

# I

## “Bessie Surtees House”—Two Merchant Houses in Sandhill, Newcastle upon Tyne

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IN April 1989 English Heritage signed a lease on Bessie Surtees House with the City of Newcastle upon Tyne and on 5th May the Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, M.P., Secretary of State for the Environment, officially opened both the new English Heritage Historic Properties office and the rooms on the first floor which the public are able to visit. The buildings now known as Bessie Surtees House are formed from a twentieth-century amalgamation of two important houses which became known by the surnames of the merchant families who lived in them during the seventeenth century: Surtees House and Milbank House (fig. 1). A third building, behind Surtees House, and known since the 1930s as Maddison House, is a post 1930 building using elements of Jacobean style and materials on the site of a derelict warehouse of eighteenth or nineteenth century date, and will not be discussed in detail in this report. This group forms part of a collection of large timber-framed houses on Sandhill, important both as a prominent feature of the riverside area, and as a very interesting group of merchants' houses which reveal their medieval origin while demonstrating by their style and size the opulence of their post-medieval owners. They are among the last of the timber-framed houses to be built in English towns before the lessons learnt from the Fire of London brought about the change to the use of less combustible materials for the construction of town houses.

The houses at 41–4 Sandhill and their illustrious occupants have been admired in almost every historical and topographical account of Newcastle, so it is surprising that there is still no published survey of these buildings. It is the lack of any detailed correlation of the doc-

umentary evidence with their structural analysis that has prompted the authors to produce a general survey of these important buildings. Of particular concern has been the attempt to dispel some of the confusion about the extent to which later renovation has destroyed the original fabric of the structures. Similarly, the interior fittings and furnishings, an extraordinary collection of wall panels, ceilings, fireplaces, doors and so forth brought in at various times from far and near, have been provenanced as far as the available sources allow.

The floor plans published here relate to the present structure (figs. 3–6 and 8–9), and are taken from architects' drawings. The ground floor will be named Level One; the first floor, Level Two, and so on, to aid cross-reference to the room numbers, which have the Level number as the first digit.

### THE SANDHILL

In the later Middle Ages Newcastle was a major port, and Newcastle's merchants were prosperous men. The ships bringing their cargoes sailed between the shallows and sandbanks of the Tyne and tied up at the town quay, between Tyne Bridge and Sandgate. Goods were unloaded onto the quayside to be carried through the gates of the town wall to cellars and warehouses in the nearby streets. Behind the wall the street called Quayside ran from the Sandgate at the east and opened out at the west into a triangular market place, Sandhill, which was shaped like a funnel with the quayside breaking into the south end of its wide east side. The Lort Burn ran down this side of Sandhill to the river, with a row of

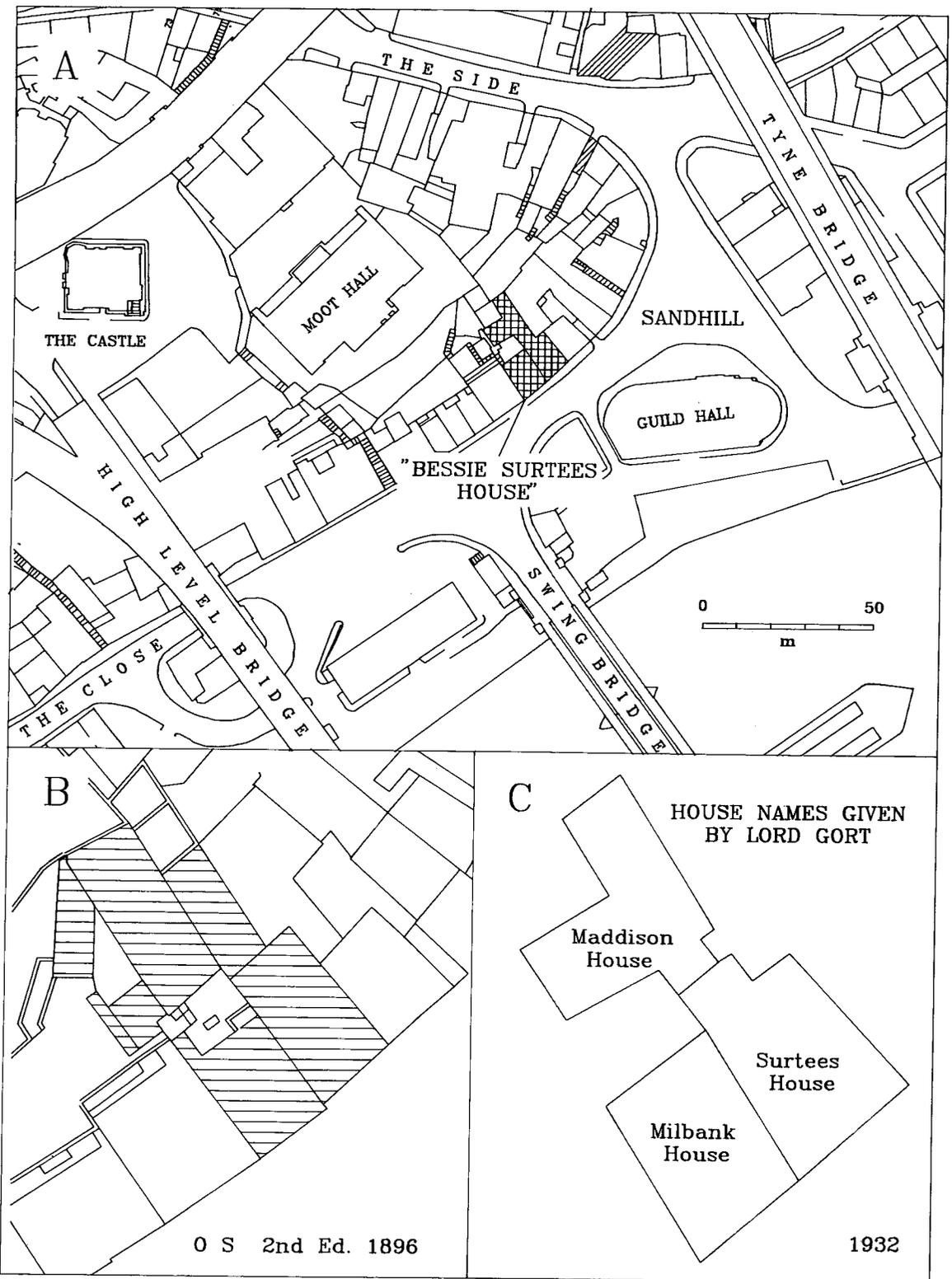


Fig. 1 "Bessie Surtees House", Newcastle: location map.

houses facing it and Sandhill. From either side of the burn two streets led from Sandhill to the higher ground—the Side at the west, leading to the Castle and the long street of markets, and Butcher Bank (now Akenside Hill) at the east, leading to All Saints’ church and Pilgrim Street.

Along the south side of Sandhill were the town wall, the hospital called the Maison Dieu, the town Exchange and Guildhall, and at least one house before the bridge with its chapel dedicated to St. Thomas. West of the bridge Sandhill narrowed to the street called the Close, with buildings on both sides.

On the long north side of the Sandhill there was a flight of steps to the Castle at the west end and the Side at the east end. On the burgage plots between these stood a row of houses which had gardens and outbuildings up against the steep-sided promontory on which the Castle was built. The two houses which are now part of Bessie Surtees House occupy two of these burgage plots.

The outline of the medieval burgage plot pattern may be reconstructed by tracing the fragmentary stone walls that survive between the properties. The antiquity of the uphill (northern) boundary is evidenced by substantial buttressed walling of medieval date surviving in the adjoining property (39 Sandhill) and observed on this plot by R. F. Wilkinson (see below) in 1932, who mistakenly ascribed it to the Roman period. This walling performed an important function in retaining the cliff base, and in stabilising the slope, above a terrace, 4 m above the street level, that has been preserved in all subsequent building as the courtyard entrance for the Milbank house.

The first evidence for buildings on Sandhill is an *I.P.M.* of 1333, the bequest of Richard de Emeldon (Cal. of *I.P.M.* No. 536, 12 October 7 Ed. III). A Guildhall was built in the fifteenth century by Roger Thornton. Henry Bourne tells us that Sandhill was a “place of pleasure and recreation for the people of the town” and that in the reign of Richard II (1377–99) a proclamation was made that merchandise was to be removed from Sandhill, where the inhabitants of Newcastle were wont to assemble for

their recreation (Bourne 1736).

From 1649 to the nineteenth century all writers say that Sandhill is full of shops and the fine houses of merchants. In the first description of Newcastle to be published, William Grey said Sandhill was a market for fish and other commodities containing “many shops, and stately houses for merchants” (Grey 1649, 64). In the seventeenth century the merchants would have had some storage space in their own houses, perhaps in the cellars (which were probably on the ground floor rather than below ground), in the roof spaces and in the rear outbuildings. They also owned or hired storage space in other nearby property, as for example Thomas Davidson did: in his will of 1675 (University of Durham Library Special Collections; Shafto Papers 180) he left his house on the Sandhill to his wife Anne, and among other bequests of property he left his warehouse at the Windows and his lofts and cellars at the foot of the Long Stairs, all of which were in his own use, to his wife and to his son Benjamin respectively. Merchants also needed counting houses, their offices and these too could be accommodated within the burgage plots and possibly within the houses themselves.

