

# The Custom House, Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne

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## SUMMARY

*The Custom House, completed in 1767, occupies a prominent position in the centre of the Quayside in Newcastle upon Tyne. Customs collections began in Newcastle in 1203; by 1604 a Custom House was recorded to the east of the Guildhall. The Custom House of 1767 was extended and refronted by Sydney Smirke in 1833, and expanded in the twentieth century to incorporate former brewery offices. It remained in use as a Custom House until 1998, and was acquired and renovated by Trinity Chambers in 2003. This article draws upon documentary sources to reconstruct the history of the Customs collection in Newcastle from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries, and the ownership of the Custom House site from the fifteenth century to the present day. This evidence highlights the involvement of Tynemouth Priory in medieval land reclamation, possibly a tactic in its legal dispute with Newcastle authorities over port locations on the Tyne, and identifies the architect William Newton (1730–98) as the designer of the new Custom House of 1767.*

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE ENGLISH CROWN imposed taxation on trade through ports, including Newcastle upon Tyne, from the thirteenth century. Customs were taxes on imports and excises were taxes upon exports. Separate departments existed to collect these taxes until 1909.<sup>1</sup> Newcastle upon Tyne was a headport, where Crown-appointed officers oversaw the unloading of ships' cargoes and calculated the fees to be paid by shipmasters on their imports. The ability to tax effectively was dependent upon the infrastructure for trade at the riverside and coast. The history of Customs collection on the River Tyne is closely related to efforts to reclaim land from the river on which to build quays, docks, warehouses and roads for unloading, storing and moving imported goods. Buildings for Customs officers to meet ship owners, maintain records of taxation and store impounded goods were part of this infrastructure. This article will examine the location of Custom Houses from the thirteenth to the twentieth century amid the development of the Newcastle Quayside. The growth of Newcastle as a port was contested by other settlements between it and the coast, notably Tynemouth and South Shields. This article provides evidence for the acquisition of reclaimed land at Newcastle by the Priory of Tynemouth, possibly a tactic in this economic conflict. The Reformation in the 1530s swept away this monastic intervention in the development of Newcastle and the Priory's lands were acquired by secular owners with documented interests in maritime trade. Increasing trade in the eighteenth century led to the opening of a new Custom House at the centre of a redesigned Quayside in 1767. This article investigates the design of the Custom House by the architect William Newton and its enlargement by the architect Sydney Smirke in the 1830s.

## PART 1: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEWCASTLE AS A CUSTOMS PORT

At the Winchester Assize of 1203 King John set up the first centralised system for the taxation of imports and exports and appointed custodians and at least six officials in named ports, including Newcastle, to collect the duties. There is no record of its collection after 1210, but in 1203–5 Newcastle paid £158 5s 11d, the eighth highest of thirty-five places named, and Jarrow paid £42 17s 10d (Gras 1912, 144). A prise, or tax, on herring, haddock and wine was recorded in 1229 and 1290 for the upkeep of the castle at Newcastle (Gras 1912, 116). King Edward I established a permanent tax upon wool in 1275. Two collectors were appointed in each port, with responsibility to keep records and retain one half of the cocket or seal applied to bundles of wool, with a controller who held the other half of the seal and a counter-roll of taxes levied upon merchants exporting wool (Cobb 1979, 227). Newcastle enjoyed a monopoly on the export of wool, hides and wool-fells for the counties of Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Westmorland and Richmondshire (Fraser 1969, 55). Its customs officials were responsible for the collection of dues from all North Sea ports between Berwick and Scarborough.

The taxes introduced by King John and King Edward I were recognition of the merchant community that had developed in the limited port area at the foot of the northern river cliff, below the royal castle.<sup>2</sup> In the thirteenth century the town of Newcastle was located upon the plateau above the River Tyne, close by the royal castle and the parish church of St Nicholas. At the riverside there was little natural space for a quay to receive ships, but the mouths of the Lort Burn, immediately east of the Castle and of the Ouse Burn further east were more favourable for this purpose (Graves and Heslop 2013, 125, Map A). The area below the Castle river cliff was a tidal mudflat, where boats could be beached but unsuitable for larger vessels until quays were constructed (Harbottle 2009, 29). The bridge across the river landed on the north side at the Sandhill, below the Castle and immediately west of the Lort Burn estuary. It is possible that the bridge was built (or rebuilt if it reused the foundations of the Roman bridge) shortly after 1170 (Graves and Heslop 2013, 112). From this bridgehead a road, now called The Side, ascended the eastern side of the Castle headland and opened onto the plateau with the Castle to the south and the parish church of St Nicholas to the north. The Castle, with its north gate facing The Side, was ideally placed for royal officers to collect taxes. The stone keep, built in 1172–77, was the most secure building in the region, and may have been used to store coinage from taxes and wages for royal officials.

From the eleventh century there were determined efforts to construct a waterfront at which ships could dock to load and unload goods by reclaiming land from the River Tyne. The earliest quayside developments were along the Close, but the presence of the Tyne Bridge prevented larger ships reaching quays here, and the major work to create landing facilities for a port was downstream to the east of the bridge (Graves and Heslop 2013, 171). The reclamation of land was achieved by building piers out from the river cliff to create places where larger ships could dock. Over time the spaces between the piers were infilled and houses and warehouses constructed on the made land. The former piers became narrow streets called chares, and new piers were constructed into the river, beginning the process again (O'Brien et al 1988, 158). This process added around eleven per cent of the land within the walls of the medieval town, 'a striking testimony to the investment the town made for its port' (O'Brien 2015, 23). Initially, ships may have docked at the piers and goods were brought to and from

the town along a road to the north, what is now Dog Bank and Akenside Hill, to connect with The Side and Pilgrim Street.

At the Sandhill, the wealthy merchant and benefactor Roger Thornton (died 1430) paid for the construction of the Guildhall and the Maison Dieu (Rawcliffe 1993). By *c.* 1400 more land had been reclaimed between the Sandhill and the Ouseburn, enabling the construction of houses, shops and warehouses. The town wall ran from the eastern corner of the Maison Dieu, along the rear of the quay, to connect with the town wall running through Pandon (Taylor-Wilson *et al.* 2017). The alignment created a continuous platform for ships to berth against, and ended the apparently haphazard southwards expansion of smaller quays into the river at the behest of individual owners. The construction of the town wall and the continuous quay strongly suggest a determined plan by the town authorities of *c.* 1400 to regularise trade, and through control of the gates through the Town Wall, to maximise the collection of taxes and customs dues. These civic buildings and new quays shifted the commercial focus from the upper town and Castle to the newly developed quays, though the markets north of the Castle remained.

The town's position as a head port for the collection of Customs duties underpinned Newcastle's commercial position. Although Customs officers were employed by central government, senior posts in the Custom House went to prominent and wealthy local men many of them members of the Merchant Guild, (later the Merchant Adventurers) founded in 1480: royal authority dove-tailed with local interests. In addition to the chief posts of Collector and Comptroller or Controller, there was a surveyor, a harbour surveyor, land waiters, and tidesmen. Even with this considerable bureaucracy, much of the work of collecting dues was 'farmed out', often to wealthy merchants. The presence of the Custom House was an important factor in the development of Newcastle's trade, its control of the river, and a major stimulus to the expansion of the Quayside, as it obliged ships' masters to dock at Newcastle rather than at other locations on the coast or further east on the River Tyne.

### *The Old Custom House*

The Guildhall on the Sandhill contained the offices of the Corporation, the Mayor's Parlour, and most importantly for trade, the meeting rooms of the Merchant Adventurers Guild, but the Customs officers were Crown employees; they may have had a separate building, or leased space within the Guildhall. They were in a separate building to the east of the Guildhall by 6 January 1604 (fig. 1), when Alderman Robert Brandling owned 'a house on the Sand-Hill, called the Custom-House' (Boyle and Knowles 1890, 169).

The Board of Customs continued to lease this building until 1767, when it was owned by Thomas Durham, a Newcastle merchant.<sup>3</sup> The location of Customs collections in this location may have been related to the building of a new Quay called Windowes, adjacent to the Guildhall in 1576 (Pears 2016, 153). It is unclear if the Custom House suffered during the Scottish siege of Newcastle in 1644, when their artillery fired from Gateshead across the Tyne and into the riverside area of Newcastle, but the Guildhall and many houses nearby were damaged and replaced after the end of the Civil War (McCombie 2009, 184). The Corporation paid the architect Robert Trollop to design and build a new Guildhall abutting the Maison Dieu in 1655–58 (Pears 2012, 83). The architectural form of the old Custom House close to the Guildhall, (fig. 2), has much in common with post-1640s structures nearby, including Bessie Surtees' House.

