

# Bakewell

## IN THIS FACT SHEET:

Early history

Trade and industry

Transport and turnpikes

Architecture

Market

Tourism

Events

The famous pudding

Bakewell today

Further information

# Bakewell

Bakewell is the main settlement, only market town and administrative centre of the Peak District National Park [PDNP Fact Sheet]. Set in the county of Derbyshire in the middle of the beautiful White Peak on the River Wye, Bakewell is 12 miles south east of Buxton and 12 miles west of Chesterfield. Its position at a crossing point on the river was an early reason for the

town's growth. The A6 road between Buxton and Matlock runs through the town centre.

The town's name comes from Badecanwylla, mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, which can be translated as Bodecca's Well after the town's springs and an Anglo-Saxon chieftain.

Bakewell is one of the most popular places to visit in the Peak District. People come to sample the town's famous

pudding, stroll around the cobbled alleys and courtyards, browse in the shops, and visit places of interest such as the **Old House Museum**, the M&C Motorcycle Museum, **Haddon Hall**, **Chatsworth** and Lathkill Dale. Various events are held throughout the year, including the carnival and well dressing. Although tourism is an important source of income for local people, the town retains its agricultural [Farming Fact Sheet] character and traditions with regular farm stock markets and the annual agricultural show.

# Early history

Traces of Mesolithic activity (around 6,000-5,000 BCE) have been found in the area around Bakewell. A largely intact Bronze Age round barrow at Haddon Fields a few miles south of Bakewell dates from around 2,000 BCE and is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The first real evidence of settlement is the hill fort at Ball Cross dating from around 1,000 BCE.

There was a Saxon church on the site of the present All Saints Church by the 9th century. Saxon fragments, including carved heads, can be seen at the church. There are also two Saxon crosses, the larger of which is said to have come from near Hassop station; the smaller was found on the moors towards Chesterfield.

In 924 CE Edward the Elder (son of Alfred the Great) started building a fortification near Bakewell, probably to protect the river crossing. The mound now known as Castle Hill is not the site of this fortification but

rather the site of a later wooden Norman castle.

By the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, Bakewell, then known as Badequella, was a very large parish, much larger than the present civil parish of Bakewell. As well as the church there were several settlements and a lead smelting works. Two priests were listed which indicates the importance of the town and church – the only other Derbyshire town with this honour was Repton. Rebuilt around 1100 CE the church has been added to and much altered over the centuries.

# Trade and industry

**The timber trade and lead mining industry brought prosperity to Bakewell in the 13th and 14th centuries, with the town expanding from the west slopes of the valley onto the meadows near the river.**

**For many years, sheep farming and lead mining remained the most important industries around Bakewell, with limestone and gritstone quarried for local use.**

During the 18th and 19th centuries other industries grew up. In 1772 Josiah Wedgwood started to use locally quarried

chert in the pottery making industry. In 1778 Richard Arkwright built Lumford Mill, a cotton spinning mill which was the first factory in the world to be powered by a river (rather than the streams of his earlier mills at Cromford). This new industry brought an increase in population (350 workers in 1780) and changes in local employment. Arkwright Square was built to house the mill workers. The mill itself burnt down in 1868 but the water courses can still be seen.

A significant 19th century industry was the production of marble ornaments as an expansion of the Black Marble industry at Ashford. Black Marble is a type of limestone containing fine-grained organic material and other impurities.

When polished the stone turns a deep glossy black.

Over the years, dairy farming replaced sheep farming, but by the late 20th century farming was in decline with many farmers diversifying into tourism-related activities [Tourism Fact Sheet].

Today, agriculture, light industry and tourism are the main sources of income for local people. An estimated two million people visit Bakewell every year, especially in the summer, on market days and for the Bakewell Show. A visitor survey in 2005 found that Bakewell was one of the most popular destinations for Peak District visitors.

# Transport and turnpikes

During medieval times, trains of packhorses carried salt, wool and many other goods to and from Bakewell. The distinctive five-arched bridge was built around 1300 and is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It was widened in the 19th century. A second bridge, Holme Bridge, was built over the river in 1664 to allow packhorse trains to cross the river.

In 1815 the Buxton to Bakewell turnpike road opened up the

town and, by 1818, crowds of travellers were calling at Bakewell's hostleries. By 1829 several stage coaches travelled in and out of Bakewell every day, going to and from Sheffield, Manchester, Nottingham, Derby and London.

