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Dumfriesshire

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Coordinates:  55°10′N 3°30′W﻿ / ﻿55.167°N 3.500°W﻿ / 55.167; -3.500

Dumfriesshire or the County of Dumfries (*Siorrachd Dhùn Phris* in [Gaelic](#)) is a [registration county](#) of [Scotland](#). The [lieutenancy area](#) of Dumfries has similar boundaries.

Until 1975 it was a [county](#). Its [county town](#) was [Dumfries](#). It bordered [Kirkcudbrightshire](#) to the west, [Ayrshire](#) to the north-west, [Lanarkshire](#), [Peeblesshire](#) and [Selkirkshire](#) to the north, and [Roxburghshire](#) to the east. To the south was the coast of the [Solway Firth](#), and across the [English border](#) [Cumberland](#).

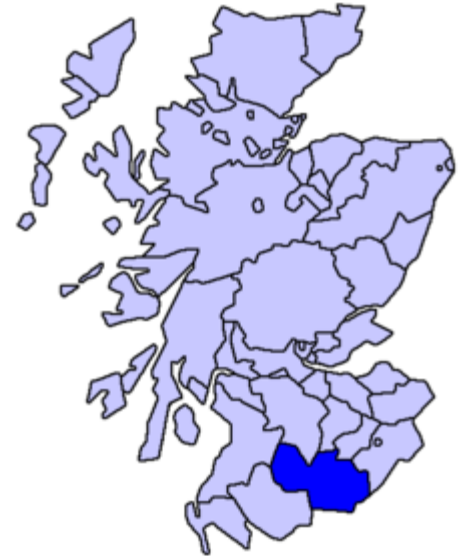
Dumfries had three traditional subdivisions - [Annandale](#), [Eskdale](#) and [Nithsdale](#).

Today it forms part of the [Dumfries and Galloway council area](#).

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County of Dumfries
until circa 1890



Geography

Area	Ranked 8th
 - Total	680,217 acres (2753 km²)
County town	Dumfries
Chapman code	DFS

See also

[\[edit\]](#)

- [Dumfriesshire Scottish Parliament constituency](#)
- The former [Dumfriesshire constituency of the House of Commons](#).

People

[\[edit\]](#)

Notable people from Dumfriesshire include:

- [Thomas Carlyle](#), essayist
- [Henry Duncan](#), clergyman
- [Andy Goldsworthy](#), land artist (from [Cheshire](#) but resides in Dumfriesshire)
- [William Jardine](#), [Jardine Matheson](#) founder

- [William Paterson](#), central banker
- [Patrick Miller of Dalswinton](#), engineer and inventor
- [Thomas Telford](#), engineer
- [Joseph Thompson](#), explorer
- [David Thomson](#), founding settler in Scarborough Ontario. Ancestor of [Roy Thomson](#)
- [Johannes de Sacrobosco](#) early astronomer and mathematician

1911 Encyclopaedia entry

[[edit](#)]

Geography

[[edit](#)]

The coastline measures 21 miles (34 km). The county slopes very gradually from the mountainous districts of the [Southern Uplands](#) in the north, down to the sea; lofty hills alternating in parts with stretches of [tableland](#) or rich fertile [holms](#). At various points within a few miles of the [Solway](#) are tracts of moss land, like [Craigs Moss](#), [Lochar Moss](#) and [Longbridge Moor](#) in the west, and [Nutmerry Moss](#) in the east, all once under water, but now largely reclaimed.

The principal mountains occur near the northern boundaries, the highest being [White Coomb](#) (2695 ft), [Hart Fell](#) (2651), [Saddle Yoke](#) (2412), [Swatte Fell](#) (2389), [Lowther Hills](#) (2377), [Queensberry](#) (2285) — which gives his secondary title to the [Duke of Buccleuch](#) and the title of Marquess to a branch of the house of Douglas — and [Ettrick Pen](#) (2269). The three longest rivers are the [Nith](#), the [Annan](#) and the [Esk](#), the basins of which form the great [dales](#) by which the county is cleft from north to south — [Nithsdale](#), [Annandale](#) and [Eskdale](#).

From the point where it enters Dumfriesshire, 16 mi (26 km). from its source near [Enoch Hill](#) in Ayrshire, the course of the Nith is mainly south-easterly until it enters the Solway, a few miles below Dumfries. Its total length is 65 mi., and its chief affluents are, on the right, the [Kello](#), [Euchan](#), [Scar](#), [Cluden](#) and [River Cargen](#), [Cargen](#), and — on the left — the [Crawick](#), [Carron](#) and [Campie](#).