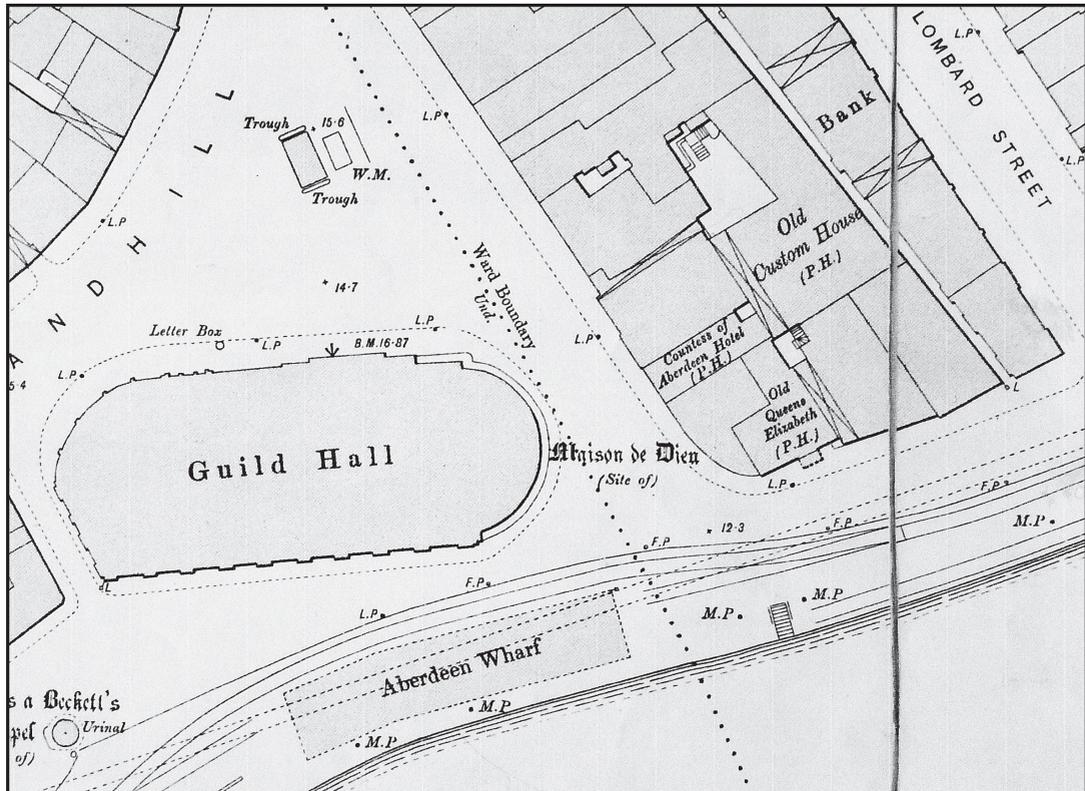
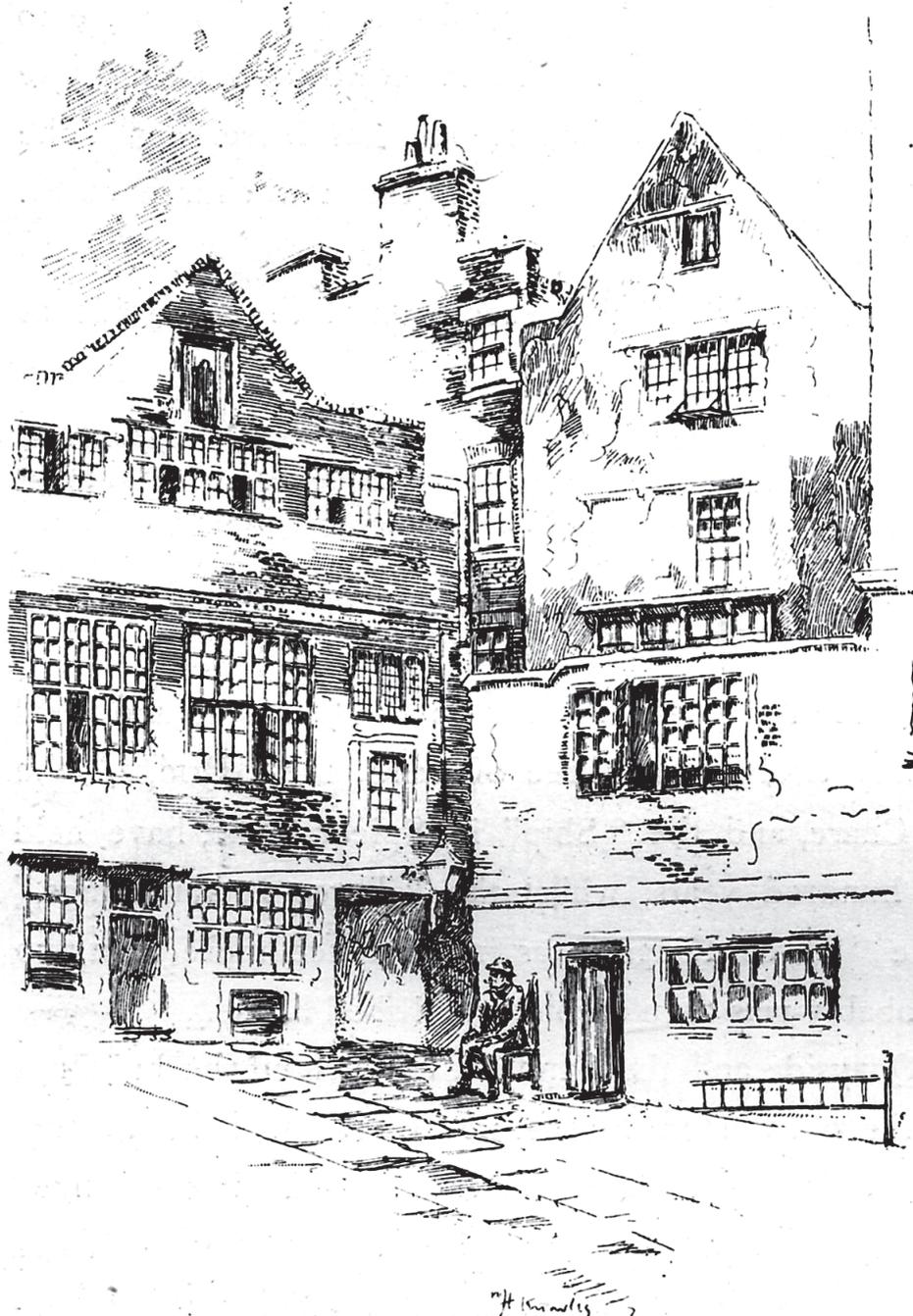


Fig. 1 Location of seventeenth-century Custom House on the Sandhill, Newcastle, in 1894 when it was a public house (Ordnance Survey 1:500 Town Map of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1894).

Although the location of the Custom House close to the town's offices in the Guildhall was initially beneficial for the collection of customs, the eastwards expansion the Quay at Newcastle in the later seventeenth century, possibly a consequence of the growth of the coal trade and other industries after the Civil War, soon placed these officers at a disadvantage, as they were now upstream of where ships docked. Furthermore, new buildings, including Cosyn's House (of seventeenth-century appearance), had been constructed between the Custom House and the medieval town wall along the Quayside, and these completely obscured the view of shipping at the Quay from the Custom House. 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 Custom House, but it was an ad hoc solution to the lack of governance facilities for the growing Quayside trade (Pears 2016). Nor was the situation at the river mouth any better, as there was no Custom House at North Shields. Instead the Board of Customs rented a quay there from Raph Clarke, on a lease of twenty-one years; this was described as '32 yards in breadth but ruinous' on 10 January 1748.<sup>4</sup>

This landing place at North Shields was essential, as each ship that entered the river was supposed to be boarded by the tide surveyor, who placed tidewaiters on board to ensure that the vessel did not unload before reaching the Newcastle Quayside, and to check manifests



**THE OLD CUSTOM HOUSE.**

Fig. 2 J. R. Boyle and W. H. Knowles, *Vestiges of Old Newcastle and Gateshead* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Andrew Reid, Sons & Company 1890), p. 170.

and search for any hidden goods. However, the poorly-paid and outnumbered tidewaiters on a vessel were easily corrupted (Ashworth 2003, 46). On arrival at the port, they were to give a report on the cargo to the land surveyor, whose team of landwaiters supervised the unloading and measuring of the cargo. This was a laborious process, requiring considerable skill to measure volumes of liquids in casks and barrels or tonnage of coal or grain. It could only begin once the importing merchant had declared his cargo of goods to several officers in the Long Room of the Custom House. Each officer signed the merchant's warrant and calculated the dues to be paid. Finally, the warrant was returned to the land surveyor and the cargo could be unloaded (Ashworth 2003, 139). A ship's master wanting to export goods had to declare his goods in the Custom House, pay the duties, and obtain the signatures of four officers before he could obtain his cocket and set sail (Ashworth 2003, 140).

