It is clearly impossible to capture the history of Cleveland over ten thousand years in a few pages. This timeline tries to set important local events and developments into a national framework.

National events have only been included where they made a significant impact on Historic Cleveland. So for example neither the Wars of the Roses or Queen Victoria are mentioned. On the other hand the Roman invasion and William the Conqueror do make an appearance. Important parts of the north-east history that had little effect on Historic Cleveland, such as coal mining, are excluded. We would welcome suggestions for improving this timeline or any corrections to its content.

Timeline periods

7600 to 3500 BC Mesolithic
- Groups of hunter-gatherer people move around the area, leaving flint artefacts and microliths at early habitation sites (on the sides of the old course of the River Leven and at Seamer Carr). Deer, elk, oxen and boar are hunted.
- Britain cut off from mainland Europe in about 7500 BC as sea levels rise.

3500 to 1700 BC Neolithic
- More settled farming begins. Hut circles found in the area. Ritual sites are constructed (stone circle at Commondale). Flint artefacts scattered across the Cleveland Plain and the edges of the moors.
- Burial sites (chambered cairn on Great Ayton Moor, Street Houses at Loftus).

1700 to 600 BC Bronze age
- Tools, weapons and decorative items manufactured from metals. Bronze axes and other implements are introduced, but flint scrapers, blades and arrowheads continue to be used.
- Habitation sites are recognisable by flint scatterings (Seamer, Stokesley). Ritual sites are developed and carved rocks on appear on moorland.
- Hill fort built at Eston Nab. Beginnings of settled farming, with enclosures for dwellings and livestock (Ayton Moor, Live Moor, Westerdale).
- Burials in circular mounds of earth (barrows) or of stones (cairns), sometimes with accompanying pottery (Burton Howe, Scarth Wood Moor).
- Alignments of shallow pits (Danby Moor). Double dyke earthwork at Danby Rigg.

600 BC to 410 AD Iron age and Romano-British
- There are improvements in farming and the population increases, but the climate deteriorates.
- Iron Age enclosures constructed (Castleton, Great Ayton Moor) and round house communities built (Percy Rigg).
- Brigantes rule from southern Yorkshire to north of the Tyne, and ally with the Roman invaders in AD 46.
- Romans establish base at York and build roads northwards. Roman soldiers occupy Cleveland (helmet at Guisborough, coins at Whorlton). Romano-British settlements (Kildale). Romans build signal stations (Goldsborough, Huntcliff) for warning of Germanic invaders.
- By AD 410 all Roman troops have left Britain; the north eastern shores are now defenceless against raiders.

410 to 1066 AD Anglian and Anglo Scandinavian
- Angles from southern Denmark begin to settle in the north east. Local place names show both Anglian (-ton, -ley) and Danish influences (-by, -thorpe)
- King Arthur dies in 537 whilst fighting Anglo-Saxon invaders, possibly in the north of England. Viking attacks on north-east coast claimed to be divine punishment for falling standards of morality.
- From 604 the kingdom of Northumbria stretches north from the Humber. Oswy is proclaimed king of all England in 655.
- At the Synod of Whitby in 664 St Wilfrid takes northern England into Roman Christianity.
- From about 870 the Danes rule northern England from York, dividing Yorkshire into three Ridings. Anglo-Scandinavian sculptures (Crathorne, Great Ayton, Ingleby Arncliffe, Kildale, Kirkby). Evidence of Viking traders (grave goods from Kildale cemetery)

