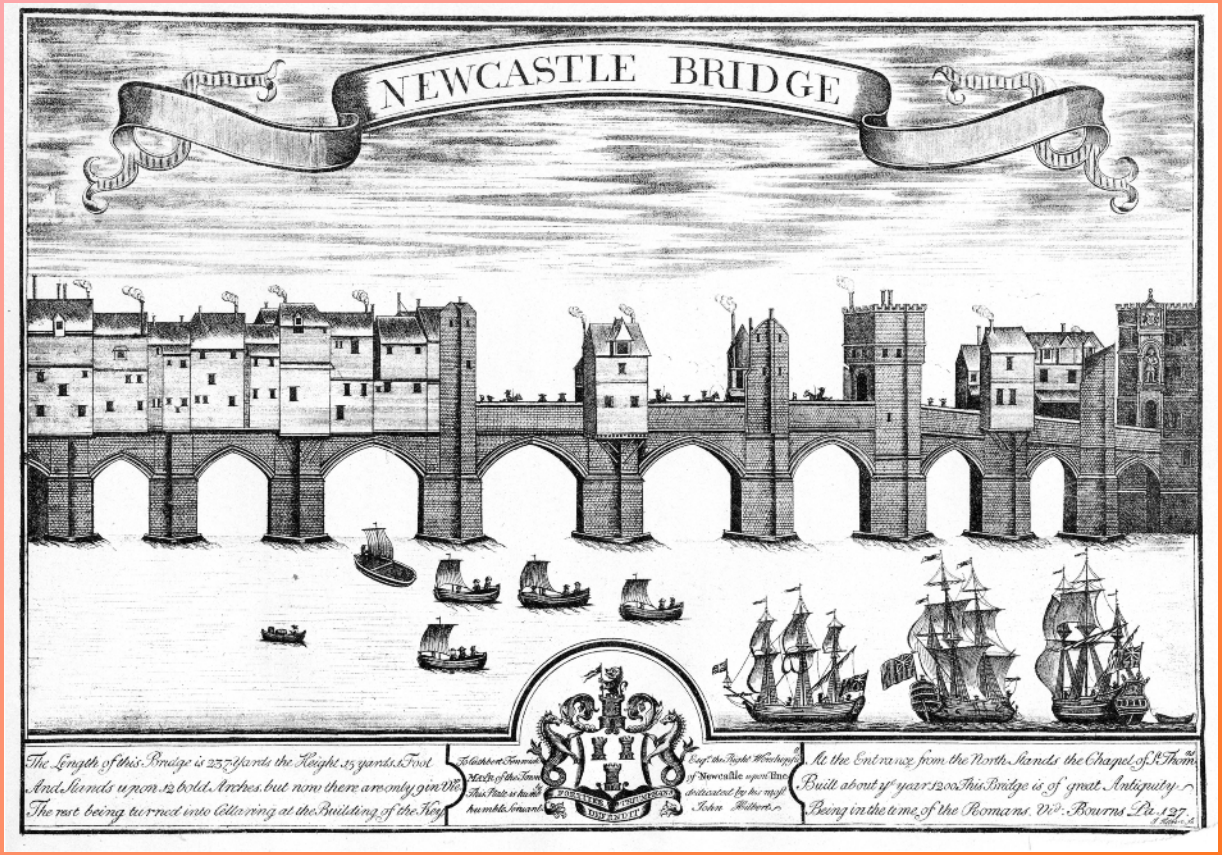
THE TOPOGRAPHY OF ANCIENT NEWCASTLE



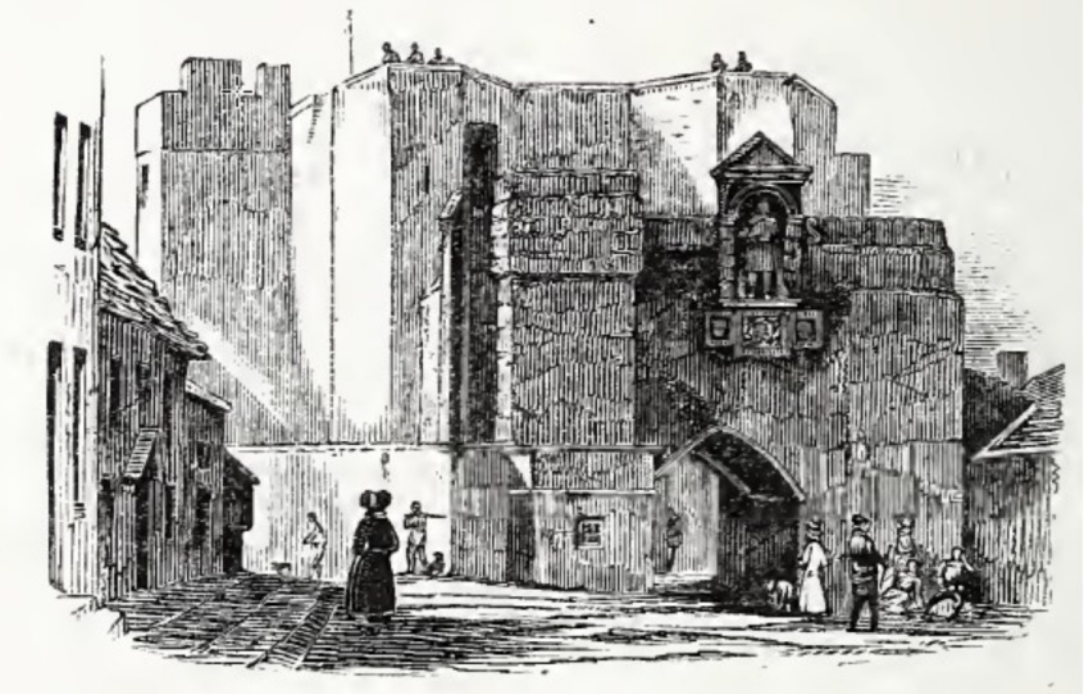
G. Bouchier Richardson

1853

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF ANCIENT NEWCASTLE

By

G. Bouchier Richardson, F.S.A. Newc.



New Gate, Newcastle removed in 1822[1]

THE COMMANDING AND HIGHLY DEFENSIBLE POSITION upon which the town of Newcastle is placed, must necessarily have recommended itself to the notice of the very earliest colonizers of this quarter of the island. The ground on which it stands rising abruptly to the height of about 100 feet from the bed of the river, is cut into three very remarkable tongues of land by four natural valleys, all permeated by streams which disembogue in the Tyne.

