



FOUNDATION DATES OF ENGLAND'S HISTORIC COUNTIES

Working dates for creation or clear attestation as shires or counties

Most of England's historic counties were already in existence before 1066

8th century
700

9th century
800

10th century
900

11th century
1000

1066
Norman Conquest

12th century
1100

13th century
1200

1

EARLY SAXON & SOUTHERN COUNTIES

8th–10th centuries



Kent	8th–9th century
Essex	9th–10th century
Surrey	9th century
Middlesex	late 9th or 10th century
Hampshire	755
Sussex	9th century
Wiltshire	9th century (recorded 800)

Dorset	9th century (recorded 837)
Somerset	9th century (recorded 845)
Devon	9th century (shire/comitatus attested 851)
Berkshire	860
Cornwall	10th–early 11th century
Norfolk	late Anglo-Saxon, probably 10th–11th century
Suffolk	late Anglo-Saxon, probably 10th–11th century



Chronicle evidence includes Hampshire 755, Wiltshire 800, Dorset 837, Somerset 845, Devon 851, Berkshire 860.



Sources: Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; Chronicon Saxonum; Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel.

2

MERCIAN & MIDLAND SHIRES

Late 9th–early 11th centuries



Huntingdonshire	10th–early 11th century
Cheshire	early 10th century
Derbyshire	late 10th–early 11th century
Warwickshire	early 11th century (recorded 1016)
Shropshire	10th century
Herefordshire	10th century (c. 930)
Cambridgeshire	early 11th century
Bedfordshire	10th–early 11th century
Buckinghamshire	10th–early 11th century

Hertfordshire	10th–early 11th century
Northamptonshire	recorded by 1011
Oxfordshire	10th century
Gloucestershire	10th century
Nottinghamshire	early 11th century
Worcestershire	10th century (c. 927)
Leicestershire	late 10th–early 11th century
Staffordshire	early 10th century (recorded 1016)



Many of these Mercian shires probably formed around the close of the 9th century.



Sources: 1851 Census; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

3

NORTHERN SHIRES

Pre-Conquest to 12th century



Lincolnshire	late 10th–early 11th century
Yorkshire	10th–early 11th century

Durham	12th–13th century as county/ county palatine
Northumberland	12th century as county



Lincolnshire and Yorkshire were pre-Conquest; Durham and Northumberland emerged later as counties.



Sources: Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; later medieval records.

4

CLEAR POST-CONQUEST COUNTIES

1157–1227



Rutland	1159
Lancashire	1182

Cumberland	c. 1157–1177
Westmorland	1226–1227



These are the main later exceptions.



Sources: later medieval records.



HOW THESE DATES WERE DERIVED



Anglo-Saxon
Chronicle references



1851 Census
analysis of shire
formation



Later medieval
records for northern
and post-Conquest
counties



Dates refer to county/shire
status, not earlier
kingdom origins