1066 to 1500 Medieval

- Invading Norwegian forces are defeated at Stamford Bridge by King Harold in 1066. Four days later Harold is defeated by William at the Battle of Hastings, and England is conquered by the Normans. After repeated rebellions by the northern earls, William orders the 'harrying of the north' and destroys all farms and houses between York and Durham in 1069. The Domesday Book of 1086 records property only as far north as the Tees; beyond there is little to record as a result of the 'harrying of the north'. Whorlton could have been used as a base by the Normans, and certainly escaped being laid waste.
- Norman rulers build castles (Castleton, Whorlton) and deer parks (Whorlton). In 1120 Robert Brus presents a chapel at Middlesbrough to Whitby Abbey.
- In 1200 the Manor of Stokesley is granted to the Eure family, who will hold it until 1622. Feudal system with agriculture based on the three-fields ploughed by oxen, creating the rigg and furrow pattern. In small towns and villages there are long strips of land or crofts behind each cottage.
- Repeated Scottish attacks on northern England. Properties in Cleveland are re-valued in 1327 after depredations by the Scots. Larger properties protected by moats (Arncliffe Hall, Easington, Hutton Rudby).
- Many medieval churches built, and larger religious houses (Augustinian Priory at Guisborough, Benedictine Abbey at Westerdale, Carmelite Friary at Kildale, Carthusian Priory at Mount Grace, Cistercian Nunnery at Westerdale). The Cistercians establish country estates or granges (from Fountains Abbey at Busby, from Rievaulx at Little Broughton).
- In the mid-1300s the Black Death and floods ravage North Yorkshire. Economic depression leads to shrunken villages (Little Ayton, Whorlton) and deserted villages (Stainsby, Tunstall).
- The Bishop of Durham builds a bridge across the Tees at Yarm in 1405, but includes a drawbridge as a defensive measure. Yarm is a working port taking Cleveland goods to London.
- Rabbit warrens (Broughton, Little Smeaton) and fish ponds (Kildale) constructed. Causeways, trods and packhorse bridges built across the moors for transport of goods. Numerous windmills and watermills built (only Tocketts Mill remains in working order). Fairs and markets established (Kildale, Stokesley).

1500 to 1700 Post Medieval

- Dissatisfaction with Henry VIII's anti-Catholic policies leads to the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, an unsuccessful protest against the dissolution of the monasteries. There were more great monasteries in North Yorkshire than elsewhere, and they had been a central feature of the economy. Roman Catholicism continues to be widespread in North Yorkshire, with centres of recusancy in Stokesley, Hutton Rudby, Crathorne and Osmotherley. In 1569 the Neville and Percy families lead the Rising of the North, an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Elizabeth I and restore Catholic rule. The rising fails and their lands are seized by the Crown.
- The Hospital of Jesus at Guisborough founded in 1561 by Pursglove (incorporating a school & almshouse). Ingleby Manor built.
- During the Civil War, 1642 to 1646, North Yorkshire is generally Royalist, although many families try to keep out of the struggles. A Royalist force intending to lift the siege of Helmsley castle is defeated at the Battle of Hambleton in 1644.
- From the mid-1600 common fields begin to be enclosed. Enclosure and improvements in agricultural practices increase farming efficiency. Most farms owned by landowners and let to tenant farmers.
- In 1604 alum manufacture begins at Belman Bank, Guisborough. By the end of the century many more alum works are in operation, mainly along the North Yorkshire coast.
- The Hearth Tax of the 1660s and 1670s shows that Cleveland has a high proportion of modest cottages.
- In the later stages of the seventeenth century support for non-conformism, especially for the Quakers, grows in Cleveland.

1700 to 1800

- Enclosure has brought new wealth to the gentry, and new Georgian country houses are built across Cleveland (Busby Hall, Carlton Manor, Langbaurgh Hall, Ormesby Hall). Stokesley develops as the principal market town for Cleveland. Turnpike roads built (Guisborough to Thirsk, Whitby to Thirsk).
- Methodist Church founded by John and Charles Wesley who preach in Cleveland. Ralph Jackson keeps his daily diary for over 40 years. James Cook's parents arrive at Aireyholme Farm and James attends school in Ayton. There are strong connections with the East India Company. General Hale at Tocketts acts as a focus

for anti-government feeling. Between 1772 and 1774 about two thousand Methodists emigrated from North Yorkshire to Nova Scotia.

- Weaving of wool with its associated fulling, and linen with its associated bleaching, are important cottage-based industries in many Cleveland villages. Leather tanning creates demand for oak bark. Improvements in agriculture; four-course crop rotation, use of lime, cereal output specialised in wheat, butter and cheese exported to London by sea. Many new farmhouses built with dressed stone walls and pantiled roofs. Scottish cattle pass through Cleveland en route to London down the Hambleton Drove Road.
Natural disasters hit Cleveland in the mid-century. Food shortages in the Great Winter of 1739-40 lead to riots, rinderpest epidemic closed cattle markets for up to six years, floods and frequent outbreaks of smallpox, cholera and typhus.
- By the end of the century Cleveland Bays are much sought after as carriage horses in European cities, and Potto Grange is a centre for breeding these animals. This is also the golden age of the Cleveland Hunt.

