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A Very Brief History of Some Aspects of Newcastle Upon Tyne to the end of the 16th C

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Dragon's Laire Scholars

Introduction

Why?

Simply stated, I have a thing about Newcastle upon Tyne. I love the history of the place, the geography, the river Tyne[1], its closeness to Scotland coupled by its distance from London, the accent of the inhabitants, the pubs, the look and feel of the streets, and the little towns close by.

Aelianora de Wyntringham, me, lived in Newcastle upon Tyne in the mid to late 1500s with her merchant/shipping husband. She's old by 1600, but still alive, maybe. Another persona of mine, Quinta Petillia Aelianora, is the wife of a Roman military officer. Her husband was stationed at Newcastle upon Tyne, or *Pons Aelius* as the Romans knew it in the mid 200s AD, amongst other places in the Roman Empire. And my third persona, Cicely, is Aelianora de Wyntringham's milk maid/cheese maker. She was born on a farm in Northumberland (or perhaps Yorkshire). She now lives with her mistress, Aelianora, in Newcastle, unless she's working on a farm somewhere managing milk and cheese. Yes, I have a thing about Newcastle upon Tyne.

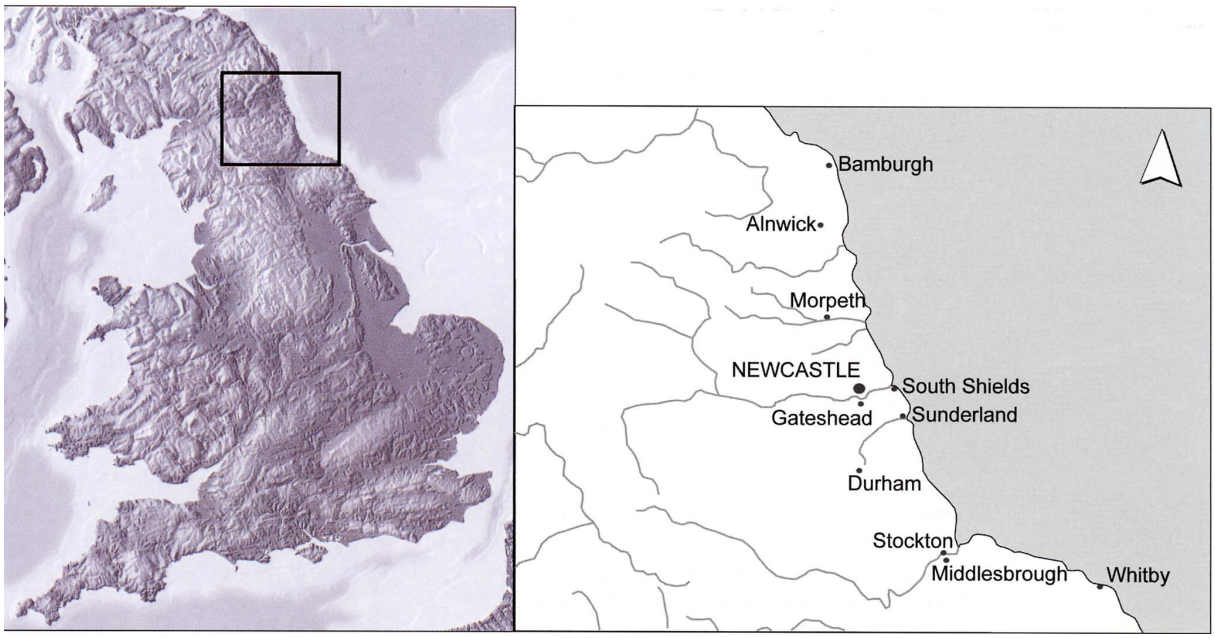

Figure 1: Newcastle's Location in Britain (Graves and Heslop 2013:Figure 1.1)

1 The Tyne is the southern boundary of what was once a Kingdom and was a county called Northumberland or 'Northumbria' for about 1000 years. Currently the county located there is called 'Tyne and Wear'. North of this county is the modern 'Northumberland'.

What/Where is Newcastle

Newcastle-upon-Tyne is a large north-eastern city (it was a town in the SCA period) in England (see Figure 1). It sits on the river Tyne, in the southern part of Northumberland, a county which borders Scotland. It is situated at the eastern end of the narrowest part of England. The town at the western end is Carlisle, in the county of Cumbria. This narrowing of England is the site of Hadrian's Wall, and Newcastle was one of the forts along that wall, set up to guard the bridge of *Pons Aelius*. Newcastle has been occupied, in one form or another, since prehistoric times. It became a town under the Normans, when the 'new' castle was built. It was an important trading port for all kinds of goods in the Medieval period, and in the mid to late Medieval period coal, of course, became one of its main exports. Later on, post SCA period, Newcastle's coal trade grew to enormous heights. Along with that, shipbuilding came to the Tyne and Newcastle.

This paper examines a limited number of aspects of the history of Newcastle upon Tyne, including the Roman fort and cemetery which preceded it. This examination halts around the end of the 16th C.

Constraints on the archaeological and visible/existing record in Newcastle

Newcastle is surprising in some ways, because, unlike many other European towns and cities, there is little remaining of its pre-1700's buildings and structures. Most of the evidence left to reconstruct the medieval and earlier town is documentary or archaeological.

This is because of the normal cycle of reconstruction and new construction that happens in every location humans inhabit, and another, rather more unique event (see below) which occurred in the more recent past in Newcastle. Luckily, in Newcastle and other areas, people interested in the past began to undertake rigorous recording and observations when old buildings were destroyed and new buildings constructed, or when modifications in any area happened. These 'antiquaries', starting in the mid to late 1700's, provided a large amount of information and recovered objects from these construction and reconstruction projects which took place during the first part of the modern era. These observations and records are now generally undertaken by archaeologists and other local 'antiquaries' and provide the bulk of the information given in this paper.

