



The Armorial Bearings of the
CITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Arms:- Gules three Castles triple towered Argent. Crest on a Wreath of the Colours
A Castle as in the Arms issuant therefrom a demi Lion guardant supporting a
Flagstaff Or flying therefrom a forked Pennon of the Arms of Saint George.
Supporters:- On either side a Sea horse proper crined and finned Or.

College of Arms
London.

M. S. Clai.
Portcullis

I.—THE ARMORIALS OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.

By C. H. HUNTER BLAIR.



Now where the wall¹ and Tyne almost meet together Newcastle sheweth itself gloriously, the very eye of all the townes in these parts, ennobled by a notable haven which Tyne maketh. (Britain, W. Camden, 1637).

In the autumn of the year 1080 Robert called Curthose, the eldest son of William the Norman, afterwards created duke of Normandy, founded a *castle* as a guard to the bridge of Tyne. It was situated upon the site where, in A.D. 120, the emperor Hadrian had, for the same purpose, built the fort of *Pons Aelius*. Robert's castle was named the New Castle upon Tyne (*Novum castellum super Tinam*).²

The canting device of a castle was therefore obviously destined to be the insignia and later the arms of the town which soon arose under the castle's protection.

¹ *i.e.* Roman.

² *Arch. Ael.*, 4th, XXII, and refs. there given.

Its lordship remained in the Crown, but in less than fifty years after the foundation of the castle the town was of sufficient importance to receive from Henry I a grant of *Laws & Customs*³ and to have a common seal. This was not armorial but had for its device a fortified castle gateway behind which rise the three towers of, probably, a wooden castle; beneath its embrasures are two plain pear-shaped Norman shields. The legend, in an early type of roman capitals, reads—COMMUNE SIGILL · NOVICASTRI SVP TINAM⁴ (plate VII, fig. 1).

An armorial shield, blasoned *gules three castles argent*, was however in use in the fourteenth century.

The earliest known examples date after 1340, but it is reasonable to suppose that it had been in use earlier in the century. We may perhaps conjecture with some confidence that it had been adopted towards the end of the previous century when the fortifications of the town, as described by John Leyland⁵ writing about the middle of the sixteenth century, had been completed.

Newcastle upon Tyne was then, and for long afterwards, the fortified base and mustering place for the armies of Edward I (*malleus Scottorum*) and his successors gathered for the invasion of Scotland. The town was also by that time an important commercial and industrial centre as well as the chief port for trade with the Low Countries, Scandinavia and the Baltic.⁶

In 1353 Newcastle upon Tyne became by the Statute of the Staple (27 Ed. III) one of the nine towns of the Staple⁷ which controlled the export of all the wool produced in England.

³ *The oldest version of the customs of Newcastle upon Tyne*, *Arch. Ael.*, 4th, I, 169. This was written in the time of Henry II but refers them to Henry I (1100-1135). *Leges et consuetudines quas burgenses Novi Castelli super Tinam habuerent tempore Henrici Regis Anglie et habere debent* (p. 170).

⁴ For fuller account see *Arch. Ael.*, 3rd, XIX, 171.

⁵ *The strength and magnificence of the waulling of this towne far passith all the waulls of the cities of England and most of the townes of Europa* (Iter.).

⁶ *Arch. Ael.*, 4th, XXXII, pp. 220ff.

⁷ Seal of the Staple for Newcastle, plate II, fig. 3.

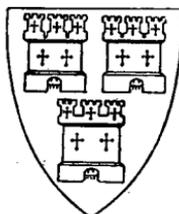
The town was created a county of itself separate from the county of Northumberland, by charter of Henry IV (1400). The castle, that is the whole area within its surrounding walls, was however exempt and remained a royal castle in the keeping of the sheriff of the county of Northumberland. It did not therefore form part of the town nor was it under the control of the mayor and burgesses until it was purchased by the Corporation in 1812, from the Crown lessees.



BISHOPRIC OF
DURHAM.
THOMAS OF
HATFIELD,
1345-81.



EDWARD III, 1340-77.