The easternmost and largest of these tongues of land,is that formed by the Ouseburn and Pandon Dean; the smallest by that stream and the Lortburn; and the westernmost, whereon stands the Castle, by the Lortburn and Skinnerburn.

To those persons who would, in our day, look for traces of either the Lortburn or Pandon Dean, very few would reward their search. Never, surely, has a physical difficulty in the site of a great town been better conquered. Few would imagine, in traversing the level area of the New Market, the elegant thoroughfares of Market and Grey streets, the busy pavements of Dean street, the Side, and Sandhill, that far below the feet there still flows a rapid stream, which once upon a time ornamented the gardens of the Franciscan Friars, was crossed by two ancient stone bridges, and, at the foot of the present Dean street and Painter Heugh, formed a junction with the swelling waters of the Tyne, which floated up thither the barges of merchandise for the merchants who dwelt on the higher grounds for, at the early day to which I allude, there were no houses or shops on the side, the Sandhill, the Close, or the Quay side.

The river flowed up to the bases of the hills on the tops of which the town then stood, and a large arm of the river was formerly to be seen where now the towering glories of Elizabeth's and James's days still rear their many storied fronts, their projecting floors, and their long rows of casemented windows. The Sandhill, so named from a hill of sand being thrown up there by the tide, was at high water completely surrounded. At other times it was a place of public recreation

The Side, at Newcastle, 1800. The Side, at Newcastle, 1844

for the inhabitants. But for the bridge, and probably a few rude structures for the purposes of commerce, all this was a naked waste the whole shore indeed, along the site of the present Close and Quay side, a sedgy strand. Having their wharfs at the head of the creek on the Lortburn, the inhabitants would do tolerably well without landing places on the shores of the river. Such a state of things, however, must have been found incompatible with the increasing trade of the town by the days of the Edwards at least, quays had been built, and a defensive wall drawn along the principal, for in 1339 it is recorded that by a sudden inundation of the Tyne, the water surmounted and bore down a piece of the wall, six perches in length, near the Wall Knoll, whereby many houses were destroyed, and 167 men and women, including priests, were drowned.

The unlading of goods on the margin of the river, would soon suggest to the merchants the propriety of erecting their dwellings and warehouses close to their wharfs, so they procured the casting of ballast behind the quays to the base of the hills, and around the Sandhill and Side, to the depth of fifteen feet or so, and by this means raised for themselves a shore not liable to be overflowed by the tide as formerly.

It was upon the most western and boldest of the three eminences to which I have already referred that Hadrian erected the station of Pons Ælli. It was the second camp upon his great barrier wall, which extended from the Tyne to the Solway. Though we have no grounds for supposing that the area of the station here would be larger than the generality of those on the line of this stupendous work, there is every reason to infer that a suburban population, very much greater than that attached to any other of the camps, would take shelter beneath its walls, and stud the green slopes with residences and gardens—with temples, and places of public amusement and resort.

We may conclude that eighteen centuries ago a population was there to be found, wise enough to take advantage of the facilities which a noble river afforded them for the purposes of trade and commerce, and to congregate in more than ordinary numbers for that purpose. It is manifest that the requirements of the large body of troops in garrison all along the line of the wall would

require a very large supply of provisions and though we cannot doubt that agriculture was to some extent practised by the soldiery, and that every opportunity was at hand for the capture of beasts of the chase, yet it is capable of certain proof that their wine was imported, that their earthenware was not made in this country, that their ornaments of all sorts, and, in fact, everything besides the simplest products of the soil used and to be used by the various garrisons, must have been brought into the Tyne in ships; while, at the same time, as we discover them to have worked lead and silver mines, and, to all appearance, raised some quantities of the more precious metal, it seems equally certain that the Tyne—the station of Pons Ælli —must have exported the product.

The precise site of the Roman camp here has long exercised antiquarian ingenuity and patience but though it seems certain that it occupied the site of the present castle, and possibly comprised the ground upon which stands the church of St. Nicholas, all endeavours have utterly failed in ascertaining, with anything like certainty, its precise position and contents. Though masonry of undoubted Roman workmanship, altars, wells, pottery, coins, and other relics of that mighty people, render it indisputable that we are upon the right locality, it cannot be a source of wonder that a site which has undergone the vicissitudes attendant upon the continuous residence of a large and busy population, should present any very distinct traces of its primal condition, when viewed through the dim and lengthened vista of eighteen centuries.

It is rather to be wondered at, that considering the change which each successive generation has worked upon the original features of the place, so many secrets of the past should have been revealed to us as have from time to time been exhumed. Horsley, in endeavouring to plot down the site of the camp, drew it in such a situation that, though his lines included as fine a rolling slope as Roman could desire, it was yet completely out of sight of the river and of command of the bridge.

Providing his square was correct, these deficiencies could no doubt have been compensated by the erection of additional works on the brink of the hill; but Hodgson, and I may add myself, conceive that the present castle was included within its walls, and that the Norman enceinte, or at least such part of it as occupied the brow of the hill, had been erected on the remains of the southeast corner of the station.

Those, however, who contend that the Romans obstinately stuck to a rule when an advantage was to be gained by making an exception, will not approve of this view; and I must admit that the line proposed forms anything but a square. A few weeks ago a wall six feet in width, and possessing all the characteristics of the walls of the other stations on the line, was discovered running at right angles across the east end of Collingwood Street.

Should this be taken for the eastern wall of the camp, the great wall itself must have come up to the north cheek of the gateway of that side of the camp, and recommenced in a similar way on the western rampart.