In 1854 a huge fire, and explosion, burnt much of the riverside areas of Newcastle and the town across the river Tyne, Gateshead. The fire started in a worsted mill (which was newly built after a fire in the building a couple years earlier) in Gateshead. The fire spread to other buildings on or near the waterfront, including a warehouse which held, amongst other things, nitrate of soda, sulfur and other explosives. The inevitable occurred (think of the recent explosion in Beruit) and the resulting explosion set the waterfront buildings of Newcastle, across the river, on fire. It also knocked stone buildings down in the town, blew off

roofs, destroyed windows and more. The explosion was so loud coal miners, 11 miles away and deeply underground, heard it. Heavy debris was thrown ¾ of a mile away, lighter debris rained down in a circle about 6 miles in radius. The explosion and resulting fires ravaged the oldest parts of both towns and basically destroyed them (Anon 2020:143; Winter et al. 1989:143). And so, we have few medieval or 1600s extant remains from the center of Newcastle; archaeology and the study of historical documents and images generally have to suffice to inform our knowledge about the medieval town and its environs.

Geography

The driving force behind the foundation of Newcastle upon Tyne and its antecedents seems to have been a fordable and shallow river crossing found about 8 miles west of the mouth of the Tyne where the river empties into the North Sea[2]. This location is not ideal for shipping; the Tyne is narrow and twisting as one travels upriver towards Newcastle from the North Sea. In some places the river is quite shallow, or it was until dredging started 100 or so years ago. Shipping was not a primary reason for the placement of the town; the ford, the eventual bridge across the river, and the trade and passage that thus ensued was the most important concern for the town's placement (O'Brien 1991:36).

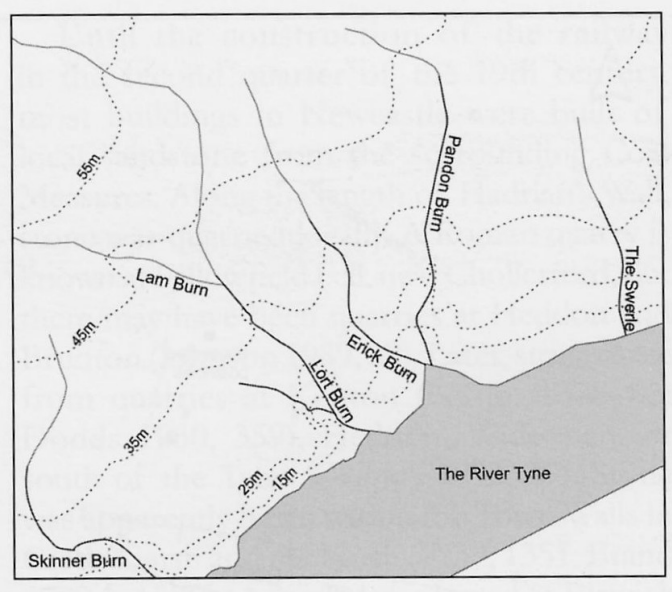

Figure 2: The Newcastle area before human habitation (Graves and Heslop 2013:Figure 1.7)

The center of the city of Newcastle is located on the top of a steep plateau on the north bank of the river Tyne. Across the river, on another plateau, is the town of Gateshead. Newcastle is situated in an ideal location for a bridge across the river, set between several different streams, or 'burns' (the Lort Burn and the Pandon Burn are primary) as they are known locally, with fairly clean riverside landings and beaches, as opposed to the somewhat swampy riversides of the lower Tyne. The burns drain into the river, and, through erosion, created ravines, called 'sides' and 'denes', as well as the riverside beaches. The burns went through the glacial deposits underlying the top soil and eroded into the sandstone which formed the plateau and underlying natural strata in the area. These burns have almost completely disappeared from the surface of the land around Newcastle, their ravines were infilled over time, and the burns themselves were set into underground drains and tunnels to make way for paved city streets

2 The town at the mouth of the Tyne, on the river's north bank, is, surprisingly, called Tynemouth.

(much like many of the famous waterways and streams of London). The geography of the area has been lost through infilling and modification over time and the original riverfronts (the northern and southern banks of the Tyne) has been considerably altered through human intervention and reclamation. Archaeological and geo-archaeological research have allowed reconstruction of the original geography of the area (O'Brien 1991:37–38; Graves and Heslop 2013:12–13, 15).

Rising up from the beaches, sand and mudflats along the riverside at Newcastle were several steep paths to the top of the plateau, probably set in the ravines of smaller creeks or burns. These still exist, although they are completely paved over and have been made into stairways, steps and 'sides'. This paving probably dates back to Medieval times if not earlier. The paths, now sets of stairs, etc, have various names: the Dog Leap Stairs, Castle Stairs, Long Stairs, the Side, and more (Graves and Heslop 2013:op. cit.; O'Brien 1991:op. cit.).

Pre-Historic Pre-Roman

There are a few pieces of archaeological evidence from the Newcastle area which mostly date to the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, although there are some from earlier time periods as well. These pieces of evidence include flints, a stone axe, ploughing marks (ard marks) (Nolan et al. 2010:155), dug-out canoes, and log boats. The dredging of the Tyne, which was done in the late 1800's to make the river more easily navigable for large ships, and the riversides more usable for anchoring and supplying/filling deep draft ships, has produced other items (spearheads, swords, rapiers/daggers, log boats) from those time periods (Graves and Heslop 2013: Table 2.1, Figure 2.1, Table 2.3, Figure 2.6). The remains of a circular, most likely prehistoric, building were found north of the castle district in High Bridge, Newcastle, under a medieval burgage[3] (see below, page 18). A radio carbon date from the site returns 1333-1324 BC (cal), making it likely to be a bronze age structure. This is the first evidence of a pre-historic occupation site within the city boundary of Newcastle (Brogan 2010:333–347).

It seems, from the study of the distribution of these fairly limited number of pre-historic archaeological finds, that the area which became Newcastle was a focal point for trade. The relative ease of crossing the Tyne at Newcastle and the point across the river to the south (Gateshead), with good solid banks and the 'stairs' of the burns allowing access to the top of the riverside plateaus, created a routeway which connected people from a wide geographical area. The Tyne and its tributaries provided ways, beyond walking, through which people could come to the Newcastle area as well. At the Newcastle location prehistoric people seemed to have traded or dispersed 'exotic trade items such as polished and perforated axes' and may have performed ritual activities. The river crossing at Newcastle was 'possibly of great social, economic and ritual significance.' This significance continued into the historical period (Graves and Heslop 2013:23–24, 29–30), and continues today.