The lack of oversight of Quayside trade at Newcastle exacerbated the loss of revenue through pilfering, smuggling and bribing of officials (Ashworth 2003, 143). It was widely recognised that Customs officers were poorly paid, unreliable, and appointed largely by patronage. On Tyneside there was also the active role in smuggling taken by Customs officers, not least Thomas Armstrong, captain of His Majesty's Customs cutter *Bridlington*, who amassed sufficient wealth from his illegal activities to build a new house (complete with stores for contraband and a tunnel to the beach) at Cullercoats c.1770 (Archaeological Services 2005, 5).

#### *Quayside Developments in the 1760s*

The problems of overseeing trade at the Quayside afflicted the Corporation as well as the Customs officers, and there was acute awareness that vital revenue was being lost at a time when Quayside trade increased from 2,879 vessels in 1749 to 3,463 in 1759, and 4,037 in 1764 (Brand 1789, II, 38–42). To resolve this, a major redevelopment of the Quayside was undertaken in the 1760s (Pears 2016). There is no evidence in the Newcastle Corporation minutes of an overall plan, but the combination of events suggest that the Corporation orchestrated the changes, with the support of the Board of Customs in London. The uncertainty about an overall plan is due to the nature of eighteenth-century town governance, in which the leading developments in the town were paid for by senior aldermen.<sup>5</sup> These men were acting as much in their individual business interests as in the interests of the town, though they were unlikely to have seen any difference or difficulty in this situation.

The redevelopment of the Quayside began with the demolition of the town wall along the Quayside from 10 January 1763, which deepened the landing space for goods and, by removing the physical barrier of the wall and the narrow gates through it, speeded up the loading and unloading of ships (Pears 2016, 155). Stone from the town wall was re-used in the rebuilding of the Sandgate or St Ann's Chapel (Mackenzie 1827, 361). This was designed by the Newcastle architect William Newton (1730–98).<sup>6</sup>

The relocation of the Custom House from its position near the Guildhall to the central location on the new Quayside between Peacock and Trinity Chares must be seen as the result of several interests: those of the Board of Customs and the Corporation of Newcastle seeking to maximise the collection of duties; the Corporation seeking to maintain the position of Newcastle as the principal port on the north-east coast; and the owner of the chosen site, Alderman William Peareth (1704–75). For the Corporation of Newcastle, the long battle to maintain its position as the principal port was now being fought not only against landholders in the

eight miles of the river before ships reached the Quayside, but also against other ports at Sunderland and Blyth. Walter Ettrick was the Collector of the King's Customs at Sunderland in 1660 and a custom house was noted there in 1682 (Burnett 1830, 20–2). Newcastle merchants' complaints that Sunderland ships were avoiding customs on coal were supported by an independent inspector in 1663 (Meikle and Newman 2007, 157). Between 1717 and 1738 the River Wear Commissioners spent £33,000 developing the port facilities at Sunderland, and even more, £420,000, between 1747 and 1830, 'huge sums of money which enabled the Wear to emerge as a serious competitor to the Tyne' (Cookson 2010, 31). A new Custom House to replace Ettrick's house was built in 1837 (Cookson 2010, 135). At Blyth, the Riddleys of Blagdon Hall, notwithstanding their role as leading members of the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers, constructed port facilities to enable export of their coal outside the jurisdiction of Newcastle (Wallace 1867, 149–150), whilst the Delavals established a port at Seaton Sluice to export their coal and glass (Askham 1955, 129). The Riddleys established a Custom House at Blyth and Lord Delaval obtained permission from the Board of Customs for documentation of exports to be sent from Seaton Sluice to the post office at Blyth and sent to London 'and are there most frequently before the arrival of the vessel' (W. 1809, 234).

For the owner of the new Custom House site, William Peareth (1704–1775), the relocation was clearly to his commercial advantage, as he could secure a long-term lease of his property to the Board of Customs, as well as demonstrating his willingness to support the prosperity of the town. Peareth was an alderman, a member of the Common Council of Newcastle for over fifty years, Clerk of the Town Chamber (Surtees 1820, 45), but declined to serve as Mayor (Baillie 1800, 232). In addition to his properties on the Quayside, Peareth had a house in Pilgrim Street and a country house and estate at Usworth, County Durham (Surtees 1820, 45). He was an example of Newcastle merchants and professionals whose urban commercial wealth funded his family's move into the ranks of the county gentry, following a trend set by the Andersons, Liddells, Ellisons and Carrs in the preceding century. Peareth leased the building to the Board of Customs, and his descendants, the Misses Peareth, eventually sold the building to the Customs Office in 1829. They retained some to the site as a report of property owners after the devastating fire of 1854 noted that Miss Peareth still owned the property at the northern end of Peacock's Chare and Broad Garth.<sup>7</sup>

## PART 2: THE HISTORY OF THE 1767 CUSTOM HOUSE SITE

Analysis of documentary sources has enabled the reconstruction of ownership of the Custom House site for the two centuries before 1767. This confirms suggestions by Graves and Heslop (2013, 180) about who led the process of land reclamation that produced a Quayside at Newcastle but raises questions about their motives. It is known from documentary and excavation evidence that the town wall along the Quayside was constructed c. 1400 (Heslop, Truman and Vaughan 1995). The chares were established before this date, indicating a high level of land reclamation to reach this point, ninety metres from the natural river cliff (Taylor-Wilson et al 2017, 91). Although the exact site of the Custom House has not been excavated, the site immediately to its east, 55–57 Quayside, was excavated prior to the construction of the new Live Theatre (Taylor-Wilson *et al.*, 2017). This revealed the development of this section of the Quayside and confirmed the process of land reclamation noted in previous excavations at Dog Bank and Queen Street to the north of the Custom House site (O'Brien 1988). Commercial pressures to maximise the number of warehouses, workshops and

accommodation led to the division of the building land between the chares into multiple plots of buildings up to six stories in height (Boyle and Knowles 1896, 170). This division of plots is also apparent from probate records, with many instances of buildings and storeys within individual buildings being held on separate leases (Heley 2007, 176). At 55–57 Quayside, adjacent to the Custom House, a ‘monumental north-west-south-east aligned sandstone wall’, up to 1.5m high and up to 1.05 m wide, and dated to the earliest phase of development, was fossilised as a boundary that survived until twentieth-century demolition of properties (Taylor-Wilson *et al.* 2017, 15). The boundaries of the Custom House may be derived from a similar process.

The Custom House site occupies a plot of land between two of the chares created by this reclamation process: Peacock’s Chare on the west and Trinity Chare on the east. Heley (2009, 60) noted the range of trades in the chares around the Custom House site: two mills, with brewers, bakers and mariners in the Broad Garth and others of these trades in Trinity Chare. Boyle and Knowles (1890, 175) wrote that Peacock Chare was named after the old Peacock Inn, which ‘occupied the site of the present Custom House’, and when the latter was built ‘the Peacock Inn moved to the east side of Trinity Chare’. However, Peacock’s Chare was probably named after the Peacock family of merchants and brewers, who owned property here at the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> A similar convention of naming chares after owners of property can be seen with Rewcastle, Hornsby and Pallister Chares. Trinity Chare alludes to the buildings of Trinity House that occupy much of the area to the north and east of the Custom House site, but this name can only date from the establishment of Trinity House in 1505 (McCombie 2009, 173); the name of the chare before this date is unclear, but the site occupied by Trinity House was formerly Dalton Place (Welford 1885 I, 400).