The apparently conflicting accounts of the great wall having been discovered in front of the Assembly Rooms in Westgate Street, and also in the gardens behind St. John’s church, which so closely adjoins, seem to be reconciled by supposing the latter masonry to have been a portion of the northern rampart of the camp, and the former the great wall itself, about to ascend Arthur’s Hill on its western route.

We have all heard with great interest and satisfaction the ingenious, and I may say conclusive manner in which Mr. Hodgson Hinde has succeeded in identifying that portion of Newcastle called Pandon with the ***Ad Murum*** of Bede; but in doing this, and endeavouring to prove the antiquity of that place to be greater than that of her now more powerful sister, he presumes, as Bede does not mention a community residing at the station of Pons Ælii, that after the departure of the Romans it had ceased to be occupied by a settled population. It is true that Bede does not notice the site in question, but this might arise from his not needing to do so. It was no part of

Bede's purpose to write the topography of the district, and, as his point was ecclesiastical history, he confined his remarks to events of that class. Furthermore, if, as Mr. Hinde also successfully shows, Gateshead means the head of the gate or street which, by the Pons Ælii, was conveyed over the Tyne to the wall, beyond which it did not go, we have at once the definition of Ad Murum, and to all appearance an indication of its site the station and suburbs of Pons Ælii, of which Pandon, only a few hundred yards to the east of the Roman bridge, may very well be considered a part though it is very possible that, lying as it did in the bed of a deep ravine, and separated from the station by the intervention of an elevated ridge of considerable height and width, Pandon may have had a sort of independent existence from the parts lying further west. That Ad Murum, then, seems to apply at least as well to the station as to Pandon, seems tolerably certain. Mr. Hodgson Hinde, having ignored the existence of Newcastle at the period in question, applies a salve to the wounded sensibilities of its modern sons in these words:"

Viewing both villas as component parts of a united community, we have reasonable grounds for assigning to them a continuous existence from the reign of Hadrian to the present day." In the absence of any real proof to the contrary, however, we may well doubt that at the departure of the Romans the large body of people which must have established themselves in and about Pons Ælii would dissolve away into thin air. An occupation of some hundreds of years must have produced a mixed community of Roman, British, and Teutonic origin, whose interests would be best consulted by remaining where they were, and continuing to inhabit a place which, at the same time that it afforded them protection, had become endeared to them through ties of blood, affection, and lengthened residence.

Should it then be conceded that ''where we find a modern city occupying the site of an ancient one it is more than probable that it has had an uninterrupted existence," it follows that the municipal independence of the boroughs of the eleventh and twelfth centuries "was not, as it has become a sort of maxim in law to believe, a boon granted from the crown by the Norman monarchs, but a right arising out of uninterrupted possession from a period of remote antiquity." Mr. Thomas Wright, M.A. who expresses these opinions, looking at the striking resemblance between the Roman municipal institutions and those of Britain, concludes thence not only that the municipal forms and conditions of cities were derived from the former Roman occupants, and that they underwent no change upon the transfer of the English crown to a Norman line of sovereigns, but that municipal charters " are rather to be considered as a proof of the antiquity than the novelty of the privileges they grant."

It seems not an unfavourable idea that when certain old thoroughfares fall in well with the presumed, in many cases well ascertained, line of Roman wall throughout the town, they may indicate the route of the attendant military way; and thus corroborate other evidence. For when a road has once been established it is natural to preserve it — houses built on its margin decay, and are replaced by others on the same site, the spot having become what may be termed private property —while that of the public, the road itself, would be infringed upon, and the attempt resisted, should any one venture to build into or across it.

Thus is such a road perpetuated. It is with this view that I would indicate several of the old thoroughfares as being the persistent representatives of the military way. At the very outset, the present Stepney bank, a road from time immemorial leading from the brink of the Ouseburn to the summit of the hill, stands precisely in the line of the ascertained course of the wall, while the till lately vacant ground north of the Keelmen's Hospital doubtless once might have yielded traces to the diligent observer of the same stony passage. Grey, indeed, in his Chorographia, written in 1649, alludes to a road leading thence all the way to Wallsend—a valuable testimony in favour of this view.

Entering the crowded locality of the Wall Knoll the road appears to be at once indicated by the narrow street specially so called, winding easily round from the southern to the eastern side of that eminence, while the wall itself takes a more direct but increasingly precipitous course down

to the open area called the Stockbridge. Imagine for a moment the Roman soldiers traversing their via, what course more likely than the line of the present Silver Street full in their face, while the wall, seeking to attain as rapidly as possible a more northerly position so as to form at no great distance a junction with the station, leaves the road by a small circuit to regain its defensive companion at the street known by the name of the Low Bridge.

Thence by a single arch was the passage of the Lortburn effected. St. Nicholas churchyard has always been a thoroughfare, and Denton Chare (before the formation of Collingwood Street the only passage westward) appears to be the obvious continuation of the route. Thence the thoroughfare of Westgate Street and Westgate Hill conveys directly to the spot, where to this day portions of the Roman military way are yet distinctly traceable. Doubtless the Roman road from the west of Northumberland remained in full force for centuries after it was abandoned by those who originally formed it. We cannot doubt that it was by this road that the judges of assize traversed their way from Newcastle to their judicial labours to Carlisle.