3 a land and building plot in a medieval town

Roman Newcastle

The pre-Roman river crossing and gathering point at Newcastle was used by the Romans from about c. 70 AD, as they conquered and then consolidated their control over northern Britain. Under Hadrian, c 120 AD, they build a bridge, called *Pons Aelius* which crossed the Tyne from Gateshead to Newcastle (Winter et al. 1989:9). There was, presumably, a fort on the southern bank of the river in Gateshead, although no concrete archaeological evidence of this fort has been found (Graves and Heslop 2013:31). The bridge was probably located in the same spot in Newcastle as the medieval bridge (now the site of what is called the 'Swing Bridge', see below, page 13) if the amount of Roman finds in that area of the river and riverbank are any indication. The Tyne was wider and shallower then, the bridge may have had up to eleven arches, much like the subsequent medieval bridge did (Winter et al. 1989:12).

Figure 3: Roman Newcastle from the south east, Lort Burn to the right (east) of the fort, Pandon burn even further east (Graves and Heslop 2013:Figure 3.15)

The Roman fort on the north side of the Tyne at the Newcastle crossing was constructed in the late second or early third century. It was a late addition to the fort and frontier system called Hadrian's Wall (Snape and Bidwell 2002:7, 166–68). This fort, called *Pons Aelius* like the bridge, became the foundation of the city of Newcastle. The fort's location was not known for certain until archaeological investigations from the 1970s and 1980s (Snape and Bidwell 2002:1–2), under the medieval castle (the Castle Garth), the Black Gate, and the High Level Bridge approach surprisingly showed the fort was located there (Winter et al. 1989:13).

The Roman fort was built on the triangular promontory (plateau/spur) discussed above. This location is now called Castle Garth, and is set between the Tyne river and the Lort Burn and a tributary of the burn. Natural soil on the Castle Garth is boulder clay and somewhat unstable. The Lort Burn is now covered by the modern Dean Street, the tributary is now the small street called the Side. The Tyne ran close to the base of the steep scarp leading up to Castle Garth. There was, most likely, a Roman waterfront at the Lort Burn inlet below the promontory's cliff edge (Graves and Heslop 2013:55). 'Castle Stairs' seem to have been constructed in a natural hollow or gully; there are Roman deposits at the foot of these stairs. Another gully or small valley to the west which seems to have been used by the Roman is indicated by the location of what is now known as the 'Long Stairs' (Snape and Bidwell 2002:1–2, 5).

A Roman cemetery and the fort vicus[4] were probably located to the west of the fort. Scattered Roman finds have been found here (Nolan et al. 1993:95). There are not many of these finds, and all come from infilled burn valleys. The rest of the remains were probably removed as the higher ground was terraced, and medieval to modern Newcastle grew into this area (Graves and Heslop 2013:57–58; Snape and Bidwell 2002:7).

The fort underwent several reorganizations during the Roman period. In the later 4th C the central area of the fort may have been used for commercial activity such as a market (Snape and Bidwell 2002:9, 167–70, 275–77). This is interesting, because it seems that the pre-Roman tradition of the location being a trading and meeting center continued under the Romans. The fort was occupied into the early 400's and beyond (Graves and Heslop 2013:57–58, 89).

Anglo-Saxon Newcastle

There is no substantial archaeological evidence for the immediate post-Roman Anglo-Saxon period in Newcastle. It is likely that the Roman bridge, fort and vicus were still used in some form or another in the post-Roman era, as discoveries at other Roman sites in the area are starting to show (Graves and Heslop 2013:66, 72–74). There is a small amount of archaeological evidence for post-Roman use of the fort site. For example, a stone-line drain or aqueduct was constructed through the former west granary of the fort. It passed a small water tank which may have been used as a silt trap or settling tank. The drain, which seems to have been built after the roman buildings had collapsed, didn't cut any Anglo-Saxon graves of the later cemetery, in fact the cemetery seems to have respected this area and no graves were put into the area for quite a while. As to what the drain did and what it served, that is unknown (Snape and Bidwell 2002:111).

4 a small village set near a Roman fort. Most of the Roman forts in Britain had vici (sing. vicus). They provided a home to the soldiers' families and to the merchants and others who helped supply the vicus and the fort.

There are layers of 'dark earth' over some of the Roman elements at Newcastle, a not uncommon find in many of the locations used in post-Roman Britain. This earth could hint at abandonment, and was thought to do so by archaeologists and historians in the past. However, it is now thought that dark earth is not caused by the same thing in all contexts and areas, it is not a sign of the dark ages or economic depression, but is much more likely to indicate that urban space had been captured and repurposed by the rich, and thus used for gardens and agriculture, rather than a sign that the urban space had been abandoned and left to squatters and lost peasants (Graves and Heslop 2013:75). The remains of a possible Anglo-Saxon enclosure overlay some of the dark earth on the Roman fort site at Newcastle. The remains are not very substantial, being simply part of a ditch and counterscarp[5] bank. A modern pit and disturbance around it interrupted the stratigraphy in the area so nothing more could be found (Snape and Bidwell 2002:125–127).

During the post-Roman and earlier Anglo-Saxon periods the fort site at Newcastle could have been used as a 'meeting place' in both Anglo-Saxon and Viking contexts. Archaeological evidence from Newcastle hints at such, including fairly worn (indicating high use) paved roads/walksways which go through/over the former Roman walls, and the embankment and counterscarp discussed immediately above (Snape and Bidwell 2002:125-127) (Graves and Heslop 2013:90–93).

There is no concrete documentary evidence for Newcastle in the 7th or 8th centuries. Newcastle would have been part of the ancient kingdom of Northumbria, which was formed from two smaller kingdoms, Bernicia and Deria. Newcastle was in Bernicia (Graves and Heslop 2013:69). It is possible that *Ad Muram*, the royal villa mentioned by Bede, may be Newcastle. However, this is not certain and there is hardly any archaeological evidence for this, as it stands. There are only two finds of this date, c A.D. 653, from the area. There is also no documentary evidence for the late 7th C, although there are a couple archaeological finds. Some beads and several radiocarbon dated burials that date to this time have been found in Newcastle and may indicate the date of the start of the cemetery (see below, page 10) and a possible monastery (Nolan et al. 2010:258–259).