The role of religious institutions in the development of the Quayside has been noted, including land leased in the Close by the Hospital of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Westgate (Graves and Heslop 2013, 180). Embleton (1896, 262) noted Alnwick Abbey and the Priory of St John of Jerusalem had property on the Quayside, and that the Prior of Tynemouth had a great stone house in Grindon Chare from at least 1392 (though this location is disputed by Graves and Heslop (2013, 136)). Embleton (1896) also attempted to reconstruct property ownership to the south of Trinity House. His reconstruction, when supplemented by the evidence of early ownership of the Custom House site, shows that through either donations or deliberate purchase, religious orders, but particularly the Priory of Tynemouth, acquired a sizeable area of the Quayside shortly after it had been reclaimed from the river, and leased it to merchants.

Brand (1789, 100) stated that in 1392 Tynemouth Priory was assigned eight messuages in Newcastle by Alan Whitheved, vicar of Tynemouth, John de Dalton, chaplain, and Robert de Anbell, chaplain. The name of Dalton may be significant in locating some of these properties on the developing eastern Quayside, as the site now occupied by Trinity House was formerly known as Dalton Place. McCombie (1995, 183) noted that a document formerly owned by Trinity House referred to a property to the south of what became Trinity House ‘bounded by a tenement of John Whyteheved and house belonging to the Abbie of Alnwicke on the west ... and lands of the Prior of Tynemouth ... on the south’ in 1422.<sup>9</sup> The site that became the Custom House would have been these Tynemouth lands. Dalton may have retained some properties that subsequently passed to Ralph Hebborne, who gave Dalton Place to Trinity House, but the adjacent properties, now the Custom House and Live Theatre sites, were given to the Priory, as noted in a series of leases.<sup>10</sup> These show that in 1466, the Priory leased, for 90

years, to John and Isabella Baxter, merchants, a messuage and garden in the Keyside, already in their possession, except for two tenements inhabited by John Talior and Thomas Reveley, mariners.<sup>11</sup> In 1493, Elizabeth Baxter, daughter of the now deceased John Baxter, quitclaim to Thomas Hayrbred, baker, a messuage and garden in the Keyside.<sup>12</sup> Hayrbred was a baker and brewer, one of many on the Keyside, but in view of later descriptions of property boundaries and the presence of baking and brewing equipment on the site of the Custom House, his house and garden were probably on this site. On Thomas's death in 1509, his widow Alice and son and heir Richard, a chaplain, assigned a house and garden to the smith Henry Tailor. Tailor's son and heir William conveyed the remaining lease of the messuage and garden from Tynemouth Priory to Andrew Surteis in 1541 for the sum of £24.

Tynemouth Priory was involved in a long-running legal dispute with the burgesses of Newcastle over port facilities on the Tyne (Fraser 2009, 43–6). The burgesses were determined to prevent the Priory establishing a port at their much more favourable position at the mouth of the Tyne. The Priory was engaged in land reclamation from the river at Tynemouth from c. 1390, which Newcastle opposed with a commission of 1401 to investigate any commercial activities along the riverside that threatened its control (Fraser 2009, 45). In these circumstances, it is suggested here that the Priory's acquisition of reclaimed land in Newcastle may have been a new tactic to subvert Newcastle's hegemony. If the Priory could not overcome Newcastle in the courts, it could at least gain income by leasing its land 'in the very centre of commercial activity' (Embleton 1896, 260) to the very merchants opposing a port at Tynemouth.

#### *Post-Dissolution Ownership*

If Tynemouth Priory was supporting the development of the eastern Quayside as part of its economic struggle with the Newcastle burgesses its investment was in vain, for it was dissolved by King Henry VIII in 1538 and its property sold off. Much of it was acquired by Newcastle merchants working with London lawyers and courtiers, as happened to the properties of the nunnery of St Bartholomew and the friaries in Newcastle (Pears 2015). In 1545 the two messuages on the Quayside formerly belonging to Tynemouth Priory (the Custom House site) were granted by Henry VIII to Sir John Gresham, alderman of London, Thomas Gresham, mercer of London, John Hall a clerk and Percival Cresswell, a clerk. They granted it on 7 August 1545 to Christopher Chaytor of Durham.<sup>13</sup> On 2 May 1546 John Chaytor, merchant of Newcastle (probably Christopher's father), assigned the two Quayside properties (Custom House site) to John Clerk of Newcastle, mariner.<sup>14</sup>

Recent research (Newton 2015a, 100–101, and Newton 2015b) has shown that the Chaytors (also spelt Chator, Chaitor and Chater) were one of the families who profited from successive Tudor governments' destruction of the established order in north-east England. John Chaytor was a member of the Merchant Adventurers, the dominant merchant guild in Newcastle, which controlled both commercial and political power in the town. His wealth enabled him to acquire properties in Newcastle, including those on the Quayside. He was named in a transaction between Roger Harding of Hollinside (Whickham parish) and Edward Ellington, slater, of Newcastle, in 1550. This transferred a property on the Quayside in Newcastle bounded on the north by Trinity House; on the south by the Quayside road; by another of Harding's tenements in the tenure of Thomas Wood, mariner, on the east; and land belonging to a former chantry in St Nicholas's Church in the tenure of Nicholas Thompson, mariner, and

with a common way, land of the Maison Dieu in the tenure of Robert Dryver, baker, and properties of John Chator, merchant, formerly belonging to the monastery of the Wallknoll on the west.<sup>15</sup> Chator was also linked to the properties to the east of the Custom House (now the site of the Live Theatre) in 1560 (Embleton 1896, 264). He held this property from Thomas Rookby. Rookby may have been a relative of James Rokesby, one of the Commissioners for the dissolution of monasteries in Northumberland and Durham (Gairdner 1888, 203). Rokesby was instrumental in the seizure of monastic property in Newcastle (Pears 2015) and if Thomas was a relation this may explain his ownership of properties formerly belonging to Tynemouth Priory. The two adjacent sites on Newcastle Quayside demonstrate the impact of Tudor policies in the commercial heart of north-east England.

John Clerk, who purchased one of the messuages on the site of the Custom House, died in 1560.<sup>16</sup> In his will he left his house bordered on the south by the Keyside and occupied by George Tailor, to Robert Hodgson, and the house occupied by George Robinson with the Keyside 'toward the fore part' was given to Robert, Susanna and Isabell Thornberry. If they had no heirs the properties were to go to Robert Hodgson, and failing his heirs to Andrew Surteis, who was identified as Clerk's 'brother'; this provision may have been intended to rectify the removal of the property from Surteis when Henry VIII seized the Tynemouth Priory leases. The properties were next recorded on 12 October 1574 when Robert Hodgson, son of Christopher Hodgson, mariner, deceased, sold a house on the Quayside to Thomas Browne, a Newcastle merchant.<sup>17</sup> This house abutted on its east side the house of Thomas Langton, merchant. Langton had died by 1586 when the house owned by his heirs was noted to be in the occupation of Robert Humphrey, cooper,<sup>18</sup> on the east side of the house of Thomas Browne, with the house of Edward Johnson, master and mariner, though occupied by Thomas Burford, on the west side, the Keyside on the south and a wall belonging to Trinity House on the north; there was also a garden on the north part of the property.<sup>19</sup>

On 20 June 1600, Benjamin Browne, merchant of the City of London and son of Thomas Browne, sold to Christopher and Jane Peacock (children of Robert Peacock, deceased, baker and beer brewer) 'a great messuage and two toofalls (lean-to structures) one a stable and the other a kiln'. This identified the site as bounded by a house of John Hunter and Trinity House Chare on the east, the Keyside and a burgage of John Hobson, mariner, on the south, a house belonging to the heirs of Edward Johnson on the west, and extending to a garth called Trinity House on the north.<sup>20</sup> The Peacocks' messuage was in the occupation of George Lilbourne, baker and brewer, and Thomas Chamberlain, mariner. Three months later, on 29 September 1600, Browne leased to George and Mabell Lilbourne a great messuage, including 'a great copper vessel for brewing and a steeplead' (also used for brewing).<sup>21</sup>

