

XXI.—THE TOWN WALL OF NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE IN PANDON DENE.

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[Read on July 6th, 1881.]

THE Corporation of Newcastle have been for some time engaged on vast works in Pandon Dene and its neighbourhood, in connection with the great scheme of improvement resolved upon by them some time ago. Acres of houses and other buildings have been demolished, and excavations on a very extensive scale have been pushed forward. During the progress of these works some very interesting discoveries have been made. A long stretch of the old Town Wall of Newcastle has been exposed, extending right across the Dene, from the western bank, near the Manors, to the eastern bank at the Sallyport Gate. I am sorry to say much of it has been already destroyed, and little, if any, of it will be visible when the works upon which the Corporation are engaged shall be completed. The whole, or very nearly the whole, of this long reach of wall was entirely hidden before these demolitions and excavations began. The accumulation of soil was, in part, answerable for this, but far more the fact that it was completely buried amongst buildings. Houses, warehouses, and sheds were built close up to it; indeed, it was incorporated with them, forming, in some cases the side wall, in other cases the end wall, and sometimes the foundation, of various structures. When I visited it last, there were places where the plaster and paperhangings of a room were still adhering to it, and other places where the chiselled holes to receive the ends of joists were visible on its face in two long lines. The finest portion of the Wall still forms the end of Wheatley's iron warehouse in Stock Bridge, and will not be demolished, though it will soon be com-



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A PIECE OF THE WALL OF NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE,
removed for street improvements, at Pandon.



pletely hidden again. This contains about nine hundred square feet, and stands about thirty feet high. From this point the Wall ran across the Dene. How lofty it was I cannot say, for much of it was already demolished when I saw it first (on June 23rd), and the work of destruction was rapidly proceeding. In this neighbourhood a long stretch was being completely rooted up, the workmen employing gunpowder for the purpose, as it was too firmly built and compact to be rent asunder by any gentler means. As soon as the old street that ran up the Dene was crossed, the Wall was seen rising to a considerable height (see Plate XXIII.); and, viewed from the inside of the ruined houses, presented many fine squares of splendid masonry. Near the Sallyport Gate it was still standing many feet in height, and continued so past the Gate for a considerable distance down Causey Bank.

Throughout the whole distance it was finely built. It was faced on both sides with large squared stones, sometimes as much as eighteen inches in length by twelve inches in breadth, and the inside was grouted. The thickness, from face to face, was eight feet.

There are several peculiar features to notice at various points. Thus in the splendid piece of Wall, forming the north end of Wheatley's iron warehouse at Stock Bridge, the excavations revealed several courses of chamfered stones one above another, rising like steps as the hill rises. This work is very good, and must be of early date. At the end of the warehouse the courses of chamfered stones exhibit, where the continuation of the Wall abuts against the Wall containing them, a "return" southwards, showing clearly that the adjoining continuation is of later date, and indicating, I think, with certainty, that when the Wall containing these chamfered courses was built the Town Wall of Newcastle did not include so large an area as in later times, but ran along the western bank of the Dene, which must have been wholly outside the fortifications. Near to the Sallyport Gate, again, is a striking feature. There must have been a breach in the Wall on the west side of the Gate at some early period, made either by assailants in some war or siege, or by the authorities of the town for purposes of reconstruction, for the junction of new and old masonry is most observable. Beyond the Sallyport Gate, going down Causey Bank in a southward direction, there is a fine piece of Wall, exhibiting on the outside chamfered work like that at Stock Bridge,

and on the inside the remains of a tower, or platform, with nine large projecting corbels still in position. The Wall here has been pierced for doorways of modern tenements, and modern staircases and passages have been formed in its thickness. The occurrence of the chamfered work on the two banks, but not, as far as I was able to discover at the time of my visit, in the Dene, suggests the possibility of there having been in early times a detached work on the height of Pandon, which was at a later period connected with the town by the "Long Wall" spanning the valley.

The works at present being carried out by the Corporation comprise the filling up the valley to a certain height, the levelling of the bank on the west, and the hill on the east, the building a huge retaining wall, well on to sixty feet in height from its foundations, and the construction of a number of new streets upon the site, running in various directions. The direction of the retaining wall unfortunately crosses the direction of the ancient Town Wall, with which it nevertheless nearly coincides, at a small angle. Hence the uprooting of the latter through a great portion of its extent. The clerk of the works explained to me that this was necessary, lest if the new wall were built part on and part off the Old Wall, the latter would "break the back" of the former. The fine fragment of Wall at Wheatley's iron warehouse will not be destroyed, but the new wall is being built close up against it, so that it will be completely hidden. The present intention, I am told, is to spare the Sallyport Gate, if it should be found possible, and to underbuild it, which would seem certainly to be necessary, as the hill in its immediate proximity is to be reduced in height between thirty and forty feet; but the fine reach of Wall to the south of it, exhibiting decided indications of early work, is to come down, and has already been sold to a citizen of Newcastle, who has bought it for the sake of the materials.

As I have just intimated, on reaching the western bank of the Dene the Wall turns northward. It does so at a right angle or nearly a right angle. At the corner is a tower, standing about twenty-five feet above the plateau of the western bank, and very picturesque in its ruin. The Wall, as it runs northward from the tower, stands six or eight courses high, exhibiting one chamfered course at the bottom, and making directly in the line of Croft Lane and Croft Street for the

recently destroyed Weavers' or Carliol Tower. Shortly after I visited it last month the workmen, I have no doubt, would come to a further portion of it, and would destroy it, as they would find it running right athwart the line of the new street. I hope, however, the exact position of the Wall will be distinctly marked in the pavement of the new street, or in the walls of the buildings that will in process of time rise on each side of it.

Mixed with the grouting of the core of the wall are many pieces of unburnt coal, some very minute, some as large as peas or marbles. Opinions may differ as to whence these fragments found their way into the mortar. Some may think with the lime from the kiln; I incline to think with the sand from the shore.