Grey was writing shortly after the Civil War, when Newcastle had suffered considerable damage and trade had been brought to a standstill. Peace returned in 1647 and the town council could begin to deal with the problem of having wrecked ships cleared from the river. In 1655 the Council decided to rebuild the Exchange and Guildhall, and chose Robert Trollope from York to be the architect.

Henry Bourne (1736, 123) said that in his time Sandhill was spacious, “adorned with Buildings very high and stately, whose Rooms speak the *Ancient Grandeur*, being very large and magnificent”.

In 1827 Eneas Mackenzie commented on the beginning of the great change that was to overtake the whole Quayside area during the next hundred years:

“The east and north sides of the Sandhill are enclosed by lofty and commodious buildings, many of which contain very large and magnificent



*Fig. 2 The Sandhill frontage, Newcastle upon Tyne.*

rooms, that indicate the grandeur of the ancient merchants of Newcastle. Most of the shops, until lately, retained their old form, being quite open in front, and without glass windows. But they are now all modernized; and the heavy projections and balconies above being pulled down, the whole range has assumed a light, airy and elegant appearance. The old houses, however, still exhibit some curious peculiarities; and as they were built before any window-tax was contemplated, the entire front of the dwelling-rooms is occupied by windows. Many of these houses have been converted into offices; and behind some of them are lofts, granaries and cellars, where great quantities of corn and merchandize are kept.” (Mackenzie 1827, 162)

Town records and other legal documents, some now known only from the writings of Richard Welford, make it possible to trace the history of the Milbank and Surtees houses. That the two plots concerned are those of the present numbers 41–4 Sandhill can be ascertained in two ways: by comparing the names on the sequence of deeds with those on plans drawn to accompany various legal documents, and by reference to Thomas Oliver’s plan of Newcastle published in 1830 which shows the ownership of each building in the town.

#### MILBANK HOUSE (44 SANDHILL)

##### DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

The house on the left as viewed from the Guildhall (fig. 2), was given its brick front around 1741 when the owner Robert Carrick applied to the Town Council for permission to project the ground floor front onto the footpath so that it would line up with the new brick front he had recently made to the upper floors of the building. The Council allowed him to do this, adding that the town’s footpath had thereby gained the piece of ground where there had been formerly steps up to the house and shop (T&WAS, Common Council Book, folio 428).

According to deeds seen by Richard Welford (Welford 1916) this property can be traced through the following changes of ownership:

- 1565 George Heley, merchant, has a messuage, two shops and a garden on Sandhill.
- 1588 William Heley leases his property on Sandhill to Roger Nicholson, mayor.
- 1595 Heley leases to Francis Anderson, taking into account the 1588 lease; Anderson’s tenants there are three men, James Clavering, Christopher Mitford and Isaac Anderson, who had married Nicholson’s daughters, Grace, Elinor and Barbara, respectively. This deed describes the site as being bounded by property of Adrian Hedworth on the west and of Ralph Cock on the east.
- 1605 Francis Anderson sells the property for £300 to William Hall, merchant. It is between a property owned by Ralph Cock on the east and on the west a messuage held by Anderson and his tenant John Brown Esq.
- 1641 By the will of Sir Alexander Hall of Elemore Hall, Co. Durham, the messuage in Sandhill occupied by Sir Lionel Maddison knight is bequeathed to his son Alexander. However, the son died in childhood and the house must have been inherited by Sir Alexander’s sister Barbara. She had married Sheffield Calverley, by whom she had a son William. Widowed, she carried on her husband’s business (he was a draper, and had been apprenticed to her father) and then in 1625 married Ralph Grey, also a draper, who was sheriff in 1628–9.
- 1645 William Calverley, gent, of Lincoln’s Inn, leases to Sir Lionel Maddison for one year the house Sir Lionel lives in but excepting the shop and three lofts.
- [Land Tax of 1664: Mark Milbank Esq., 14 hearths  
Land Tax of 1665 and 1666: the same (PRO E179/158/101,104 & 105)]
- 1665 Ralph Grey and his wife Barbara sell to Thomas Bewick, merchant, of Newcastle, messuages on the Sandhill occupied by Mark Milbank, merchant and alderman, between those possessed by Matthew Jeffreyson and Timothy Robson

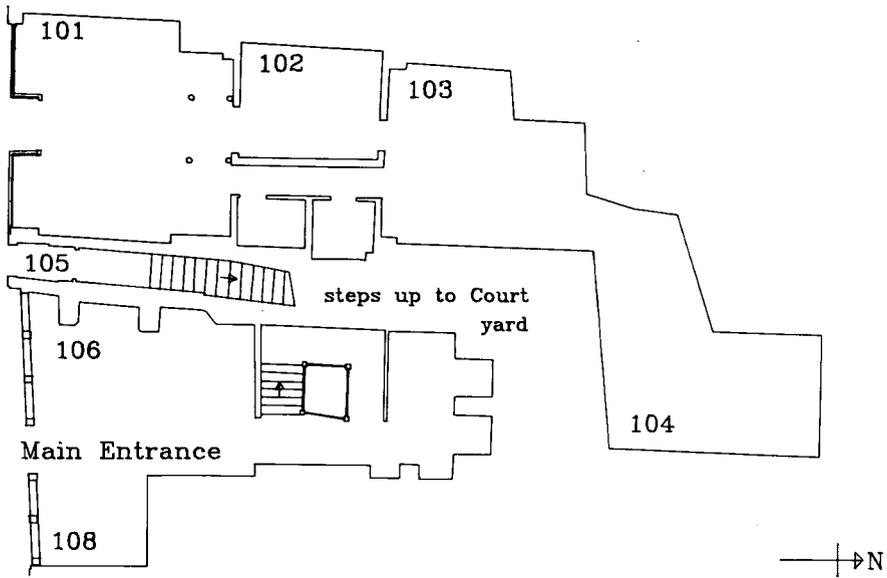


Fig. 3 Level One.

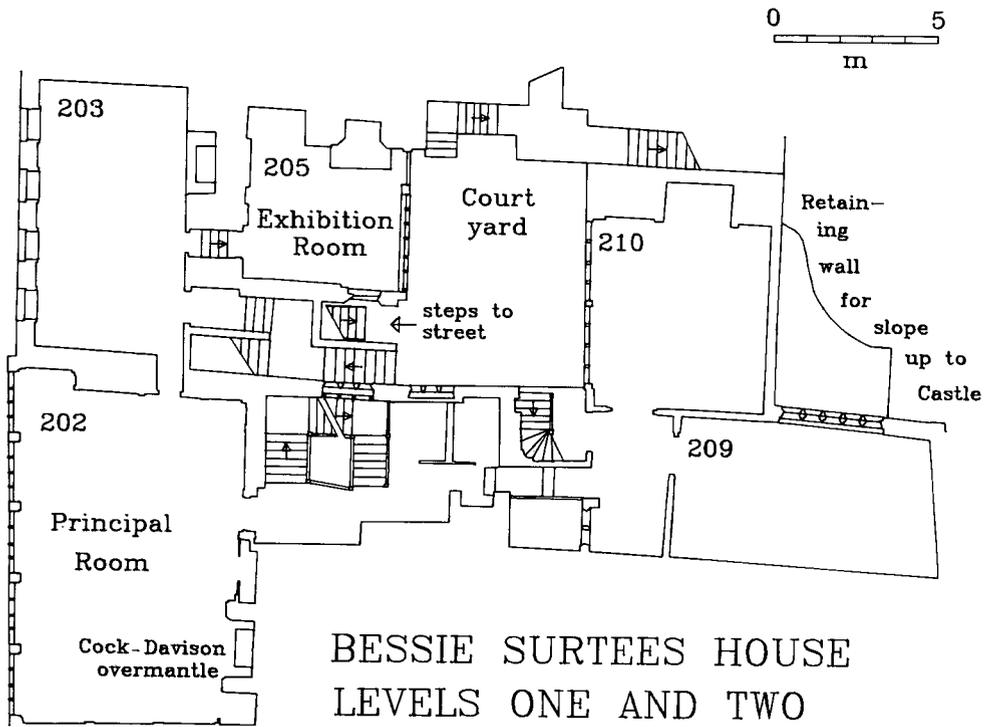


Fig. 4 Level Two.

on the west and by Thomas Davison on the east. In 1641/2 Thomas Bewick had married Jane, daughter of Sheffield Calverley and Barbara, so this is a sale to a son-in-law. Both Ralph and Barbara Grey died in 1666.

1710 Will of Thomas Bewick of Close House who leaves much property including his dwelling house in the Sandhill to his wife Elinor, and after her death to his daughter Philadelphia. She married Utrick Whitfield, a member of the Boothmen's Company. She died in 1737. He was a very wealthy man and at his death about 1743 was said by the *Gentleman's Magazine* to be worth £40,000.