The dearth of documentary evidence about Newcastle continues into the 8th and 9th centuries. Monasteries, including the assumed monastic establishment at Newcastle, declined with the power of the Northumbrian Kingdom; assaulted by Vikings in the late 9th C, monasteries were often abandoned. By about 1000 AD a church seems to have been built in the cemetery and the cemetery was being used, according to archaeological evidence. The first documentary evidence for medieval Newcastle dates to the early 12th century when the army of William I (the Conqueror), returned from Scotland, and camped at a place once called *Moneccestre* (Monkchester) and now called 'New Castle'. In 1074, two years later, Aldwine and his companions came to Monkchester and found it in ruins. There is no firm

5 the outer side of a ditch or moat

archaeological evidence for a settlement, either religious or lay, at Newcastle before 1080, however (Nolan et al. 2010:156–157, 258–259).

The cemetery (see below) and associated structures within and near the old Roman fort were probably related to the religious establishment of Monkchester (*Moneccestre*). The '*cestre'* element of the name maybe refer to the remains of the Roman fort wall, which were visible (according to Nolan et al 2010) in the 8th C. It's very possible that in the 8th C Newcastle, as Monkchester, was a monastery which was not given royal acknowledgment, but existed nonetheless. These types of monasteries, along with lands owned by various knights, were able to circumvent the need to wait for promotion by the king, and were able to establish hereditary rights and ownership of their lands without 'direct gift' from the king. This might explain why Newcastle is so rarely mentioned in the official religious and other records of the Kingdom of Northumbria (Graves and Heslop 2013:85–89).

Figure 4: Burial in a Timber Coffin from the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Newcastle (Graves and Heslop 2013:Figure 4.7)

The first substantial evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity found in Newcastle starts about AD 700, with the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery which covered at least part of the old Roman fort location. Some parts of the old Roman fort were still standing when the cemetery was started, such as the north wall of the western granary. Other parts of the fort had been demolished or collapsed, and robbed. The robbed stone may have been used in a nearby, but undiscovered as of yet, settlement (Nolan et al. 2010:147, 156–157). In fact enough of the Roman fort survived that it seems possible the cemetery was set within the fort itself, perhaps because the walls were still respected, or perhaps simply because they were too big to remove easily (Graves and Heslop 2013:76–77).

Inhumation burials are found which date from c. 700 AD; these burials continue into the mid 13th C. There was a timber building, which predated two successive stone churches or chapels, associated with the cemetery. The earliest stone building dates to the 900's. At the time Graves and Heslop wrote (published 2013) there was no contemporary Anglian or Anglo-Saxon settlement evidence. This is likely lost under the subsequent city. Some isolated finds, such as a wicker lined pit possibly dating to the late Saxon period (it may be Norman as well), and early medieval iron socketed and barbed arrowhead, some ard and plough marks and ditches cut by latrine pits from the early 12th C to the mid-14th C, indicate that there is such evidence; but it's not going to be easy to find (Graves and Heslop 2013:65, 75, 82–85).

Medieval Newcastle

During the Medieval period, from Norman times onward, Newcastle grew into an economically important town and port for England. By 1524, there were about 7,500 people living in Newcastle and the town ranked fourth amongst the wealthiest towns and cities in England (Williamson 2020). The laws of Newcastle, created before the mid 12th Century, gave the town's burgesses[6] rights to monopolies on certain kinds of trade such as wool, hides and cloth trade, and the sole right to buy goods from a vessel anchored at the mouth of the Tyne, and the right 'to insist that all cargoes be unloaded at Newcastle, save for salt and herring which could be sold on board ship' (O'Brien 1991:36). This meant Newcastle grew, while the other villages and towns along the Tyne, including those on the south side of the river, stayed small and of minimal importance for trade during the SCA period.

Unfortunately the area north of the river frontage, the ordinary domestic and commercial areas of the old town center, has not seen much archaeological investigation at all. The religious and monastic areas of the town have also seen little archaeological investigation (Graves and Heslop 2013:99–100). The discussion which follows will concentrate on the castle, the areas close around it, the riverside (Quayside), trade and more; all topics which have seen a decent amount of archaeological investigation.

The Castle

The Norman 'new' castle, which gave the name to the medieval and later town, was built, in timber, in autumn 1080 by Robert Curthose, the eldest son of William the Conqueror, after he returned from a campaign against the Scots[7]. The building of this keep meant the end of the use of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery which was in the same location. When it was built, many burials were destroyed. The castle ditch cut through the cemetery on the north and west, other parts of the cemetery were covered with upcast from the ditches to form the rampart, and the postulated late Saxon church and a small surviving cemetery area was enclosed within the castle bailey. The narrow strip of the cemetery south of the church which survived seems to have seen intermittent use after the castle was built, until the mid 13th C. It's likely those buried there were members of the castle garrison and their families (Nolan et al. 2010:147, 157). A lot is known about the Castle, archaeologically, because the Castle Garth was partially destroyed by the railroad viaduct cut through it in the mid 1800s, and observations of the archaeology began then (Graves and Heslop 2013:100–101).

6 a freeman or citizen of a town or borough

7 There does not seem to have been a bridge over the Tyne at this time; the Roman bridge was either ruined or completely gone, and documentary references reflect this. The stone medieval bridge, or a wooden predecessor, was most likely built before or in the 1170's as the bridge chapel, dedicated to St. Thomas the Martyr at that time, implies (Graves and Heslop 2013:112).

Figure 5: The Keep of the Castle (CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=670573)

Figure 6: The Black Gate (By Dposte46 (talk) (Uploads) - Own work, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40272960)

The castle was rebuilt in stone in 1168-78 under Henry II[8]. Building on the castle ceased for a time under Richard I, but was finished by John (Graves and Heslop 2013:104–105).

The Keep (Figure 5) from this rebuilding still survives. The building of its massive foundation meant the removal of an unknown number of burials from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery as mentioned above (Nolan et al. 2010:157). The 13th C Black Gate, a barbican type castle gate, also survives (Friar 2007:25). Parts of the southern and northern curtain walls, remains of the 12th C north gate and a southern postern also survive (Graves and Heslop 2013:103). The rest of the castle is gone, although there are quite a few archaeological remains, and much historical knowledge about the castle.

8 One of the few named engineers documented from the early middle ages worked at Newcastle at this time. He was Maurice the Engineer. He also worked at Dover Castle (Friar 2007:199).

