

X.—RUINS OF BUILDINGS ONCE EXISTING ON THE QUAYSIDE, NEWCASTLE.

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[Read on the 29th April, 1896.]

1st. An undescribed arched wall supposed to have belonged to some church or chapel.

2nd. A priory of the order of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem.

3rd. A great stone house of the prior and convent of Tynemouth.

On looking into Welford's valuable *History of Newcastle and Gateshead in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, my attention was arrested by the following short passage at page 215 :—“The great stone house of the prior of Tynemouth on the Quayside’ is mentioned in a deed of this year’s date, 1392,” [15th and 16th Richard II.] This recalled an almost forgotten impression which, many years ago, I had received at the old Three Indian Kings’ inn, on the Quayside, to the effect that in the west wall of the cellarage of that ancient hostelry, there was a series of three or four quite plain, pointed arches of stone of the same style of architecture as those prevalent in our churches of St. Nicholas and St. John, but of smaller dimensions, and without capitals to the pillars, a peculiarity, according to Mr. Longstaffe, of Newcastle church architecture. The arches were filled in with stone walling, and were supposed to have appertained to some ecclesiastical edifice of the fourteenth century, were perhaps coeval with the churches named, and possibly may have had some connection with the Trinity house, the almshouses of which were only a very few yards distant, or either with the chapel of St. John of Jerusalem, or even with the great stone house of the prior of Tynemouth on the Quayside.

These arches, when new, and with the exception of their having no capitals to their pillars, must have resembled the three plain arches forming the nave arcade of the church of Witton-le-Wear, as described and figured by the Rev. J. F. Hodgson, vicar of Witton-le-Wear, in his paper on that church in vol. xvi. part 45, page 63, of *Archaeologia Aeliana*.

It was about the year 1840, when the old Three Indian Kings, by the arrangements of its parts and their age, having become unsuited to the changed customs and requirements of the increasing commerce of the Quayside, was obliged to be pulled down in order to make room for erections better adapted to the altered circumstances, and so the line of pointed arches which had long stimulated curiosity, but had kept its own counsel and the secret of its origin, necessarily went the way of most old buildings no longer wanted, and was carted away with the rest of the inn to assist in making some embankment or other, and the present Three Indian Kings was erected in its place.

In a deed of mine, dated 1560, more than one hundred and fifty years after the date quoted by Mr. Welford, as stated above, relative to the old Three Kings' inn, there is a general descriptive account of the properties occupying the site of the inn at that time, and had occupied for some time previous. This account gives us an interesting view of the arrangement of the buildings at this part of the Quayside long before the present street front had been erected; and we get a verbal picture of a group of small erections consisting of the following, viz. :—

1. A messuage or tenement, with its appurtenances..

2. Around this are four tenements or burgages, one on each side, and one at each end. At the south of this group there are no private buildings between it and the Tyne, there is only the town wall. At the north of the group is a stone wall, extending nearly east and west, which is still the southern boundary of the property of the Trinity house.

I have copied from the deed the description of these tenements, and have arranged them in a simple diagrammatic form.¹ From their moderate size these houses may have been not dwellings but offices devoted to business purposes, and so occupied for a part only of the day, as it may be supposed that the amount of daily commercial business in the first half of the sixteenth century would not require much space or many hours for its dispatch. It is presumed that they were separated from each other by passages or chares, into which doors and windows would open to give access, air, and light to the merchants, the tenants, and the public. Now, the central compartment, according to the above document, was the nucleus or starting

¹ See this at p. 264.

point of the future inn, the west wall of which showed the pointed arches. Whether these formed part of the house before the tenement and it were joined together does not appear by the deed. They were the sole representatives, however, of anything architectural in the group. It is a pity that the dimensions of the arches were not taken. All the dimensions given in the deed have been copied in the diagram. The tenement at the west side of the house belonged to Thomas Rookbye, esq., of Mortham, Yorkshire, who let the tenement at the south side of the house to Richard Harrygatt or Harrygald.

The tenement to the north of the central one belonged to James Anderson, master and mariner, who let it, also his property, to the above-named Richard Harrygatt, who therefore held both tenements. The tenement at the east of the house had been lately in the occupation of the prior and convent of Tynemouth.