1741 Utrick Whitfield of Newcastle sold to Robert Carrick the great messuage and shop in the Sandhill which were known as the Sandhill Coffeehouse, then in possession of Robert Carrick and others. On the east was a messuage formerly owned by Timothy and then by Thomas Davison, and then by Matthew Bell. On the west was the property of Thomas Greenwell.

This is the Robert Carrick who refronted the house in brick. The coffee house closed around 1757.

#### SANDHILL EXTERIOR OF THE MILBANK HOUSE (44 SANDHILL)

This timber-framed house has a brick front added c. 1741. The bricks have been laid in English garden wall bond, in a repeating pattern of four courses of headers and one course of stretchers. There are five storeys, and the house is four bays wide. The shop which occupies most of the ground floor has been refronted some time around 1900. The shop door is recessed between windows each of three tall lights, below a plain fascia and cornice. To the right of the shop is an eighteenth-century pedimented wood doorcase, with an architrave surround to the door; there is no overlight, and

long leaf-carved scroll brackets support the dentilled pediment. The first floor level is masked by the shop cornice; the second and third floor levels have string courses made of moulded bricks at the position of the joists. The top floor has a dentilled brick string, and at eaves level a plain band is the base of a roof parapet of brick with three corbelled pilasters and flat stone coping. There are four sash windows on each upper floor, with their boxes set forward in the opening and with no special treatment of the sills. All windows except those on the top floor have flat brick arches, made of gauged bricks, which at one time were covered in render to make them look like stone lintels; this inappropriate treatment has been removed in the restoration. The top floor windows have the elliptical brick arches so often found in the second quarter of the eighteenth century and the window heads have been filled with brick. It seems that no original glazing bars remain, since other sashes of that date in Newcastle have glazing bars some 50 mm wide and these are narrower, in a much later style. They are without the slender elegance of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and may be of the 1890s or early 1900s; however, the sashes themselves have not been given the horns typical of new sashes from the 1860s onwards. The roof is covered in pantiles. The left return shows a timber frame in the gable peak, with a mullion and transom window set below the collar of the roof truss.

#### STRUCTURAL HISTORY

##### The Medieval House

The oldest part of Milbank House is a timber-framed house of four bays with sandstone party walls at right angles to the street. The main structural load is taken into the stone walls via massive beams. The Level One beams (101) are no longer open for examination, but the Level Two and Three beams are almost certainly original. The Level Two beams (203) have moulded arrises and support exposed floor joists. Each end has the empty mortice of a corner brace, clearly no longer appropriate to

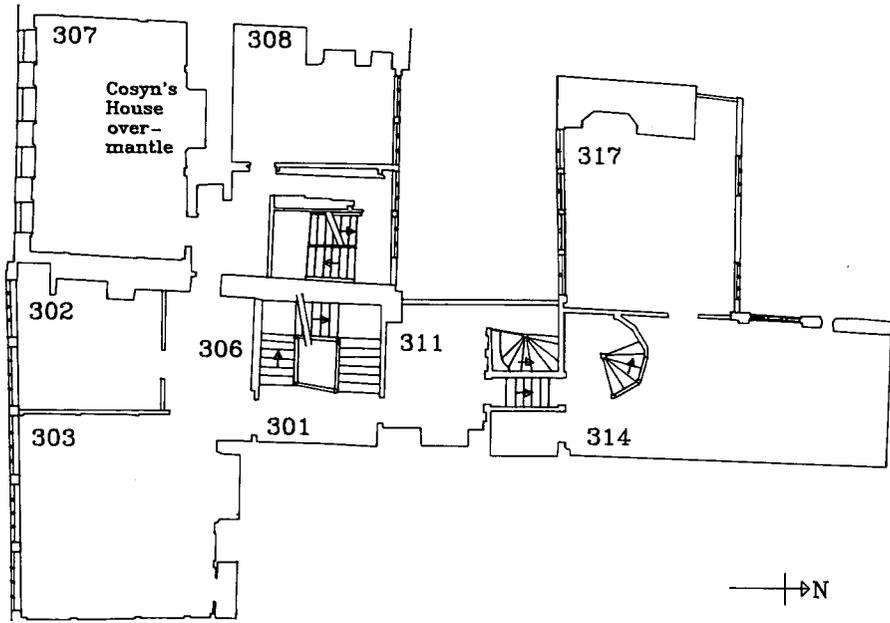


Fig. 5 Level Three.

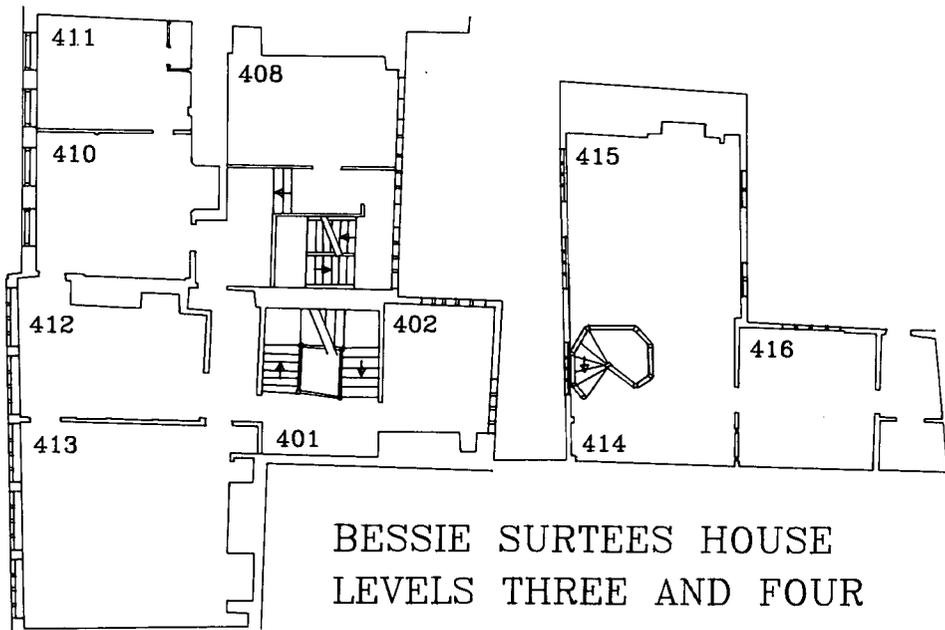


Fig. 6 Level Four.

a beam supported by stone walling. The Level Three beams (307) were probably of similar profile, but have been crudely cut back with an adze. The planed sides still retain a sequence of knife-cut carpenter's marks adjacent to the joists on the south face of the beam, running from east to west, numbered (in sequence with the joists) I–XX, along with a little pictogram cut in the same manner.



The northern beam in 307 was also re-used from a post-and-rail building, having an empty mortice and dowel hole at each end. The fact that the spacing of the earlier joints in three of the four beams of rooms 203 and 307 are the right size for these rooms suggests that they are from a precursor of the present stone-walled house.

The outer face of the east wall was exposed during renovation in 1987, and photographed by the County Archaeologist, Miss Barbara Harbottle (fig. 7). This shows an offset at approximately 6.5 m above present ground level. It is still discernible in the stair-well but in other areas has been almost totally plastered over. The walling on Fig. 7 appears to show a rebuild above the string, of slightly greater thickness, which is clearly seen either side of the west door of 306. An earlier phase may therefore have been two-storeyed. Although evident now only from the Surtees House, the presence of a string course here suggests that the Surtees plot was empty when the third storey of the Milbank House was constructed, or contained a building much less tall.



Fig. 7 Surtees House, Level Three, 1987.

The stone walls now stand three storeys high on each side, with the moulded beams in 307 probably socketted into the top of each wall. The east wall top was exposed in 1992 during recarpeting in the passage of the floor above (403), and the plan of Level Four shows the upwards continuation of this wall to be too narrow to be of stone. That the western wall from this point was not stone is seen in the west wall of 411 which is timber-framed (seven closely spaced studs of thin scantling with a brace at the northern end).

The timber front (no longer extant) was probably of post and rail construction supported by the surviving closely spaced floor joists. That the front was jettied can be seen on the cross-section (fig. 10), which reveals that the foot of the roof cruck blade on the front side has been truncated when the present brick facade was added in the eighteenth century.

The stone walls have been described as gable walls, as that is how they relate to the present roof. It is quite possible that the house, two or three storeyed, originally had a timber roof with gable to the street, as seen at The Cooperage, a contemporary building (Heslop and Truman 1993, 1-14).

The Milbank House now has a massive brick chimney stack to the rear of the front range, and a timber-framed wing to the rear of this. That this was not the original layout is suggested by two observations. Firstly, on the second floor, the brick chimney encases a ceiling beam of size and moulded decoration similar to the two beams in 203 described above. This is not *in situ* and is only seen where it protrudes into passage 204, and in the doorway from 203 to 205 driven through the chimney stack by Wilkinson. As the moulding is on both sides of the beam, it cannot have been from an earlier rear (north) wall, but must represent a third beam in the main house body, suggesting that 203 was originally five bays wide. That the spacing between this and the second (northern) beam in 203 is not regular shows that the chimney was not built around this beam in its original position, which is where the fire-place of the chimney is now. On the third level in 307, an equivalent beam is evident protruding

for 5 cm above the later overmantle. At this level, the stack is not thick enough to encase a beam safely, and so the beam is on the outside of the fireplace.