The Annan rises near the [Devil's Beef Tub](#), a remarkable chasm in the far north, and after flowing about 40 mi (65 km), mainly in a southerly course, it enters the Solway at [Barnkirk headland](#). It receives, on the right, the [Kinnel](#) (reinforced by the [Ae](#)), and — on the left — the [Moffat](#), the [Dryfe](#) and the [Milk](#).

From the confluence of the [White Esk](#) (rising near Ettrick Pen) and the [Black Esk](#) (rising near [Jocks Shoulder](#), 1754 ft.) the Esk flows in a gradually south-easterly direction until it crosses the Border, whence it sweeps to the S.W. through the extreme north-western territory of Cumberland and falls into the Solway. Of its total course of 42 mi (78 km), 12 mi (20 km) belong to the White Esk, 20 mi (32 km) are of the Esk proper on Scottish soil and 10 mi (16 km) are of the stream in its English course. On the right the [Wauchope](#) is the chief affluent, and on the left it receives the [Megget](#), [Ewes](#), [Tarras](#), [Liddel](#) and [Lyne](#) — the last being an English tributary, and the previous forming the border between [Roxburghshire](#) and [Cumberland](#).

Other rivers are the [Lochar](#) (18 mi), the [Kirtle](#) (17 mi) and the [Sark](#) (12 mi), all flowing into the Solway. For one mile (1.6 km) of its course the Esk, and for 7 mi (11 km) of its course the Sark, form the boundaries between Dumfriesshire and Cumberland.

[Loch Skeen](#) in the north (1750 ft or 533 m above the sea) and the group of lochs around [Lochmaben](#), are the principal lakes. There are few [glens](#) so named in the shire, but the passes of Dalveen, Enterkin and Menock, leading up from Nithsdale to the Lowther and other hills, yield to few glens in Scotland in the wild grandeur of their scenery. For part of the way [Enterkin Pass](#) runs between mountains rising sheer from the burn to a height of nearly 2,000 ft (610 m) Loch Skene finds an outlet in [Tail Burn](#), the water of which at a short distance from the lake leaps from a height of 200 ft (61 m) in a fine waterfall, known as the [Grey Mare's Tail](#). A much smaller but picturesque fall of the same name, also known as [Crichope Linn](#), occurs on the Crichope near [Thornhill](#). Mineral

waters are found at [Moffat](#), [Hartfell Spa](#), some three miles (5 km) farther north, Closeburn and Brow on the Solway.

Geology

[[edit](#)]

The greater portion of the county of Dumfries belongs to the [Silurian tableland](#) of the south of Scotland which contains representatives of all the divisions of that system from the [Arenig](#) to the [Ludlow rocks](#).

By far the largest area is occupied by strata of Tarannon and Llandovery age which cover a belt of country from 20 to 25 mi (40 km) across from [Drumlanrig Castle](#) in the north to [Torthorwald](#) in the south. Consisting of massive grits, sometimes conglomeratic, [greywackes](#), flags and shales, these beds are repeated by innumerable folds frequently inverted, striking northeast and southwest and usually dipping towards the northwest. In the midst of this belt there are lenticular bands of older [strata](#) of Arenig, Llandeilo, Caradoc and Llandovery age composed of fine sediments such as cherts, black and grey shales, white clays and flags, which come to the surface along anticlinal folds and yield abundant graptolites characteristic of these divisions.

These black shale bands are typically developed in Moffatdale; indeed the three typical sections chosen by Professor Lapworth to illustrate his three great groups

- (1) the Glenkill shales (Upper Llandeilo),
- (2) the Hartfell shales (Caradoc),
- (3) Birkhill shales (Lower Llandovery) occur respectively in the Glenkill Burn north of [Kirkmichael](#), on Hartfell and in Dobbs Linn near [St Mary's Loch](#) in the basin of the river Annan.