The prior and convent possessed property not only in the very centre of commercial activity, but also in various other and upper parts of Newcastle. By the Tynemouth chartulary they had a yearly rent of 111s. from eight burgages on the Quayside. The burgage on the east side of the central one must have been one of these eight, and it was empty, probably on account of the recent suppression of the monastery, and the rent of it according to the above rate was probably about 14s. per annum.

With regard to the tenement at the south of the centre of the group, belonging to Thomas Rookbye, esq., it would, in all probability, being the southernmost of the group, have on its south side or front a doorway and window or windows looking out upon the Quayside, the town wall, and its gates, with a chare on each side of it.

After 1560 several unrecorded changes, forming a revolution in the arrangements of the items of the group, their ownership and tenantry must have occurred; in fact, the five must have been entirely pulled down and replaced by two rows of houses extending from north to south, with a yard or passage between, forming an enlarged property extending from the boundary wall of the Trinity house to the Quayside as then existing.

In 1575 this property was conveyed by George Lawson, gentleman, to Richard Harrygate. Whether this was the same person previously

named, or a relative of his, cannot really be decided, but as only fifteen years had elapsed since the date of the deed, it may be the same.

In what has now been read there is nothing that can throw light on the origin of the arches in the west wall of this property, neither is there anything to show that they had connection with either the so-called chapel of St. John or the stone house of the prior of Tynemouth.

Let us, then, pass on to the consideration of these other ruins.

In Brand's *History and Antiquities of Newcastle*, vol. i. page 22, we find the following:—

1st. Between Grindon chare and Blue Anchor chare there is a remarkable old building, the front towards the quay. It has a balcony, supported by posts with shields on them, but at present not charged with any armorial bearings.

2nd. Behind, in Grindon chare, is a very observable house of stone,² with buttresses on the outside, with a crypt or vault arched with stone, now converted into a cellar. Human bones have been found here, and there is a tradition that this was once called St. John's chapel.

In *Richardson's Table Book*, Hist. vol. iv. page 24, the following passage occurs:—'1829 (May). This month, on pulling down an old house on the Quayside, Newcastle, a fine gothic window was discovered in the east side of what is supposed to be the chapel of St John of Jerusalem. This building, which is of stone, with buttresses on the west side in Grindon Chare, is used as a corn loft; the crypt is used as a warehouse. Human bones have been dug up about it.

'There was anciently in the town's hutch a writing endorsed "The agreement made betwixt the Prior of St. John and the towne of Newcastle, touching a water gate."'

'There is now no longer any doubt that this was the Chapel of that Order, and that the gate alluded to was one contiguous to the town wall which extended along the Quay.'

'There was also a chapel below the Ouseburn, in the parish of All Saints, dedicated to St. Lawrence, and founded by one of the Percies, which is said to have been dependent on the Priory of St.

² May not this have belonged to the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem?

John of Jerusalem. This chapel and its possessions were granted, in 1594, to the Corporation of Newcastle. The remains of St. Lawrence's chapel form a part of the glasshouse belonging to Messrs. Robert Todd & Co.'

It seems extraordinary that the author of this extract had neither seen or heard of the remarkable old building with its front towards the Quay, having a balcony supported by posts with armorial shields upon them, although it was quite adjacent to the stone house which he attributes to the priory of St. John of Jerusalem.

Now this old building has a character peculiarly knightly with its array of armorial shields, not at all an ecclesiastical one, and most probably was once the property of the order of St. John of Jerusalem,³ and a priory or commandry of the order, similar to the preceptory of Chibburn, in Northumberland, which has two escutcheons over the south door of its ruined chapel.

To whom, then, are we to assign the stone house in Grindon chare with a fine Gothic window in its east side or end, its buttresses, its crypt arched with stone, all of which must have given the ruin a decidedly ecclesiastical appearance, not to mention that human remains had been dug up near to it, to whom, but to the prior and convent of Tynemouth, who, we know alone had a great stone house on the Quayside.

These two very interesting ruins have long been confounded together, owing to the untrustworthiness of tradition, the want of right discrimination, and the popular ignorance of the existence of a stone house belonging to the prior of Tynemouth, a house which I do not find noticed in Gibson's history of the priory.

It is scarcely possible to discover the dates of the foundations of these once important establishments.

We know that the great stone house was existent in 1392, and that Thomas De La Mere was elected prior of Tynemouth in 1342, and died abbot of St. Albans in 1396. He was a very eminent man, and a great builder, and the house in question was most likely constructed during his Tynemouth priorate.