Christopher and Jane Peacock were the children of Robert Peacock, baker and brewer. In his will of 1596 Robert Peacock left his house to his son Christopher. After Christopher Peacock's death Jane (then living in Scarborough) sold the property to Mabell Lilborne of Newcastle, widow of baker George. On 7 September 1616 Mabell Lilborne granted the property to John Peacock, master and mariner, who was her son by Robert Peacock deceased. Although there are no parish records to confirm it, Christopher and Jane Peacock may have been the children of an earlier marriage by Robert Peacock, whilst John was born of a marriage between Robert and Mabell. After Robert's death his widow may have married another baker and brewer George Lilborne, but the property they lived in was destined for the children of Robert and his first wife. This might explain the omission of John Peacock from the sale of the property in January 1601, with Robert's second wife and widow Mabell living in the house

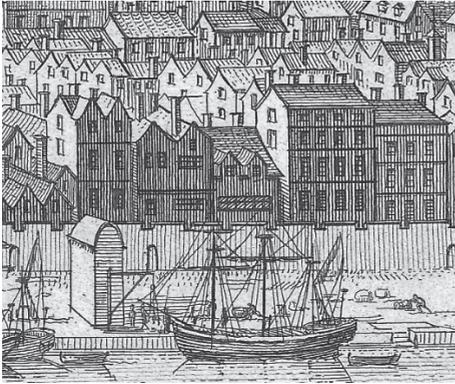


Fig. 3 Site of the Custom House 1745. Detail from Northumberland Archives, Woodhorn: SANT/DRA/4/1/26, 'The Prospect of the South-east View of Newcastle upon Tyne' 1745 by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. (Reproduced by permission of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne).

with her second husband George Lilbourne and her son John, but ownership by Christopher and Jane. After Christopher's death, Jane's move to Scarborough removed her interest in the Newcastle house and she sold it to her step-mother, who passed it to her son John.

The Peacocks occupied this plot until at least 1629, when John Peacock, baker and brewer, was mentioned in a deed.<sup>22</sup> By 1694, the passage was called Peacock Chare in a lease of one sixth part of a messuage, sugarhouse and distilling house in Peacock Chare by Christian, heiress of Edward Greene, shipwright, to Thomas Davison of Newcastle.<sup>23</sup> At some point between 1629 and 1670 property in Peacock Chare came into the ownership of the Peareth family, possibly due to the marriage of Roger Peareth of Gateshead, master mariner, to Susan Peacock of Newcastle at All Saints Church in January 1607/8. In his will of 1670 William Peareth, merchant of Newcastle, specifically named the buildings in Peacock Chare as the inheritance of his son Henry Peareth.<sup>24</sup> In Henry Peareth's will of 1729, the properties in Peacock Chare were stated to be in the occupation of Daniel Fisher, George Campbell, Anthony Dunn and the heirs of Timothy Davison (possibly the heir of Thomas Davison noted in 1694).<sup>25</sup>

In 1723 Samuel and Nathaniel Buck made an engraving of Newcastle from Gateshead.<sup>26</sup> The two properties on the site of the Custom House can be identified by their proximity to a tall two bay building to their west, with an adjacent distinctive range of shops with their three gables facing the Quayside. These buildings survived to be photographed in the early 1850s, but were destroyed in the 1854 fire (Manders 1995, 7). This group of buildings were illustrated by the Bucks in their 'South-East Prospect of Newcastle upon Tyne', published in April 1745 (fig. 3).<sup>27</sup> The building on the left of the Custom House site may have been the 'great messuage' mentioned in earlier deeds. The two properties that occupied the Quayside front of the Live Theatre site were rebuilt between 1723 and 1745, when Buck made his views of Newcastle. In 1723 the houses had large gables facing the river and wide rows of windows on at least two floors. By 1745 these buildings had been replaced with distinctly Georgian structures, with sash windows, pitched roofs parallel to the river, horizontal bands between stories and five and four stories. The 1745 rebuilding may have been related to the construction of cellars located in the recent excavation of this site (Taylor-Wilson *et al.* 2017, 101–107).

*The Custom House of 1767 and its Architect*

By 1762, the concerns of the Customs collectors in Newcastle, the Board in London, and the Newcastle Corporation led to alterations along the Quayside to facilitate greater trade and also greater collection of duties (Pears 2016). The demolition of the town wall created a greater area for trade. Comparison of Buck's view in 1745 and photographs from before the fire of 1854 show that most of the buildings were unaffected by the alterations to the Quayside, but the opportunity to regulate trade from a new Custom House was seized; the two plots between Peacock's Chare and Trinity Chare belonging to Alderman William Peareth were cleared of earlier buildings and a new Custom House constructed.

Correspondence between Mr Sunderland, the Collector of Customs at Newcastle, and the Board in London reveal that the architect of the Custom House was William Newton (1730–98), who had designed the new St Ann's Church, the Lunatic Asylum of 1765 and who would build Charlotte Square 1769–77, the Assembly Rooms 1774–76, the north side of the Guildhall in 1794, and several country houses in Durham and Northumberland (Pears 2013). Newton had the confidence of the gentlemen and merchants of the Corporation, and had known William Peareth since Newton and his father Robert Newton had supervised the construction of the Newcastle Infirmary in 1751–53, to which Peareth was a subscriber. The erection of the Custom House was beset by delays, which irritated the Commissioners in London, but they were more perturbed to learn that Peareth had made alterations to the plans they had approved, including attics and extensive cellars (fig. 4). The Board sent the plans back to Newcastle and ordered the Collector to inspect the work. His letter of 1 March 1766 reported that he had taken the plans and had visited the new building with 'Mr Newton, the Architect that drew them', who was paid a guinea for his attendance, and the builder, at which it was noted that:

the building corresponds therewith [to the plan] but that the roof is raised higher which is an advantage for there are made floors and garrets all over the Custom House that will be very useful and convenient for the lodging of dry goods and securing old books and papers.<sup>28</sup>

The incorporation of vaults and cellars was also defended on the grounds that the back vaults could be used for storing liquors, at a rent of £5 per annum, while the front vaults left empty would provide against flooding from storms and high tides.

Peareth's motivation for including the cellars and garrets may have been to rent them out to other businesses, or to charge the Board of Customs more, while if the Customs ever gave up the house, he would have a more extensive building to let to another tenant. The Collector wanted a more commodious building and saw possibilities for the use of the cellars by the Custom House. The Board of Customs, however, feared that the inclusion of cellars might mean a higher rent, was opposed to the alterations to the original plan. The Board insisted that the cellars were walled up,<sup>29</sup> but they were ignored as the Customs officers made full use of them. There was an urgent need for stores to hold seized goods, which frequently had to be sold off, as advertised in the Newcastle newspapers.<sup>30</sup>

The new Custom House opened in January 1767. It was built of brick with stone angle quoins and was a building of some prestige, employing Palladian proportions and style (fig. 5). Brick was the fashionable material in eighteenth-century Newcastle, as seen at the Keelmen's Hospital and Charlotte Square. Although the south elevation was refaced in 1833, the original brickwork can be seen on the west side of the Custom House. Goods for inspection could be brought from the Quayside into the cellars through a hatch in the west wall



Fig. 4 The vaulted cellars beneath Custom House.

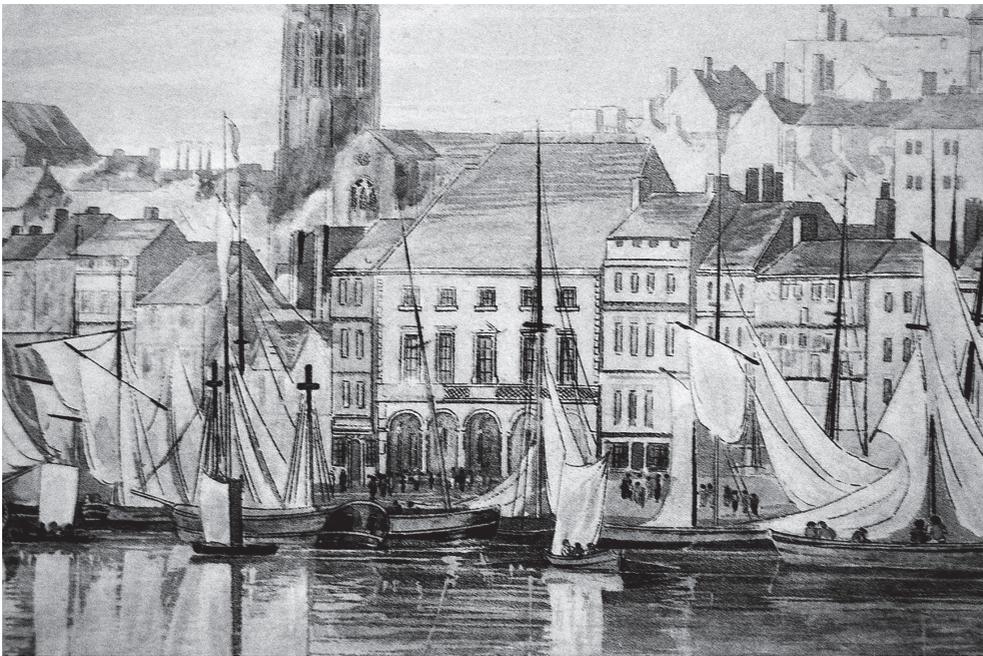


Fig. 5 The Custom House, Newcastle, Excerpt from T. M. Richardson, *View of the Port and Town of Newcastle upon Tyne, from the Rope Walk Gateshead*, 1819.