NEWCASTLE
UPON TYNE
OF 14TH
CENTURY DATE.

Whether or not the town arms can be dated earlier it is certain that the shield was in use in the later half of the fourteenth century when a fortified barbican was added to the north front of the great gate which faced towards Scotland, known thereafter as the New gate; its earlier name may have been the Berwick gate.⁸ Armorial shields, after the fashion of the time, were placed above its northern entrance, such as can yet be seen in similar positions on the

⁸ Brand's *History of Newcastle upon Tyne*, vol. I, plate face p. 13.

northern castles of Alnwick, Bothal, Etal, Lumley and Hilton.⁹

The shield of Edward III (plate II, fig. 1) as borne by him after 1340 (plate II, fig. 2) was in the middle flanked on the dexter by the shield of the bishopric of Durham, and on the sinister by that of Newcastle upon Tyne¹⁰ (p. 3).

This great fortress of the New gate was destroyed in 1823 "to the great regret of the inhabitants of Newcastle"¹¹—a regret which has often since been expressed ineffectually when other historical monuments of the town shared the fate of the New gate.

The shield of Edward III was fortunately preserved from destruction and now stands in the basement of the Keep (plate II, fig. 1); those of the bishopric and town were destroyed.

An example of the armorial shield of the town of late fourteenth century date, can still be seen, in red glass with three white single-towered castles, in the north window of the chancel of St. John's parish church (plate III, fig. 1).

This with the lost shield from the New gate are the only examples now known of the arms of the town before 1575. In August of that year William Flower, Norroy King of Arms, accompanied by his son-in-law Robert Glover, Somerset Herald, made an official visitation of the North.¹²

He then granted crest, supporters and mantling, which he calls "the rest of the appendages and trappings"¹³ to the

⁹ For Alnwick, Bothal and Lumley see *Arch. Ael.*, 3rd, VI, plates face pp. 89, 102, 120. For Hilton, *Arch. Ael.*, 4th, plate III and for Lumley East Gateway plate IV. *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Brand, *op. cit.*, p. 13, says that these "ancient shields" were there when he wrote in 1789 and that the shield on the dexter bore the "cross of St. George". Gray, the author of *Chorographia*, writing in 1649 (*First annual report of our Society—1814*, p. 24), says that it bore the arms of the bishopric of Durham; as the lions on the Durham shield may have been much weathered by 1789 I have preferred the earlier blason especially as Thomas of Hatfield, then bishop, was a trusted councillor of Edward III, Privy Seal Keeper, 1343, and with Edward at the campaign of Calais and Crecy, 1346.

¹¹ *Local Historians' Table Book*, M. A. Richardson. *Historical*, Vol. III, p. 270. Illustrations of the gate's destruction, pp. 272-73.

¹² Copy of the original grant with translation in *Arch. Ael.*, 4th, XXVIII, 202; see also Brand, II, 183-85.

¹³ *Ceteris phaleris et appendiciis* (*Ibid.*, 203).



The ancient Arms of the
COUNTY OF THE TOWN OF NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE
1575

College of Arms,
London.

Anthony R. Wagner.
Richmond Herald.

“most ancient”¹⁴ arms of the town. In this grant Norroy appears to congratulate the town because it had long used arms—“is made more famous, more honoured and more renowned by the long use and display of insignia or arms”.¹⁵ He therefore makes the aforementioned additions to the shield of arms for the “greater honour and glory” of the town. Robert Glover illustrated the grant by a “trick”, that is a pen and ink drawing of the armorials. A copy of this from the original at the College of Arms is here shewn¹⁶ (p. 5).

The motto FORTITOR DEFENDIT TRIUMPHANS is said to have been added in 1646 in memory of the brave defence of the town when besieged by the Scots in 1644;¹⁷ this addition completed the armorial achievement of the town. The earliest example of the use of the motto is, I think, that on the title page of Gray's *Chorographia* published in 1649 as here illustrated (p. 7).

Since c. 1646 the blason has remained unchanged.

