

VIII.—ISAAC THOMPSON'S PLAN OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, 1746.

BY THOMAS WAKE.

[Read on 28th October 1936.]

The plan of Newcastle upon Tyne (plate xi), made by Isaac Thompson for the duke of Cumberland in 1746, is in the British Museum¹ and is reproduced by courtesy of the trustees of that institution. Gough,² in 1780, records "I am informed a very correct plan (of Newcastle) was taken soon after the rebellion, by order and at the expense, of the late duke of Cumberland, and is in the hands of Isaac Thompson who drew it." Brand,³ in 1789, was unable to trace it. Longstaffe, in his account of the New Castle upon Tyne,⁴ drew attention to its existence in the British Museum, and had that part of it which included the castle and its surroundings copied to illustrate his paper.

The plan is on vellum and measures 40 by 48 inches. It is drawn in Indian ink and colour, to a scale of 200 feet to an inch. On an escutcheon ornamented with military emblems it is inscribed: *To His Royal Highness William Duke of Cumberland, This Plan of Newcastle upon Tyne is humbly dedicated By his Royal Highness's most obedient & devoted Servant Isaac Thompson 1746.* At the top right corner is a key to the gates, towers, etc., of the town walls and their distances from each other, and at the

¹ *Crown MS.* xxxii, 52.

² *British Topography*, 1780, vol. II, p. 57.

³ *History of Newcastle*, vol. I, p. 2n.

⁴ *Arch. Ael.*² IV, 112.

bottom left corner a key to the chares and public buildings.

The area covered by the plan includes part of the Town Moor and Leazes on the north and about 560 yards of the Gateshead side of the river. Quarry House (at the junction of the present Westgate road and Corporation street) on the west; and on the east Pandon Dean, Red Barns, and the Glasshouse bridge over the Ouseburn. The deans formed by the Skinner burn, the Lort or Lork burn, and the Pandon burn, which influenced the lines of development of the mediaeval town, are clearly indicated, and the banks and other surface inequalities are carefully shaded. The castle, town walls, churches, and many of the more important buildings are shown in elevation and the remainder on plan coloured red. Compared with other eighteenth century plans of Newcastle, notably that by James Corbridge (1723), reproduced on p. 113 *post*, Bourne (1736), Charles Hutton (1770), and Brand (by Beilby after Hutton, 1789), that by Thompson is exceptional for the beauty of its execution, its accuracy, and its clarity.

A number of features are represented which are of much value in reconstructing the appearance of the town at the middle of the eighteenth century. The castle area is largely built over. The keep is roofless and the ruined forebuilding has been omitted. Close to the east side are a number of dwellings, and on the west and south sides are the remains of the walls which enclosed the keep and divided the inner from the outer bailey. The gate on the west, at the junction of these walls, is marked but blocked by a dwelling, and the postern near the keep stairs is indicated.⁵ On the east side of the castle area is the old Moot Hall. This shows two lights on the south gable, but the elevation gives no suggestion of the "King's Chamber," or "Grand Jury Room," known to have been on that side. A door is shown slightly north of the middle of the west wall. The Black Gate is not

⁵ See Knowles, *Arch. Ael.*⁴ II.

represented in detail, but a small open square can be noted on the south-west of the entrance. The Half Moon, the top of which is shown with battlements, appears to be divided from the inner bailey by a cross wall. This wall runs from the Moot Hall, near the middle of the south gable, to the south curtain near the postern, the two arches of which are shown. One end of the Half Moon abuts on the angle formed by the junction of the two walls and rejoins at the south-east corner of the Moot Hall. North of this is a broad platform which narrows towards the north where the Dog Leap stairs lead on to it.

The town walls include the length from the Sandgate to the Exchange which was removed in 1763. The list of towers and gates along the walls commences with the Water tower, here called Sailmakers' hall, near the Close gate, from which the distance is given as 44 yards. The measurements have been made on the inside face of the walls. From Sailmakers' hall to the return at this point the circuit is given as 3,703 yards. Bourne⁶ gave the distance as 3,696 yards. Thomas Aubone's⁷ measurements of 1745 gave the figure, according to Brand,⁸ of 3,813 yards, or according to Mackenzie⁹ 3,759 yards, but Mackenzie omitted the distance from Sailmakers' hall to Close gate, which Aubone gave as 52 yards. Hutton gives Close gate to Sandgate as 2,740 yards, and Thompson's measurement is 2,755 yards. As on Corbridge's plan, the 140 "Breakneck" stairs are suggested on the wall between Close gate and Whitefriar tower.