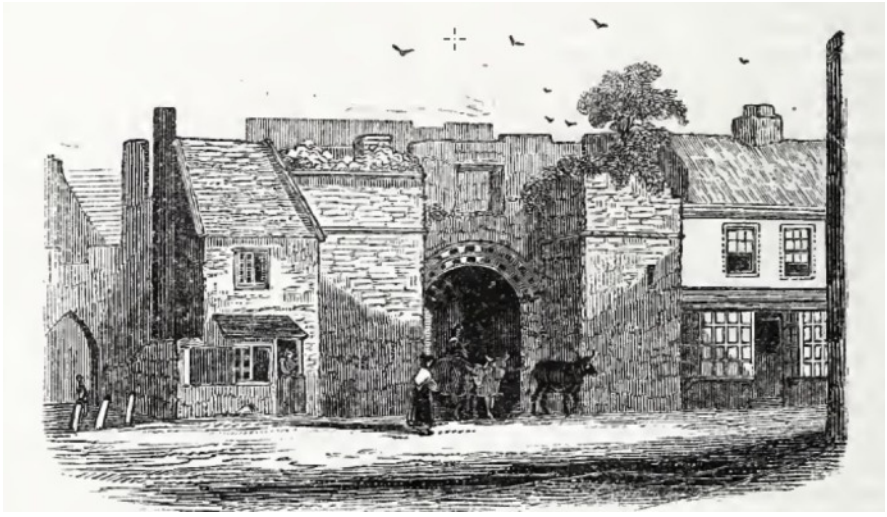
A passage in the biography of the Lord Keeper North, in 1676, implies this; while the same important functionaries are in 1279 still more distinctly shown to have used “Carel Street, the main thoroughfare in old times between Newcastle and Carlisle.” The three Norwich military officers who visited the North in 1634, left on their westward route by the West gate,” with the pretty murmuring musicke of the Tyne, which kept them from straying on their left, as the Piets’ wall did on their right.”

We met, continues one of their party, ”with some dangerous waves and passages, one more especially, for it was rocky and steepy, so was it narrow and intricate, winding every step, and expecting our nags to fall upon us a place this was as dangerous to us and others, that way Land travellers, as the gulfe is terrible to seamen.” The writer proceeds to state that on leaving Hexham, they “happily lighted on a guide, who by chance was bound for those intricate wayes; with him we mounted for Carlisle, still along by the Picts’ wall.”

The localities here pointed out render it unlikely that any other than the old military way could be meant. Doubtless, Roger de Thornton, the opulent burgess of Newcastle, used the military way, when in his youthful progress towards the scenes of his future greatness.

In at the Westgate came Thornton in.
With a happen hapt in a lamb’s skin.

In pious remembrance of the road which had led him thither, and the portal which had given him admission, he rebuilt, or more probably added, an outwork to the old gate.



West Gate, Newcastle Removed in 1811

Thus we have every reason to conclude that the Roman military way is still preserved through the town, and thence that the streets indicating it form the oldest thoroughfare in Newcastle. It is also more than probable that the town in its earliest form would be built along the sides of the road, much after the manner of the long street like villages scattered all over the country.

This view seems the more certain, from the circumstance that the greater number of the churches and monastic institutions are found to lie on either side of the route. Commencing from the east, we have St. Anne's chapel. the hospital on the Wall Knoll, the monastery of St. Augustine, in the Manor Chare, the church of All Saints, and those of St. Nicholas and St. John. Besides these, there were at least two almshouses —one in the Stockbridge and the other in St. Nicholas' churchyard, adjoining the bridge which carried the way over into Pandon.

Pilgrim Street Gate, Newcastle Removed in 1802

There was also adjoining the south side of the way the hospital of St. Mary the Virgin, in Westgate. It is a usual circumstance throughout the counties of Northumberland and Durham to find old buildings bearing the name of Spitals, standing on the line of the ancient roads. These it is quite certain were hospitals for the reception and refreshment of wayfarers at a time when there were no inns for their accommodation.

Hence, it appears reasonable, that while the churches mentioned were erected on the wayside in order to afford an opportunity and suggest the propriety to the wayfarer as well as the inhabitant of spiritual exercises therein; the monastic institutions and almshouses (which were probably originally hospitals) were intended for the restoration of bodily vigour by the aid of food and sleep. Indeed it is distinctly stated in the charter of foundation of the Hospital of the Virgin in temp. Hen II., that besides other purposes, it was designed for the entertainment of the indigent clergy and such pilgrims as were passing that way. In the certificate drawn up in 1546, it is

described as having been founded “to lodge all poor and wayfaring people being destitute of lodging, and to bury such as fortuned there to dye.”

As the hospital was popularly designated the West Spital, so was that of the Trinity on the Wall Knoll termed the East Spital which was no doubt devoted to similar purposes, as by the charter of 1360 three beds were always to be kept for accidental guests.

Pilgrim Street, another of these very old thoroughfares mentioned under its present name so early as 1292, and leading northward to the Norman Shrine of Our Lady at Jesmond, had such another caravanserai in it for the accommodation of the great bodies of pilgrims who made frequent visits to the locality mentioned. In the same street was the house of the Franciscans, where the devotees not only feasted their eyes with divers sacred relics, but partook of personal refreshment.

The fraternity of the Blessed Trinity on the Quay side, erected for jointly religious and secular purposes, had a guest chamber, and not only relieved their own seafaring brethren, but offered an asylum for others, wayfarers and strangers, who might have been wrecked upon the coasts. This opulent and excellent body were frequently relieving large bodies of foreign seamen who had suffered this misfortune.

During the times of pestilence, the brethren gave admission to the plague stricken, with meat and drink, such medical attendance as then existed, and, if the issue was mortal, burial at the hands of their chaplain. Such was the use also to which the almshouses and hospitals were put in these dread seasons; and the hospital of the Magdalen, placed without the town, after having for centuries been devoted to the reception of lepers, was upon the disappearance of that fearful disease used as an hospital for those smitten with the plague.

Besides these conventual houses already incidentally mentioned were those of the Dominicans, Carmelites, Nuns of St. Bartholomew, and of the Hospitallers of St. John, the chapel of which still exists among the crowded chares of the Quay side.

Hard by was the hospital of St. Katharine; and, in the The great Bridge over the Tyne, clad with dwellings and furnished like that of London with three gate towers, had at its northern or Newcastle end a chapel dedicated to St Thomas of Canterbury, whose custos collected the alms of the wayfarers for the support of the important structure to which it was attached. Close, the town residence of the Percies, to which on the northern progress of Margaret, daughter of Henry VII., on her way to her marriage with James of Scotland, a magnificent banquet was given by its then owner. The Close also contained the residences of many other persons of distinction.

The site of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, originally selected for the advantages it presented as a place of defence, is not less favoured by nature for an effective surface drainage. The general health of the inhabitants who now crowd the busy spot is always, to a certain extent, secured by the fine rolling descent towards the Tyne, and a southern exposure. The four ravines which intersect at great depth the site are so many huge sewers in themselves while the smaller rills, or watercourses, with which the place is so well supplied, aid materially in relieving the general surface from superabundant moisture.