No other example of the armorials of the town which can be dated between the end of the fourteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth now exists. The revival of heraldry in Tudor times does not seem to have affected the North as the same absence is observable in the castles and halls of Northumberland and Durham. The very unsettled state of the Marches of England towards Scotland—which included the whole of Northumberland—during this period doubtless accounts for this lack of heraldic ornament. War, not the arts of civilized life, was the occupation of the Borders until they ceased to be in 1603.

About the year 1650 John Cosyn, a Newcastle merchant, built himself a lordly dwelling house on the Quay near the corner of the Sandhill.¹⁸ It was still standing in 1890 but the

¹⁴ *Armis predictis antiquissimis (Ibid.)*.

¹⁵ *Insigniorum sive Armorum longe usu et demonstracione Comitatus ville pedicte, clarior, honoratior et spectabilior efficitur (Ibid.)*.

¹⁶ This has been procured by the generosity of the Corporation and by the interest of Mr. John Atkinson, Town Clerk.

¹⁷ Brand, *op. cit.*, II, 184n.

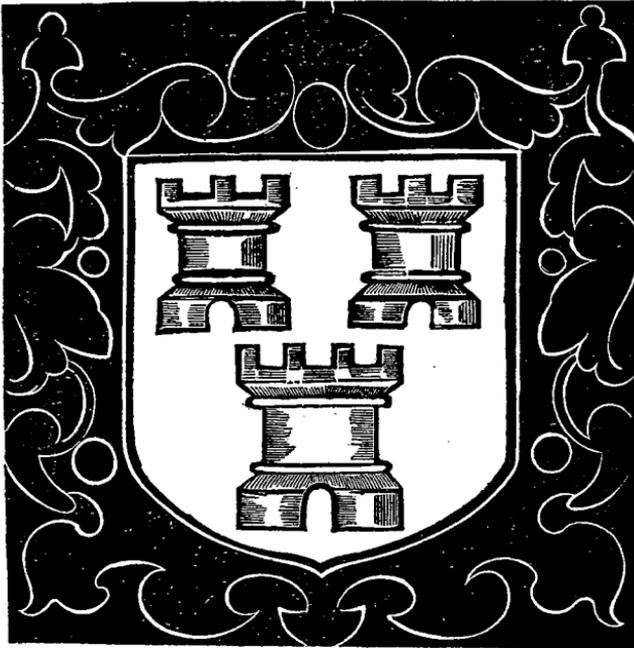
¹⁸ *Vestiges of Old Newcastle and Gateshead*, by Knowles and Boyle, pp. 170-172 and plates facing.

needs of our civilization caused, and the indifference of the citizens to their historical monuments allowed it to be destroyed.

S. P. D.

DILECTIS BURGENSIBUS,
ET PROBIS HOMINIBUS NOVICASTRI
SUPER TINAM.

W. G.



Fortiter Defendit Triumphans.

The only relic of its ruin is the finely carved oak overmantel¹⁹ which adorned the panelled room with its square oriel windows and latticed casements—described as the “most beautiful old room in Newcastle”. This overmantel was carved with the armorials of John Cosyn, flanked on

¹⁹ *Arch. Ael.*, 4th, VIII, pl. III, p. 49.

the dexter by those of Newcastle (plate III, fig. 3) and on the sinister by those of the Draper's Company.

Thomas Davison, another Newcastle merchant, about the year 1657, also decorated the panelled parlour of his house on Sandhill, now known as Surtees House,²⁰ with an armorial overmantel.²¹ The shield of arms of the town is amongst those carved upon it.

The armorial achievement of the town carved, c. 1658, above the fireplace of the Town Chamber in Guildhall²² is very modern in style and compares favourably with the modern examples shewn here on plates I and VII, though the banner (*vexillum*) of the "Lord George" is now missing (plate II, fig. 2).

Somewhat later in date is the cartouche carved with the three castles of the town and supported from behind by one lively seahorse (plate IV, fig. 2) which served as a finial on the staircase of Jesus Hospital at the Manors.²³

It is now displayed in the common room of the new hospital at Spital Tongues—spoil from the ruin which has been allowed to overtake the finest example of seventeenth century architecture in our city or indeed in the whole North Country.