Secondly, the stone party wall does not extend to the full length of the rear wing, making a neat and regular termination 9.9 m from the frontage. That the string does not turn the corner is not surprising because the rear wall was probably timber-framed like the front. Evidence of the return of this wall in the lower levels, and therefore further indications of the location of a putative early rear wall to the Milbank House, has been removed by later staircases (211, 304) and Wilkinson replaced much of the lower part of the party wall with mullioned windows, but a clue may survive in the position of the back wall of the underlying cellar, 102, which corresponds also with a slight change in alignment in the later stair passage, 105. This would have given the original building almost square proportions, 9.2 m × 9.9 m.

Little evidence survives to suggest the internal configuration of the earliest phases of Milbank House. The beam in 307 against the fire-surround mentioned above shows the position of an earlier fire hood, 3.7 m wide, as a crudely cut rebate between the seventh and eighteenth joists. The rebate has a drilled socket for an upright post, 1.5 m from the east end, possibly for the heck post of a medieval fire hood. The position of the stairs before the addition of the brick chimney is uncertain. Extra thick timber for the fifth and tenth joists in 307 might hint at a stair adjacent to the suggested early chimney mentioned above.

In general design and construction methods the earliest phase is typical of the timber-framed houses of Newcastle of the late and post-medieval period, as exemplified by the Cooperage (Heslop and Truman 1993, 10). Newcastle houses often have stone walls for the lower floors. This was more than fashion or popular building tradition: a surviving medieval building assize directed that burgesses sharing a party wall had to make the wall of stone, at least 14 feet high and 3 feet six inches thick (North 1985 and Heslop and Truman 1993, 9-11). It is not possible to date the

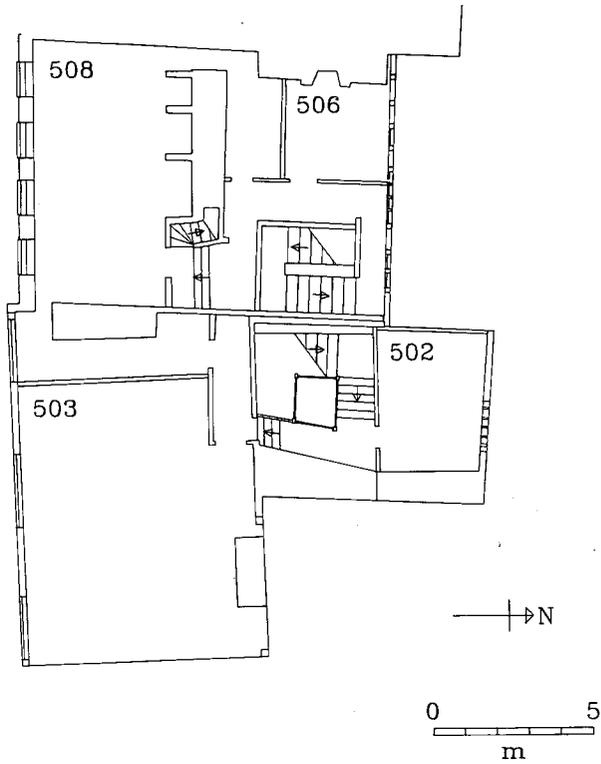


Fig. 8 Level Five.

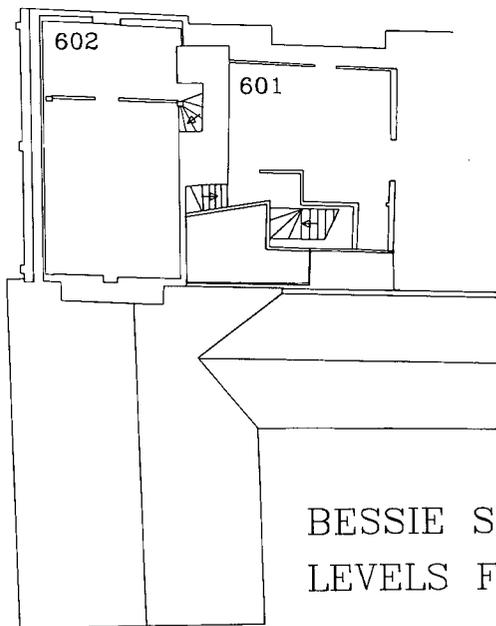


Fig. 9 Level Six.

BESSIE SURTEES HOUSE  
LEVELS FIVE AND SIX

construction or currency of the early phase of the building. It is consistent with the period A.D. 1400–1600.

#### Post-Medieval Alterations

The house was enlarged by the addition of upper storeys, a brick chimney stack and a timber-framed rear wing of four storeys.

The brick chimney stack rises through the centre of Milbank House, heating rooms 203, 307 and 411. As seen in cross-section (fig. 10), the stack is supported on the ground floor by four cast-iron columns. Conceivably, it originally stood at ground level and was underpinned when the passage, 105, took up the space to the east of the stack thus preventing access to the rear cellar, 103. Alternatively, the stack may have risen from the ground surface (which slopes up to the height of the Level Two floor), and been tunnelled under when the cellars were extended at some later time. The stack occupies two-thirds of the width of the house, the now lost staircase taking up the remaining third.

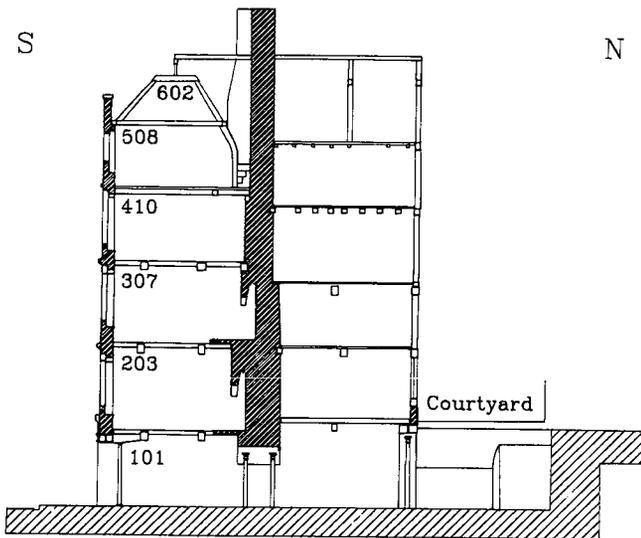
Two upper floors were added to the house sometime after the construction of the brick stack, or at a later stage in the same building campaign. As these floors were above the top

of the stone walls a different construction method was used. It omitted the large east-west ceiling beams of the lower floors, and used instead the north-south joists as load-bearing elements, supported at the front by the timber-framed façade and at the rear by the chimney-stack. The use of tall crucks (4.15 m) standing on the floor of Level Four allowed an upper floor to be inserted half way up the blade, where the collar crosses the cruck.

The upper floors at the front of the house were reached from Level Five via a simple staircase rising from the western part of 411. The position of this is indicated by a tail trimmer in the ceiling joists in 411.

The roof crucks were truncated on the frontage side, when the jetty was replaced by the existing flat-faced façade, but otherwise are complete. Most of the purlins and rafters have been renewed. There are four pairs of cruck blades, three with yokes, and a fourth of full height. Both gables have timber-framed walls with brick nogging, and each has a small window above the collar in the central panel. There are no carpenter's marks on the cruck blades.

The rear wing reflects the construction sequence of the front range in having massive



Milbank House : cross section

Fig. 10 Milbank House: Cross-section.

ceiling beams keyed into the stone side walls in Levels One to Three, with smaller timber joists between timber-framing at Levels Four and Five.

A chimney stack in the west wall heated the apartments in this wing, as well as providing support for the floor joists.

The north gable was retained by Wilkinson, who was able to re-use the cruck blades but needed to replace many of the studs. The present truss was more substantially altered in 1983, when most of the lower timbers were replaced, but the basic form can be understood from a Napper Collerton drawing (1982) and Mrs. Graciela Artola's photographic survey (1980). It is of the usual Newcastle upper cruck type. The blades are yoked, the saddle supporting three posts rather than the usual one (king post). The common rafters lie on two purlins above the elbow of the cruck, nailed onto the blade. The collar is jointed and pegged into the soffit of the blade and the spaces above and below are filled with closely spaced studs of narrow scantling, as at the Cooperage (Heslop and Truman 1993, 5) and a house gable at No. 35 The Close. The present truss has five lights, but only the central pair look original.

At some point in the structural history the passage (105) was taken through the house to the rear courtyard, up 21 steps. At ground level, the west wall is of brick. This is now rendered, but was recorded in 1987. It contains a mullioned window from the west wall of the passage to 101. If the passage is not an original feature, as seems likely, it must have been inserted during a major episode of alteration, giving the possibility of separate access to the house, via the rear courtyard.

The dating of these various alterations cannot be deduced from the structural evidence alone. The simplest and perhaps most plausible explanation is that all the major structural modifications were done at the same time, perhaps when the interior was refurbished in the mid-seventeenth century.

