

An Observation Tower on Newcastle Quayside

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SUMMARY

Illustrations by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck of Newcastle upon Tyne published in 1723 and 1745 showed a tower-like structure immediately behind the medieval town wall along the Quayside. This article examines the possible roles of the structure as an observation point for organisations supervising the collection of fees from ships using the Quayside. It is suggested that the demolition of the town wall from 1763 was part of a major development of the Quayside to handle increasing trade and maximise the Corporation's revenues; this also enabled the relocation of the Custom House, rendering the tower redundant, and also the rebuilding of St Ann's Chapel.

INTRODUCTION

IN 1723 AND 1745 THE ILLUSTRATORS SAMUEL AND NATHANIEL BUCK engraved views of Newcastle upon Tyne from across the River Tyne from the tower of St Mary's Church in Gateshead (figs. 1 and 2).¹ Their highly-detailed views recorded the churches, mansions and defensive walls of the town, the busy traffic on the river and quayside, and several buildings that have been demolished since the eighteenth century, one of which is the subject of this paper. This was a tower-like structure that stood inside the town wall and rose at least two storeys above the battlements of the wall to give views down onto and along the quay through windows in each face (fig. 3). The 1745 illustration showed two levels of horizontal bands. The tower may have adjoined the rear of the town wall, so that the wall-walk provided access to its middle storey. It is possible that the tower was hexagonal, but for reasons given below it is more likely that the tower was octagonal, with windows in the sides looking out onto the Quayside, at least on the upper storey. Possible functions of the structure include a bay window on one of the Quayside houses, a defensive tower on the wall, a belvedere, or an observation tower for one of the organisations monitoring activity on the Quayside.

The Quayside at Newcastle was formed from the eleventh to the fourteenth century through successive dumping of ballast, midden and earth at the base of the river cliff to create jetties and docks for ships, with the docks later infilled to create a straight quay along the River Tyne (Graves and Heslop 2013, 185). To the east of the Tyne Bridge, on the downstream side, the town wall was built along this quay in the early fifteenth century. The Quayside was often called the Newe Key in records of the Newcastle Corporation (Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums). Bourne (1736, 133) noted that the town wall along the Quayside created two streets, one on the north and inside the wall and one to the south between the wall and the river. The southern street was the Key or Quay, 103 rods in length from the Guildhall to the Sandgate. Bourne (1736, 133) described the street inside the town wall as:

chiefly inhabited by such as have their Living by Shipping, such as Merchants, *Hoftmen*, *Brewars*, &c. As it is the great Place of Refort for the Buinefs of the *Coal-trade* . . . it is not much to be wondred at, if in going along it, you fee almost, nothing but a whole Street of Sign-pofts of Taverns, Ale-houfes, Coffee-houfes, &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE QUAYSIDE

The eastern Quayside was illustrated in several maps and illustrations during the eighteenth century and these enable an analysis of how the mercantile requirements of the town developed to cope with the expansion of trade during the eighteenth century. It must be noted that there were inconsistencies in these depictions of the Quayside. The Quayside structure did not feature on either James Corbridge's map of Newcastle in 1723 (Frostick 2003) or Isaac Thompson's map of 1746 (Wake 1937, plate XL), and the demolition of the town wall and probably the Quayside structure occurred before the area was shown in Charles Hutton's map of 1772. These were plans rather than prospects, showing most of the town as blocks of buildings but with sketches of the principal buildings including the Guildhall and churches. Corbridge and Thompson showed the town wall along the Quayside as a solid structure with battlements and omitted the numerous water gates illustrated by the Bucks in 1723 and 1745 and also documented by Bourne (1736, 133). Corbridge included a prominent gate opening onto the river at the end of Broad Chare, but this did not appear in the Bucks' prospects or Hutton's map, nor was it mentioned by Bourne, suggesting that this may have been artistic licence by Corbridge. Corbridge omitted the high and low cranes from his drawing of the Quayside, though the low crane featured prominently in the Bucks' prospect of 1745 and the sites of both cranes were indicated on Thompson's map of 1746. The site of the Customs House to the east of the Guildhall was shown by Thompson but not by Corbridge. The omission of the Quayside structure by Corbridge and Thompson may have occurred as it was relatively small in comparison to the plans of the whole town they were producing and because of their attempts to portray the town wall as a standing structure with battlements. The inclusion of the towers on the town wall around the rest of the town was perhaps important because they conveyed the completeness and strength of the walls, which were a source of some pride to the town.

