

VII.—THE TOWN WALL OF NEWCASTLE, IN  
GALLOWGATE.

BY SHERITON HOLMES.

[Read on the 25th March, 1896.]

IN excavating the foundations for some new buildings at present being erected on the south side of Gallowgate, an interesting portion of the northern face of the town wall has been exposed down to its base, revealing masonry of much better character, and what I take to be of considerably earlier date than the other wall remains present.

In my paper on the Newcastle town walls,<sup>1</sup> I hazarded the opinion that the long-bedded masonry, such as we find in the keep of the Castle and the Black Gate, preceded the peculiar cubical kind characteristic of the town walls generally, in which the stones are nearly square on their faces, and built without much attention to concurrence of the plumb joints; and that the different character of the masonry in the wall near St. Andrew's church led to the belief that it had been built at an earlier date. This opinion, I think, is fully confirmed by the exposure of the excellent masonry of the lower portion of the wall in Gallowgate, which is comparatively long-bedded work: the stones ranging from fifteen to twenty-four inches long and eight to ten inches in depth.

The foundations are very shallow, there being only about twelve inches of rubble under the first course of dressed masonry which is twelve inches in depth. Above this is a double line of splayed courses, each seven and a half inches deep, stepped up towards the west, truly dressed and set, from which, to a height of four feet nine inches, the masonry is well coursed work, and arranged so as to avoid plumb jointing, though in many places the scanty depth of the stones has necessitated the use of spallings, or thin pieces of stone packing in the bed joints, so as to make the top line of the course even. This masonry also presents the peculiarity of the upright packing pieces so characteristic of the wall masonry, though in it they are of less frequent

<sup>1</sup> See pages 1-25 of this volume.

occurrence. Above this good masonry, to a height of ten feet, the walling is, or has been, of a somewhat similar character, but it is not so regularly built, and the exposure to weather, rats, and rough usage, has opened the joints and made it present a very different appearance from that below it. The loss of mortar and spillings also tends to make the big joints more perceptible, but notwithstanding its present very different appearance, I think it possible that the greater portion of it may be coeval in age with that below. Not so, however, the portion above it, including the parapet, to a height of nine feet three inches, which is distinctively of the cubical character, and clearly an addition at a later date.

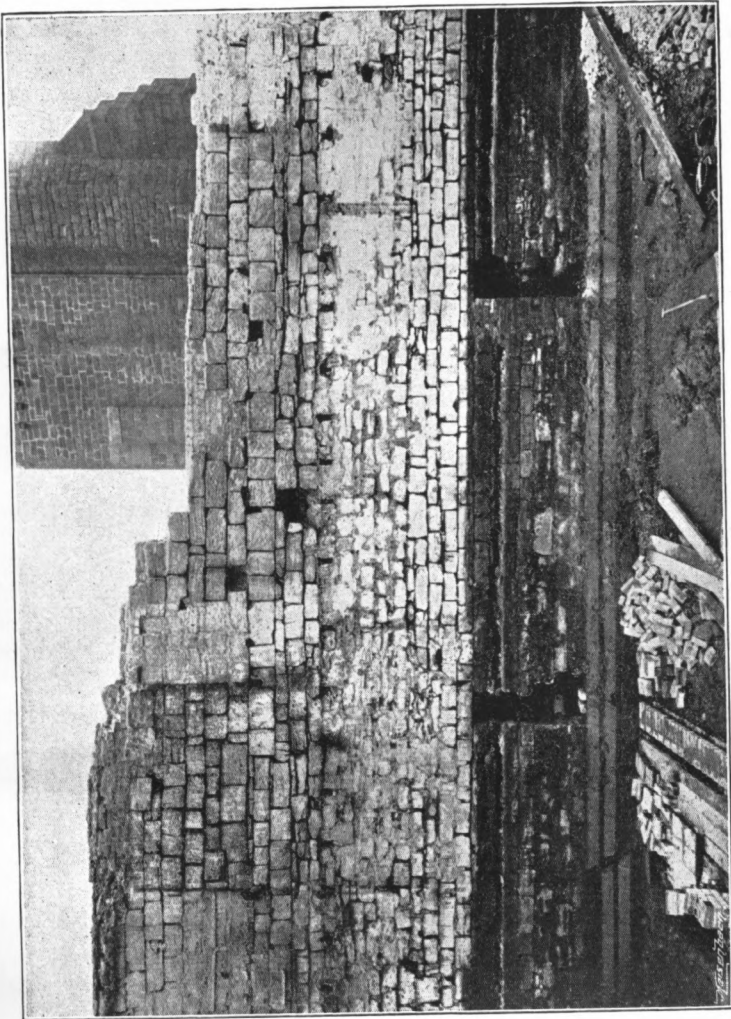
The mortar with which the walls have been built is of very poor character, the quantity of lime being deficient, and that completely killed by admixture with a fine loam instead of sand, so that it remains in a crumbling state without any adhesive power whatever.