The only example in stone that has survived, of possibly late seventeenth century date, is the shield formerly on the south face of the Tower on the Bridge.²⁴ It is now kept in the Great Hall of the Keep in a rather weathered state: since



²⁰ *Vestiges, op. cit.*, pp. 8-11.

²¹ *Arch. Ael.*, 4th, XI, pls. XXX and XXXI.

²² *Vestiges, op. cit.*, pp. 22-23, and illustration on p. 23.

²³ *Vestiges, op. cit.*, p. 270 and plates. *Arch. Ael.*, 4th, XI, p. 218.

²⁴ It was preserved by Alderman Hornby in the wall of his garden in Pilgrim Street, when the bridge was finally destroyed in, 1775. Richardson's *Table Book, Hist.*, II. p. 237, from which the above cut was taken. See also Brand, *op. cit.*, II, 184n.

the cut here printed was drawn, the motto beneath has disappeared. Its date is uncertain, but its companion shield, formerly on the south face of the tower on the Gateshead side of the river, also now preserved in the Keep, bears the armorials of Lord Crew of Stene, bishop of Durham (1674-1714). Both shields therefore probably date in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The custom of displaying the armorials of the town either upon or within public and private buildings appears to have ceased about the end of the seventeenth century, or at least none have survived.

The town did not use an armorial common seal until 1645. The twelfth century seal (plate VII, fig. 1) mentioned above was in use until lost in the storming of the town by the Scots in October 1644. A Council minute of 30th May, 1645, reads as follows: ²⁵

30th Maij 1645.

For Authoriseinge the New seale

Whereas at a Common Councell holden the 9th of Aprill 1645. It was Ordered in regard the Common Seale of this Corporacion was lost at the Stormeinge of this Towne and that there was speciall occasions for the vse thereof. That a new Seale should be made like vntoe the old one, as neare as could be and the said new Seale so made to be reputed and taken to be the Common Seale of this Corporacion and as effectual to all intents and purposes as the Old Seale was As by the said Order may appeare And whereas according to the foresaid Order there is a new Seale made wch by some mistake differs from the said old Seale the Old Seale being engraue with One Castle and this newe one with Three Castles Neuertheless wee the Maior Aldermen and Sheriff and the rest of the Common Councell of this Towne vpon good advice thereof had, knoweing the Three Castles are the Armes of this Corporacion and therefore more fitt and proper for the Seale thereof, Do hereby Order and declare that the said Newe Seale engraue with Three Castles be from henceforth reputed and taken to be the Common Seale of this Corporacion and shall be to all intents & purposes as available and effectuall as the afore said Old Common Seale heretofore hath byn.

²⁵ *Newcastle Record series*, vol. I, pp. 43-44, and also pp. 25 and 39.

The plain, meagre design of this seal (plate VII, fig. 2^N) needs no comment. It was replaced in 1731 by one larger and more ornate shewing the whole armorial achievement. This was succeeded, in 1882, by that now in use. It is larger than its predecessor but of a like pretty, meretricious design (plate VII, fig. 3). Numbers 4, 6, and 7 on this plate are seals of the mayoralty and *ad causus* for which see *Arch. Ael.*, 3rd Ser., XIX, pp. 174-77.

I have only found few examples of the armorials which must have been lavishly used in the old Mansion House, though it is likely that there are other examples scattered about the country. Those upon a china plate and a bowl are illustrated on plate V and a book stamp and book plate figs. 4, 5. The Mansion House in the Close, built in 1691, was sold, with all its furnishings, pictures, plate, books, china and other household goods, by auction 3rd January, 1837. The deed was done by order of the Corporation and in spite of the strenuous opposition of the majority of the inhabitants of the town.²⁶ In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the armorials of the town were used extensively as decorations on maps and plans of the town and on the title pages and illustrations of the histories of Bourne and Brand.

These are of diverse designs varied as fashion or the spirit of the artist dictated. Though they thus differ in style and details and some do not appeal to our modern aesthetic taste, they do illustrate the blason correctly. Some of them are illustrated on plates VIII and IX in the *Supplement* which follows.