The Bucks' views of English towns were very detailed and they created accurate depictions of what they saw (Hyde 1994, 29). This can be seen by comparing the views of Newcastle in 1723 and 1745 with the earliest photographs of the Quayside before the 1854 fire (Manders 1995, 9). The Guildhall was shown as constructed by Robert Trollope after 1655, with the medieval *Maison Dieu* abutting its east side, and before the reconstructions of 1794, 1809 and 1823. To the right of the Guildhall the Bucks showed a gap where the road from Sandhill entered the Quayside, with a building with a single gable on the corner of the Quayside and the Sandhill. Adjoining this corner building was another with four gables (or two buildings of two gables) and three storeys of windows, which accords with the position and nineteenth-century appearance of *Cosyn's House* (Boyle and Knowles 1890, facing page 170; Manders 1995, 9). To the right of *Cosyn's House* were two further buildings of two bays each, a three-bay building with a pitched roof, and another also of three bays with three gables on the southern elevation to the street and with its eastern wall visible, showing that it was on the end of one of the chares running back from the Quay. The Quayside structure that is the

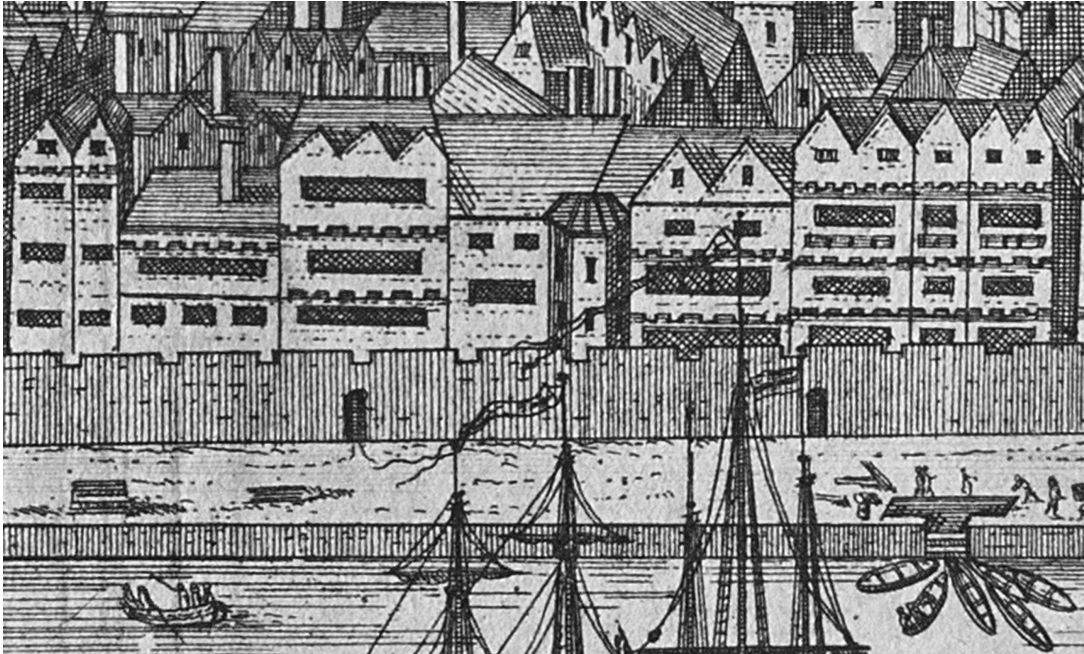


Fig. 1 Extract from *The Prospect of Newcastle upon Tyne 1723* by Samuel Buck.

subject of this paper stood at the end of this chare, with a building of two bays to its right. In the views of 1723 and 1745 the structure was positioned directly below Anderson Place, with St Nicholas's church to the left and All Hallows church (before its demolition and rebuilding from 1785) to the right. The Bucks' views were both taken from the tower of St Mary's church in Gateshead. By comparing the Quayside structure's position in the line of sight between Gateshead tower and Anderson Place, and its position before a house of three bays on the end of a chare, it may have stood at the end of Grindon Chare.

The Bucks' work was funded by subscriptions and Samuel Buck advertised for subscriptions in the Newcastle newspapers in December 1722 (Hyde 1994, 35, n.11). This might have been an opportunity for flattery to emphasize the properties of subscribers and wealthy citizens more than they were due in an accurate depiction of a scene, but this does not appear to have been the case with the Newcastle views. In the 1745 prospect of Newcastle, the Bucks carefully incorporated the levels of daylight and shadow at the time of the illustration. Several important buildings that might have been expected to be shown in detail, such as Anderson Place, the Keelmen's Hospital and the Barber Surgeon's Hall, had their principal southern elevations in shade; the arches of the Tyne Bridge cast long shadows on the water. These details suggest that the Bucks showed the town in the late afternoon when the sun was at the south-west and that their aim was realism rather flattery. This emphasis upon lighting to convey an accurate illustration was significant for the subject of this paper. Nearly all of the buildings on the Quayside were also shown in shadow, though the Quay was shown in the light and the southern face of the town wall was lighter than the buildings behind it. The Bucks recorded in great detail activities on the quayside: people at work, the Low Crane