Whoever was originally concerned in laying out the course of the streets in Newcastle must have been governed by sanitary views for in several instances we find the lines of the greater old thoroughfares occupying the summit of the ridges formed by two of the larger ravines, so that drainage right and left might be secured from the backs of the houses.

A remarkable example of this exists in the case of Pilgrim Street, “the west side of which drains into the Lortburn, and the east into the Arickburn, which, though at this day covered over, is yet the boundary of the various properties in that direction. Another example occurs in the fact of

the west side of Newgate Street and Big Market draining into a nameless stream, crossing the present Clayton Street West.

Though few if any of these watercourses now run open to the day, with the exception of Pandon Dean and portions of the Skinner and Lort burns, the direction they have taken can in all cases be detected from the gradual fall of the ground towards the proper bed of the stream on both its sides, as if in the lapse of time a repetition of rain floods had washed away the soil right and left of the watercourse itself. This may readily be observed in Newgate Street, where the Lortburn passes the southern extremity of Saint Andrew's churchyard, crosses the street, and flows eastward.

It is also very observable in Erick Street (so named after the stream), and in the case of the Skinner burn, where it forms the dip between Derwent Place and Westmorland Street, in the vicinity of the cattle market; indeed the market itself is held on the whole of the eastern slope of the burn, while its western bank is still indicated by the rise of the ground at the backs of the houses in Marlborough Crescent and the roadway of Churchill Street.

Insignificant as these little streams may appear, there is something interesting in the reflection that for ages they were the only sewerage the town possessed, and that they have had a persistent existence through seven centuries and more, though running through densely built localities.

Four and thirty years after the Conquest, Robert Curthose, returning from an expedition against Malcolm of Scotland, wintered within the remains of the Roman camp of Pons' Ælii, and occupied his men in raising a castle within the area of its ruined walls. This building, which was probably of a rude but effective construction, was called the Newcastle upon Tyne, in opposition to the old Roman castle or Chester of Pons Ælii, which was unquestionably the most appropriate Latin name for the place up to the Norman era.

That this original castle of Robert was not of great magnitude or strength, may appear from the great ease with which Rufus took it from the partisans of the rebellious Mowbray, and from the circumstance that Florence, Simeon, and Hoveden, describe it as "*municiumcula*," a little fort, whilst Tynemouth is spoken of as a castle. It has been customary to suppose that the existing keep was the structure then erected but a writer in the Archaeological Journal," in pointing out the contra diction which such a view receives from the architectural details of the building, supposes the present castle to have been erected during the twelfth century on the site of the fort of Curthose.

The details of the chapel, he observes, belonging to the latest period of the Norman style, seem to mark the date of the completion of the building as subsequent to 1180; and it is satisfactory to find that this diagnosis, as we may call it, is very nearly correct.

The pipe rolls, which shew that very extensive works at the castle of Newcastle, occupied in their execution the period between 1168 and 1180, and cost upwards of £900. of the money of that day, leave no doubt upon our minds that they refer to the costs of the second Norman castle of Newcastle.

Outer works of great magnitude were added by subsequent monarchs but as the subject has already been so ably treated by Mr. Bruce, I shall not pursue it further here, but conclude by drawing your attention to the Wall which surrounded the town during the Edwards and their successors.

There can be little doubt that, though during the reigns of Rufus and John we have mention, apparently very definite, of town walls, they must rather be considered as indicative of boundary dikes than as defensible stone structures. It is unlikely, indeed, if so late as the reign of John the

Sandgate, Newcastle Removed in 1798

works of the castle were not complete, that money had been expended upon the formation of barriers of magnitude for the town, which I conceive must have depended upon the protection of the fortress till the days of the Edwards, when the chain of defences of which we have yet magnificent remains were drawn around the town. I am the more justified in applying to them so sounding a phrase, from the surprise and gratification which they have excited among many of you to whose notice I have had the honour of introducing their remains, and more especially from the remarkable commendation bestowed upon them by Leland, who must have seen them in their prime, and was every way capable of forming an opinion of them. The words of Leland are:—

> Strength and magnificens of the waulling of this towne, far passith all the waulles of the cities of England, and of most of the townes of Europe."

Lithgow, the covenanter, in his account of the preparations for the defence of the town in 1644, speaks of the walls in the highest terms:–

> "The walles hereof Newcastle," says he, "are a greate deale stronger than those of Yorke, and not unlyke to the walles of Avineon, but especially of Jerusalem. Being all three decored about the battlements with little quadrangled turrets; the advantage resting onely on Newcastle, in regard of seventeen dungeon towres fixt about the walles (and they wonderful strong), which the other two have not."