The great revival of interest in the art and science of armory of recent years has not passed by Newcastle upon Tyne as numerous articles in the 3rd-4th Series of *Arch. Ael.* and elsewhere testify.

A copy of the original grant of crest and supporters to the armorial shield of the town by William Flower, Norrov

²⁶ See Richardson's *Table Book, Historical*, IV, 333-35. Also *The Month Chronicle*, 1887, pp. 111-14, where there are two engravings of its then condition at a timber merchant's yard. It was destroyed by fire in 1895.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.



FIG. 1.

1. SHIELD OF EDWARD III FORMERLY UPON NORTH FRONT OF NEWGATE.
2. REVERSE OF 4TH GREAT SEAL OF EDWARD III, 1341.
3. STATUTE STAPLE SEAL OF NEWCASTLE.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.

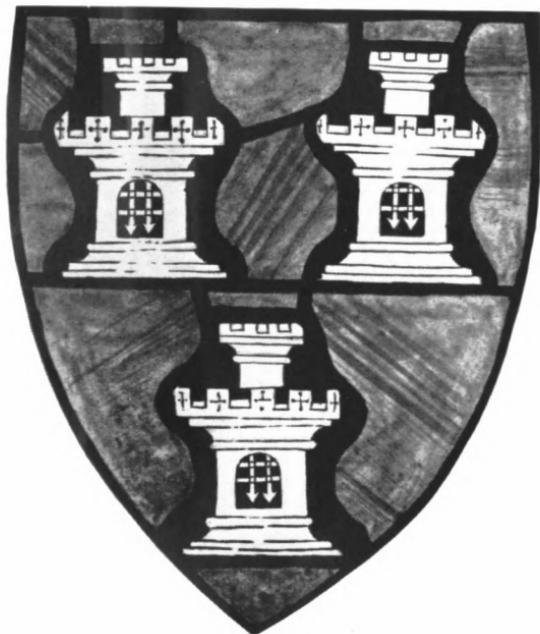


FIG. 1.

1. SHIELD IN WINDOW OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, NEWCASTLE.
2. OVER FIREPLACE IN TOWN CHAMBERS, GUILDHALL.
3. FORMERLY IN COSYN'S HOUSE ON QUAY.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 1.

1. OFFICIAL DRAWING OF CITY ARMORIALS—19TH CENTURY.
2. FINIAL FROM STAIRCASE OF JESUS HOSPITAL, MANORS.



FIG. 2.