Little survives of the seventeenth-century interior decoration of the Milbank House. The Level Two room (203) has the original stone fireplace with a shallow arch and quarter-round

moulding, although the present firebasket and fireback with Royal arms of Charles I are almost certainly later additions. The room above, 307, has nothing of this period; the ceiling beams are earlier, and the panelling and fireplace are Gort additions, but the fourth level room (410) has original panelling and a contemporary, large, relatively plain stone fireplace with a highly decorated 17th century overmantel. Again, the fireback of James I is probably imported.

A further renovation in the eighteenth century saw the rebuilding of the façade in brick, and the redecoration of the principal rooms. Wilkinson describes the removal of an “Adams ceiling of 1730” from Room 203 in 1933. This was not very likely to be really Adams style—late eighteenth century—but could well be mid-eighteenth century. Georgian sash windows with shutters and seats from this period survive in all three main frontage rooms (203, 307, and 410/11). The pedimented doorway may be contemporary, all of these alterations being part of the restoring of the building to private use after Robert Carrick's coffee house closed, which seems to have been about 1757.

## SURTEES HOUSE (41 SANDHILL)

### Documentary History

Welford (1916, 31–41) describes a series of deeds relating to a house on the Sandhill in which the last document is dated 1770. It is the sale of property in Sandhill by Morton Davison, of Beamish, and devisee of his deceased brother Thomas Davison, to Snow Clayton. On the west was property held by Samuel Thompson, on the east and north was the property of John Smith. The house being sold was occupied by Aubone Surtees and Matthew Bell. There can be little doubt that this is the house which became Bella's Coffee house, and so the sequence of deeds Welford describes must relate to the Surtees House, showing transfer of ownership from 1465. The successive changes of ownership can be summarised:

- 1465 Sale by Robert Rhodes to John Belt of his messuage on Sandhill.
- 1475 Ralph Herbottel, who granted a lease to Belt;
- 1478 to Peter Bewyck, who was mayor in 1490-1;
- 1568 Andrew Bewyck to Gawan Mylbourne, both merchants;
- 1578 Gawyn Mylburne to Robert Mitford, when the property is described as having a brewhouse and a tappestone;
- 1581 Richard Hodgson, Mayor of Newcastle, to Ralph Cock (see Richard Hodgson's will, *Durham Wills and Inventories*)
- 1611 Ralph Cock the elder's will leaves his Sandhill house to his wife Barbara and after her death to his sons William and Ralph
- 1649 Ralph Cock the younger to Samuel Cock, for use of Thomas Davison and his wife Ann, daughter of Ralph Cock, or for use of Ann's heirs
- [Hearth Taxes of 1664, 1665 and 1666: Mr Thomas Davison 11 hearths (PRO E179/157/101, 104 and 105)]
- 1694/5 Timothy Davison in his will leaves his house on Sandhill to his son Thomas;
- 1758 Thomas Davison in his will gives his estate to his nephew Thomas Davison;
- 1765 The will of Thomas Davison the nephew; he leaves his houses in Newcastle to his brother Morton. And finally, linking with the evidence of the plans and lawsuit mentioned below:
- 1770 Morton Davison conveys a messuage on Sandhill to Snow Clayton.

Aubone Surtees, Clayton's tenant before Mrs. Webb set up her coffee house, was a distinguished banker and alderman. He is now better remembered, however, for his daughter's elopement with young John Scott, later Lord Eldon and Lord Chancellor of England, on 18th November 1772. They were married the next day at Blackshields, near Fala, in Scotland. This match was against the wishes of Aubone Surtees, but a reconciliation was eventually effected and a second marriage ceremony was held under licence in St. Nicholas'

church on 19th January 19th 1773. The couple then returned to Oxford where John Scott resumed his studies (Hawkins 1990).

When Aubone Surtees left Sandhill in 1772, Snow Clayton's next tenant was Eleanor Waterwood; she opened a coffee house, Mr Carrick's in the adjacent house, which he gave its new brick front in 1741, having apparently closed in around 1757. "Nellie's Coffee House" ran from about 1774 to 1781; the use as a coffee house then continued under Mrs. Isabell Webb and was known as "Bella's Coffee House". A Webb was entered as one of the tenants of the Claytons until about 1794.

Further light is thrown on the occupants and their use of the building in two groups of documents relating to a lawsuit of c. 1784 in the Newcastle Central Library (Seymour Bell Portfolio 19). An undated plan shows the site of dumping of rubbish against the castle hill at the rear of the plot, Mr. Wilson's stable "which did not fall", and a "house lately built by Mr. Wilson, on the site of a house that fell down". It also shows that Mr. Wilson owned the dwelling house and shop now number 44 Sandhill, and the long range behind it which is labelled "Mr Wilson's Factory and warehouses".

There are in the Tyne and Wear Archives documents relating to a law suit in which the plaintiff was Isabella Webb, widow, who in 1784 became tenant of Snow Clayton and made a living by using the Surtees House as a coffee house. The defendant was James Wilson, who occupied the building to the west and also the long range which overlooked the yard between the two properties. Mrs. Webb complained that Wilson had built a shed which blocked the light to windows in the west side of her property, and especially one—four feet high by four feet two inches wide—in her kitchen. Her lawyer was a Mr. Clayton. He prepared a case which was that not only was there the loss of ancient light, but there was also damage to trade because the kitchen was vital to carrying on the business of a coffee house. Moreover, glasses were knocked against each other and broken because of the gloom, candles had to be burnt even at mid-day, and customers left the house in disgust. Clayton obtained a deposition from

a 70-year-old lady, Jane Tate, who had worked in the house thirty years previously for Matthew Bell, and then for Aubone Surtees; the kitchen window was the same as the present one and seemed to her, from the form of the glass and the make of it, to be very ancient. From other evidence it is shown that there were ten windows in the west side of the house. The outcome, in 1786, was that Wilson paid damages and costs to Mrs. Webb of just over £30. A second plan, drawn up in 1798 to accompany a conveyance to Archibald Reed of the house to the east of the Clayton house (39 Sandhill), marks Nathaniel Clayton as the then owner. Below Clayton's name in brackets is “Bella's Coffee House” which is shown as protruding nine feet W-E and 12 feet S-N into Reed's house on the ground floor, and 17 feet by 22 feet on the first floor—a strange boundary which persists to this day.

It is notable that the James Wilson who so annoyed Mrs. Webb is listed in Whitehead's Directory as a tobacconist; his property is shown in the late eighteenth-century plans to include a factory in the rear wing; and in the 1801 Directory Mrs. Wilson has a coffee house in Sandhill. By 1833 there is no Mrs. Wilson's coffee house, but Isabella Wilson has a clothes dealer's business in High Bridge. It seems possible that Bella's Coffee House became Mrs. Wilson's Coffee House, especially since the plan in the Seymour Bell file shows Mr. Wilson as owning both front and rear properties in 1798.

In the eighteenth century, when Mrs. Webb in what had been Aubone Surtees' house was pursuing her neighbour Mr. Wilson in the courts, she was Snow Clayton's tenant. He had acquired the house about 1772, inheriting the tenant Aubone Surtees who had lived there since 1754 as Thomas Davison's tenant. Snow's son Nathaniel then inherited the property and it was owned by the family until 1848 when it appears as for the last time under “N Clayton's Executor” in the land tax records (Twas 23). In 1795 Snow Clayton had built new lofts behind the front range, again according to the land tax records, and these may well be the block which eventually was demolished and

became the site of the so-called Maddison house.

The Clayton family acquired part of this site again in the late nineteenth century. John Clayton seems to have acquired the left house in 1880, and the right house in the 1890s, thus uniting the two.

Among the Clayton's tenants in this century, a “Seamens' Mission” is disparagingly referred to by Wilkinson (“I'm sorry to say the majority of frequenters were not seamen” Wilkinson, NCL). This was “The Seamen and Boatmen's Friendly Society Sailors' Rest” from 1925 to the Gort sale, according to directories. (Ward's *Directory of Newcastle* 1925, 1929, 1930) Donnelly Lodging house occupied the rear wing before the Gort restoration (op. cit. 1919, 1922, 1925, 1930).

The houses remained in the Clayton family until the sale of part of the Clayton Estate on 9 December 1931 (Twas 1119) when the united property “The historical premises 41-4 Sandhill”, was acquired by the Hon. Standish Robert Gage Prendergast Vereker (1888-1975), who became 7th Viscount Gort on the death in 1940 of his brother and 6th Viscount, Field Marshal of the British Army.

