Hello and welcome back to Episode 11 of the Counties of England podcast. In this week’s episode we will be covering the county where the first factory in the world was built. The county where the biggest ever bowl of popcorn was prepared, and the county where the highest market town is at just over 1,000 feet above sea level where the average annual temperature is below 8 degrees Celsius. This week we will be covering the county of Derbyshire.

Derbyshire is a county located in the East Midlands. It is bordered by seven counties: Staffordshire and Cheshire to the west, Greater Manchester to the North-West, West Yorkshire to the North, South Yorkshire to the North-East, Nottinghamshire to the East and Leicestershire to the south. It has a population of 1,053,316 which means it is the 21st largest county, in terms of population when compared to the other counties. In terms of area, it is again the 21st largest county. It is the 24th largest county in terms of population density, so it is right in the middle of the pack when it is compared to other counties. The county town of Derbyshire is Matlock, but the largest town is Derby. It is split into 9 different authority areas: High Peak, Derbyshire Dales, South Derbyshire, Erewash, Amber Valley, North East Derbyshire, Chesterfield, Bolsover, and the City of Derby. Derbyshire is a mixed county between rural and urban areas.

The median salary in Derbyshire is £29,943 putting it below the UK average of £31,500. The unemployment rate is 3.29% again putting it below the UK average of 4.8%. The average house price is £219,614 putting it well below the UK average yet again.

Derbyshire is divided up into 11 different parliamentary constituencies, of these 9 are represented by Conservative MP’s and the other two are represented by labour MP’s.

There is a sense of a tight-knit community in rural Derbyshire villages. For example, when a new resident settled in Derbyshire they found that the fellow villagers wanted to use this new villager’s garage as a petalling shed, and that it would be customary for ladies to be given tea and gentleman helpers to be given whisky. This is the sense of togetherness in Derbyshire, the sense that you sign an imaginary contract when moving to Derbyshire. You move to Derbyshire on Derbyshire’s terms.

A famous geographical feature that is in Derbyshire is the Peak District. The Peak District was the first ever national park created in Britain. There are two famous peaks in the Peak district: The Dark Peak and the White peak. The dark peak is made up of dark, coarse gritstone, and the white peak is made up of is made up of white limestone. Here is a video which will explain a little bit more about the peaks and the location of Eyam which I will talk a bit more about next. [Play Eyam location and teaser clip]

I have actually visited the village of Eyam in between the dark peak and the white peak. I think I went there in 2015 and 2017 and it seemed like a traditional rural British village, however that was before I knew about its secret. The secret is that the village is most known for the plague outbreak in 1665. They implemented methods such as isolating infected people and the relocation of church services from the church to Cucklett Delph, a natural amphitheatre to stop villagers mixing with each other. When you think about this now, the methods used in the COVID-19 pandemic have been around since the 17th century. The main difference between the plague and COVID-19 is that the plague was far, far deadlier. It is estimated that out of 350 people living in the village at the time only 83 survived meaning that the plague killed just over 3 quarters of Eyam’s population. This clip from March 2020 will explain more about Eyam’s past, and how it affected the response to the coronavirus pandemic. [Play Eyam response clip]. This clip was from the BBC.

The flag of Derbyshire involves a design of: A green cross on a blue background. These colours were chosen to represent Derbyshire's green countryside and its rivers and reservoirs, respectively. In the centre of the flag is a Tudor rose, which has been the county badge since the 15th century. The rose is gold in colour rather than the more usual red and white, partly to differentiate from the emblems of Yorkshire and Lancashire; it is also supposed to symbolise quality.

Fun facts about Derbyshire include:

* Derby Arboretum, also known as Arboretum Park and The Arboretum, is famous for being England’s first public park. Its Grade II\*-listed and inspired the design of New York’s Central Park.
* Derby’s Silk Mill is thought to have been the first factory in the world – and it was the first silk mill in England.
* Derby Cathedral towers above the city and has the second highest perpendicular church tower in England! Its bells are the oldest set of 10 bells in the world, one of which was cast in 1520 during the reign of Henry VIII and is still in use almost 500 years later (making it one of the oldest working objects in Derby). Among its many treasures are the tomb of Bess of Hardwick – designed by the powerful lady herself – and the intricate Bakewell Screen.
* The world's biggest ever bowl of popcorn was prepared at UCI cinema at the Meteor Centre in 1991. It took staff from the cinema three days to complete the record, starting on August 23 and finishing on August 26.
* The Peak District contains over 50 reservoirs and several villages had to be submerged to make way for them, including Derwent and Ashopton.
* The Peak District was the first national park in the country.
* Kathleen Kennedy, sister of John F. Kennedy, is buried in Edensor churchyard. She was married to the Duke of Devonshire's elder brother.
* At 1000 feet above sea level, Buxton is the highest market town in England? That elevation means the average annual temperature is below 8 degrees Celsius.
* Legend has it the world-famous Bakewell Tart was created accidentally by a cook in the town’s Rutland Arms Hotel in 1820? It is said the almonds, sugar and eggs which ended up as a custard layer above the jam were intended by the landlady to enrich the pastry of a jam tart.

So that just about wraps it up for this week’s episode as ever I do hope you enjoyed it and that you are looking forward to next week’s episode. Another quick reminder that if you haven’t checked out my website, then I would strongly advise that you do and in the meantime have a great week and I will talk to you again on the 20th of March where we will be covering the county of Devon!