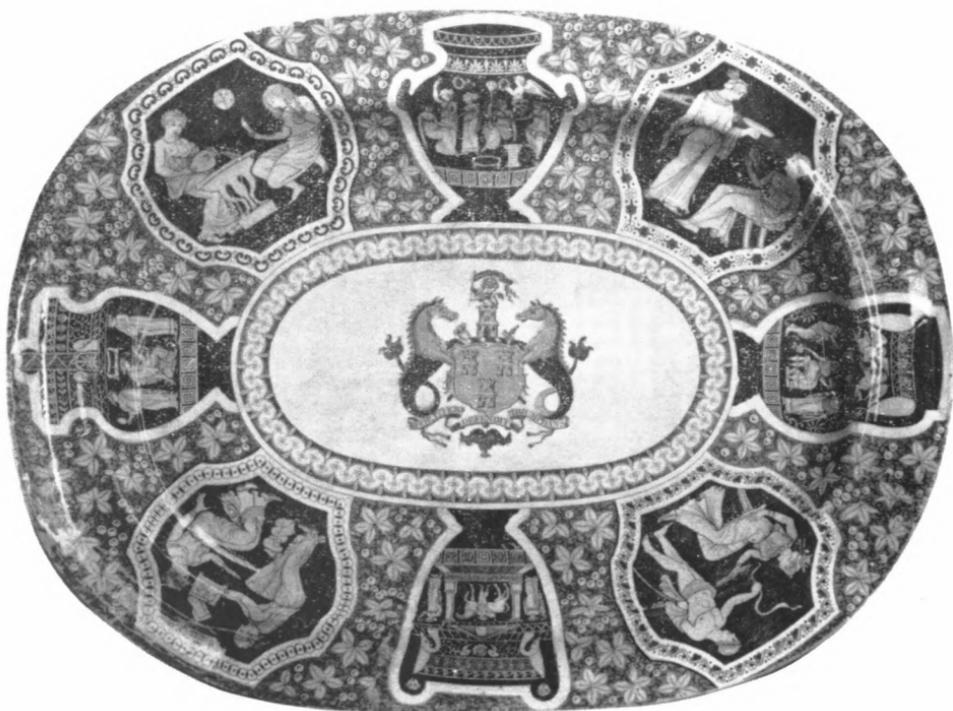


FIG. 1.

1. BLUE SPODE SIDE-DISH (ASHET) FROM OLD MANSION HOUSE, NOW IN LAING ART GALLERY.
2. BLUE CHINA BOWL FROM OLD MANSION HOUSE, NOW IN LAING ART GALLERY.



ARMORIALS OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.

From a drawing by L. C. Evetts (1949).



4



5



1



2



6



3



7

SEALS OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.

- 1, 2, 3. Common Seals.
- 4, 5. Seals *ad causas*.
- 6, 7. Seals of the Mayoralty.

From photographs by C. H. Hunter Blair.

King of Arms in 1575, was printed with a translation in *Arch. Ael.* for 1950 Vol. XXVIII. This was illustrated by a drawing by Mr. L. C. Evetts, a vigorous free interpretation of the blason, done by an artist skilled in heraldry (plate VI).

It was generally realized that the official design used by the city authorities was poor and unworthy of the city (plate IV, fig. 1). Therefore, on the initiative of our member Mr. John Atkinson, Town Clerk, and with the consent of the City Council, an officially authorized drawing (plate I) was procured from the College of Arms which, on 5th May, 1954, was adopted by the Lord Mayor and Council to be the official design for the armorials of "the county of the town of Newcastle upon Tyne".

NOTE: The armorials of Newcastle upon Tyne, as confirmed with grant of crest and supporters by Norroy King of Arms in 1575, belong to and are the property of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and citizens as a corporate body, which alone has the right to use them. They cannot therefore be used by anyone except the Corporation and its appointed officers acting in their official capacity. No other person, society, club or firm can use them, nor can the Corporation or its officials authorize or permit others to bear them. This was confirmed by the High Court of Chivalry on 21st January, 1955, when the Surrogate to the Earl Marshal (Lord Goddard, D.C.L.) delivered a reserved judgment for the plaintiff in the cause in which the Manchester Corporation complained that the Manchester Palace of Varieties Ltd. had publicly displayed representations of the arms, crest, motto and supporters granted to the Corporation and had also displayed on their common seal the same representations contrary to the laws and customs of arms.²⁷

My grateful thanks are given to Mr. John Atkinson, Town Clerk, and to Mr. L. C. Evetts for the generous help they have given to me in preparing this account of the armorials of our city.

²⁷ *The Times*. Law reports of the 21st December, 1954, and 21st January, 1955.

SUPPLEMENT.

*Being examples of the armorials of Newcastle upon Tyne,
chiefly of the eighteenth century.*

The simplicity of early armory, as shewn on plate II, figs. 1, 2, and on plate III, fig. 1, had, by the early seventeenth century, become more ornate as illustrated on plate III, fig. 2, a style replaced, in the early eighteenth century, by one rococo in character.

This development was quite in keeping with the general trend of design as shewn in architectural decoration, furniture and book plates. The art of armory was indeed an ideal medium for the use of this style of ornamentation by the artists of the time.

The shields of various fanciful shapes, sometimes called Gothic, are framed in ornamental gilt scrolls with their tinctures and metals indicated by the ugly method of lines and dots introduced from Germany in the seventeenth century but now fortunately discarded.