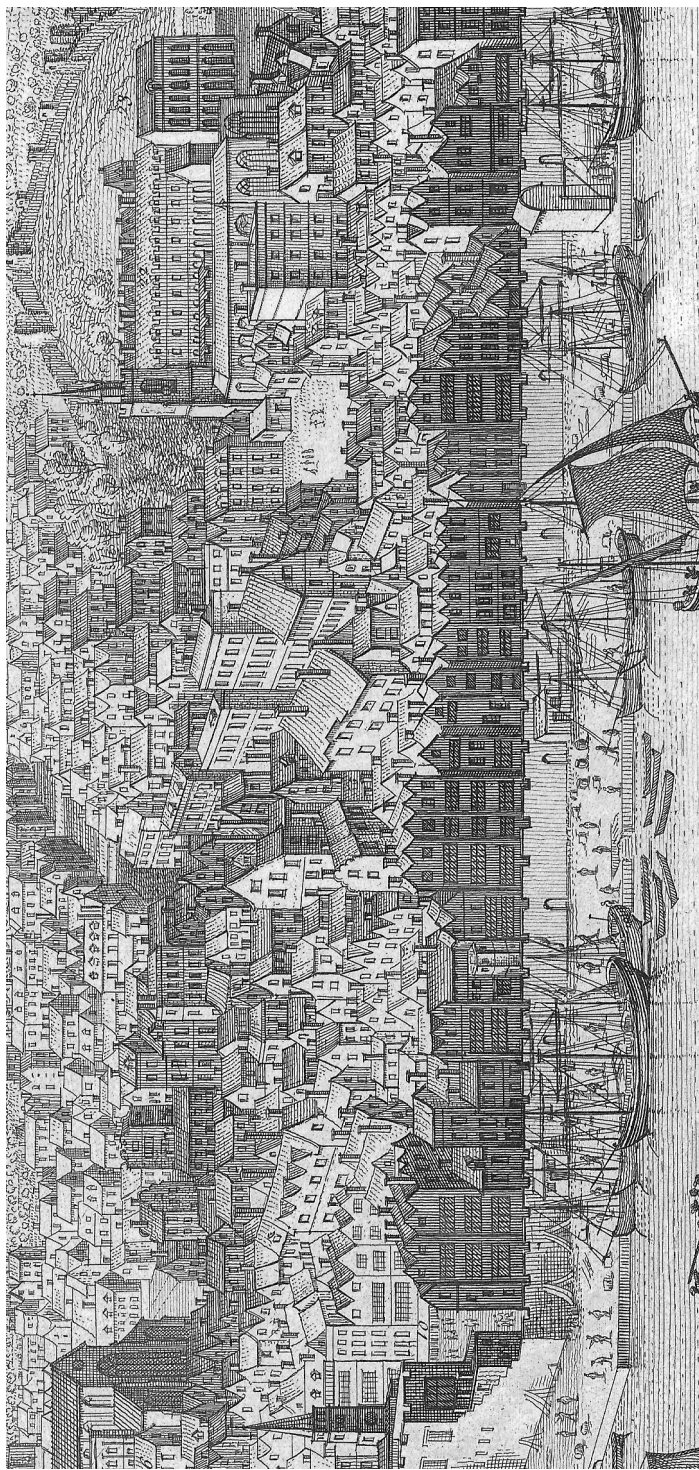


Fig. 2 Extract from *The Prospect of Newcastle upon Tyne 1745* by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck.

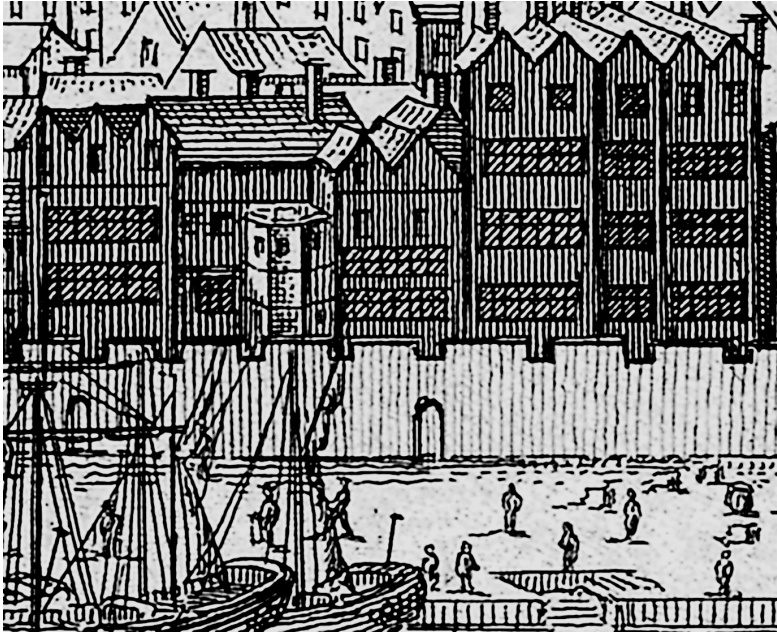


Fig. 3 Detail of the Quayside tower in 1745.

unloading goods from a ship, timber stacks, sheds and even individual barrels. The numerous water gates through the wall to the road behind were shown. Bourne (1736, 133) noted that:

These in the Reign of King James I. Anno 1616, were ordered to be locked up every Night, except one or two to stand open, for the Masters and Seamen to go to and fro to their Ships. This was done, to prevent Servants casting Ashes and other Rubbish into the River; and those two Gates *were watched all Night long* [my italics].