With the building of the railways in the 19th century there was a long debate as to whether the railway should continue beyond Rowsley up the Derwent Valley through Chatsworth Park or along the Wye Valley past Haddon Hall and Bakewell. Eventually, in 1862, the latter route was built. A shallow tunnel was built behind Haddon Hall so as not to disturb the Duke

of Rutland who lived there. The line was closed in 1968. It was bought by the National Park Authority in 1981 and opened to walkers and others as the Monsal Trail.

The vast majority of visitors to Bakewell drive into the town centre via the A6. Numerous bus services pass through the town, including the **TransPeak** from Derby and Manchester. A National Express coach stops at Bakewell en route between London and Manchester. The nearest railway stations are Chesterfield, Buxton, Matlock or Grindleford, and the nearest airports are Manchester or Nottingham East Midlands.

# Architecture

Houses in Bakewell are mostly built from gritstone or from limestone with gritstone sills and cornerstones. A number of buildings in the centre of the town date originally from the Tudor and Stuart periods. These include the Old Market Hall (now the National Park Visitor Centre), Bagshaw Hall, the former Town Hall, St John's Almshouses and the Bath House. The latter was built in 1697 by the Duke of Rutland who aimed to

establish a spa. However, at 15°C, Bakewell's spring water was colder than that at nearby Buxton and the spa was not a success.

The Old House (now the museum) has a timber-framed early Tudor core clad in stone. The elegant late Georgian buildings include the Rutland Arms Hotel, Rutland Terrace, Queen's Arms Hotel, Peacock Hotel and Victoria Corn Mill. Victorian buildings include the present Town Hall, Old Post Office, Royal Bank of Scotland, Trustee Savings Bank and Burton Closes. All Saints Church was

substantially rebuilt in the 1840s and many other buildings were rebuilt or improved.

Since 1951, when the Peak District became Britain's first National Park, any new development has been strictly controlled. The historic core of the town became a Conservation Area in 1980 to maintain its character. New buildings in the centre and elsewhere in the town are in keeping with existing buildings – using natural stone, traditional sizes and shapes for windows, slates for roofs and neutral colours for woodwork.

# Market

Bakewell has been a trading centre for more than a thousand year, with regular markets held since Anglo-Saxon times. A royal charter for the market in Bakewell was confirmed in 1330. Held every Monday, the street market once sold butter, pots and pans, corn,

horses, cattle, sheep and pigs. In 1826 the market was moved to a site beside the Peacock Inn (the present marketplace), to clear the streets and relieve congestion. It was later confined to cattle and sheep with a stall market for food and household goods. The

livestock market moved across the river to the Agricultural Business Centre in 1998. It was officially opened in February 1999. The centre is one of the most modern livestock sales facilities in the country. Two footbridges link it to the town centre.

# Tourism

About two million people visit Bakewell and the surrounding area every year, the majority of them just for a day visit. Most people browse the shops, walk by the river, admire the old buildings and the church, perhaps have something to eat or drink and then continue to Haddon Hall, Chatsworth or other local places of interest. The busiest periods are summer Sundays and Mondays (market day).

There are plenty of places to stay in Bakewell itself, with various types of

accommodation, from hotels to small B&B establishments. An accommodation booking service operates at the National Park Visitor Centre. The Visitor Centre also provides brochures, tourist guides, maps, books and souvenirs. It is very well used – between 2004 and 2009 an average of 184,600 people visited the centre each year.

There are a number of small cafes and restaurants, pubs and hotels but there are no large-scale provisions for tourists. There is a great deal for tourists [Tourism fact Sheet] to see and do in the Peak District National Park, as well as in the small towns just outside the Park, such as Buxton, Leek, Matlock Bath and Ashbourne.

## IMPACTS OF TOURISM

The large number of visitors to Bakewell provide good business for local shopkeepers and for the restaurants and cafes.

With the busy A6 road between Buxton and Matlock running through the centre of the town, the main problem is traffic congestion [Traffic Fact Sheet]. Large numbers of vehicles travel from Chesterfield and Sheffield for the Monday market, although the re-siting of the livestock market in 1998, and improved parking provision, has helped to reduce traffic through the centre of the town on Mondays. There are now seven car parks in Bakewell.