And Grey, writing 1649,— remarks:—

White Friar Tower

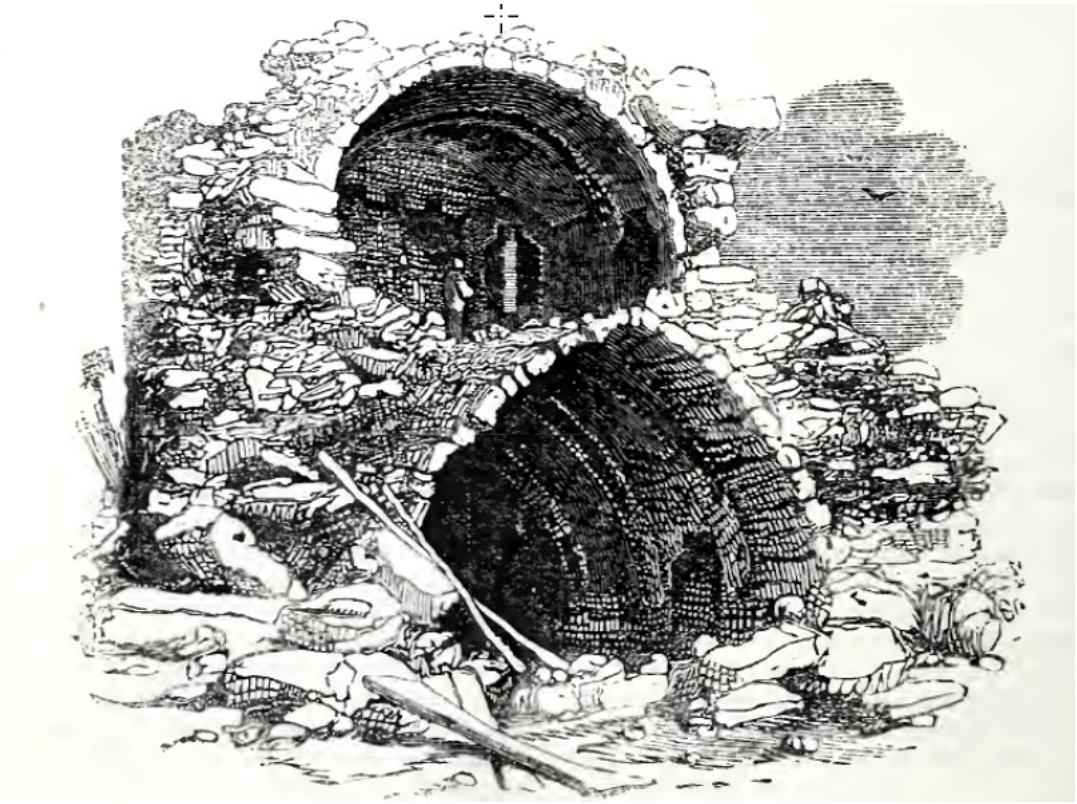
> "This towne, famous, being a bulwark against the Scots; all the power of Scotland could never win it since the walls were built; but of late being assisted by the English, was stormed, our churches and houses defaced, the ornaments of both plundered and carried away, the crowne of our heads is fallen, woe now unto us for we have sinned."

After these high but by no means undeserved encomia, it becomes necessary I should afford you a somewhat minuter description of the barrier. The whole extent of the walls has been computed at two miles and about one eighth, their thickness placed at eight feet, and their height in many parts exceeded twenty feet to the top of the battlements; so that with the addition of fifteen feet for the depth of the moat, a formidable barrier of thirty five or forty feet has been opposed to the enemy.

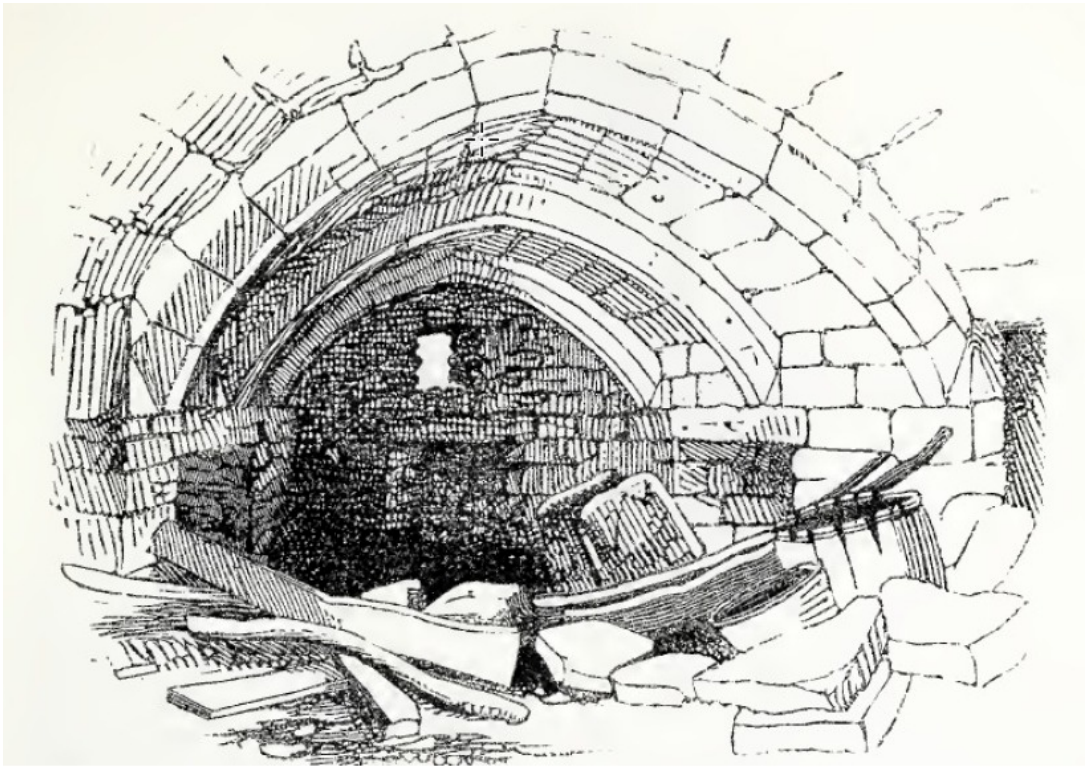
The towers would of course present a still greater elevation. The portion of the wall accessible from the east side of South street is one of the best examples remaining of the original height of On the exterior, the walls possessed a moulded base, which when the line descended a hill was made to move in grades an arrangement which may conveniently be observed on the exterior face of the wall accessible from Bath-leine.

Besides seven massive gates of first class character, the wall was furnished with seventeen circular bastions of great strength and effective construction; these were placed within bowshot of each other, and thus possessed an entire command of the intervening curtains. Between these, for the most part, were two guerites, or square watchtowers, placed upon the wall itself, and provided with machicolated parapets, through which missiles could be showered on the heads of the enemy.

These were also provided each with an oeillet, opening from the passage beneath the platform.