In both of their illustrations the Bucks showed that to the left of the Quayside structure was a building with three gables and a building with two gables and another with five gables to its right. Illustrations of this area before the devastating fire of 1854 (Ayris and Sheldon 1995; Manders 1995) showed that these had been prestigious buildings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (like the surviving Bessie Surtees House at the Sandhill). With their attention to lighting, the Bucks picked out three faces of the structure in the light, whilst all of the houses behind it were shaded. The rear walls of the structure were also depicted, showing it to have been hexagonal or octagonal in plan. There were windows in each riverside face and on at least two storeys. The lighting and the shape indicated that the structure was detached from these houses and was not a bay window or stair turret of one of the houses.

POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS OF THE QUAYSIDE STRUCTURE

The Quayside structure bore some resemblance to a water conduit, such as the one at The College at Durham Cathedral erected c. 1753 (Roberts 2003, 120), but was much taller than the Durham example. There were water-pumping engines on the riverside from the seventeenth century: in 1680 Cuthbert Dykes owned a water-pumping engine outside the Sandgate and in

1697 William Yarnold's system of water pumps supplied 50,000 gallons per week to 161 properties in the town (Rennison 1979, 1). However the structure in the Bucks' illustrations was inside the town wall, not on the riverside where it might be expected to draw river water, unless its water came from an underground source or conduits inserted beneath the town wall. It also bore some resemblance to a belvedere, a detached structure in which wealthy families and their guests could take refreshments whilst admiring views of the landscape. A belvedere was built on the western wall of Durham Castle by bishop Cosin *c.* 1667 from which he and his guests could view the River Wear below (Roberts 2003, 149 and illustration 12). The Quayside structure was of similar form to a belvedere, but was unlikely to have been a place of polite entertainment given its location amid the noise and bustle of trade on the Quayside. If it was a detached structure with at least two storeys visible above the town wall, the most likely interpretation is that it was a three-storey tower.

The Bucks' 1723 and 1745 illustrations showed the tower close to the town wall, rather than the houses behind it. If the tower abutted the Quayside section of the town wall, it may have had a defensive function. Although the Bell Tower and others at Berwick-upon-Tweed were polygonal, the medieval towers on the Newcastle town wall were generally D-shaped, as can be seen in the surviving Heber and Morden towers on the north-west of the town, and they projected from the outer face of the wall. The river tower on the west side of the town wall was rectangular in plan. Straight-sided artillery towers of polygonal form were added to the medieval walls of Berwick-upon-Tweed and Norham Castle in the early sixteenth century (Grundy *et al.* 1992, 173–178, 522), but these were on the outer faces of the walls so that their guns had optimum defensive coverage and could flank the walls on their sides. The Quayside tower stood inside the town wall and although it enabled views over the wall, it had limited ability to defend the outer face of the wall and the Quayside. The location of the tower was also at odds with early Tudor artillery fortifications which were often sited at exposed corners of medieval defences, such as at the Lord's Mount of 1539–42 at Berwick. If there was an intention to protect shipping at the Quayside, an artillery fort at the downstream side of the defences close to the Sandgate would have been a more effective location. No specialised artillery fortifications incorporating angled bastions such as those erected at Berwick in the reigns of King Edward VI, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth I (Grundy *et al.* 1992, 173–178) were added to Newcastle's medieval walls in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, and it is noteworthy that contemporary artillery fortifications with bastions were built outside the town walls (as at Shieldfield), or thrown up in front of the existing defences as at the Plummer tower and in front of the Black Gate of the Castle (Graves and Heslop 2013, 238–9). It was noted that during the threat of Jacobite invasion in 1745 guns were placed on the town walls and 'the water-gates on the Quayside were built up with gun-holes in them' (Mackenzie 1827, I, 54) but there was no mention of the Quayside structure being used for military purposes; it is unlikely therefore that it had any defensive purpose.

The hexagonal or octagonal shape of the Quayside tower was similar to structures designed for observation, including toll-houses on contemporary turnpikes, and The Octagon erected close to the harbour at Seaton Sluice in the eighteenth century which may have been a harbour-master's office (Grundy *et al.* 1992, 565). The height and form of the Quayside tower gave its occupants views of the business taking place along the Quayside. There were several organisations requiring the means to oversee and control activities on the Newcastle Quayside, including Trinity House, the Meters Company, the Ballast officer, the Quaymaster and the Customs officials.