# Events

Dating back to 1819, the Bakewell Show is held on the first Wednesday and Thursday in August each year. As one of the largest agricultural shows in the UK it draws enormous crowds, both of competitors and visitors. Judging takes place of all kinds of livestock (from

beef cattle to rabbits) as well as a horse show and numerous stalls selling all kinds of agricultural and countryside goods. There is also a children's area with rides and entertainment. A park and ride scheme operates on Show days.

The well dressing and carnival take place in the summer. For the well dressing, petals, leaves and other natural materials are pressed into a soft clay base to form a picture, often with a religious or local theme. The Bakewell Arts Festival in August showcases local theatrical, artistic and musical talent.

# The famous pudding

The delicacy known as the Bakewell Pudding is a jam pastry with an egg and almond flavoured filling. It was allegedly invented by mistake. The story goes that in the mid 19th century, the landlady of what is now the Rutland Arms, Mrs Greaves, instructed her cook to make a strawberry pudding with a

special egg mixture stirred into the pastry. The cook muddled the instructions and poured the egg mixture on top of the jam instead of stirring it into the pastry. The customers enjoyed the pudding so much they asked for it again, and so the Bakewell Pudding was born. The story is almost certainly

not true, however, as such puddings had been well-known since medieval times.

Two shops now claim the original pudding recipe and a third sells what it claims to be 'original Bakewell Puddings'.

# Bakewell today

By the 1990s, Bakewell was seriously in need of regeneration. The livestock market in the centre of town brought traffic congestion every Monday. Parking was badly organised and there were derelict sites in the town centre. There were few facilities for local residents.

The Bakewell Project was set up in 1996 to secure the future of Bakewell and its surrounding rural area, and to tackle the economic and social needs of the community. The partnership responsible for the project included representatives from local authorities, community and business agencies, and the private sector. The project resulted in:

- A new home for the livestock market at the Agricultural Centre with space for 1,000 cattle, 2,000 sheep and 450 calves, plus three livestock sales rings. The centre is more than a livestock market however, with a small business and farming advice centre, cafe and market-related retail units, meeting rooms and exhibition space.
- A biodiversity initiative involving a partnership of many voluntary organisations

restored and improved wildlife habitats for species, such as otters and water voles, along the River Wye.

- A permanent home for the town library in Granby Road.
- A swimming pool underneath the library part funded by a National Lottery grant.
- A self-build project by a team of volunteers resulted in the Medway Community Centre, a multi-purpose hall and meeting rooms.

The re-siting of the livestock market away from the town centre enabled other types of development to take place. Bakewell now has a supermarket with car parking on the site. There is a range of small, independent shops, as well as large retail outlets, plus an improved stall market, offices, and private and social housing. Development is to a high standard of design, materials and landscaping, with natural stone walls and blue slate roofs, in keeping with the local traditional style. Once derelict sites in the town centre have been turned into shops or flats.

The population of the parish of Bakewell, which has been gradually increasing over the last two centuries, has now stabilised at around 4,000 (3,979 in the 2001 census) living in 1,732 dwellings.

A good mix of trade and

commerce, industry and agriculture has maintained the bustling character of Bakewell and so far prevented it from becoming solely a tourist town. There are three small industrial estates where a range of goods is manufactured, as well as numerous shops for both residents and visitors, restaurants, cafes, hotels and pubs, all providing work for local people. There are two primary schools, one state comprehensive and a private school. A Methodist Chapel, All Saints Church (CoE), English Martyrs Church (RC) and a Quaker Meeting House provide places of worship.

The Peak District National Park Authority employs around 120 at Aldern House in Bakewell. Natural England's [[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)] Derbyshire and Peak District office is also based in Bakewell and employs around 40 people.

## SUSTAINABLE BAKEWELL

**Sustainable Bakewell** was launched in 2008 to promote sustainable lifestyles and green business practices in the town. With a grant from the Peak District Sustainable Development Fund it will take the green message to local schools and investigate the feasibility of micro-hydro schemes.

# Further information

- Bakewell: The Ancient Capital of the Peak,  
Trevor Brighton, Halsgrove Books, 2005
- **Old House Museum**
- National Park Visitor Centre, Old Market Hall, Bridge  
Street, Bakewell, DE45 IDS, tel: 01629 813227,  
bakewell@peakdistrict.gov.uk
- Peak District National Park Authority, Aldern House,  
Baslow Road, Bakewell DE45 IAE, tel: 01629 816200