#### THE SANDHILL FRONTAGE OF SURTEES HOUSE (41 SANDHILL)

This timber-framed building has five storeys and, on upper floors, five bays. It is of post-and-rail construction, with render covering the area below the continuous strips of windows on first, second and third floors, and filling the panels on the top floor. The only exposed parts of the frame are the posts and on the top floor only, the studs. Each floor is jettied over that below, and the first, second and third floors have full-width strips of glazing interrupted only by the posts of the frame; the sills rest on long curved brackets which rest on a cord string (fig. 11). On all the upper floors these posts are remarkable in the quality of their decoration, which consists of pilaster-like treatment in which five strips of reeding appear to hang like pieces of cord, with their tops gath-



Fig. 11 Detail of the Sandhill Exterior Elevation.

ered into a bulbous shape and their lower ends into a tassel shape. This quasi-classical detail is also found defining the bays of the internal panelling. The ground floor is partly this property, partly in the same ownership as the building next door, a "flying freehold" situation not uncommon in medieval towns where properties have been merged and then separated as ownerships have changed. Most of the ground floor is filled by a shop front which was installed in the 1930s restoration, using old timber. The central shop door is of seventeenth-century appearance, with planks and panels, and three windows to the left and two to the right have small-paned fixed lights in mullions and transoms. Above the shop win-

dow, leaf-carved brackets or beam ends support the first floor. The house windows are 4 lights each, with transoms and some lower opening casements, all with small panes; the top floor has high lights only in end and centre bays, the intermediate bays being filled with studs and render, and the bressumer which holds posts and studs directly on rendered joist ends of large scantling. The roof is covered in Welsh slate, and has a renewed brick chimney at the left end.

The modern appearance of these timber-framed houses is that of a continuous wall, composed of a richly-decorated timber frame which has full-width strips of windows. This may be misleading. Certainly in the case of the

adjacent house, number 39, there is both visible and anecdotal evidence of the removal of a full-height projecting bay window. The interruption in the plaster strings, and the variation in the scantling of the beams, indicate the removal of this bay. There was, moreover, an order made by the Council in 1821 that all such projections must be removed. So there may well have been such windows as shown in the Akenhead publication of 1847, facing page 6, “The House of Aubone Surtees, Esq., Sandhill” which shows the present numbers 39–44; all timber-framed, a 5-bay, 5-storey house at the left and the 3-bay, 4-storey house which is now number 39 at the right. There are two full-height oriels in the second and fourth bays of left house, the present no. 41, and another propped on posts in the centre of the house next door, the present no. 39.

### STRUCTURAL HISTORY

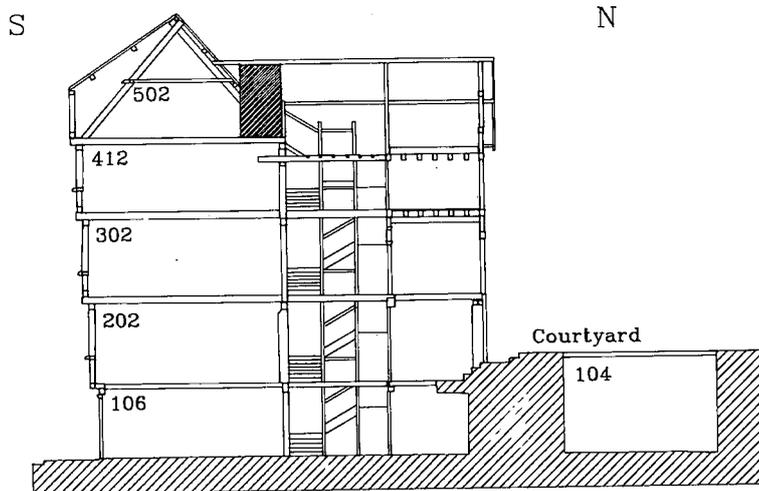
This building can be split into three main structural parts, a front timber-frame range, a rear staircase and a rear wing. The two chimney stacks in the front part of the building are

against the Milbank party wall and in the north west corner, where the brickwork effectively forms a north wall to the frame. The east wall is hidden by panelling and render; as this building has effectively taken one bay from the almost identically fronted adjacent structure, 39 Sandhill, it seems most likely that these two were built at the same time, and shared this wall in their framing.

It is likely that the main frontage frame is a single build of the mid-seventeenth-century, with a later heightening to form a garret. Although the rooms and passages have undergone many modifications over the generations, the main structural elements have survived well, and required a minimum of alteration.

### Internal Decoration

The Level One rooms were re-furbished in the 1930s (see below) but the fireplace and panelling of the Level Two room (202) are probably original (fig. 13). The fireplace with the date 1657 in the spandrels of the arch had been bricked up by 1930 and a modern one built in front of it, but was revealed by 1932 (fig. 14). The rear wall is plastered and decorated with Tudor rose motifs. The firebasket on a brick



Surtees House : cross section

Fig. 12 Surtees House: Cross-section.



*Fig. 13 Surtees House, Room 202, 1993.*

floor supports a cast iron fireback with the Royal arms of Charles I and the initials C. R.

The carved oak overmantel has classical designs in three panels flanked by pairs of Ionic columns. In the friezes above the columns are four small shields carved with the arms of Newcastle—three castles, the Cock family—a roundel between three cockerels, the Davison family—a wavy band between six cinquefoils, and the Merchant Adventurers' Company—waves below roses and leopards for England. Ralph Cock, the then owner of Surtees House and Mayor of Newcastle in 1669 (see above), was a governor of the Merchant Adventurers' Company. Anne, one of his four "cannie hinnie" married Thomas Davison in 1657 as the

letters carved at the foot of the columns indicate.

It was from this room that the celebrated elopement of Bessie Surtees and John Scott, later Lord Eldon, is reputed to have taken place. While the event is well authenticated by letters and memoirs of the family, there appears to be no evidence to support the popular legend that the escape was from the western-most casement (Hawkins 1991).

Room 303 is entirely of the seventeenth century, giving it a unity which is unusual in Bessie Surtees House. The panels are separated by reeded pilasters as in the fine room immediately below (202) and on the frontage façade. The pilasters are surmounted with capi-

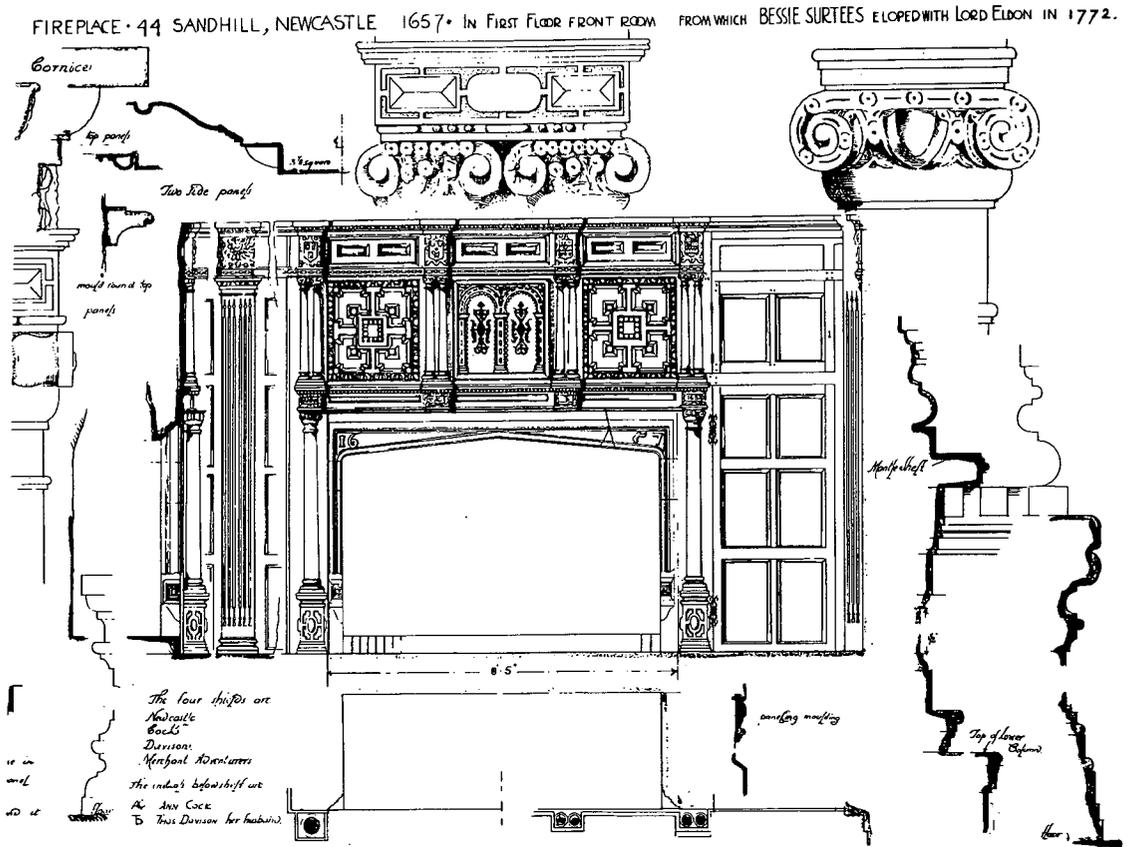


Fig. 14 Surtees House Fireplace, from drawings by C. I. Greenhow, 1932 (Courtesy of RCHB/E)

tals carved with masks in classical style. The ceiling is plain except for central and corner plaster decoration consisting of two alternating patterns of branches with fruit, flowers and birds, which have been copied in the ceiling below. Figure 15 shows this room as it looked shortly after Lord Gort's renovation.