facing Peacock's Chare and held in stone troughs and barrel shelves until they were inspected by the searchers. The cellars were constructed from stone walls up to one metre in height, from which sprung brick vaults that met stone pillars in the centre of each bay. Stone from the demolished town wall may have been used in these cellars, as it was for the new St Ann's Church, also constructed by Newton. It is possible that evidence of earlier occupation survives below the current brick floor of the cellars, as located in the excavation of the adjacent Live Theatre site (Taylor-Wilson *et al.* 2017, 101–107).

Externally there is a narrow plinth made by extending bricks out from the west wall; this provided additional stability to the wall by spreading the weight and would also keep the wheels of carts using Peacock's Chare away from the wall. Higher up there is a projecting band of bricks two bricks high: this denoted the level of the first floor and is another feature of classical style buildings. This brick band is cut by the Venetian window that lights the main staircase. This window was moved into its present position during Smirke's alterations in the 1830s. As designed by Newton, the ground floor on the south side had an open loggia formed by five arches, the western arch giving entry to Peacock's Chare (fig. 6). Loggias were a feature of Palladian buildings, the original purpose being to provide a cool shaded area in the warmer climate of Italy, but at the Custom House this loggia provided a covered outdoor space for goods awaiting inspection and before they were brought into the cellars. Rows of arches were a feature of William Newton's buildings and can be seen at the contemporary St Ann's Church.

The first floor of the Custom House had tall sash windows, the central window was distinguished by a triangular pediment and the others with horizontal cornices. In Palladian fashion the windows on the second floor were square, set in raised architraves and with prominent sill stones. A very high roof of grey slates covered the building. At first floor and second floor levels the building bridged Peacock's Chare to provide additional accommodation for offices at the front that overlooked the Quayside. The line of the building stepped back behind the front rooms on the west to realign with Peacock's Chare. This produced an offset in the roofline that is visible today. The height of the roof also hid the two blocks of chimneys, which are located in the lateral wall running through the building, but which can be seen in aerial views of the Custom House and from Trinity Chare.

Recessed behind the loggia were offices for landwaiters, tidesmen, watermen and searchers. The central corridor led to a staircase in the rear centre of the building. The staircase was lit by an elegant Venetian window, in this case in the north wall (moved to the east wall in 1833), a feature of several other buildings by Newton. The staircase led up to the first floor, where on each side was an office (for the Comptroller and the Collector). Filling the whole of the south side of the first floor, giving a wide view of the Quayside, was the Long Room; most business was conducted there, as ships' captains and merchants sought the required signatures for import and export, and clerks calculated duties to be levied. The staircase continued upwards to the second floor, where there were further offices and storage space for the vast amount of correspondence and record-keeping generated. Above this were the capacious attics, intended by Mr Peareth as additional storage. A block and tackle was attached to the roof above the well of the staircase so that goods could be hoisted up to the attics (fig. 9).

The Board of Customs in London may have assumed that the internal fittings and furniture from the old Custom House would be moved to the new one, but some expenditure was requested: a new clock by John Hawthorne, clock and watch maker, was installed in March

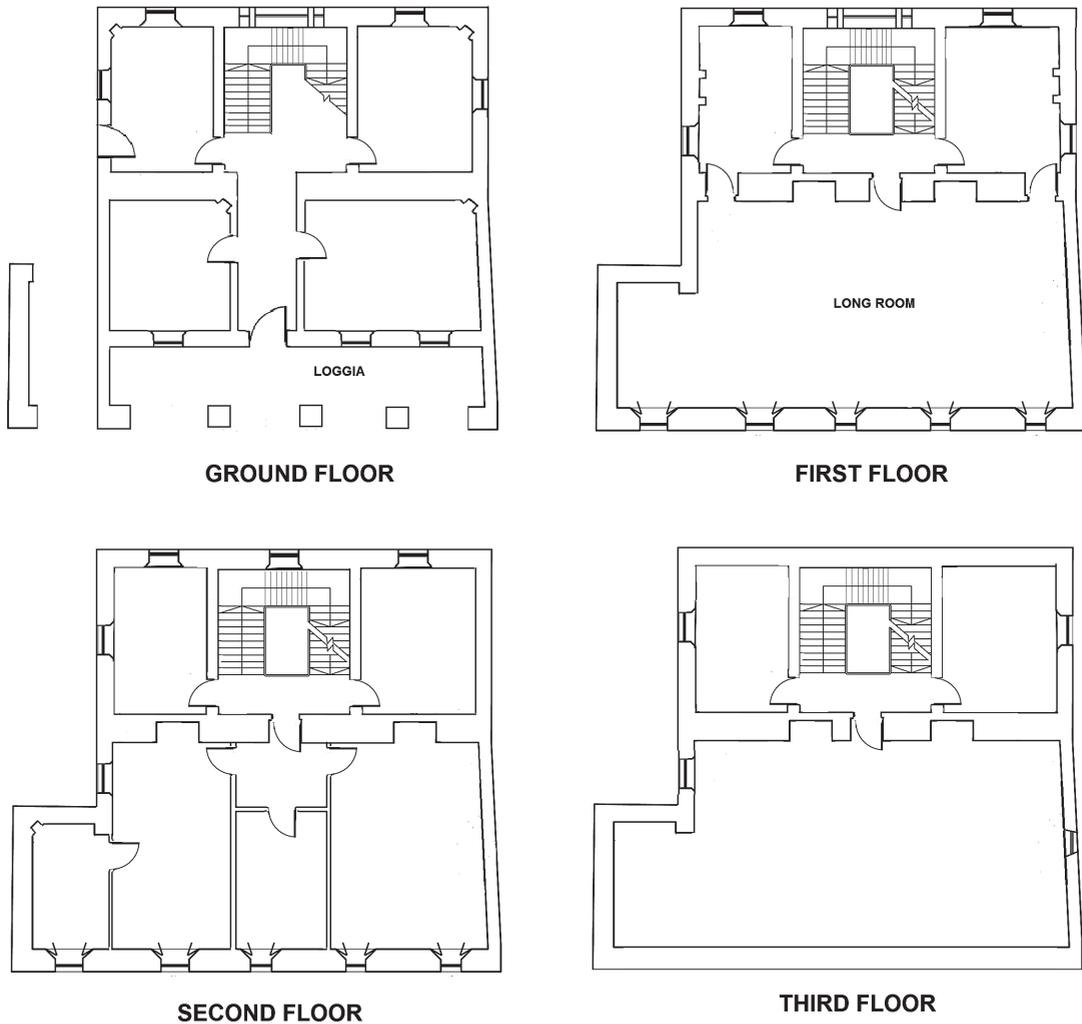


Fig. 6 Reconstructed Layout of 1767 Custom House.