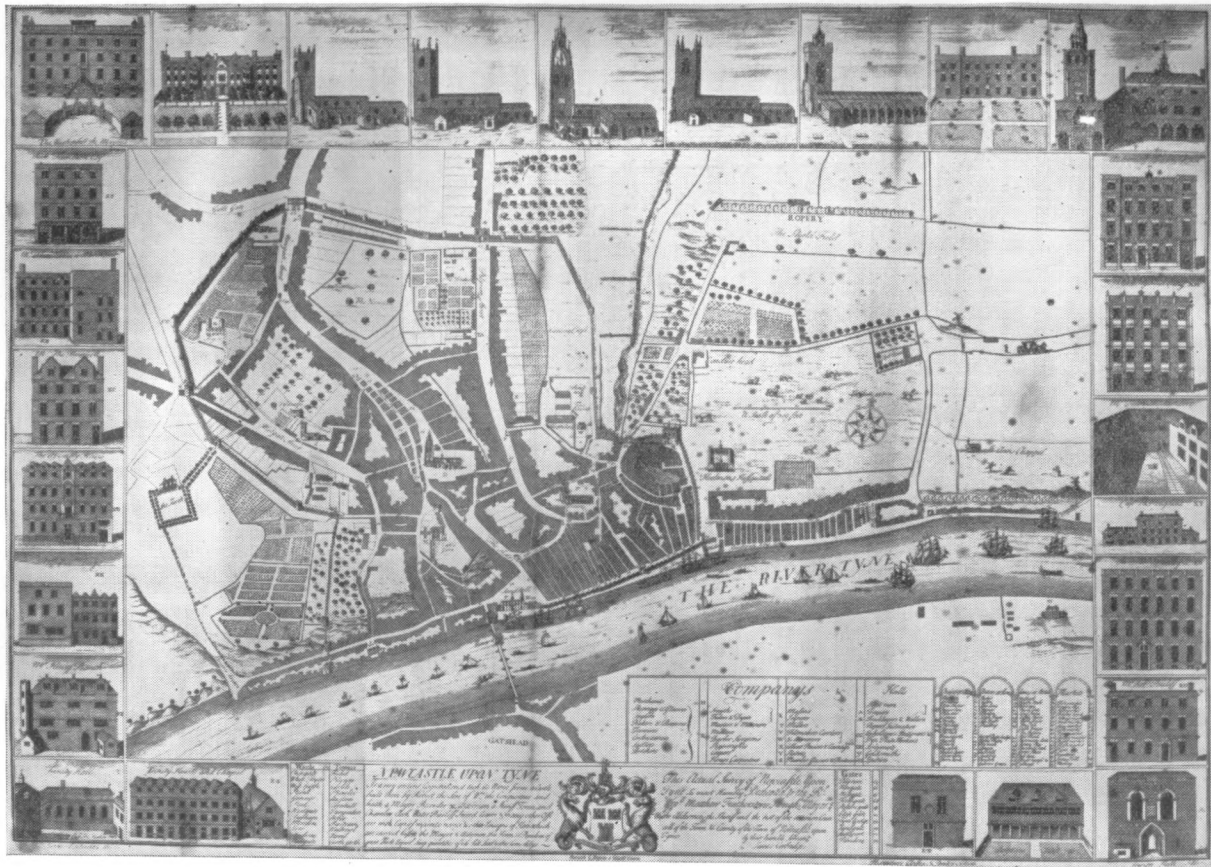
There is no need here to refer to more than a few of the gates of the town. Westgate, removed in 1811, is shown with its long projecting barbican. Newgate has the enlarged tower built after the gate became the prison for the town. It was removed in 1823 when the stone was used to build the gaol erected in Carliol square. The

⁶ *History of Newcastle, 1736*, p. 18.

⁷ Secretary of Trinity House.