Austin Tower (removed)



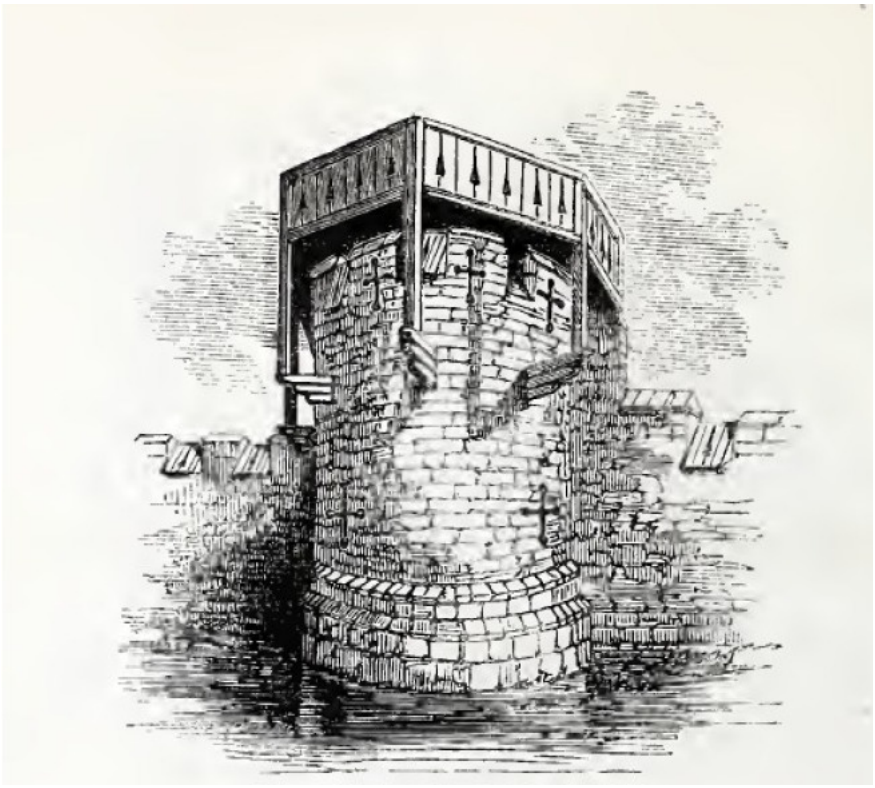
Interior of Lower Chamber of Neville Tower.

On the coping stone of the centre merlon of the breastwork of each of these garrets was the figure in stone of an armed warrior, shewn only to the knees, to convey an impression to the enemy of the watchfulness of the garrison, or perhaps only designed as an elegant ornament or termination to the turret. Not one of these figures remains in its original position, but two have been found within an hundred yards of each other during the works for the Central Railway station.

The first (that now on the castle staircase) walling stone at some subsequent repair, and the other buried in the soil at the exterior root of the wall, having been thrown off the garret into the moat beneath, and then gradually covered up.

Our authority for the precise position of these figures rests on the MS. History of Newcastle, quoted by Bourne as the Milbank MS. The real writer was a Newcastle worthy who lived during the reigns of all the Stuart kings, and chronicled many local matters which now prove highly valuable. His words are “Between everyone of these (round) towers there were, for the most part, two watch towers made square, with the effigies of men cut in stone upon the tops of them, as though they were watching, and they were called garrets which had square holes over the walls to throw stones down.”

Six of the bastions were each possessed of two obtusely arched apartments, with bold ribs. These chambers had also three cruciform oeillets each, so formed that the archer could discharge his arrows with full effect to the very bottom of the ditch and base of the wall, while at the same time he could readily elude inimical shafts. Access to the first of these vaults was had from the ground, and to the second by a winding stair leading out of the first, though in many cases they were provided with stairs leading at once from the military way on the inside of the curtain to the upper chamber.



The Pink Tower

Nine other of these bastions had but one apartment, but that of larger size than the others, upon the ribbing of which rested the platform, which in these cases was always gained from the curtain wall, and not by an internal stair. A good example of this arrangement may be viewed in Pink Tower, in Clayton street, and also at Herber Tower, near the Fever Hospital.

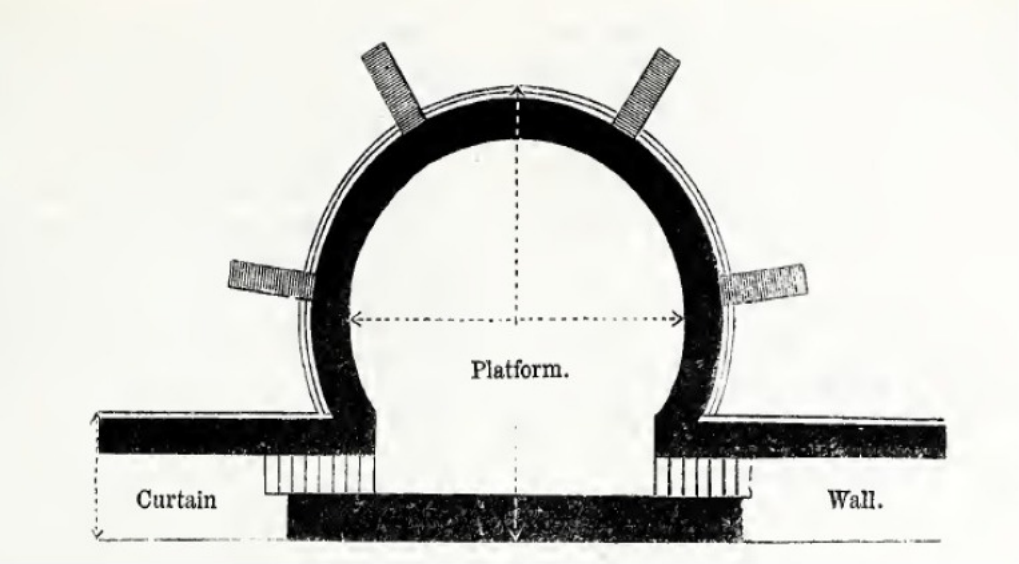
These nine bastions were provided with a series of corbellings projecting from the upper portion of the structure. That these once had borne some sort of defensive gallery, could not, I thought, be doubted; but in what manner I had not been able to determine. Had the gallery, which must have been formed of wood, been thrown simply from corbel to corbel, it would have interfered with the use of the embrasures of the tower, without affording any sufficient compensating advantage. Mr. Albert Way and I, however, paid a visit to Pink Tower, one of the nine bearing

these corbels. He suggested that they might have supported a defensive gallery, such as I had conceived probable, but carried aloft, over the breastwork of the tower, by means of vertical struts, set on the extremities of these corbels, thus enabling; two sets of soldiers to be engaged at once in defending the tower. On ascending the platform, in order to satisfy ourselves as to whether there were upon the corbels any traces of such an arrangement, we were rewarded by finding the much weatherworn, but withal sufficiently distinct, traces of the socket in which we presume the strut has rested.