ORGANISATIONS OBSERVING QUAYSIDE ACTIVITY

The Master and Brethren of Trinity House in Newcastle were responsible for marking the safe channel from the mouth of the Tyne to the Quayside in Newcastle. They erected markers, the High Light and Low Light at North Shields, to guide ships into the river and installed buoys in the river. In return for guaranteeing safety they were entitled to a fee from each ship using the river, and this fee was collected when the ships tied up at Newcastle (McCombie 2009, 171). The buildings of Trinity House were located at the northern end of Broad Chare, and the Bucks' views and Corbridge's map showed that the area east of Trinity House from Broad Chare to the Sandgate was built up with chares lined with houses and shops. It was impossible for the Brethren in their buildings to see what was happening on the river other than a brief glimpse as ships passed the end of Broad Chare; even this would have been restricted by the town wall, and they could not see any ship that tied up at the east end of the Quay close to the Sandgate. If the Brethren were to collect their dues, they must have had some means of identifying new vessels other than from their buildings in Broad Chare. They may have used the observation tower shown by the Bucks or had other arrangements at the Quayside.

The Meters, or Metters, one of the minor Companies of Newcastle, may also have used the Quayside tower. They claimed the right to measure all corn imported and exported from Newcastle, 'for which they made extravagant charges, particularly to non-freemen and foreigners' (Mackenzie 1827, II, 702). Their role was defined by an ordinary of the Common Council on 3rd August 1611, amended on 18th October 1670, and a new card of their charges and duties was approved on 30th June 1726.² The Metters shared the lower storey of the White Friar Tower on the town walls with the Company of Bricklayers. However, this tower was too far from the Quayside where they would be best placed to exercise their privilege, so they may also have used the Quayside tower. The Metters Company continued in existence until 1811, when their excessive charges were challenged in a lawsuit, which they lost. Their existence was contemporaneous with that of the Quayside tower and their business required observation of the Quay, but there are no documentary sources to confirm their use of the tower.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Newcastle Corporation developed the Quayside to cope with burgeoning trade. A significant campaign of building work at the New Key was recorded by the Newcastle Common Council and Chamberlains from 1701 to 1708. Nicholas Fenwick, water bailiff, was paid £50 for defraying the work 'rebuilding the New Key' in August 1706; and received £50 again in November 1706 and January 1707.³ Fenwick received £50 in June 1707 for workmen at the New Key, £25 in August 1707 and £50 in September 1707, and in June 1707 there was a payment to 'Richard Marshall Engineer for the New Key out of ye revenues of this towne in part of the agreement with him about ye said Key £ XX'; in July 1707 Jno Barker was paid £320 for oak timber for the New Key and Thomas Hall was paid £30 for timber for the New Key; Mr Mayor disbursed £69 to workmen at the Key in September 1707 and the same month Francis Rudston received £12 for oak timber and Wm Sanders was paid for smith work at the New Key.⁴ In 1708 ten guineas were paid to Nicholas Fenwick for 'his care and attention attending the late building of the New Quay'.⁵ Two cranes were built, the high crane close to the Guildhall and the Low Crane which can be seen in the Bucks' illustration of 1745. The site intended for the High Crane was found to be unsuitable and a new site was found in October 1701.⁶ These cranes were leased to William

Wrightson in 1732 for 21 years but on 18 December 1749 he petitioned to have the leases renewed for 21 years from that date, noting that he had repaired one of the cranes when it was ruinous.⁷

The Common Council minutes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have frequent references to the problems experienced in enforcing Newcastle's claims to monopoly of trade on the River Tyne and also ensuring that all dues were collected from ships using the New Quay. The Council wanted all ships to unload and load at the New Quay so that it could enforce its claims to monopoly of trade and ensure all dues were paid. However, the New Quay was located 10 miles (c. 16 km) from the mouth of the Tyne, and Newcastle authorities struggled to prevent ships discharging and loading cargoes at North Shields and South Shields and at the many other quays available before a ship reached Newcastle. Petitions by merchants and landowners to build quays east of Newcastle for their personal use were investigated by committees of the Common Council to determine if they would impair navigation or more importantly threaten Newcastle's monopoly on trade. There is a sense in the Common Council minutes that they were not always assiduous in providing the means to enforce their claims to dominion over the river. On 2 July 1722 Mungo Crisp, deputy water bailiff, petitioned the Common Council 'that several ships leave the River Tyne without paying dues and others load and sell at Shields which he could not prevent as he did not have a boat or rowers to carry him'.⁸ The Common Council agreed to pay for a boat and two able rowers, but it is remarkable that he had to ask for what would seem to be essential equipment for a water-bailiff.