⁸ Vol. 1, p. 18n.

⁹ *History of Newcastle, 1827*, vol. 1, p. 106.



PLAN OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE BY JAMES CORBRIDGE 1723.

small gate or postern leading to the street of that name, called by Thompson "Whitefryer" gate, is on the site of the Denton or Neville tower. It was removed in 1805. Richardson's house is shown on the outside. Forth gate, leading to the Forth, was opened out in 1705 and removed in 1811. Though Thompson has omitted the word gate from the Wallknoll or Carpenters' tower, he shows the lane passing through it from Conduit Head. Broad Chare gate is the name given to the opening in the Quayside wall with a high arch and pointed gable. Sixteen smaller gates are indicated along this section of the wall. At the north end of Tyne bridge the Magazine gate or Bridge End gate, said by Gray¹⁰ to have been rebuilt after the siege of 1644, is shown with a central and two smaller flanking towers. Gray states that it was built on one of the arches of the bridge, but here the river frontage has been reclaimed to this point. Formerly there were twelve piers, but encroachments reduced these to nine. The tower on the bridge is erected over the third pier, and that on the Gateshead side is shown on the land abutment. During the rebellion of 1745, which occasioned the making of this plan, the gates, with the exception of Newgate, Sandgate, and the gate on Tyne bridge, were walled up and the town walls planted with guns.

The towers are shown with their rounded fronts to the field. West Spittle tower is also marked Heslop's house. No turrets are marked from the Close gate to this point. Between West Spittle tower and Stank tower there are two turrets; and from the latter to Westgate there is one turret between each tower. Forth gate passes beneath one of them. From Durham tower to Andrew tower there are two turrets between the towers, but none is shown from Andrew tower to Newgate. Between Newgate and Pilgrim gate there are again two turrets, but from Pilgrim gate to Austin tower there are three turrets

¹⁰ *Chorographia*, 1649, p. 7.

between the towers. There is one turret between Corner tower and Pandon gate, and then no more are shown. In all there are shown seven main gates, three postern gates and seventeen water gates, nineteen towers, and thirty turrets.

The four churches within the walls are carefully drawn. St. Nicholas shows all the main details, including the building erected for the Thomlinson library in 1736 by Walter Blackett. This building has a door at either end of the south front instead of one as at present. A path crosses the churchyard from the corner of the Flesh market (now Cloth market) to Nether Dean bridge. All Hallows has a buttressed tower with a heavy battle-mented parapet. Surmounting this is a squat, pyramidal steeple quite unlike that represented on the margin of Corbridge's plan. The south wall of the church is heavily buttressed, and towards the east end is a transept-like structure with a window in its south wall. The walls of this building are carried up the full height of the church. No mention is made of a transept in the early accounts of the church, though references are made to a vestry on this side. It is possible this may have been a chantry chapel re-used as a vestry after the Dissolution. On the view of the demolition of the old church by Ralph Waters, now in the vestry of the present building, there is a suggestion of walling carried above the aisle roof and an interruption of the buttresses at this point.

St. Thomas's chapel, at the bridge end, appears as a simple structure with a saddle bell-turret at the west end. St. Ann's chapel, in Sandgate, rebuilt in 1682, is very small and the details are difficult to determine. The bell-turret appears to be dome-shaped. What was once the chapel of St. James, near the site of the present Hancock Museum in Barras bridge, is indicated as a dwelling with two doors on the south side.

St. Mary's, Gateshead, has the pinnacles added to the tower in 1740 and removed in 1764. The tomb in the

churchyard, east of the church, was believed by Brand¹¹ to be that erected for himself by Robert Trollop, the builder of the Exchange on the Sandhill completed in 1659. The tomb has been appropriated by others at later times, and the spaces between the corner pilasters are at present filled with modern brick work.

Presbyterian meeting houses are shown in Hanover square, Castle Garth, off the Groat market, and off Silver street. The Orphan House, founded by the rev. John Wesley in December, 1742,¹² stands in rural surroundings outside Pilgrim gate, but the Baptist meeting house at the foot of Tuthill stairs is not marked. The Quaker meeting house in Pilgrim street shows an open south front and the long garden east of it.