In the extreme northwest of the county between Drumlanrig Castle and Dalveen Pass in the S. and the Spango and Kello Waters on the north, there is a broad development of Arenig, Liandeilo and Caradoc strata, represented by [Radiolarian](#) cherts, black shales, grits, conglomerates, greywackes and shales which rise from underneath the central Tarannon belt and are repeated by innumerable folds, in the cores of the arches of Arenig cherts there are diabase lavas, tuffs and agglomerates which are typically represented on Bail Hill east of [Kirkconnel](#). Along the southern margin of the Tarannon belt, the Wenlock and Ludlow rocks follow in normal order, the boundary between the two being defined by a line extending from the head of the [Ewes Water](#) in Eskdale, southwest by [Lockerbie](#) to [Mouswald](#). These consist of greywackes, flags and shales with bands of dark graptolite shales, the finer sediments being often well cleaved. They are likewise repeated by inverted folds, the axial planes being usually inclined to the southeast. The Silurian tableland in the northwest of the county is pierced by intrusive igneous rocks in the form of dikes and bosses, which are regarded as of Lower [Old Red Sandstone](#) age. Of these, the granite mass of [Spango Water](#), northeast of Kirkconnel, is an excellent example. Along the northwest margin of the county, on the north side of the fault bounding the Silurian tableland, the Lower Old Red Sandstone occurs, where it consists of sandstones and conglomerates associated with contemporaneous volcanic rocks. The Upper Old Red Sandstone forms a narrow strip on the south side of the Silurian tableland, resting uncomfortably on the Silurian rocks and passing upwards into the Carboniferous formation. It stretches from the county boundary east of the Ewes Water, southwest by [Langholm](#) to [Birrenswark](#). Along this line these Upper Red sandstones and shales are overlaid by a thin zone of volcanic rocks which point to contemporaneous volcanic action in this region at the beginning of the Carboniferous period. Some of the vents from which these igneous materials may have been discharged are found along the watershed between Liddesdale and Teviotdale in Roxburghshire.

The strata of Carboniferous age are found in three areas:

- (1) between [Sanquhar](#) and Kirkconnel,
- (2) at [Closeburn](#) near Thornhill,
- (3) in the district between Liddesdale and Ruthwell.

In the first two instances (Sanquhar and Thornhill) the Carboniferous sediments lie in hollows worn out of the old Silurian tableland. In the Sanquhar basin the strata belong to the Coal Measures, and include several valuable coal-seams which are probably the southern prolongations of the members of this division in Ayrshire. At the S.E. limit of the Sanquhar Coalfield there are patches of the Carboniferous Limestone series, but towards the N. these are overlapped by the Coal Measures which thus rest directly on the Silurian platform. At Closeburn and **Barjarg** there are beds of marine limestone, associated with sandstones and shales which probably represent marine bands in the Carboniferous Limestone series.

The most important development of Carboniferous strata occurs between Liddesdale and Ruthwell. In the valleys of the Liddel and the Esk the following zones are represented, which are given in ascending order:

- (1) The Whita Sandstone,
- (2) the Cementstone group,
- (3) the Fell Sandstones,
- (4) the Glencarholm volcanic group,
- (5) Marine **limestone** group with Coal-seams,
- (6) **Millstone Grit**,
- (7) Rowanburn coal group,
- (8) Byreburn coal group,
- (9) Red Sandstones of Canonbie yielding plants characteristic of the Upper Coal Measures.

The coal seams of the Rowanburn field have been chiefly wrought, and in view of their exhaustion bores have been sunk to prove the coals beneath the red sandstone of upper Carboniferous age. From a palaeontological point of view the Glencarholm volcanic zone is of special interest, as the calcareous shale associated with the tufts has yielded a large number of new species of fishes, decapod crustaceans, phyllopods and scorpions. The Triassic rocks rest uncomfortably on all older formations within the county. In the tract along the Solway Firth they repose on the folded and eroded edges of the Carboniferous strata, and when traced westwards to the Dumfries basin they rest directly on the Silurian platform. They occur in five areas:

- (1) between Annan and the mouth of the Esk (the Scottish portion of the Solway Basin),
- (2) the Dumfries basin (Lower Nithsdale),
- (3) the Thornhill basin (Middle Nithsdale),
- (4) the Lochmaben basin (Middle Annandale),
- (5) Upper Annandale.

The strata consist of breccias, falsebedded sandstones and mans, the sandstones being extensively quarried for building purposes. In the sandstones of Corncockle Moor reptilian footprints have been obtained. In the Thornhill basin there is a thin zone of volcanic rocks at the base of this series which are evidently on-the horizon of the lavas beneath the Mauchline sandstones in Ayrshire. In the Sanquhar basin there are small outliers of lavas probably of this age and several vents filled with agglomerate from which these igneous materials in the Thornhill basin may have been derived. There are several striking examples of basalt dikes of Tertiary age, one having been traced from the Lead Hills south-east by Moffat, across **Eskdalemuir** to the English border.