The large stone fireplace with brick hearth is flanked by Ionic timber columns and a finely carved overmantel with Corinthian columns and geometric patterning. At frieze height are wooden masks representing a laurel-wreathed male head and a female with native American features. There are firebacks with both Charles I and James I arms.

The fourth level has been divided at an early

date, into two rooms. Two authentic features survive in the larger room, 413, the plastered bird-and-floral motifs in the corners and centre of the otherwise plain ceiling (copied in 202) and the fireplace, both of which are seen in their present position in a photograph of May 1932 (NCL 29516).

#### The Roof

The roof consists of five A-frames sitting on wall plates parallel with the street. The western end of the ridge beam is keyed into the west chimney stack, and the western ends of the purlins are bedded into the eastern wall of the Milbank House, restating the fact that the



*Fig. 15 Surtees House, Room 303, c. 1944.*

upper storeys of the latter predate the roof of the Surtees House.

The eastern faces of the trusses have a series of carpenter's marks near the apex, cut with a chisel, counting from the west—I, II, III, IIII; and the fair face on the eastern gable is on the exterior. The apex of each has a lapped joint, secured with two pegs. The fourth truss from the west is keyed into brickwork adjacent to the northern chimney stack, suggesting that the chimney was contemporary with the main frame.

The east gable is in good condition, having had its structural duties taken over by a new A-frame placed outside the original. The wall is of brick-filled timber panels, with four studs above the collar and six below. The studs are half-lapped onto the collar, each one secured with two iron nails.

#### The Staircase and Rear Wing

The main problem of structural interpretation is in linking the staircase and rear wing to this body, primarily because they were derelict in 1932, and have been gutted and rebuilt.

The square stair-well carries the stairs up five floors to the top of the building, with slender, turned oak balusters and rails between four square hollow posts. There are cupboards and doorways off most landings, their ironwork indicating sixteenth or seventeenth-century dates but it is now impossible to say whether or not they were originally intended for Bessie Surtees House.

The half-turn and landing staircase is shown in its present position in a photograph of 1929 (fig. 16, NCL 29522) and so was not one of Wilkinson's introductions. The stair, however, has much new timber, and new cross beams at floor and half landing level brought in to link

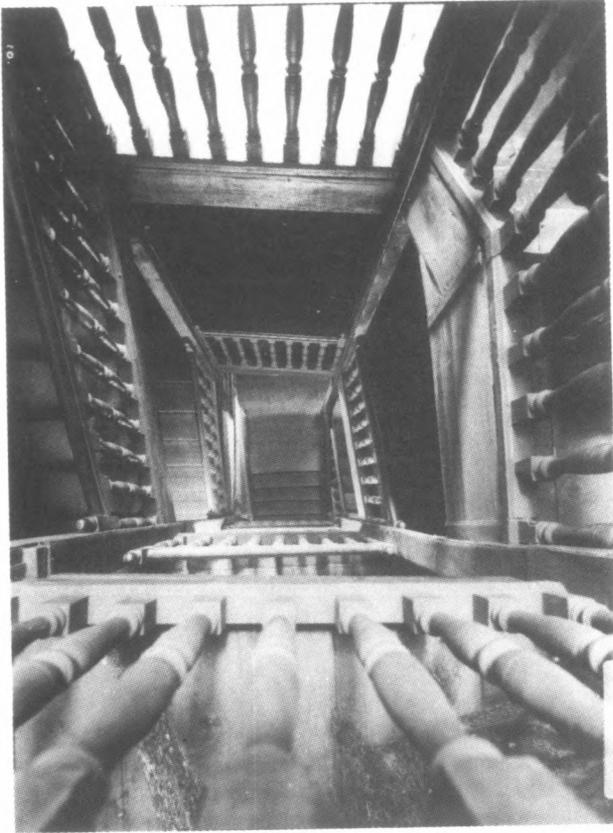


Fig. 16 *The Surtees Staircase, 1929.*

with the floor beams on either side, many of which were also renewed. Closer inspection reveals that at least three different baluster types make up the present stair: a visibly older design with thicker neck and waist found on the gallery of Levels Two and Four and the first flight from the bottom, secured without wooden pegs; a second design with slim neck, on the rest of the rising flights from Level One to Four secured with pegs in alternate balusters; and a third design—with a larger collar on the upper shaft and more pronounced banding on the waist, without wooden pegs, and on a stringer without mouldings top and bottom. This suggests the following sequence: the main stair of four levels was built with the second type, with moulded stringers and peg construction, without a balustrade on the horizontal front passages. The first flight was not in its present position. The stair was extended when

the new garret wall improved the accommodation of the roof-space chamber, using new balusters loosely copied from the original, and constructed without pegs or stringer moulding. This was how the stair looked until 1933, when Wilkinson got a different set of balusters of almost identical design (possibly from the now lost Milbank stair) and added the gallery balustrades and realigned the bottom flight.

This final conclusion poses the question, what was the original position of the bottom flight? This addresses one of the main interpretational questions of the structure: when was the present division between shop and residence created, and to achieve that separation, how could the upper storeys be entered without passing through the shop? The solution was that an extra door at the western edge of the frontage gave access via a passage screened off from the shop, up a short flight of

stairs onto the first half landing of the main stair. The head room for the first flight of stairs was achieved by breaking the western-most ceiling joist with a tail-trimmer which still survives. This accords with the reminiscences of pre-Gort tenants who remember the stair leading straight ahead (Rodney Hawkins, pers. comm.). This passage had to be removed to allow the insertion of the present fireplace, which Wilkinson states was put in to buttress the creeping party-wall. A street door in this position is shown on the Akenhead engraving of c. 1847.

The rear wing has very little original fabric, in that it was not only rebuilt by Wilkinson, but it was altered to fulfil a different function, and from providing service accommodation to the main rooms of the Surtees House, it became a link block to the wholly new building which Gort called Maddison House. The small rooms of the original wing were heated by fireplaces in a four-flued brick chimney stack in the east wall which were blocked up by Wilkinson.

The garret storey was created by altering the pitch of the southern slope of the roof of the main frame, and adding walling between the old wall plate and the new eaves line. The purlins of the new roof line are supported by vertical struts from the old truss principal rafter, and the wall posts further secured by tie rods, now metal but originally timber.

#### “BESSIE SURTEES HOUSE”—THE AMALGAMATION OF THE HOUSES

Nos 41, 43 and 44 Sandhill were purchased in 1931 when the Hon. S. R. Vereker, later seventh Viscount Gort, was minded to refurbish the group in period garb and so recreate a historic mansion on the Sandhill around the core of the Surtees House from which an ancestor of his wife (a Surtees) had eloped with the future Lord Chancellor. He employed R. F. Wilkinson of Windy Nook, Gateshead, an engineer injured in the Great War, to supervise the renovation and acquire period fittings to refit the largely empty and derelict timber carcasses of the three buildings. The process and result

of this work are described in three interesting sources; a typescript of a talk given by Wilkinson to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle during the work, an unpublished account of the renovation by his granddaughter Laura Proud in 1954, and a catalogue of a charity exhibition held partly to celebrate the completion of the renovation of Bessie Surtees House in 1934 with an historical introduction by T. Wake of the Newcastle City Library.

The frontage blocks of 41 and 44, being in a relatively good condition, required little alteration below roof level, but the rear sections were gutted and rebuilt, while the warehouse in the back plot was demolished and a completely new building erected, the so-called Maddison House, incorporating the stone west wall of the precursor. Gort's renovation undoubtedly saved the buildings from the fate of many contemporary houses, the demolition sales at which Wilkinson made many valuable purchases.

#### Interior Alterations and Additions—Milbank House

The shop of the Milbank House was replastered but not altered by Gort. The four cast-iron columns on the ground floor that support the chimney-stack are of nineteenth-century date. The front room of the floor above, 203, had an eighteenth-century ceiling removed, and access to the rear wing provided by knocking a passage through the chimney flue into Room 205. This room had the floor raised by 1 m to bring it level with the courtyard, and period floor-boards were brought from a building in Sunderland dated 1620. Much, if not all of the present linenfold panelling must have been brought in from elsewhere. The stone arched doorway to the courtyard is said to have come from the demolished Trinitarian Priory at Pandon. The poorly re-assembled stone fireplace came from a house at Shotley Bridge. The fireback depicts the scene of the Annunciation and is probably German or Flemish and seventeenth-century.

The Level Three room in the front range (307) was fitted with imported panelling with Ionic capitals which has been poorly installed

and is of unknown origin. The main feature of the room is the elaborately carved and painted oak overmantel, which came from John Cosyn's House (demolished 1895), via Eastfield Hall, Warkworth. The three carved panels are separated by Corinthian columns and bear coats of arms with supporters, mantling and crests. On the left are the arms of the town of Newcastle with supporting sea-horses, in the centre those of John Cosyn, ermine a chevron engrailed with lion rampant for its crest, and on the right the shield of the Worshipful Company of Drapers of London (three sunbeams issuing from three clouds crowned with three imperial crowns). Cosyn was a member of this company.