The Blackfriars stands amid orchards and gardens. The buildings form three sides of the quadrangle of the cloisters. There is no indication of the church which had formerly occupied the north side. The south wall of the east range has an upper and lower window, and there are dormer windows on the east and south fronts. The site of the Nunnery of St. Bartholomew is an open space divided by the Lamb burn which joins the Lort burn on the east. On the west side is a small tower-like structure which may be part of the gate of the nunnery. A similar building appears in Fairfax's Views (16—), reproduced by Brand.¹³ The site of the Greyfriars, east of the Nuns and near Pilgrim gate, is occupied by the mansion of "Mr. Blacket," well known by Kip's view of 1702. What is probably the site of the cloisters of the Austin friars is occupied by the Workhouse. Only three sides of the quadrangle are shown.

Much of the church of St. Mary's hospital in Westgate road can be made out, including the south door and what is probably the vestry. The buildings on the west

¹¹ Vol. I, p. 496.

¹² *Journal*, 20th December, 1742. Foundation stone laid.

¹³ Plate of miscellaneous antiquities.

of it are marked "School," i.e. the Grammar School. No remains of the Magdalen hospital, at the top of the present Northumberland street, are shown, but the fields named "Maidlins" and "Sick Man's Close" indicate its neighbourhood. A stream divides the two fields, and on the east of the Maidlins is another stream issuing from what appears to be Magdalen's well near Pandon burn.

Thompson only shows a few of the almshouses, several of the older foundations having fallen into disuse in his day. Brigham's almshouses, immediately within Pilgrim gate on the west side, are represented as dwellings. These almshouses were conspicuous in the early years of the eighteenth century by their thatched roofs.¹⁴ Holy Jesus hospital, near the Manors, shows the arcaded front and the fountain on the south side. The eastern half of the hospital has dormer windows for the third floor, but the western half has the walls carried up the full height. Behind it, on the east, is All Hallows school. In the open space south of the hospital is the "Widows Hospital," founded in 1725 by Ann Davison, and rebuilt in 1754. The buildings east of it, at the foot of Croft stairs, are on the site of Ward's hospital, founded about 1450, and allowed by Robert Brandling to fall into decay about the end of the sixteenth century. The Keelmen's hospital, outside the town walls near the Carpenters' tower, shows the domelike structure over the entrance and a similar feature over the north block, also shown by Corbridge. The scrollwork ornamentation of the dormer on the west of the entrance has been replaced in recent years by a plain gable. The almshouse in Pudding chare, opposite the end of what was until lately called Rosemary Lane, is only faintly marked. It was rebuilt in 1789 and now forms part of a warehouse. The Maison Dieu, or St. Katherine's hospital, founded by Roger Thornton in 1403, adjoins the east end of the Exchange. Nothing is shown of Elizabeth Nykson's almshouse. It stood in

¹⁴ Spearman MSS., *Newcastle Magazine*, 1824, vol. III, p. 38.

Pilgrim street, opposite the west stairs of the churchyard of All Hallows. Another almshouse, not shown, stood at the foot of the steps leading to the Nether Dean bridge from St. Nicholas.

The Exchange and Guildhall, on the Sandhill, built about 1659, has a door or opening at either end of the south front in addition to the central door. The gables appear to terminate in finials and there is a suggestion of angle buttresses on the south side. The details of Trinity House are given more clearly on Corbridge's plan. The Surgeons' Hall, near the east end of the Holy Jesus hospital, has the arcading in front similar to its neighbour, and it has a large centre window surmounted by a gable. The Custom House occupies a space behind the houses on the east of the Sandhill and at the back of Cosin's House on the Quayside.

The Forth, for many years the recreation ground of the town, is shown with its large bowling green in front of the tavern. The tavern was rebuilt in 1682 and is in the same style as the Holy Jesus hospital built the same year. Over the arcaded front is a balcony, and above part of the eastern half of this is what appears to be a battlemented structure with a door in front. Probably this led to the mayor's room when the civic leaders turned out in full regalia at the feasts of Easter and Whitsun, and then, in the words of Mackenzie,¹⁵ "they unbended the brow of authority and joined the festive throng." The Maidens' Walk crossed a bridge over the Skinnerburn near the south-east corner of the Forth and proceeded through a grove to the fields of Elswick. A bowling green is shown, surrounded by trees on two sides, on the site now the Prudhoe street area, off Northumberland street.