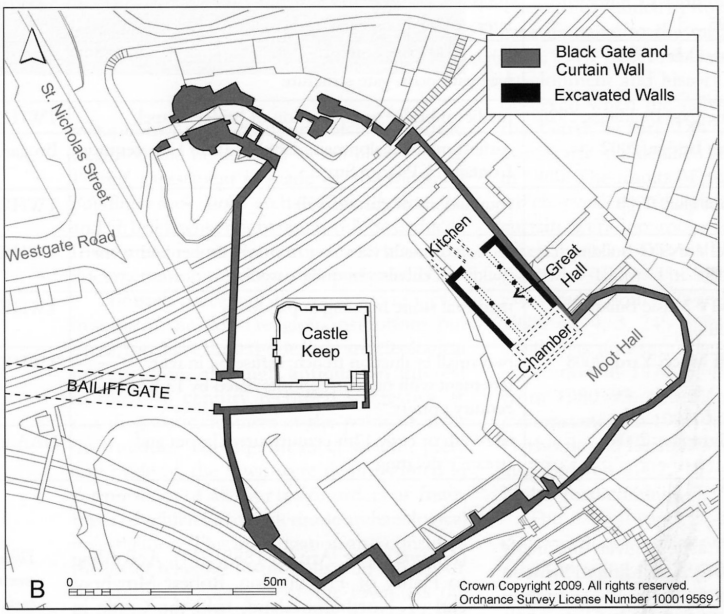

Figure 7: The Castle Garth, Keep, Hall, Gates, and Walls (Graves and Heslop 2013:Figure 5.3)

The still existing Black Gate (Figure 6), one of the main castle gates and set to the north-west of the Keep, was built between 1247-1250 during the reign of Henry III (Friar 2007:25). There were guard rooms to either side of the gate (near the rear of each wall). In front of it was a turning bridge[9] over the moat (Graves and Heslop 2013:108–109).

Archaeological investigation has shown that the site of the Great Hall in the castle was against the eastern curtain wall. This hall was huge, and aisled, with a total width of 44ft, and a probable length of 66 ft. This Hall was used in 1292 when John Balliol, king of Scotland, paid homage to Edward I of England (Graves and Heslop 2013:109).

The other main gate of the castle was the Bailey Gate, near the southwest angle of the keep. There was a small street, called Baylygate, which ran from the Bailey Gate of the castle westwards. Land plots visible on a map of 1830 around this medieval street may show medieval units of land tenture which were originally laid out when the street was created. This settlement may have been separate from the town, and related to the military and administrative functions at/in the castle (Graves and Heslop 2013:109–110).

A stone bridge over the river Tyne from Gateshead to Newcastle has existed in the same spot (where the 'Swing Bridge', a huge turning bridge is now) since at least Medieval times and perhaps Roman times. The medieval bridge, which was badly damaged in 1771 by flooding, had 12 arches, 9 of which stood in the river. The land arches (three of them) had been converted into cellars by 1771, and one still remains visible in the basement of Watergate Buildings. There were conflicts about where the Palatinate of Durham (on the south bank of the Tyne) and the town of Newcastle met. Usually this was marked by two crosses halfway across the bridge. This could change though, at one point the bridge belonged to Newcastle completely, and the town's mayor and burgesses built a tower and portcullis on the south end of the bridge (late 1300s). The bishop had his part of the bridge recaptured by 1416 and there was a tower and portcullis on the north side of the bridge between the third and fourth arches. There were also houses on the bridge, a chapel, and

9 A bridge that spun on a central pivot set into a river, a moat, a stream or ditch.

perhaps a hermit living on the bridge (in another chapel). The master of the (non-hermitage) chapel was also the keeper of the bridge, and bridge upkeep was paid for by indulgences, grants from wills and various taxes (Graves and Heslop 2013:111–113).

Trade

Newcastle was a chartered borough[10]. It's not known when it was granted this status, but it came into Royal hands following William II's victory over Robert of Mowbray, Earl of Northumberland in 1095. By 1189 the town was a 'burgh', and its Customs are the third oldest surviving borough records, after Leicester and Dublin. The town was probably a borough before the first 'new' castle was built. It doesn't have an official charter for this status, which hints that the rights of a borough for Newcastle were legal by ancient custom usage (meaning dating to before the Curthose timber 'new' castle was built). This also provides a bit of evidence that some form of urban existence was in Newcastle in the Saxon period, evidence which is not yet found in the archaeological records. 'In common with most developing towns of the late 11th and 12th centuries, the inhabitants of Newcastle struggled over a period of two centuries to seize control of their own affairs in government through the Corporation and in commerce through the Guilds, colloquially known in Newcastle as 'Companies'' (Graves and Heslop 2013:114).

One of the major impetuses behind the development of local government in Newcastle was paying for the repair, upkeep and improvement of the bridge over the Tyne. This helped with the early economic development of the town. Newcastle was also an inland port, and this aspect of the economy grew with the town through time. By 1216 at least, although probably many years earlier, there was a Merchant Guild in the town (confirmed in that year by King John). In 1305 a dispute between traders and others was resolved by allowing those who were not involved in trade (such as producers, weavers, etc) to have equal opportunities to the 'merchants'. This resulted in twelve main companies during the time of Edward III (also called 'mysteries') (see Addendum, page 20, for their names). In the mid 15th C there were new guilds created, called 'by-trades'. Other companies such as the Goldsmiths were created at various times. The creation of all these different companies and by-trades (see Addendum, page 20, for a full list) shows how the burgesses of the town tended to create new mercantile organizations in order to accommodate changes in trade patterns. For example, in 1600 the Company of Hostman was created to represent the rapidly expanding coal trade which was boosted by the dissolution of the Monasteries – releasing coal-rich lands for private exploitation. The captains who shipped coal bought it in Newcastle and took it to London for sale, were amongst the '(h)ost' men (Graves and Heslop 2013:114–115).

10 A lower-tier unit of local government, set up and 'chartered' by the Crown to allow local self-determination.

By the late 13th C wool, wool-fells and hides were the main commodities exported from Newcastle. They went to Flanders, Zeeland, France, Italy and towns in the Baltic (more than 40 foreign ports in all) as well as other English ports. The fortunes of this trade varied, and it began to decline in the early-mid 14th C. The wool from the north of Britain was not of good quality, there were wars with the Scots which interfered with the cross land trade of wool to Newcastle, and there was competition with Berwick upon Tweed, which also shipped wool. Both Newcastle and Berwick suffered from the Scottish wars, and in the end (mid 1300's) Newcastle (its burgesses) asked the King to allow them to ship coal (which had been barred previously), and grindstones as well as woolen cloth and hides, and thus coal took over as the primary item exported (O'Brien 1991:39–40).