The great war helm, as shewn on plate I and on plate II, fig. 2, has become a globular iron pot, of fantastic shape with a narrow neck able to be worn by no man. (Fig. 1.)

The mantling is no longer shewn covering the back of the helm as a protection, as seen on plate II, fig. 2, but has become conventionalized into decorative scroll work or sprigs of foliage (figs. 1-3). The crest, which should be strongly fastened to the helm so as to appear an integral part of it, is now shewn standing upon a degenerate form of wreath bearing little likeness either in function or design to the original twisted crest wreath of medieval heraldry. Sometimes the crest and wreath appear without a helm, standing isolated above the shield. (Figs. 4-5 and plates VIII & IX.)

Two of the figures in the text (nos. 6 & 7 on p. 16) are of quite different style. Figure 6 is a pictorial design

shewing father Tyne and his river, surrounded by a ship in sail, an anchor, and millstones to emphasize that the armorial plaque he contemplates bears the arms of Newcastle upon Tyne. Figure 7 is a rather coarse drawing in an architectural setting by R. E. Bewick. Finally a late nineteenth century example is shewn on plate IX, fig. 2. A lively drawing, the shield in an escallop which two seahorses, thrashing the sea with their finned fore feet, support above the water.



FIG. 1. ON PLAN OF TOWN IN BOURNE'S "HISTORY", 1736.



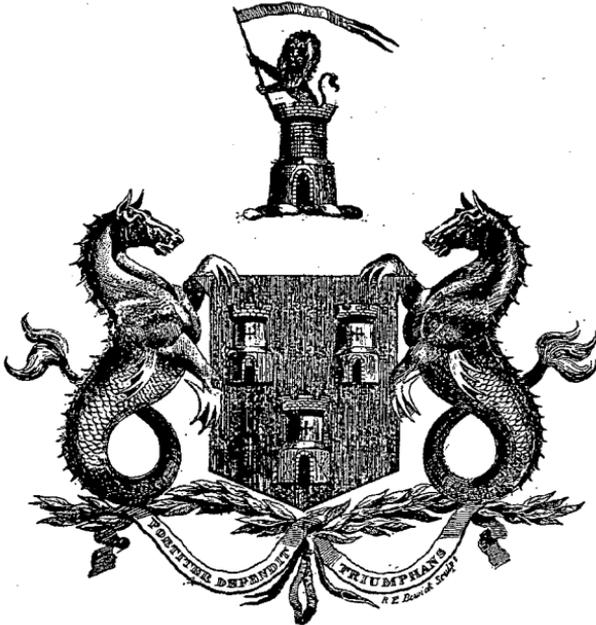
FIG. 2. KITCHEN'S MAP OF NORTHUMBERLAND, PUBLISHED BY AUBREY & CO., 1769.



FIG. 3. PLAN OF NEWCASTLE BY CHARLES HUTTON, 1770.



FIG. 4. MANSION HOUSE, BOOK STAMP. R. E. BEWICK.



Mansion House

FIG. 5. MANSION HOUSE, BOOK PLATE. R. E. BEWICK.



FIG. .6. BRAND'S "HISTORY", ON VIEW OF TOWN IN VOL. II, 1789.

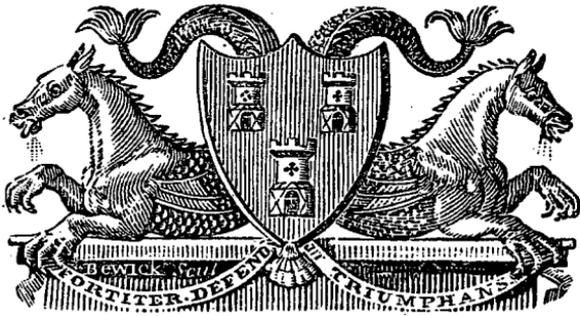


FIG. 7. BY R. E. BEWICK. AN ENGRAVING IN RICHARDSON'S TABLE BOOK, VOL. I, HISTORICAL, P. 216.



FIG. 2.