The order of the knights hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, instituted in 1120, driven from Palestine to Rhodes in 1310, and from Rhodes to Malta in 1523, where they assumed the name of

³ See p. 244.

knights of Malta, had a preceptory at Chibburn, in Northumberland, and besides many preceptories scattered all over England, Chibburn had thirty-two properties from which rents were received. But in the history of the order to which I have access, there is no mention of any preceptory, priory, or commandry, or other institution as existing in Newcastle, and yet we had one of their houses on the Quayside, which had a dependent chapel near the mouth of the Ouseburn.

If it be true that this ruin was really that of a priory of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem, as seems proved by the fact of the prior having had an agreement with the town of Newcastle about a watergate, how does it happen that there is no notice of the existence of the priory in the *Extenta Terrarum et Tenementorum Hospitalis*, etc., which is published in vol. lxxv. of the Camden Society, or in vols. v. or xvii. of *Archæologia Aeliana*.

The order was dissolved by king Henry VIII. and queen Elizabeth. It is disappointing to have the thread of one's story suddenly cut off.

In conclusion, the two ancient buildings herein mentioned after having been as good as buried out of sight and memory for centuries had yet to be utterly destroyed as it were by fire. The fate of the arched wall has been already told, that of the ruins of the supposed chapels remains to be briefly indicated.

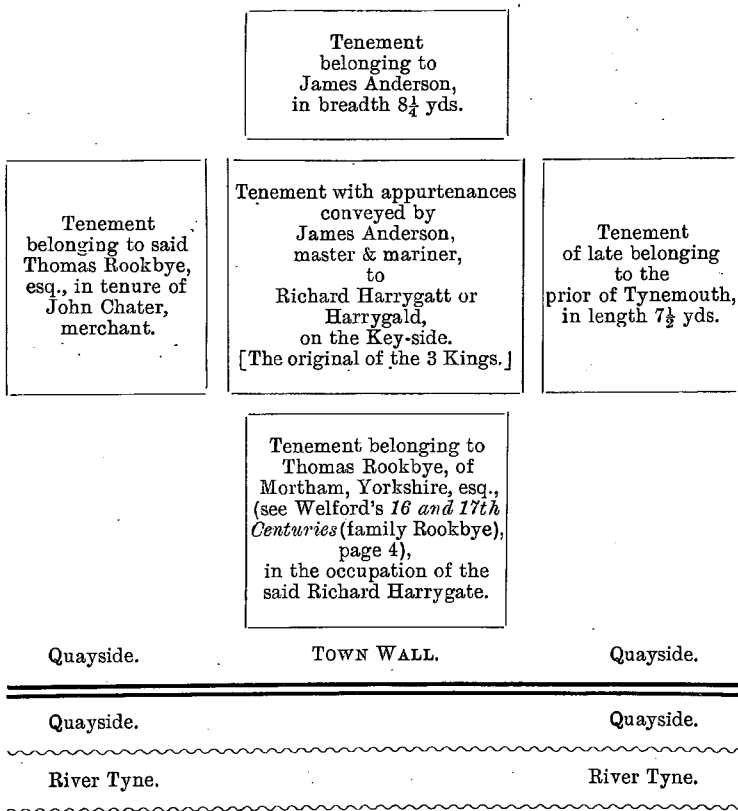
On the 5th of October, 1854, occurred the memorable explosion at Gateshead, of a large goods warehouse, situated in Hillgate, which scattered fire and desolation among the houses and offices on both sides of the river, and the shipping lying between. The Quayside was next day as if it had been bombarded, the part of the quay which suffered most was that in which Grindon chare, Blue Anchor chare, and three others immediately to the eastward of them, were situated. The Dark chare, to the west of them, escaped, and still exists, being both dark and narrow.

The houses on each side of the chares were so seriously damaged that they had to be pulled down, and the result was that the once celebrated houses of the priory of Tynemouth and of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem or knights of Malta were involved in the common ruin, and for ever disappeared.

Out of a great evil sprang a magnificent good; the narrow, dark, and dirty chares were replaced by wide streets of fine architectural pretensions—a credit to the town.

NORTH.

Stone boundary wall of Trinity house.



SOUTH.

DIAGRAM showing boundaries of tenements referred to in page 259. The particulars taken from a deed, dated January 23, 1560.