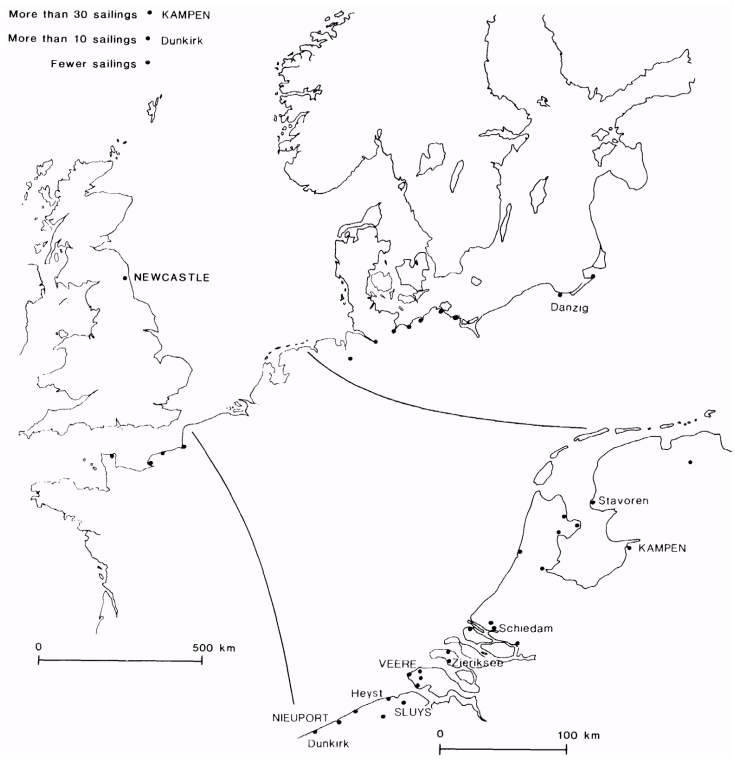

Figure 8: Destination of Newcastle coal exports 1377-1391 (O'Brien 1991:Figure 5.4)

The burgesses of Newcastle were second only to those of London in privileges and exemptions from common law granted by the Crown. The burgesses worked incessantly to keep trade and economic power in Newcastle, and not allow the small towns along the Tyne, set closer to the North Sea, to grow economically. The 'Port of Tyne' consisted of all the riverbank along the Tyne, and was controlled by Newcastle: trade had to be done through a Newcastle merchant. This custom was fiercely contested, but wasn't overturned until the 18th C. This meant that Newcastle was important in all the trade in the north of England and southern Scotland, as well as trade throughout northern Europe and even the Mediterranean. With the increase of the coal trade in the 15th C, the town became even more important, and local gentry had to interest themselves in trade and commerce in the town, in order to remain in power (Graves and Heslop 2013:119).

But, in the Middle ages, trade in coal began to grow. Newcastle is very close to the former major coal fields of northern England, in Northumbria and Durham. Newcastle is renowned for the coal trade that developed and flourished there[11]. Surface coal was gathered from across the area of coal fields and used in the area from at least Roman times, and the use of coal grew from that point on. When the surface coal was exhausted, underground coal pits were opened inland of the Tyne, perhaps in the reign of Henry VIII. When the monasteries were dissolved, coal bearing land was redistributed to new owners and open to exploitation (mining). Coal exported from Newcastle probably played a part in supporting medieval industries in Flanders, particularly Bruges and Holland. It was also used in France, London, Southampton and Scotland. It was used for drying the dye madder and other processes in the textile industries (for example in Zeeland), for smoking and drying fish, for the brewery process in Holland, for burning lime and other aspects of building and for working iron. By the end of the 1300's (c 1380's) coal was a prominent export from the Tyne. The Bishop of Durham complained to the King about Newcastle's dominance of the coal trade, but the King let that dominance remain. He made

