can lead to wider links; for instance, the Chambers of Commerce of North East England and in Newcastle, South Africa signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding in 2016. One project that is currently being explored is using software designed by a company in Newcastle upon Tyne to better manage the electricity distribution network in the partner Newcastle.

The exchange of information and best practice in areas of common interest is an important feature of the network. One such area is ensuring the vitality of town centres against the challenge of increasing online and out-of-town shopping. Information and case studies from different Newcastles are shared on the network website – for example “New Castle Main Street” which promotes downtown New Castle, Indiana, USA, and the town centre partnerships, business improvement associations and districts of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Newcastle upon Tyne and Newcastle Ontario, Canada. Northumbria University in Newcastle upon Tyne has secured an Arts and Research Council Grant to study “The Future of the City Centre”. There will be an international symposium in Newcastle upon Tyne this September and at the University of Newcastle in Australia next February. Everyone is welcome, whether they live in a “Newcastle” or not – see <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/news-events/events/2018/09/ahrc-network-future-of-the-city-centre/>

Cultural projects between different Newcastles are an important part of the offer. For illustration, there is an ongoing collaboration between the Newcastle Arts Development Organisation (NADO) in Newcastle, South Africa and Curious Monkey Theatre Company in Newcastle upon Tyne on a project called “Two Newcastles” embracing drama, song and story-telling. The Newcastles of the World secretariat helps facilitate contacts and source funding – in this case from the Arts Council of England. The artists involved presented their original work “This World Here...Nomhlaba Le” at theatres in Newcastle upon Tyne in May of this year, and the project has also involved local schools.

Different artists from these two Newcastles came together last summer in Akhaltsikhe, the “Newcastle” in the Republic of Georgia, to perform alongside local singers and dancers at the annual festival at the magnificent Rabati fortress in the town.

People from a number of the Newcastles contributed to a book of poetry entitled “Proud to Call it Home” with foreword from accomplished poet Lindiwe Mabuze who comes from Newcastle, South Africa; she was an anti-Apartheid activist who went on to serve her country as a Member of the first democratically elected parliament of South Africa and as a diplomat, being High Commissioner for South Africa in the UK from 2001 to 2010.

There has also been a singing project called “This is my Home, Newcastle” with artists from Newcastles in Canada, Japan, Australia, the UK and Switzerland contributing their own localised lyrics and performance to a tune called “Home Newcastle” that was a hit record for the singer Busker (Ronnie Lambert) twenty years ago.

Young people are an important part of this global initiative. School links are promoted and there’s a resource pack (with project ideas) that educationalists have helped create. The alliance also encourages links between youth councils and youth parliaments, and several visits have taken place. The Newcastles of the World conference in Newcastle upon Tyne in 2012 inspired young visitors from Shinshiro to create their own youth assembly – the first of its type in Japan – and to host the inaugural Newcastles of the World youth conference which took place in December 2017.

To mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year a book was published about the Newcastles of the World, alongside an exhibition of photographs and artefacts in the city library of Newcastle upon Tyne, and a travel app is being developed for use by young people visiting one Newcastle from another to help them get to the right places and enjoy the best experiences.

There’s a regular, colourful newsletter of stories, profiles and features from Newcastles around the world which can be downloaded from the website – [www.newcastlesoftheworld.com](http://www.newcastlesoftheworld.com) – and for more information contact David Faulkner or Zélie Guérin at [newcastlesoftheworld@gmail.com](mailto:newcastlesoftheworld@gmail.com)