The Common Council also tried to control the dumping of ballast by ships returning to the river. A vessel that had discharged its cargo at another port and was not bringing goods back to Newcastle needed to carry ballast (often bricks, earth, ash or midden rubbish) to maintain its stability in the open sea. However, when it reached the Tyne the crew needed to dump this ballast as quickly as possible so that they could embark new cargo on arrival at the New Quay. This was supposed to be done at the Ballast Hills to the east of Newcastle, but some crews dumped ballast in the river mouth or as they came upriver, blocking the carefully and expensively maintained navigable channel through the rocks and sandbanks along the river. Ships' masters were supposed to obtain a certificate to show that they had disposed of their ballast in the approved manner and present this to the Corporation's officials in the Ballast Office. The location of the Ballast Office was not specified: it may have been in the Guildhall, where Graves and Heslop (2013, 181) stated that in the sixteenth century 'newly arrived ship-masters, factors, agents and merchants' were required to report 'for the weighing and admission of their goods, and for the paying of revenues on coal, ballast, salt, grindstones and other goods to the town's clerk and chamberlains.' However, officials in the Guildhall could not see along the New Quay, due to the north-west to south-east orientation of the building and the position of the Maison Dieu at its east end. A closer and more direct means of supervision was required and this may have been the reason for the Quayside tower.

Another official who needed oversight of activity on the Quayside was the Quaymaster. The structure shown in the Bucks' views was conveniently located to supervise new ships arriving at the Quay and check that they had complied with the regulations, and if not for the ballast office it may have been built as an office for the Quaymaster. It was noted on 10 April 1691 that the position of Quaymaster had been vacant since the death of Robert Jennison and the Council agreed to appoint Francis Johnson, a merchant, as 'key master'.⁹ He resigned on 6 May 1701 and was succeeded by his son Baptist Johnson.¹⁰ Baptist Johnson was dead by

11 April 1710, when Daniel Soulsby, gentleman, was appointed.¹¹ The Common Council stated the duties of the 'Key Master' on 20 July 1721:

to prevent any damage being done to the Key, to appoint the berths or stations of ships, to assess or rate by the ton such ballast as shall be cast by warrant directed to him into any boat or keel upon the New Key out of ships stationed there to indorse on the said warrant the number of tons and due casting of them without damage to the river, after which the said warrant to be returned to the ballast office. (Brand 1789, 2: 35)

On 19 June 1729 John Green was appointed as Quaymaster, in room of Daniel Soulsby, deceased.¹² The Common Council established a committee on 21 April 1742 to examine the revenues owed to the Corporation and also which fees were payable to the Quaymaster and how to enforce payment, suggesting that problems continued despite the appointment of officials and the presence of the observation tower.¹³ During a cattle distemper outbreak in 1750 the Quarter Sessions of 2 May 1750 appointed toll gatherers for each of the Newcastle town gates and also 'Robert Moore Toll-gatherer on the Key'.¹⁴ These officials would have needed an office from which to keep watch, store records and possibly also money taken in fees.

The Customs Office was another organisation required to oversee activity on the Quayside. Newcastle became a customs port in 1275 and the existence of a 'cockettum or custom house' was noted in 1281 (Graves and Heslop 2013, 119). The western part of the Quay, an area close to the Guildhall called Windowes, was built in 1576. The Customs House stood at this western end of the Quayside, on the eastern edge of the Sandhill and close to the Guildhall. It was noted on 6 January 1604 that the Customs house at the Sandhill belonged to Robert Brandling (Boyle and Knowles 1890, 169). By 1723 when the Bucks made their first prospect of Newcastle, the Customs House had been hidden from the Quay by the buildings that faced directly onto the Quay, including Cosyn's House. A narrow, covered path called Dark Entry led from the Quay to the Customs House and there was another path to the Customs House from the Sandhill to the west. The officers in the Customs House had no direct sight of the Quay and were therefore at a disadvantage in fulfilling their duties to monitor ships arriving, unloading, loading and departing, and in paying the required fees. The tower shown in the Bucks' views of 1723 and 1745 would have addressed this deficiency by providing direct oversight of the Quay in a position close to the Customs House.

Among the officers of Customs were the Controller, searchers, landwaiters, coastwaiters and tidewaiters (Carson 1972, 52–53). Landwaiters 'controlled the landing of goods and checking against entries'; Coastwaiters supervised 'the landing and shipping of goods carried in coasting vessels and ensured that goods consigned coastwise did not go foreign and thus avoid the export duty'. Tidewaiters, or tidesmen as they were also known, boarded vessels as they entered the river on each tide and stayed on the ship until all goods were unloaded. They also 'went down the river on every tide and cleared vessels which had discharged their cargoes' before alighting and either boarding an incoming vessel or waiting ashore until an incoming vessel arrived to take them back to their base in the port. Raph Clarke petitioned the Common Council in January 1748 stating that Customs officers leased his quay at North Shields;¹⁵ these may have been the tidewaiters from Newcastle using a convenient disembarkation point at a time when there was no Customs House at North Shields (due to the opposition of the Newcastle Corporation).