In excavating for the cross walls of the new building in the mud of the fosse, I ascertained that the angle of slope of the fosse from the wall base was at the rate of eight horizontal to four perpendicular, or a slope of two to one. A bank of clay runs along the fosse parallel to its course, which the builder thinks is original ground. If this be so, the ditch has been of a double character, but this, I think, is extremely improbable.

There was nothing found of any importance in the excavated ground. Some horses' skulls and bones were turned up out of the fosse mud, and a portion of an old Delft dish, the design and colours of which are very good. The date of this dish would probably be towards the end of the seventeenth century, and having been found in the fosse it would mark the latest time when the fosse remained open.

On my first reaching the place I ascertained that it was the intention to cut away and destroy the lower portion of the wall, but on explaining to the builder, Mr. Hutchenson, the great desirability of leaving it undisturbed, he took an intelligent view of the matter, and devised a plan whereby it could be saved. This received the assent of the architects, Messrs. Liddle & Browne, and is now being carried into effect, whereby the masonry with its splayed courses will not only be preserved but exposed to view in the cellarge of the building.

By the kind co-operation of Mr. Park, photographs of the wall face have been taken, which show the different kinds of masonry, and the accompanying section<sup>2</sup> of it at the place, marks their various

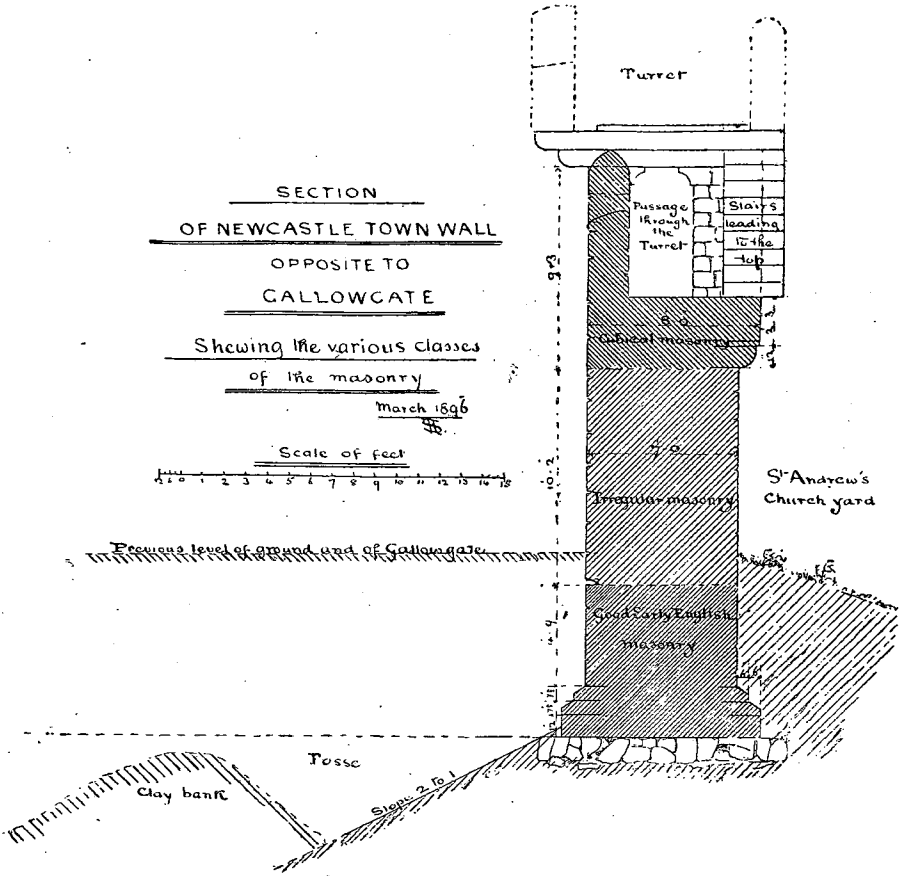


The TOWN WALL IN GALLOWGATE, NEWCASTLE, with tower of St. Andrew's Church behind it.  
(From a photograph by Mr. Fredk. Park, of Newcastle.)

heights. The thickness of the wall above the dado is seven feet six inches, and the extreme height from the fosse level to the underside of the parapet coping is twenty-six feet five inches.

<sup>2</sup> See next page.

It is very curious that the present level of Gallowgate is between eight and nine feet above what must have been the level of the top of the fosse, and only eight feet below the top of the older masonry. It is scarcely to be imagined that the wall builders would have left so



commanding a height so close up to their barrier, and yet the slope of ground to the north of Gallowgate seems of a normal character as though the level of the street had not undergone alteration.