#### Interior Alterations and Additions—Surtees House

The shop frontage, now forming the entrance room, was partitioned and re-structured. The large stone fireplace is an addition brought from elsewhere to buttress the party wall between Surtees House and Milbank House. The fire basket supports a large plain cast iron fireback bearing the initials W.I.M. The heavy seventeenth-century door to the street and the adjacent Tudor windows are also additions of this restoration, the former having been purchased in London and the latter having come from a house in the Close. Both are however, quite in keeping with the character of the entrance to a wealthy merchant's property of the period.

The Principal Room, 202 (figs 4 and 13) on Level Two was restored to its present form by Gort (see above). The room illustrates well a principal room where a wealthy merchant would have entertained his guests and conducted business. It is well lit by the continuous strip of five south facing windows with ovolo-moulded mullions and transoms, from one of which Bessie Surtees is said to have eloped (see above). The walls are oak-panelled, the panels themselves are of Jacobean rather than Renaissance proportions, but the reeded pilasters which divide the bays are in a free interpretation of the classical style, having quasi-classical capitals surmounted with carved

cherubim. Five of the panels have openwork lyre or acanthus motifs, screening a recess to the left of the fireplace.

The plaster ceiling, divided by strapwork into panels of geometric shapes, incorporates floral and fruit motifs, as well as fleurs-de-lys and roses. It is reputedly a copy of the ceiling in Cosyn's House which once stood on the junction of Sandhill and the Quay, but a 1929 photograph in the Central Library (NCL 29516) shows a plain ceiling, and the Cosyn House had been demolished for forty years when the present decoration was added.

On the floor above, the larger of the two rooms, 413, was fitted with panelling on the eastern wall, and the head of the fireplace arch was embellished with a Greek-key pattern. There is a damaged fireback of James I within it.

Room 412 was given a decorated plaster ceiling of rectangular strapwork enclosing floral designs similar to those downstairs. The heavy oak door, with lock escutcheons, strap hinges and a wicket gate, is sixteenth-century but the door frame is later. The wall panelling, which appears to be imported, is mainly plain but there is some linen-fold panelling near the fireplace.

#### The so-called “Maddison House”

This is at the back of the two frontage houses and is entirely of the 1930s. The basic form is L-shaped, with a spiral staircase at an angle of the two blocks. The north and east walls were entirely re-built in the 1980s restoration while the south wall dates mostly from the 1930s. Beneath its gabled roofs are two windows with leaded panes crowned with low pediments made of re-used moulded timbers. Steps to the left of this wing lead up to the garden and out to the back of the Moot Hall (built 1810–1812) which can just be seen above the railings. Within the garden are other old walls and revetments, some of them supporting the south curtain wall of the castle bailey.

The principal room of the lower floor, 210, has its north wall built into the hillside and a large brick fireplace with overmantel in the Elizabethan style including small carved heads.

The fireplace contains a Charles I cast iron fireback. The floor is of large brick tiles laid diagonally.

On the next floor, Room 317 has a curious "jailer's" peep hole covered with an iron grill. It was acquired in the 1930s restoration. The windows all along the south side are peppered with decorative painted glass panes. The plain fireplace arch was once plastered over, as can be seen from the keying marks which have disfigured it.

The roof timbers of Room 415 give this room its character. They appear at first to be of raised cruck construction but on closer inspection some of the timbers can be seen to be unsupported or superfluous additions. The fireplace at the western end is early seventeenth-century. It is flanked by slender stone Ionic columns and stone brackets carved with floral designs. The overmantel itself is dated 1654 and embellished with a central plaque and cherubim at either end.

The straight stair from the courtyard turns into an open octagonal staircase of the Jacobean period, and is reputed to come from four different sources. Wilkinson describes the purchase of a stair from Beaudesert Hall, Staffordshire, which was demolished in 1935 (R. F. Wilkinson, NCL).

#### Later Renovations

Further structural modifications awaited the purchase of the complex by the Tyne and Wear Metropolitan County Council from the Estate of Viscount Gort in 1978. The Napper Colleton Partnership was commissioned in November 1979 to oversee repairs starting early in 1980, with the assistance of survey funded by English Heritage. The first phase saw the rebuilding of the now precarious Milbank chimney stack. Next, the Milbank roof was replaced, and the north gable dismantled and refitted in largely new timber (October 1983). The rear retaining wall was rebuilt (April 1984), the cellar under Surtees House was filled in and the existing basements and stone party wall waterproofed (1985). The final major alteration took place in 1986–87, and saw the insertion of a new staircase and fire

escape in Milbank House, and more limited alterations throughout the complex to allow a new usage as the regional offices of English Heritage (Historic Properties Group).

## DISCUSSION

Both messuages were for centuries owned and occupied by men of great wealth and distinction. Two of the most beautiful and most interesting monuments in St Nicholas' church, for example, are those of the seventeenth century to members of the Maddison family and of the Hall family. Their wealth was the result of their occupations as merchants combined with shrewd investments, for the various wills talk of coal-mines and other property as well as the lofts and cellars in which they would store their merchandise when it came into the town by river. At first they themselves lived near the river and presumably had counting houses either in their houses or beside their warehouses, but as their wealth increased they moved away. Sometimes the houses were never lived in by their owners, and were let at first to men of similar social standing.

Of the layout of these merchants' houses we have little evidence, but it is shown by North (1985, 41) that there were some formal regulations controlling building within the town. The party wall between 41 and 44 Sandhill seems to be as required by the assize.

The evidence of surviving plot shapes, as seen in for example Oliver's 1831 map, suggests that from the Middle Ages there had been long plots along the south side of the Close, giving direct access to the river's edge so that goods could be unloaded directly into warehouses or onto private quays, while on Sandhill there was less space available for such development because of the public buildings on the south side. The messuages or houses that were built on the north side of Sandhill, in the restricted space available between the route to the bridge, the market place and the castlehill, would have their fronts to the street, with access to the space behind generally by means of a passageway. Merchants would need

to have their goods carried by porters from the quay to their warehouses. It was not unusual for wills of the seventeenth century to cite “my house wherein I dwell on the Sandhill” (Ralph Cock the elder: will made 29/8/1611, proved 1612, Durham Probate Records)—and then also “a message or warehouse at the Windowgate” (Timothy Davison will made 7/2/1694, proved 1669, Durham Probate Records), and others mention lofts and cellars, e.g. the Cooperage, No. 32 The Close (Heslop and Truman 1993, 3). Since space was restricted by the shape of the site, the extra accommodation needed to store goods would have to be found in cellars and roof space, in rear buildings or at other locations. Town houses of this period were still one room deep, essentially following the pattern inherited from the medieval hall houses whereby a large space for communal living was supplemented by a private withdrawing room or solar, and by private bed chambers; in an open site services would be set against the opposite end of the hall from the solar. On restricted town sites, as on the north side of Sandhill, they were often in a rear wing and the kitchen was often entirely detached for reasons of safety in the days before brick chimneys became the norm.

While a variety of medieval town house plans have been recognised, most with front range to the street and rear wings, the Sandhill sites are unusual. There is no long strip of land behind the house to accommodate extra rooms and outhouses, and provide stabling and gardens. To add extra rooms which are comfortable to have light, it was necessary to add storeys onto the front range, reserving the dark and probably damp rear areas, under the shadow of, and often burrowing into the hill, for the use of servants and as storage and ancillary services such as brewing and washing. It can be seen from documents relating to other sites on Sandhill that there would be shops on the ground floor, and a low hall above, with adjoining buttery and dairy for storing food.

Adjoining the hall would be chambers, including bedrooms. Above there could be a gallery which could have access to the leads, the walking space on the roof. There were also,

perhaps reached by external flights of stairs, a low kitchen and a high kitchen, a pastry room and a starching chamber, cellars and lofts. These houses clearly provided all the rooms and services needed by a prosperous family which ran its business from home, and often provided extra accommodation for other members of the family. Comparisons can be made with what is known about merchants' houses in other major east coast ports such as King's Lynn, where Parker has shown that merchant properties were modernised and extended in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but that there were still by the end of the seventeenth century certain buildings and services which were provided on the landholding of a merchant (Parker 1971, 43 *passim*).

A feature of the development of the Newcastle quayside is the flourish of building activity in Sandhill in the decades after 1650. This period saw the rebuilding of the Guildhall in an eclectic style, part Gothic, part classical, by Robert Trollope of York, the construction of the Mansion House on the Close and the construction of many new houses and commercial buildings in Sandhill, of which the Milbank, Surtees and Red House group still survive. There may be several reasons for this: the spur to trade given by the end of the trading hiatus occasioned by the Civil War and Scottish Occupation; the need to replace buildings destroyed during those troubles; the expansion of the coal trade during the final decades of the century; and the wish to replace the medieval house halls with more elegant and better lit buildings which reflected fashionable taste. These must have been the last timber-framed buildings to be built in Newcastle.

As the eighteenth century saw a shift away from living beside the river, commercial use of the great houses along Sandhill overtook domestic use and by 1741 the west house was certainly, and by 1784 the east house was also, a coffee house.

The period of Clayton family ownership saw the buildings rapidly decay to a near derelict state until purchase of the united property “The historical premises 41–4 Sandhill”, by the later seventh Viscount Gort.

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