Twitter Thread by Dan Jackson



Dan Jackson
@northumbriana



Delighted to be asked by @uklandestates to delve into their archive for their 30th anniversary. They now have a portfolio of 28 estates across the region, but the Team Valley was not just their first, it's actually the oldest industrial estate in Europe

Team Valley was born because the North East didn't rebound from worldwide recession like the South did. Although firms like Armstrongs dabbled with car-manufacture in the early 20s, the NE stuck all its eggs in the heavy industry basket: coal, ships and guns.



But demand for coal and armaments had cratered. In 1936, men even marched from Jarrow to London to highlight their desperation at mass unemployment. In Jarrow, it reached 80 per cent. In nearby Gateshead it was 57 per cent.



Such was the state of the region’s economy that in 1934 the National Government decided to site Europe’s first industrial estate in the Team Valley to create “facilities required by industrialists engaged in starting fresh enterprises” (of the type that were booming in the South)



The excellent @Englands_NE tells us that the River Team begins as a collection of streams near Tanfield in NW Durham – a name which originally meant ‘Team Field’. Team is an ancient name, meaning ‘dark river’ with the same root as the name of the Thames.



Back in 875AD the Viking ‘Great Heathen Army’ had overwintered at the mouth of the Team after destroying Tynemouth Priory. Once the winter was over they raided the rest of the North East coast and ransacked Hexham Abbey.



The Team Valley was a rural area until a colliery operated by the Bowes family (ancestors of the Queen) opened here in 1842. By 1920 140,000 tons of coal a week were being shipped out from nearby Dunston Staiths – still the largest wooden structure in Europe.



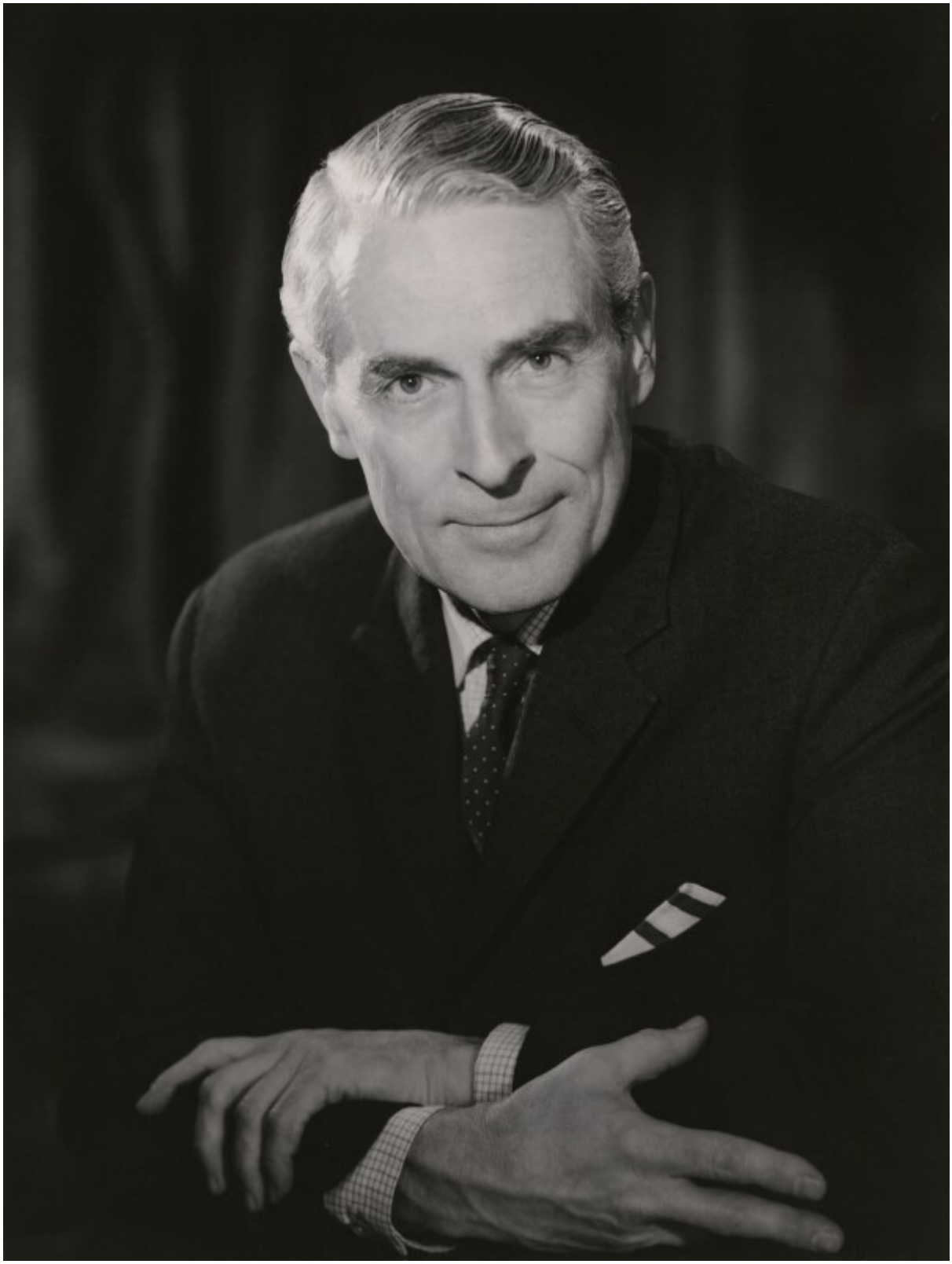
Novel and unorthodox” was how the concept of a government-funded, purpose built industrial estate was described the commissioner appointed by the surprisingly forward-thinking Chancellor Neville Chamberlain to help Britain’s “special areas” – here speaking in 1936



£2M of govt funding was granted and the banks of the Team were quickly surveyed during July-Sept 1936, and the contract awarded to George Wimpey & Co – forerunners of @TaylorWimpey. The great Niklaus Pevsner thought the Team Valley was a remarkable example of planned architecture



The 700 acre site, designed by the 29yr old William Holford was transformed from boggy land using colliery waste. Holford was a key figure in 20thC urban planning: a member of the panel that selected Lúcio Costa's plan for Brasília + he worked on the plans for Durban & Canberra



On 22nd February 1939, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth travelled north to formally open the Team Valley Trading Estate in front of a crowd of 500 enthusiastic locals.



On the same day the King & Queen crossed the Tyne to Walker Naval Yard to launch the mighty battleship HMS King George V - an example of the more traditional industries of Tyneside.



It’s telling that the first tenants to move in were very different to the usual heavy industries: Orrell and Brewster Ltd, haulage contractors, and a motor company: Holland Coachcraft Limited. Before long, more than 7,000 much-needed jobs were up for grabs.



Construction on the site was paused during World War II, with the land instead used to grow food to aid the war effort, but by the mid-sixties, more than 16,000 people were employed at the Team Valley Trading Estate.