The Mansion House in the Close has the broad terrace front to the river and the half-moon approach to the entrance gates on the north. Corbridge gives a clearer view of the details of the north front. The Vicarage, in

¹⁵ p. 714.

Westgate, has the enlargement made in 1694 by Dr. Nathaniel Ellison. On the west of it the site of the Assembly Rooms is laid out in the nature of a formal garden. Walter (afterwards sir Walter) Blackett's house, near Pilgrim gate, has the two wings added to the sixteenth-century house towards the end of the seventeenth century. These wings are in the same style of architecture as the Mansion House in the Close built about the same time. They have a dome on the roof at each end within a balustraded parapet. The formal lay-out of the gardens reflects the fashion of the period of the enlargement of the house before Capability Brown established the craze for landscape gardens. Gateshead rectory, in Oakwellgate on the east of the church, has dormer windows and the door slightly to the west of the middle of the south front. King John's palace, at the top of Oakwellgate, was known in 1614, according to Brand,¹⁶ as "Pallace Place," and was believed to be the house in Gateshead of the bishops of Durham.

Eleven pants are marked. There is one in Gallowgate, outside the town walls, two in what is now known as Newgate street, one in Bigg market, one at the head of the Side near St. Nicholas, one at the foot of the Side, one opposite the Vicarage, one near the west end of Denton chare, and three in Pilgrim street.

There are seven windmills: one on the Town's Leazes, one in Vine's close, approached by what is now called Vine lane, west of Pandon dean where the burn bends to the south, one on the east side of the dean, in Shieldfield, and one south of this. This latter occupies the site of the fort, the mound of which is indicated, erected against the Scots in the siege of 1644. A windmill on or near this site is recorded in 1296.¹⁷ Other windmills are shown near Red Barns and on the Ballast hills near Glasshouse bridge.

¹⁶ Vol. I, p. 482.

¹⁷ Lay Subsidy Roll, *Arch. Ael.*³ XIII, p. 278.

Four watermills are shown in Pandon dean. That at Barras bridge also shows the dam which supplied the water. There is a mill near where the burn turns south in Sandyford, another below the bend, and one lower down.

There is a ropery outside the Carpenters' tower. Foundations of the Roman Wall were reported from the site in 1783.¹⁸ Two others are in Shieldfield, one on the North Shore, east of Sandgate, and another in Hillgate on the Gateshead side of the river. The two flint-glass houses in the Close are shown, one on each side of the road outside Close gate.

All traffic approaching the town had to pass through the town gates. Outside Westgate, at the junction of the Hexham road and the road leading along what is now Bath lane, are the County gallows. The main Ponteland road entered Newgate as did also the Berwick road. This latter could also pass through Pilgrim gate. Pandon gate was approached by a steep declivity through an avenue of trees from Conduit head where the roads from North Shields and Shieldfield met. An alternative approach was to the Sallyport or Carpenters' tower. The approaches to the gates, except that at Pandon, were lined with houses. Middle street, flanked by Groat market and Flesh market (now Cloth market), occupies the site of the present Town Hall. "Pullens" is the name given to that part between the top of Flesh market and Bigg market. Groat market extends to Denton chare opposite the west door of St. Nicholas. The site of Grey street was then an open dean. A lane called Swinburne place cut through from the Side, on the site of Milburn house, to Painter Heugh. Back Raw and Bailiff gate lead from Whitefriar gate to the Castle, and Sheep Head alley from the Long stairs to Castle stairs.

The chares on the Quayside, quoted by Mackenzie¹⁹ as being "the most crowded with buildings of any part of

¹⁸ Brand, I, pp. 138 and 139n.

¹⁹ p. 163.