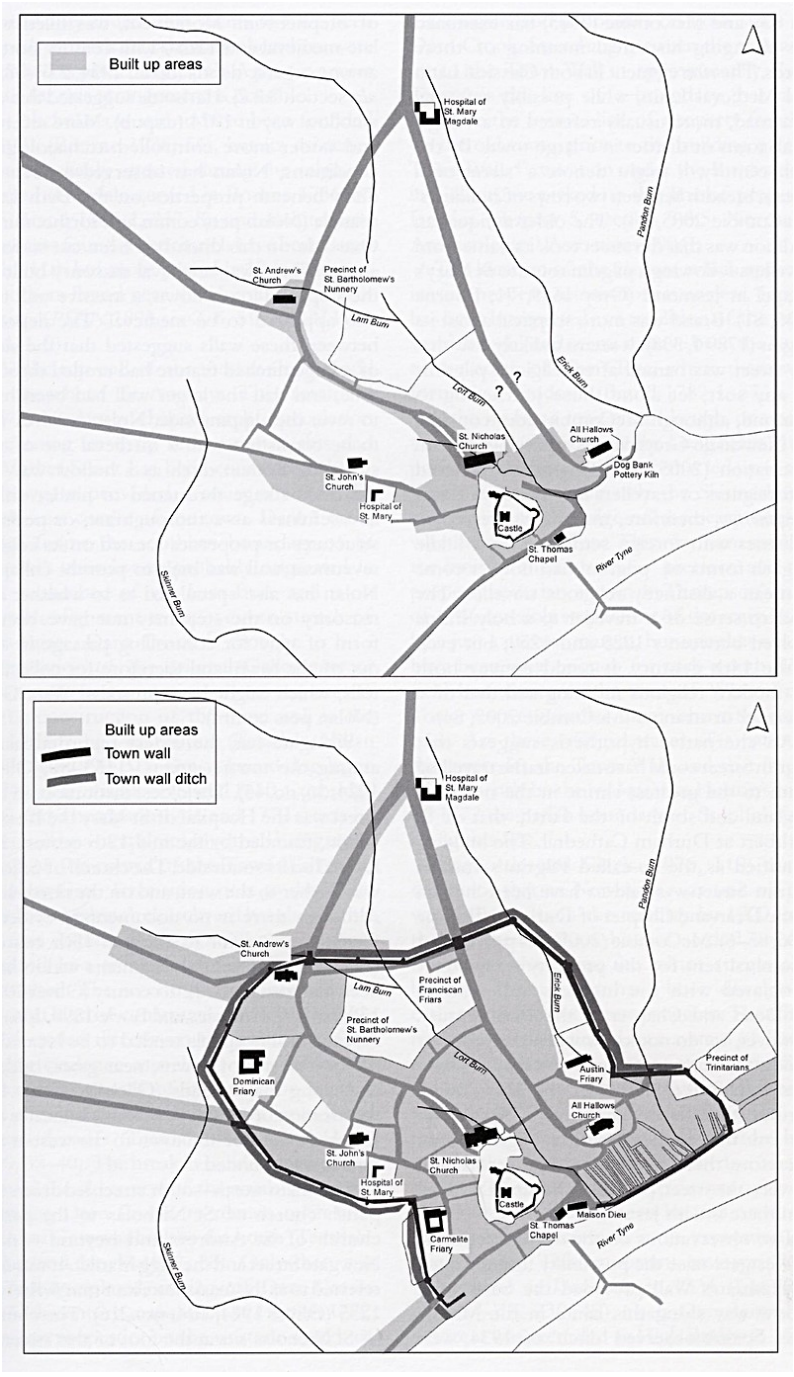

Figure 9: Build up of Newcastle from the end of the 12th C (top) to later Middle Ages (bottom). The Quayside and the Close, and its chares are noticeable. (Graves and Heslop 2013:Figure 5.11)

11 Think about any city in America or Australia or Washington state or… wherever. If it's named 'Newcastle or New Castle' it's almost always close to a coal mine.

more in taxes that way. By the 16th C Newcastle was the dominant source of coal in northern Europe, and coal was the most traded item from Newcastle, both by value and by volume. It was shipped as far away as the Baltic (Graves and Heslop 2013:120–122; O'Brien 1988:39).

The Quayside

The Quayside is the area of Newcastle, set along the river, which was developed by the town to promote shipping traffic. Newcastle had always had a little port, generally in the small inlets the Pandon or Lort burns made in the Tyne. The riverside is down a steep descent from the town and the castle. As mentioned above there are several burns which break the cliff edge, amongst these the Lort Burn and the Pandon Burn. The Lort Burn split Newcastle in two, and the Pandon Burn separated the town from the village of Pandon, until that village was absorbed into Newcastle as the quayside developed. Sandhill, immediately upstream of the Lort Burn, was the point where the bridge from Gateshead came into the town, this was a nodal point for communications (O'Brien 1991:37–38). The area below the cliff is called the Close. It is possible that reclamation and infilling of the shore began here as early as the 11th C (Graves and Heslop 2013:171). There was/is a road leading down to this area on the western side of town (and the castle) called Pilgrim street. The Close held houses and private wharves. These were split by narrow lanes called chares and ended in separate wharves. These wharves were combined by dumping ballast and other waste into the Quayside which ran from the Lort Burn to the Pandon Burn and beyond to incorporate the original port. (O'Brien 1991:37–38).

Archaeological investigation undertaken in the mid-1980's shows that the development of the Quayside and the Close began when a retaining wall was built along the river-bank below the castle and bridge plateau in the early 13th C. Piers, consisting of clay platforms faced with sandstone, were built which projected towards the river, with docking space between the piers. These were built in the first half of the 13th C, and were used only for a short time before they were covered with dumping on the foreshore. The material dumped originated from other areas, and was brought to the riverside as ballast[12] or midden. This dumping was very important, for it created the raised platform which exists today, upon which the Quayside rests. Once enough material was dumped, and the ground raised high enough (3m at least), streets were set out and building started. This was all before the end of the 13th C! It's possible the actual quayside was built in the late 14th C, which means for 100 years the wharf at Newcastle consisted of each street having its own 'watergate' and landing stage before the continuous quay was built (Ellison et al. 1993:154–156; O'Brien 1991:37–38). Ballast dumping and quayside construction continued into the 17th C, with houses being built on the Quayside from the 14th C on (Graves and Heslop 2013:132–133, 173).

12 The ballast originating from other places, primarily London, and consisted of rocks and sand and more. It was dumped in Newcastle and used to form the Quayside because valuable coal was used as ballast for ships leaving the town. Other items, more valuable than coal, used for ballast shipped from Newcastle included grindstones, iron and lead (Graves and Heslop 2013:122).

Housing and Land Plots (Burgages)

As with the markets (see below, page 19), the main streets of Newcastle tended to run from south to north, from the riverside/quayside to the roads which ran north to Scotland. Minor roads ran east to west. The plots of land, called 'burgages', which are visible on early maps, probably go back to medieval times. Like those in many medieval towns, the burgages shown on these early maps were generally long and thin, with the thin section being the frontage along the road (so the plot generally ran east to west, rather than north to south). They do not seem to have been set up by a central authority, but seem to have developed ad hoc. It seems the town grew 'organically from the late 11th century, until sometime before the construction of the Town Wall in the late 13th century stopped this pattern of development' (Graves and Heslop 2013:131–133).

There are no surviving domestic buildings in Newcastle that date before 1400, and unfortunately, archaeological evidence adds little to our understanding of these early buildings (Graves and Heslop 2013:132–133). There has been very little archaeological investigation of the burgage system within the town and its development. Most archaeology has happened in the castle and quayside districts (Brogan 2010:331).

As happened with the Quayside, burns and ravines passing through the expanding settled areas of Newcastle were infilled with midden ('dark earth') from the 14th to the 17th C. This seems to imply some kind of oversight and corporate direction in trash and waste disposal (Graves and Heslop 2013:180–181, 202). This has an impact on archaeological study in the town because the detritus that is normally found and studied by archaeologists is often missing, only to be found in a nearby ravine jumbled up and mixed and impossible to relate to the place where the detritus was created.