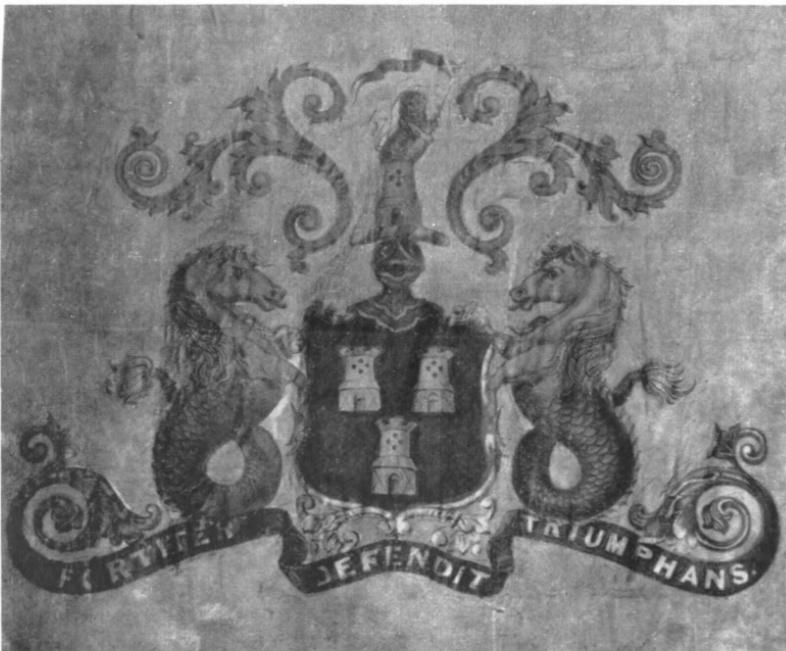
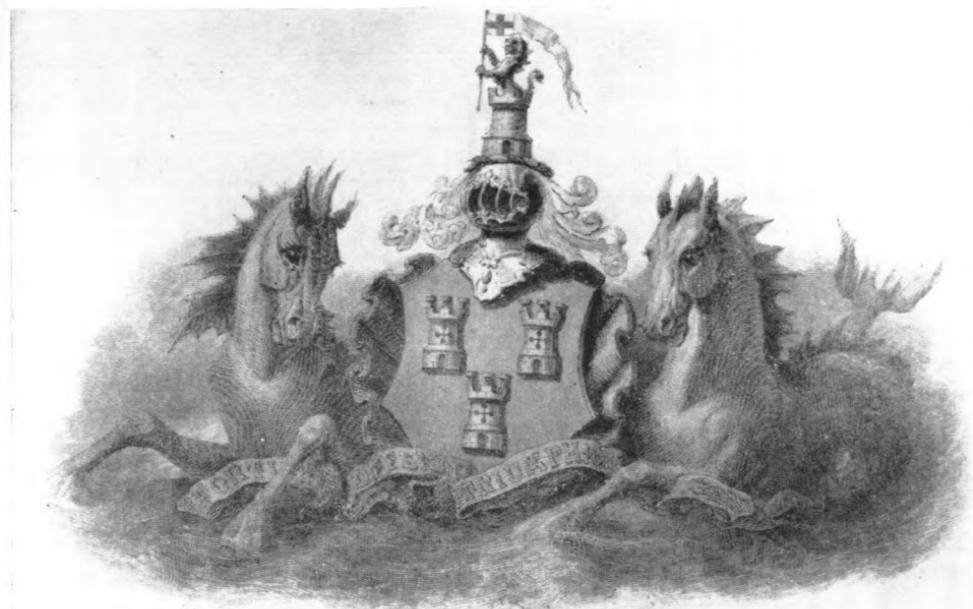


FIG. 1.

1. PAINTED TOWN BANNER, NOW IN LAING ART GALLERY.
2. BRASS FROM MAYOR'S COACH, NOW IN LAING ART GALLERY.



2. ON PLAN OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE BY ANDREW REID (NOW ANDREW REID & CO. LTD.). 1879.



1. FROM PLATE OF THE ARMS OF NEWCASTLE COMPANIES. 1776. (LAING ART GALLERY).