Climate and industries

[[edit](#)]

The climate is mild, with a mean yearly temperature of 48 °F (January, 38.5 °F (3.6 °C); July, 59.5 °F), and the average annual rainfall is 53 in. Towards the middle of the 18th century farmers began to raise stock for the south, and a hundred years later 20,000 head of heavy cattle were sent annually to the English markets. The **Galloways**, which were the breed in vogue at first, have been to a large extent replaced by shorthorns and **Ayrshire** dairy cattle. **Sheep** breeding, of later origin, has attained to remarkable dimensions, the walks in the higher hilly country being given over to **Cheviots**,

and the richer pasture of the low-lying farms being reserved for half-bred lambs, a cross of Cheviots and [Leicesters](#) or other long-woolled rams. Pig-feeding, once important, has declined before the imports of bacon from foreign countries. Horse breeding is pursued on a considerable scale. Grain crops, of which [oats](#) are the principal, show a downward tendency. Arable farms range from 100 acres (0.40 km²) to 300 acres (0.4 to 1.2 km²), and pastoral from 300 to 3000 acres (1.2 to 12 km²).

In general the manufactures are only of local importance and mostly confined to Dumfries and a few of the larger towns. Langholm is famous for its [tweeds](#); breweries and distilleries are found at Annan, Sanquhar and elsewhere; some shipping is carried on at Annan and Dumfries; and the salmon fisheries of the Nith and Annan and the Solway Firth are of value.

Communications

[[edit](#)]

(1911 entry brought up to date)

As built,The [Glasgow and South Western Railway](#) from [Glasgow](#) to [Carlisle](#) runs through Nithsdale to Dumfries, practically following the course of the River Nith, then on to [Annan](#) and lower Annandale to the English border at [Gretna](#).A branch was built from [Dumfries](#) to [Moniaive](#),the [Cairn Valley Light Railway](#) but this closed in 1949.

The [Caledonian Railway](#) from [Carlisle](#) to [Glasgow](#) runs through Annandale, which threw off at [Beattock](#) a small branch to Moffat,now closed. At Lockerbie a cross-country line to Dumfries (now closed), and at [Kirtlebridge](#) a line that ultimately crossed the Solway to [Bowness](#) which is also closed.

From Dumfries westwards there were rail communications on the 'Port Road' to [Castle Douglas](#), [Newton Stewart](#), [Stranraer](#) and [Portpatrick](#),with branches to [Kirkcudbright](#) and [Wigtown](#) all closed and lifted.

The [North British Railway's](#) [Waverley](#) route, to [Edinburgh](#) from [Carlisle](#) was closed in the 1960s. There are vague plans to reopen this line to [Carlisle](#) as a continuation of the new rail link which is being rebuilt from [Edinburgh](#) to [Tweedbank](#) . Until 1967 the [North British Railway](#) sent a short line to [Langholm](#) (via Canonbie and Gilnockie) from [Riddings Junction](#) in Cumberland, giving access to Carlisle. The last passenger train ran on the Langholm branch on 26 March 1967, the last freight service on 17 September in the same year, and the track was lifted shortly thereafter.

There is also an extensive local bus and coach network throughout the county,centred on [Dumfries](#).

There are no commercial airports in the county.

Population and government

[[edit](#)]

The population in 1891 was 74,245, and in 1901, 72,371, when there were 176 persons who spoke Gaelic and English.

The chief towns are:

- [Annan](#) (pop. in 1901, 4,309 pop. in 1951 4,631, in 2001 8,389),
- [Dumfries](#) (pop. in 1901, 14,440, pop. in 1951 26,322, in 2001 37,846),
- [Langholm](#) (pop. in 1901, 3,142, pop. in 1951 2,404, in 2001 2,311),
- [Lockerbie](#) (pop. in 1901, 2,358, pop. in 1951 2,621, in 2001 4,009),
- [Moffat](#) (pop. in 1901, 2,530, pop. in 1951 2,114).