There has been some archaeological investigation done in Newcastle outside of the castle and quayside areas, just not much. Such investigation on a burgage plot north of the castle showed that in the 11th C the site was used for charcoal making. Perhaps tree clearing was happening in the area. By the 12th C the plot was being used for agriculture. In the late 12th to early 13th C the town was expanded to include the area, and the burgage plot was created. A stone building was built, probably parallel to the street in front of it (Pilgrim street) and was likely to have occupied the same footprint of the 19th C building on the burgage destroyed after the archaeological investigation on the site for new construction. The stone building was two storeys tall in the late 13th and 14th C and stood on very slight foundations. During the 13th to 15th C ironworking was undertaken on the site (Brogan 2010:348–349).

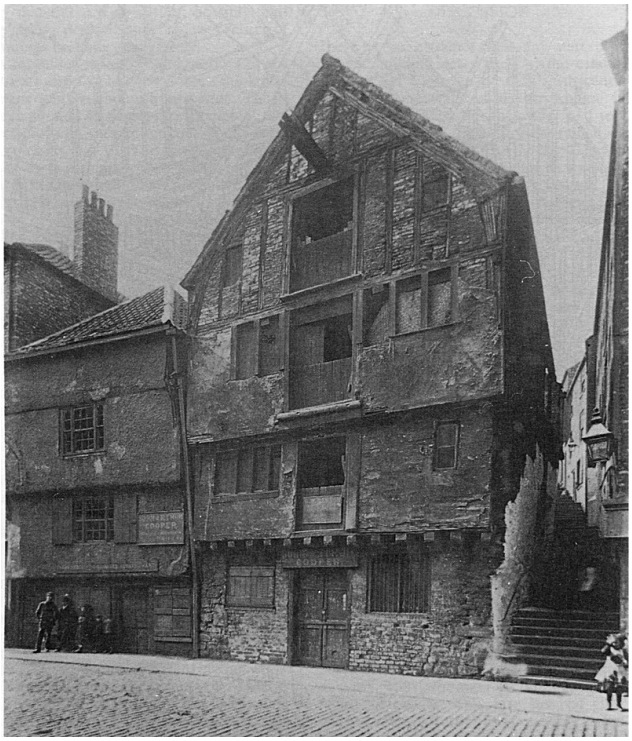

Figure 10: The Cooperage c. 1880 (Heslop and Truman 1993:Figure 6)

Timber framing for building construction becomes common from the 16th C on in Newcastle. The only early example still remaining of this type of construction is the Cooperage (most likely built in the early 16th C), which is typical of the type: a shop-house with upper crucks, wide paneling, heavy scantling, curved wind-braces, and in the later phases at least, brick nogging in the panels (Heslop and Truman 1993). There were a few other buildings of this type in Newcastle recorded by photography or illustration before their destruction in the 19th C. The other timber framed houses left in Newcastle are later than the 16th C (Graves and Heslop 2013:137).

Markets

Like all medieval towns, Newcastle had several market areas. Each area specialized in a different type of product. There was an iron market, a meat market, a butter market, a poultry market, a cloth market, a wheat market, a fish market, a herb market and more. By the late middle ages these markets were set along several roads which went through the town from the riverside wharves to the north and northwest areas of the town (Graves and Heslop 2013:125–130).

The Town Wall

The town wall of Newcastle was started about 150 years after the town became urbanized and was built from about 1265 to about the late 14th C (Nolan et al. 1989:29). It was the largest and strongest defensive walling in England, outside London. Unfortunately, the wall was removed after the Civil War from the mid 1600's on, and less than a tenth of it now survives. The wall was 2 miles long (3.6 km) and 30 m wide, and when construction was finished it had 19 towers, 40 turrets, six towered gates, two posterns, an embattled curtain walling 3.5 to 4.2 m high and a 21 m wide outer ditch. There was a road inside the wall, around it's entire circuit (except where monasteries were) (Graves and Heslop 2013:182).

The wall was only half built when Newcastle was threatened by the Scots under William Wallace in the 1290's. The townsmen met the Scots outside the wall, and the Scots decided to leave and pillage Tynedale instead! The Scottish threats of the 14th C pushed the

Novocastrians[13] to finish the wall. The history of the wall after that is 'one of neglect, encroachment and frantic repair during times of approaching war'. During the 16th century the gate towers were used as jails, magazines or, along with many of the towers, as the meeting halls of the craft companies (Graves and Heslop 2013:182–185).

Conclusion

Many aspects of Medieval Newcastle upon Tyne have been neglected in the above brief discussion of the town and its development. For example, churches and monasteries are not examined. Such an examination would take an entirely different paper! Most of the documentary evidence for the development and running of the town is not discussed. Again, that would require another paper. Despite these gaps, I hope the paper has shown a bit about the development of my favorite British town, or 'the Toon', as it is called in Newcastle.

Addendum

The Twelve Main Companies (Mysteries) in Newcastle during the time of Edward III:
Merchants of Woolen Cloth/ Drapers,
Mercers/Merchants of Silk and Small Wares (eventually the Merchant Adventurers),
Skinners (eventually Glovers),
Tailors,
Saddlers,
Merchants of Corn/Boothmen (eventually joined into the Merchant Adventurers),
Bakers and Brewers,
Tanners,
Cordwainers,
Butchers,
Smiths,
Walkers or Fullers and Dyers

The new guilds (by-trades) from the mid 15th C:
Masters and Mariners / Blessed Trinity,
Weavers,
Barber-Surgeons with Wax and Tallow Chandlers,
Cutlers,
Shipwrights,
Coopers with Ropers and Plasterers,
Bricklayers and Plasterers,
House Carpenters and Joiners,
Masons with Bricklayers and Metters,
Glovers and Saddlers,
Joiners,

13 A highbrow word for 'those who live in Newcastle'.

Millers,
Curriers, Feltmakers, and Armourers,
Colliers, Paviors and Carriagemen,
Slaters with Bricklayers (separated 1677),
Glaziers with Plumbers, Pewterers and Painters.

Other companies included Goldsmiths, Waits or Musicians, Scriveners, Bricklayers, Rope-makers, Upholsterers/Tinplate Workers/Stationers, Sail-makers, Mettors (measurers of capacities of keel and boats), and Porters.

There were also some companies that went extinct by the late 1600s or so: Cooks, Spicers (used to be in the Merchant Adventurers), Furbishers, Sword-slippers, Bowyers (bowmakers), Fletchers , Spurriers, Girdlers, Vintners, Watermen, Keelmen.
(from Graves and Heslop 2013:114–115, Table 5.2)

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