With no Customs House at North Shields or South Shields, the Customs were also unable to prevent ships calling at the available landing points well before Newcastle to unload and



Fig. 4 Tidewaiters' tower, Gravesend, Kent. Photograph and permission to publish from Conrad Broadley.

load cargo whilst avoiding Customs dues. As at Newcastle, there is a considerable distance between the quay at London and the Thames estuary, and at Gravesend on the Thames there is a tower (fig. 4) that might indicate the function of the Quayside tower in Newcastle: a 'Watch House for the use of the Duty Tidewaiter who scanned the water to report ships arriving or sailing to and from the Legal Quays in the Pool of London' (Tomasin 2014). The tidewaiters boarded incoming ships and stayed aboard until they reached and unloaded their cargoes at the Pool of London. The Gravesend tower is octagonal and of two storeys of weatherboard construction, with sash windows on both storeys in the three sides facing the river. It is not without architectural embellishment, for it has a central chimney and each corner has clasping Doric pilasters. Tomasin (2014) stated that the tower at Gravesend was built in 1713, or it may be early nineteenth century (Historic England 2014); the Doric pilasters and narrow-framed sash windows would be closer to the latter date. Although the Gravesend tower was built downstream at the river entrance and the Newcastle tower was upstream at the Quayside, it is an example, like the Octagon at Seaton Sluice, of a structure built to observe maritime trade.

The Common Council of Newcastle came to a 'judicious arrangement with the collector of Customs for the collection of ballast dues' (Mackenzie 1827, II, 648) that increased payments for the town. On 15 July 1734, they agreed to pay £21 per annum to Alfred Lawson esq. who for some time had 'obliged all ships clearing at the Custom House to pay the dues accustomed to be paid at the town's house'.¹⁶ If the Customs officers, ballast officer and Quaymaster were to monitor activity at the Quayside effectively and prevent avoidance of duties by ships' captains, they needed an office on the Quayside. Mackenzie (1827, II, 625) noted that the Quaymaster 'had charge of the numerous water-gates' in the town wall and Bourne's comment (1736, 133) that these gates were 'watched all Night long' implied that the Quaymaster and his staff were able to see the water-gates, which they could not do from the Guildhall and the Customs House. The tower shown in the Bucks' prospects of Newcastle in 1723 and 1745 was better placed to exercise supervision, and it is likely that it was a Quaymaster's office, with the possibility that it was also used by the Customs officers and the ballast officer.

DISAPPEARANCE OF THE QUAYSIDE TOWER

Brand (1789, 2: 38–42) noted the increasing trade on Newcastle Quayside from 2,879 vessels in 1749 to 3,463 in 1759, and 4,037 in 1764 and 4,830 in 1785. This expansion prompted the Corporation to develop the Quayside to cope with greater trade and ensure that their dues were collected. Although there is no record of an overall plan in the Chamberlains' accounts or the Common Council minute books for the 1760s, the work on the Quay was an opportunity to address several other matters. The town wall was 'no longer of any use for defence, but a great obstruction to carriages, and hindrance to the dispatch of business' (Mackenzie 1827, I, 117). A successful application to King George III resulted in an order of the Privy Council on 17 November 1762 authorising the demolition of the town wall along the Quayside, and 'on January 10, 1763, the workmen began to pull down the wall and gates upon the Quay' (Mackenzie 1827, I, 117). The removal of the barrier of the wall and the narrow gates increased the available landing space, and the speed at which goods could be brought to and from the ships.

Stone from the old town wall was used in the rebuilding of St Ann's Chapel to the designs of the architect William Newton and funded by the Corporation. The intention of the Corporation to rebuild the chapel was published in the *Newcastle Courant* of October 1762, at the time of the application to the Privy Council, and the opportunity to rebuild may have been part of the plans for the developments on the Quayside.¹⁷ The new chapel was intended to seat 600 people, recognising the growth of population, whilst emphasising the Anglican hegemony of Newcastle in a quarter that was known for its non-conformity; Brand (1789, 1: 400, 449) noted the presence of dissenting meeting houses at the Wall Knoll, Love Lane, Garth Heads and the Sallyport, and Baillie (1800, 143) stated that Methodism had many recruits among the keelmen of Sandgate, following several visits by John Wesley from 1742 (Fewster 2011, 102). In 1776 a new road was built from Newcastle to North Shields, improving communications with the Quayside, Sandgate, St Ann's Chapel and the industries of the Ouseburn (Brand 1789, 450).