1800 to 1900
- National Schools (Church of England) and British Schools (non-denominational) provide basic education for all. North of England Agricultural School founded in 1841 in Great Ayton. Increase of nonconformist religions, Quaker influence and the temperance movement.
- Stockton and Darlington Railway opens in 1825. Rapid expansion of railway network follows with rival companies, coming together to form the North Eastern Railway in 1854. Railways open up opportunities to exploit Cleveland's mineral resources. After ironstone is discovered in the Cleveland Hills mines are opened across much of Cleveland (Great Ayton, Guisborough, Skelton, Swainby, Upleatham). Immigrant workers move into towns and villages with ironstone mines, diluting local culture. Other mineral working includes whinstone setts for paving urban streets, jet mined for jewellery, and sand and gravel.
- Owners of the Middlesbrough Estate acquire land south of the Tees in 1830 and the development of Middlesbrough begins. In 1850 John Vaughan finds ironstone in the Eston Hills. By 1859 Middlesbrough had 32 blast furnaces. In 1862 William Gladstone refers to Middlesbrough as an infant Hercules. The population of Middlesbrough increases by leaps and bounds; people move into Middlesbrough from far and wide.
- New Poor Law of 1834 introduces the union system of workhouses with old parish-based poor houses replaced by workhouses in Guisborough and Stokesley. Electoral reform creates the division of Cleveland, which returns a Liberal MP. Reorganisation of local government sees the end of the ancient wapentakes; most of Langbaurgh West becomes Stokesley Rural District, and modern Parish Councils are formed.
- The River Leven flood of 1840, caused by the Kildale fish pond dams bursting, results in great damage.
- Wealthy businessmen from Teesside build large country houses in Cleveland (Hutton Hall, Marton Hall, Rounton Grange) to rival the houses of the established landowners. The railway reaches Saltburn, and the Peases develop it as a holiday resort.
- Stokesley is a centre for printing and publishing (Braithwaite, Pratt, Tweddell) but by the end of the century has lost much of its commercial importance.

1900 to 2000
- Ironstone mining continues well into the century. Middlesbrough's growth continues, driven by the steel, shipbuilding and chemical industries. New housing estates built on what had been agricultural land. By the end of the century employment significantly declines in these heavy industries, and employment in service industries grows.
- Clevelanders join up to fight in the First World War, many join the Green Howards. German battleships bombard the north-east coast. Demand for steel and ships rises. There are large number of fatalities during the war, and in the following 'flu epidemic. Economic slump of the 1920s.
- Second World War II brings many new people into Cleveland villages (billeted troops, evacuees, Land Army girls, prisoners of war). There are fewer fatalities than in 1914-18. Teesside bombed, Middlesbrough Station suffers direct hit.
- Until mid-century farming is based on a large number of small mixed farms. After the Second World War farms are much larger, with outputs increasingly controlled by government subsidies. Mechanisation dramatically reduces employment and use of agrichemicals increases production. Farmers search for additional sources of income.
- After the Second World War increases in school leaving age, comprehensive schools and more universities change people's expectations of education. Teesside Polytechnic becomes University of Teesside in 1992.

- Beeching axe closes many rural railways in 1963. Teesside County Borough formed in 1967, County of Cleveland in 1974. Massive increase in private car ownership in the second half of the century brings many more visitors into rural Cleveland and by opening up commuting possibilities raises rural house prices. Tighter planning controls restrict spread of housing in rural villages. Wealth imbalance grows across what was Historic Cleveland, deprivation in the east, more affluence in the west.
- North York Moors National Park designated in 1949. National Trust purchase properties and land (Ormesby Hall, Roseberry Topping). Huge increase in countryside leisure activities; walking, mountain biking, riding. Cleveland Way long distance footpath inaugurated in 1969.
- Large out-of-town leisure and shopping developments around Middlesbrough initiated by the Teesside Development Corporation. Growth of large supermarkets forces closure of many small shops.

2000 onwards
- Trend to smaller family units drives growth in apartments, either new build or conversions. Traffic congestion increases. More people use air travel, more flights from Teesside Airport. New James Cook University Hospital serves entire Cleveland area and beyond.
- Revival of market towns (Stokesley), but villages lose small industries and shops. Increase in leisure spending supports new restaurants, inns and hotels.
- Foot and mouth disease precautions seriously affect many rural businesses. Reductions in CAP payments and ban on fox hunting turn many in the countryside against the government.