The county returns one member to parliament. Dumfries, the county town, Annan, Lochmaben and Sanquhar are royal [burghs](#); Dumfries forms a sheriffdom with the shires of Kirkcudbright and Wigtown, and there is a resident sheriff-substitute at Dumfries, who sits also at Annan, Langholm and Lockerbie. The shire is under school-board jurisdiction, and some of the public schools earn grants for higher education. The county council and most of the borough councils give the bulk of the residue grant to the county besides assisting building schemes, to subsidise high schools, to provide

bursaries and apparatus, and to carry on science and technical classes, embracing agriculture, dairying (at Kilmarnock Dairy school) and practical chemistry. There are academies at Dumfries, Annan, Moffat and other centres.

History

[[edit](#)]

Archaeological remains from the neolithic and Bronze Age include stone circles (as in [Dunscore](#) and [Eskdalemuir](#)), [tumuli](#) and [cairns](#) (Closeburn), and sculptured stones (Dornock). A number of bank barrows and cursus have recently been discovered.

The British tribe which inhabited this part of Scotland was called by the Romans *Selgovae*. They have left many signs of their presence, such as hill forts and camps ([Dryfesdale](#)). The country around Moffat especially is rich in remains.

There are traces of the Roman roads which ran by [Dalveen Pass](#) into Clydesdale and up the Annan to Tweeddale, and at Birrens is one of the best preserved examples of a Roman camp. Roman altars, urns and coins are found in many places.

After the withdrawal of Roman power from Britain, the situation in Dumfries is not clear. The Selgovae were pressured by the power of Strathclyde, by Scots from Ireland, and the Angles from Northumberland. There is little writing preserved from this time, and that which did is ecclesiastical in nature. Archaeology, although rich on the ground, has rarely been investigated, and place names, used as an indication of influence, are still argued over by academics.

In the parish church of [Ruthwell](#) (pron. Rivvel: the rood, or cross, well) is preserved [an ancient Anglo-Saxon cross](#) which tells in [Runic](#) characters the story of the [Crucifixion](#). The Saxon conquest of Dumfriesshire does not seem to have been thorough in the West, the people of Nithsdale and elsewhere maintaining some Celtic institutions up to the time of [David I](#), although this is not certain.

As a Border county Dumfriesshire was the scene of stirring deeds at various epochs, especially in the days of [Robert Bruce](#). [Edward I](#) besieged [Caerlaverock Castle](#), and the factions of Bruce (who was lord of Annandale), [John Comyn](#) and [John Baliol](#) were at constant feud. The Border [clans](#), as haughty and hot-headed as the Gaels farther north, were always at strife. There is record of a bloody fight in Dryfesdale in 1593, when the Johnstones slew 700 Maxwells, and, overtaking the fugitives at Lockerbie, there massacred most of the remnant. These factions embroiled the dalesmen until the 18th century. The highlands of the shire afforded retreat to the persecuted [Covenanters](#), who, at Sanquhar, published in 1680 their declaration against the king, anticipating the principles of the [glorious Revolution](#) by several years. [Prince Charles Edward](#)'s ambition left the shire comparatively untouched, for the [Jacobite](#) sentiment made little appeal to the people.

Dumfriesshire is inseparably connected with the name of [Robert Burns](#), who farmed at [Ellisland Farm](#) on the Nith for three years, and spent the last five years of his life at Dumfries. Thomas Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, in a house still standing, and was buried beside his parents in the kirkyard of the old Secession church (now the United Free). His farm of [Craigenputtock](#) was left to [Edinburgh University](#) in order to found the [John Welsh bursaries](#) in classics and mathematics.



Craigenputtock House 1829

Folk history suggests that at Holywood, near Dumfries, there stand the relic of the grove of sacred oaks from which the place derived its name, and a stone circle known locally as the [Twelve Apostles](#).

See

[[edit](#)]

- W. M'Dowall, *History of the Burgh of Dumfries* (Edinburgh, 1887);
-

- Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Dumfries and Galloway* (Edinburgh and London, 1897);
- J. Macdonald and J. Barbour, *Birrens and its Antiquities* (Dumfries, 1897);
- Sir William Fraser, *The Book of Carlaverock* (Edinburgh, 1873); *The Douglas Book* (Edinburgh, 1885);
- *The Annandale Book* (Edinburgh, 1894);
- G. Neilson, *Annandale under the Bruces* (Annan, 1887);
- C. T. Ramage, *Drumlanrig Castle and the Douglases* (Dumfries, 1876).

This article incorporates text from the Encyclopædia Britannica, Eleventh Edition, a publication now in the public domain.

External links

[[edit](#)]

- [Dalveen Pass](#)

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