The removal of the town wall provided an opportunity to move the Customs House from its hidden position behind Cosyn's House to a new location in the centre of the Quay and the new building opened in 1766. In 1776 it was noted that 'Here is a noble custom-house and the



Fig. 5 The Custom House, Newcastle, Excerpt from T. M. Richardson, *View of the Port and Town of Newcastle upon Tyne, from the Rope Walk Gateshead*, 1819 (Print in author's collection).

finest quay in England except that at Yarmouth' (*New Display*, 1776, II, 178). The new Custom House replaced a building of two gables shown in the Bucks' views.¹⁸ The Custom House was described as having 'a handsome front towards the river, is four stories high, and contains a great many separate and convenient apartments, for transacting the extensive business daily done' (Baillie 1801, 215). Oliver (1831, 54) stated that it was built of brick (visible in the side walls). It was refronted in stone by Sydney Smirke in 1833 (Grundy *et al.* 1992, 446), but it was illustrated in 1819 by T. M. Richardson, showing the building before Smirke's alterations, as a Palladian-style building with an open loggia of five arches on the ground floor, a pediment over the central first floor window, flat heads to the other first floor windows and smaller square windows on the second floor (fig. 5) It had a high roof, which may have accommodated the fourth storey noted by Baillie. The date and the Palladian style of the building, as well as his role in designing St Ann's Chapel for the Corporation, suggest that William Newton also designed the new Custom House, though there is no record of the architect. It does not appear to have been owned by the Customs Office or the Corporation, for Mackenzie (1827, 720) stated that the Custom House was leased by the Customs Office from the Misses Peareth. This arrangement continued until 1829.

With the new Custom House in the centre of the extended Quayside the Customs officers and possibly the Quaymaster and other officials were better placed to observe and control business. The observation tower was redundant and may have been demolished when the

Customs House opened. It was not shown on Charles Hutton's map of Newcastle and Gateshead in 1772, nor on Beilby's map of 1788.¹⁹

CONCLUSIONS

The Quayside observation tower illustrated the problems faced by the Newcastle authorities in exercising their claims to control of trade on the River Tyne. The reorganisation of the Quayside from 1763, with the removal of the town wall and relocation of the Customs House, solved some of the problems, but could not overcome those emanating from Newcastle's geographical location distant from the river mouth, the Corporation's failure to maintain the access channels up to Newcastle and provide adequate funding for supervisory bodies, and the poor relations with other towns better placed to handle trade due to centuries of legal bullying by the Newcastle Corporation. These issues would finally be addressed in the nineteenth century with the removal of the merchant oligarchy by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 and the formation of the Tyne Improvement Commissioners by Act of Parliament in 1850. This provided professional management of the environment and trade all along the River Tyne, rather than the isolated and *ad hoc* arrangements exemplified by the Quayside tower shown in the Bucks' prospects of Newcastle.

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NOTES

¹ Society of Antiquaries of London Library: Coleraine collection, portfolio iv, f.61, 'The Prospect of Newcastle upon Tyne' 1723 by Samuel Buck (Reproduced by permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London); Northumberland Archives, Woodhorn: SANT/DRA/4/1/26, 'The Prospect of the South-east View of Newcastle upon Tyne' 1745 by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. (Reproduced by permission of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne)

² Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, GU. ME The Mettors Company of Newcastle. Note that Mackenzie spelt the Company as Meters, TWAM as Mettors, and Baillie (1801, 433) as Metters.

³ TWAM, MD.NC/FN/1/1/71, Chamberlain's account book 1706-1707.

⁴ TWAM, MD.NC/FN/1/1/72, Chamberlain's account book 1707-1708.

⁵ TWAM, Calendar of Common Council Book, Newcastle (hereafter CCCB) 1699-1718, 589/12, f.152.

⁶ TWAM, CCCB 1699-1718, 589/12, f.51.

⁷ TWAM, CCCB 1743-66, 589/14, f.141-2.

⁸ TWAM, CCCB 1718-43, 589/13, f. 49.

⁹ TWAM, CCCB 1656-1722, 589/6, f. 193v.

¹⁰ TWAM, CCCB 1699-1718, 589/12, f. 87.

¹¹ TWAM, CCCB 1656-1722, 589/6, f. 240.

¹² TWAM, CCCB 1718-1743, 589/13, f.185.

¹³ TWAM, CCCB 1718-43, 589/13, f. 266.

¹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 7 July 1750, 4.

¹⁵ TWAM, CCCB 1743–1766, 589/14, f.125.

¹⁶ TWAM, CCCB 1718–1743, 589/12, f. 266.

¹⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 2 October 1762, 2.

¹⁸ The form of the earlier building on the site of the Custom House can be determined from Bucks' *Prospects*. Their accuracy is attested by the depictions of the two buildings immediately to the west of the Custom House, one of two-bays and a distinctive low building with three gables next to it, shown in an early photograph (Manders 1995, 7).

¹⁹ TWAM, D.NCP/2/8 Ralph Beilby's Plan of Newcastle and Gateshead, 1788.

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