1767, having cost £5 5s; in March 1767 George Lowes offered to supply six new chairs with leather bottoms at a cost of 10s 6d each, or £3 3s all told; and the elevated southerly aspect of the new Custom House brought further expense, as on 30 May 1767 new curtains were obtained for the Long Room at a charge £5 18s 8d. There were also demands upon the space: Lawrence Turner requested a desk in the new Custom House to continue collecting Greenwich Hospital duties; the Duke of Richmond's receiver was also provided with a desk in new Long Room. He came with a fine new panel displaying the Duke's arms, prompting a request that the rather shabby Royal Arms from the old Custom House needed to be replaced; and in October 1767 Mr Giles Alcock, Receiver of the Light Duties at Newcastle, was also offered a desk in the new building.<sup>31</sup>

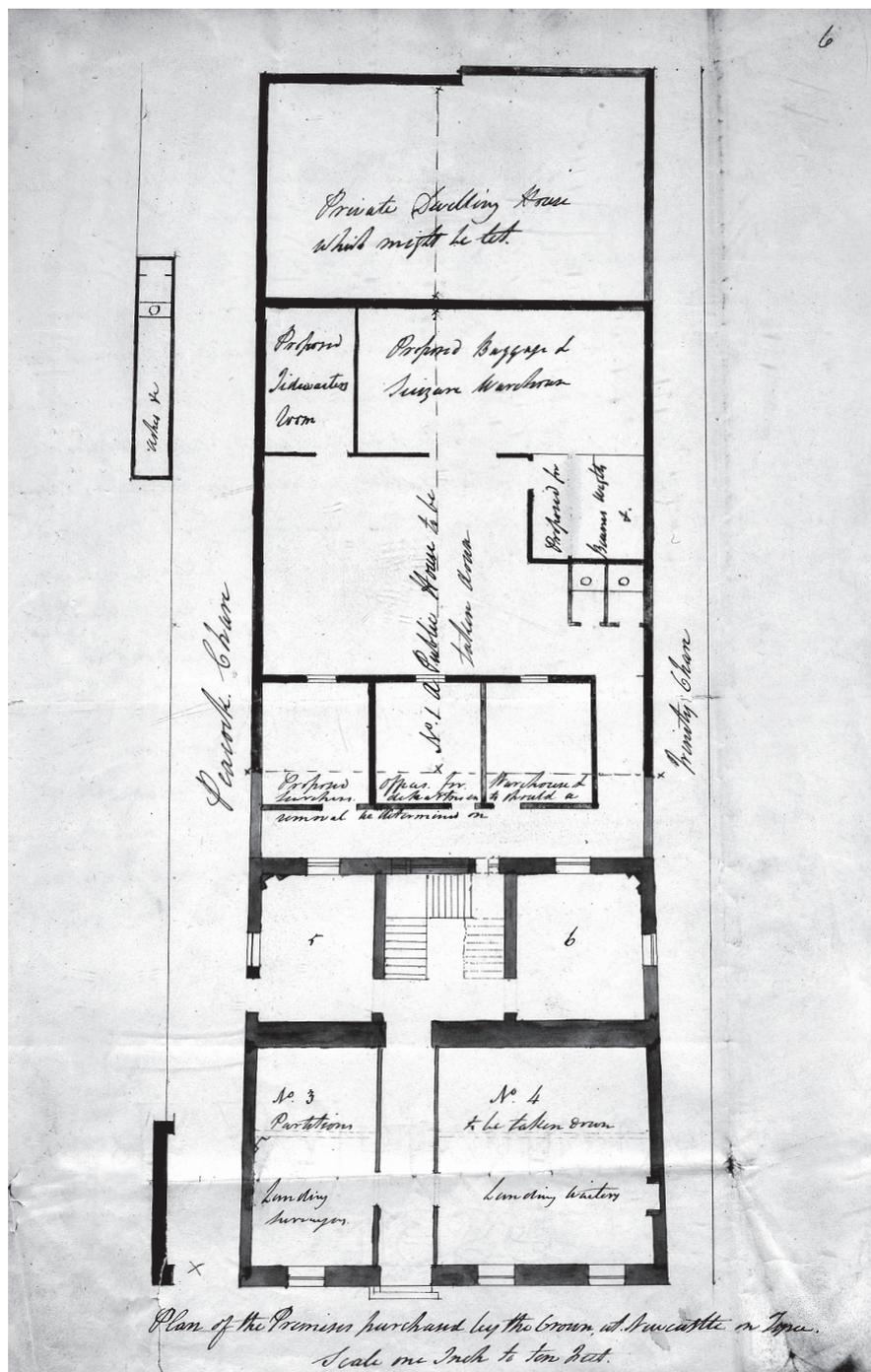


Fig. 7 Plan of the Custom House ground floor and rear yard 1830 by John Pitts. TNA, CUST 33/6. Reproduced by permission of The National Archives.

## PART 3: NINETEENTH CENTURY ALTERATIONS TO THE CUSTOM HOUSE

The expanded Quayside and the new Custom House were praised by contemporaries: in 1776 it was noted that 'Here is a noble custom-house and the finest quay in England except that at Yarmouth' (*New Display*, 1776, II, 178). Baillie (1801, 215) stated that the Custom House had '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'. By the 1820s, however Mackenzie (1827, 720) wrote that the increasing trade of the Tyne had made the Custom House 'quite insufficient'. He noted a proposal to build a new Custom House on the Sandhill, 'near the site of the old Custom House, capable of containing the establishments both of the customs and the excise'.

In 1816 there was an attempt by the authorities at North Shields to open a Custom House there, but this was rejected by The Treasury. This was not an unqualified success for Newcastle, as it was determined that although no Custom House would be built at Shields, if masters of colliers wished they could sign the coast-bond there — the thin end of the wedge, so it appeared to the Newcastle authorities.

The Newcastle Corporation were keen to see the Custom House return to the Sandhill, not least Alderman Reed who would have gained financially from the sale of his property to the Board of Customs. They engaged the architect Sydney Smirke (1798–1877) to view the proposed site at the Sandhill and the existing Custom House in May 1829.<sup>32</sup> In his report Smirke noted difficulties with the Sandhill site, which could only be accessed from the west and also the high cost of the land. As a result this site was rejected and the Crown bought the existing Custom House from the Peareths for £7,985 at the end of 1829.

The Custom House had not remained unchanged since 1767. A 'Plan of the Premises purchased by the Crown at Newcastle on Tyne' by John Pitts in 1830 (fig. 7) showed that by this date the ground floor loggia had been blocked up and windows inserted to create additional offices.<sup>33</sup> Evidence of these changes can be seen in the ground floor rooms, particularly the angled fireplace in the south-west room (fig. 8), which was formerly in the corner of the wall dividing this room into two offices (the Landing officers' room and room 3 in fig. 7). A large joist in the ground floor south-east room indicates the former dividing partition there. Pitts also showed that immediately north of the Custom House was a public house, a yard and a private dwelling house; the Crown bought these and demolished them.<sup>34</sup>

Smirke designed a substantial extension to the rear of the Custom House to accommodate a new Long Room on the first floor, with offices and warehouses on the ground floor and more cellars below. In April 1831, a builder Thomas Hall contracted for this work at a cost of £1,336.<sup>35</sup> As Smirke was living at 12 Regent Street, London, and had no intention of moving to Newcastle to oversee the construction he recommended that the Board should employ John Wardle as a clerk of works. Wardle (1795–1860) was an accomplished architect in his own right and was Richard Grainger's 'principal architectural designer' for the reconstruction of central Newcastle from 1835 (Colvin 2008, 1086–87).

The Long Room extension was completed by August 1832.<sup>36</sup> To connect this with the original building, Smirke submitted plans to move the staircase and create an entry into the Long Room. The Board accepted these and the tender of Mr William Brown to execute the work for £977 on 25 October 1832. The section of the staircase from the ground to the first floor was relocated to the north-west corner of the building. This alteration can be seen in the



Fig. 8 Custom House: ground floor, south-west room. Inserted fireplace formerly in the corner of the room created by enclosing the ground floor loggia. Original wall of offices later removed leaving fireplace at angle to the larger room; note the protruding stub of wall at cornice level to right of the fireplace.



Fig. 9 The alterations to the staircase shown by the change in balustrade. Note the block and tackle on the roof rafter, to hoist items to the attics. (Richard Pears).