The elevation thus gained would not only entirely preserve the defensiveness of the parapet of the tower, but would seem to have been devised as a compensating means of defence for those towers which had but one chamber, and consequently less altitude. It is further worthy of remark, that the towers with one chamber, and the arrangements for the wooden gallery, are all placed in successive order, and on the northwestern quarter of the fortification.

The accompanying sketch of Pink Tower has been prepared to exhibit the presumed arrangement of these wooden stages. The tower yet exists precisely as represented, with the exception, of course, of the stage and a few of the upper courses of masonry; but, as the base of each of the five oeillets of the parapet remains, the restoration has been a matter of ease and certainty.

The present height of the tower is 27 feet 6 inches its original height probably 31½ feet, with the stage 40 feet. The adjoining curtain is 22 feet, the original height.[2] By the consultation of modern works of reference no definite idea is conveyed of the word “barbiean,” but Mr. Planche, who has referred to this subject in articles[3] on Anthony Bastard of Burgundy (who bore for his badge a device called a “barbacane") is of opinion that this has been a contrivance formed of wood and fixed about fortifications for the discharge of missiles, &c. He gives a figure of a moveable wooden tower for archers, wherein are drawn shutters for the embrasures evidently for the purposes I have suggested below. Possibly all such wooden works were called barbicans in the Middle Ages.



Diagram

White Friar Tower and Corner Tower, from their peculiar positions on the wall, were somewhat different in form to those already classified, the former, however, consisting of two apartments, differed only in its form, which was circular, for being placed on the brow of a hill overhanging the Close, its embrasures were required to command a greater range than the others which sprung from the face of the curtain wall. The latter, Corner Tower, in order to suit a very peculiar angle of the wall overhanging the town of Pandon, was formed, as it were, by placing two of the watch towers at right angles with each other.

The merlons and embrasures of the parapet running along the curtains, rose in stages, to meet the superior elevation of the bastions and guerites so as to protect the stairs which led to the summits of each. In most cases the merlons immediately adjoining the towers have been pierced with cruciform loops.

From traces yet remaining near Pink Tower, it is evident that the embrasures have been provided with wooden shutters, swinging as it were from coping to coping, and capable of being lifted up for the discharge of missiles from the walls, and immediately closed so as to act as a shield from the arrows of the assailants.

The platform of the curtain in many parts, if not all, appears to have overhung the inner face of the wall, and to have been supported by a series of corbelling, much after the manner in which the guerites are made to project on the inner side of the wall. An excellent specimen of this arrangement may yet be observed in St. Andrew's churchyard, and, until lately, in that part of the wall which skirted the Earl's Inn, in the Close.

Considerable additional breadth was thereby gained to the platform, so as to compensate for the loss of room by the parapet. Besides the great gates which, from their various character and size, cannot be described collectively, the wall was perforated at different points by many smaller ports, commonly called posterns.

The chief characteristics of at least two of the great gates were the possession of a main tower several stories in height, and an outwork, which I think it probable has in each case been additional to the larger and original structure. All round on the inner face of the wall there was left a passage for the conveyance of the troops and military stores. As this was of very high importance, it was strictly preserved, and to this day is an uninterrupted footpath around the town.

The moat or ditch was of the uniform width of twenty two yards, and fifteen feet deep. It everywhere surrounded the town except where the nature of the ground precluded it. It is now for the most part filled up. For the defence of these walls the burgesses were under a well organised military training. The town was divided into as many wards as there were gates and towers; these were twenty four in number. The aldermen had these wards under their general superintendence, and each tower had two constables.

The very curious muster of the sensible inhabitants taken in 1539, which I have edited in the Archaeologia Æliana, conveys many valuable particulars as to the system then and formerly pursued. Although nations, not so blessed as the English isles, still think it expedient to fortify and garrison their towns, here the remains of old ramparts and ditches are viewed by the present generation as matters of curiosity and, so long as true bred British tars continue to man our wooden walls, except for the security of her arsenals and the convenience of her fleets, England will never more need a fortified town.

The din of battle within her coast has for ever been superseded by the more .welcome bustle and buzz of commerce the refined enjoyments of civilisation and domestic happiness have permanently established their ascendancy throughout the land; and we may congratulate ourselves that the burgesses of Newcastle will never more be called by drum and fife to defend its walls.

Note:—The reading of Mr. Richardson's paper was illustrated by several sketches by himself, and especially by a large and beautiful drawing prepared by Mr. John Storey, a talented artist of Newcastle, and draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries there. Mr. Storey had in the purely antiquarian portion of his labours been materially aided by the lecturer's sketches and researches; without such material in fact the drawing could not have been executed. We understand it is proposed that the Antiquaries of Newcastle should secure Mr. Storey's picture for their apartments in the castle, an arrangement which we hope will be effected.

NOTES

1) Read at the Newcastle Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of Great Britain, August 31, 1852

2) In the ground plan the circular area represents the platform of the tower, which was ascended by the steps on either side from the pathway of the curtain wall. The admeasurements are,—from the exterior edge of wall to wall, 24 feet 6 inc. and within the tower, across the dotted line, 21 feet. The projection of the corbels from the wall was five feet.

3) These memorials of Pink Tower will be viewed with increased interest, from the circumstance that it is now in course of demolition. As is usually the case with ancient masonry, the work presents considerable difficulty to the destroyer. The walls have been grouted with liquid lime, and stoutly resist the action of crowbar and pick of Gentleman's Magazine for March, 1839, p. 248, and Archaeologia of the Society of Antiquaries of London, vol. XXVII. p. 424.

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