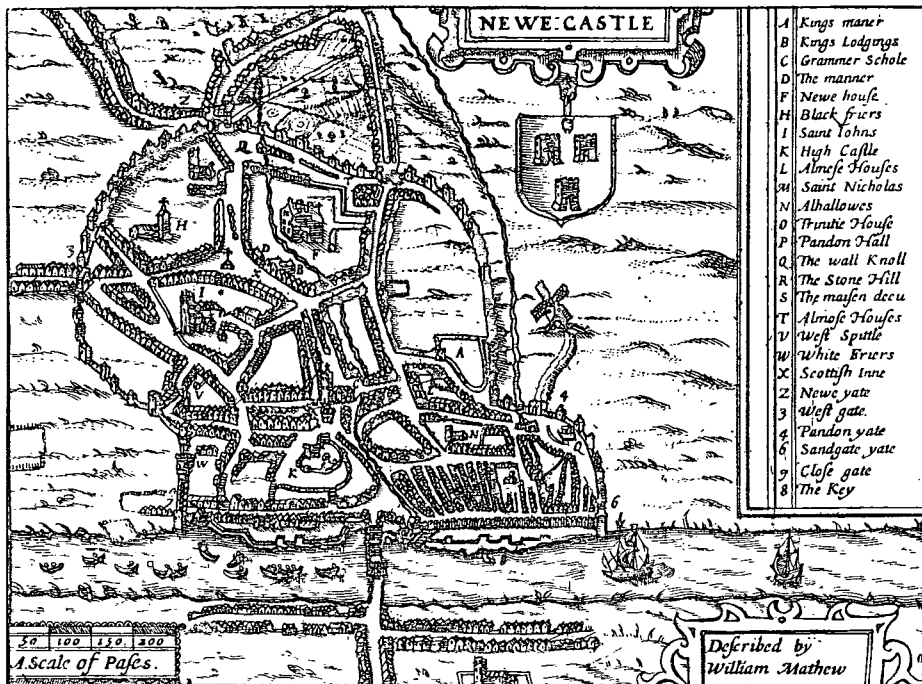
his majesty's dominions," are numbered to correspond with the key provided. The western section from Hornsby's chare to the Sandhill has been rebuilt subsequent to the fire of 1854. The remainder of the chares are still preserved though fast losing their identity. Only a few have name-plates, and the demolition at present proceeding will soon make it impossible to recognize those that have none.

Contrasted with the chares, the crofts and gardens within the walls and immediately outside make a delightful picture. The dwellers in Pandon could take their summer evening stroll up the Croft stairs to Carliol Croft and the gardens behind Pilgrim street, or they could wander in the sylvan surroundings of Pandon dean. Those in the Close and Market area had the Forth Banks and the fields of Elswick, while the dwellers in Newgate had ample gardens behind their own houses. Even Roger Thornton, who lived in the early fifteenth century in Broad chare, could enjoy an orchard at the back of his house. The rev. John Wesley had every inducement to say of Newcastle that "he knew no other place in Great Britain comparable to it for pleasantness."²⁰

The biography of Isaac Thompson has been written by Richard Welford in *Men of Mark* and in *Archæologia Aeliana*³ III, pp. 27-31. He came to Newcastle from Lancashire at an early age. In many ways he was a remarkable man. His earliest calling, and one which he followed right through, was that of land agent and surveyor. In addition to this plan of Newcastle he executed many estate plans, including Walker, Elswick and Quarry House, Denton, Horsley lordship, Tynemouth and South Lyham. In all of these he shows the same neatness which characterizes the present work. Doubtless there are many others hidden away in estate offices throughout the county. Thompson also ventured into print as a poet, became a newspaper proprietor in 1739 and published the *Newcastle*

²⁰ *Journal*. 4th June, 1759.

Journal. Later he published the *Newcastle General Magazine* and many other books and pamphlets, and lectured on natural and experimental philosophy. He died in 1776 at the age of seventy-two, and was buried in the graveyard behind the Quaker meeting house in Pilgrim street.



SPEED'S PLAN OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.



TYNE in 1746.



EXPLANATION.

1. Small House	11. Aqueduct
2. Castle	12. High School
3. Church	13. Park
4. Wall	14. Mill
5. Garden	15. Mill Race
6. Street	16. Mill Race
7. Wall	17. Mill Race
8. Wall	18. Mill Race
9. Wall	19. Mill Race
10. Wall	20. Mill Race
21. Wall	21. Mill Race
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