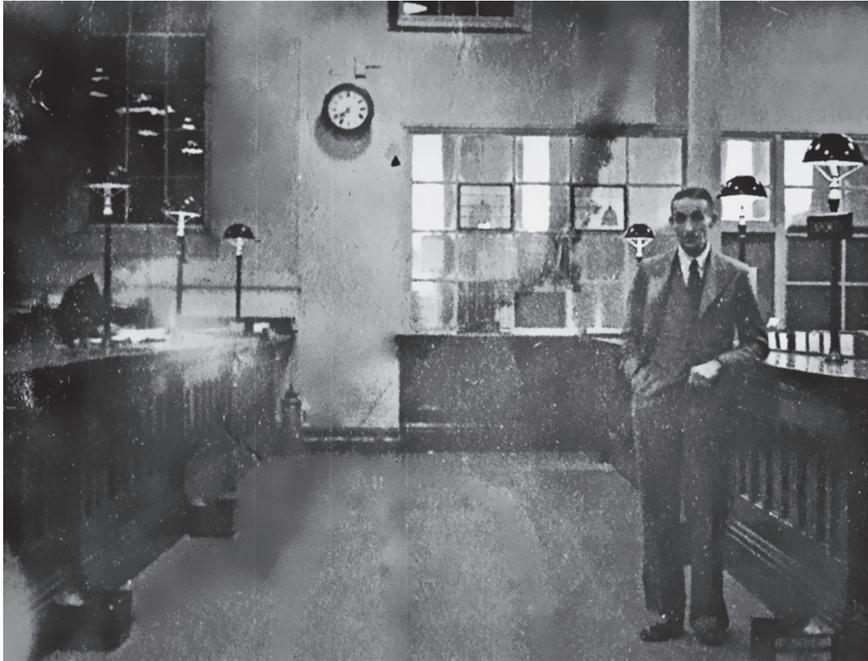


Fig. 10 Interior of the Long Room c. 1955, with counters for imports on left and exports on right. (Photo: Mrs Enid James). The column behind William Burn (Deputy Collector) indicates the line of the east wall of Smirke's Long Room, before its extension in the early twentieth century.



Fig. 11 The Custom House. Engraving by William Collard, 1841. From *Architectural and picturesque views of Newcastle-upon-Tyne ...* Engraved by W. Collard from drawings [by J. W. Carmichael, T. M. Richardson, B. Green and J. Dobson] ... With historical and descriptive notices by M. Ross in 1833.



Fig. 12 The Royal Arms above the front door. Photo: Dr Tom Yellowley.

different balustrade of the staircase internally (fig. 9), and by the straight joints in the external brickwork of the western wall where Newton's Venetian window was relocated.

The Long Room was entered in its south-east corner through a doorcase of Grecian Doric pilasters. Skylights in the pitched roof and tall round-headed windows on the west, north and probably on the east sides created a well-lit interior. Long counters ran north-south through the room, with positions for the Customs officers along its length (fig. 10).

The Board approved Smirke's design for a new stone front over the earlier brickwork in November 1832. Nevertheless, he retained the previous five arches on the ground floor and created a prominent entrance with an architrave supporting the royal coat of arms. The first floor windows were bordered by pilasters and pediments, and a cornice and balustrade added at the eaves (fig. 11). The elevation was described as 'reminiscent of an Italian palazzo' and 'a fine example of minor official architecture of the period' (Faulkner, Beacock and Jones 2014, 116). Smirke was concerned about the impact on business during the construction of the stone front and requested the employment of no less than twenty masons. Wardle reported that the new stone front and other alterations were completed in December 1833.<sup>37</sup>

The Royal Arms over the front door (fig. 12) were carved in Portland stone at a cost of £50 by William Grinsell Nicholl (1796–1871) a hitherto un-noted example of his work.<sup>38</sup> The Royal Arms were installed in March 1834.<sup>39</sup> Two months later Smirke submitted his statement of accounts — the cost was £1165 15s 8d.<sup>40</sup> The ground floor now contained on the west of the entrance passage the landing surveyor's office and ante-room, with the registrar's office to the east of the entrance passage. A long passage ran north through extension, with the searcher's office, seizer's room, landing waiter's office and tide surveyor's office to the east. To the west of the passage were tide waiter's office, locker's office and baggage warehouse. The older part of the building housed the Comptroller's office, ante-room, collector's office and private office, with the warehouse department and the controller of accounts office. The second floor had four rooms and provided residential accommodation. Additional cellars were constructed below the Long Room, with a new entrance in the yard to the north of the Long Room

extension. A small crane was attached to the north wall of the new Long Room to lower goods into the cellars.

Even when the work was finished there were complaints from the staff that southerly winds blew into ground floor rooms and up the stairs into the Long Room, and about excessive heat in the summer. New swing doors with patent spring hinges were installed in entrance passage at a cost of £13 *os* 2*d*.<sup>41</sup> These were minor troubles compared to the dispute that now arose: the Board had assumed when the Corporation had offered £2,000 towards the building of a new Custom House on the Sandhill that they would make the same provision for the refurbishment of the existing Custom House. The Town Clerk, John Clayton, responded:

The Common Council believe there has been a misunderstanding. On 6 February 1827 the Common Council made a proposal for a new Custom House which was not accepted. In September 1829 the Crown officers bought the Custom House for £8,000 instead of £9,000 and altered the building at their own plan for £2,000 instead of £4,000, the Common Council not being a party. In summer 1832 the Corporation offered to pay for an ornamental front in return for two clerks seats in the Customs House. This front was built for £360 and the Corporation was willing to pay this on receipt of a Treasury minute granting them the right to the seats.<sup>42</sup>

The Board asked Smirke his opinion and he noted that 'the Town Clerk is an extremely shrewd dry lawyer and I was half afraid of him'. He suggested reducing the demand to the Corporation 'to £1,650, or to be liberal to £1,500'.<sup>43</sup> The dispute rumbled on and was not settled when the old Corporation was swept away by the Municipal Corporations Act in 1835.

The Newcastle Custom House was fortunate to survive the Great Fire and Explosion that occurred on 6 October 1854. Many properties to the west of the Custom House were consumed by the fires, whilst the Custom House was severely damaged: 'the roof was nearly blown off, every window was smashed and every door thrown off its hinges' (*Account of the Great Fire 1854*, 35). The extensive records of the port were saved by Mr Browne, the Chief Clerk, who in two hours transferred them into a steamer and moved them downstream away from the flames. The Custom House was repaired and many of the damaged surrounding properties were replaced with 'palatial mercantile offices ... many connected to the booming shipping trade' in the next decade (Morgan 2007, 66).

### *Reform of Customs Collections*

The control that the Newcastle Custom House had formerly exercised over the coastline between Berwick and Scarborough came to an end when Custom Houses opened at Sunderland, Stockton and Middlesbrough, whilst Customs officers had been based at Blyth since the mid-eighteenth century (W. 1809). The control of revenue collection on the Tyne changed in 1848 when an independent Customs Port, the 'Port of Shields', was created in the harbour between North Shields and South Shields; a Custom House opened at North Shields on 6 April 1848 and two Customs officers were stationed at South Shields, business being transacted in a house formerly belonging to Isaac Cookson on Dean Street. Pressure from ship-owners continued and on 27 August 1863 the foundation stone of a new Custom House, designed by Mr Clemence, the Borough Surveyor, was laid at the Mill Dam, South Shields; it opened on 18 July 1864. The following year South Shields became an independent Customs port, overseeing the area from Souter Point on the Durham coast and along the south side of the Tyne to Jarrow Quay (Hodgson 1903, 201–2). The establishment of these Custom Houses

broke Newcastle's monopoly, though it continued to transact the majority of trade on the Tyne.

#### *Storage of Imported Goods*

Throughout its history the Newcastle Custom House was the focal point of an extensive range of buildings and services to control and tax trade within its remit. Within Newcastle, by the mid-nineteenth century there were several bonded warehouses along the Quayside to store goods that had yet to pay import duties.<sup>44</sup> At the west end, at the junction of Hanover Street and The Close were the huge block of warehouses owned by Amor Spoor, constructed between 1841 and 1844 (McCombie 2006, 1). These remained in use until 1982. A very large Queen's Warehouse was shown to the west of the Custom House, between Plummer Chare and Fenwick's Entry, on the 1861 Ordnance Survey map (fig. 13). Many bonded warehouses (now apartments) stood to the east of the Custom House between Burn Bank and the Milk Market, ready to store the goods arriving on Tyneside.

#### *Activities in the Northern Part of the Custom House Site*

The area north of the Long Room had a separate history as a brewery and distillery. In 1782 Thomas Burdon and Co. brewers were recorded at Peacock's Entry, as was P. Temple, shoemaker (Whitehead 1781, 11). By 1790 the brewery was owned by Burdon and Rayne. Baillie (1801, 530) stated that this brewery 'for years has brewed vast quantities of beer.' R. B. Sanderson 'spirit merchant ale and porter brewer' was recorded in 1827 (Parson and White 1827, 74) and the Newcastle Whisky Distillery was noted by Oliver (1831, 54). Sir Thomas Burdon died in 1826 (Bennison 2000, 218). The brewery was sold in July 1827, when it was noted that the premises, comprising a brewhouse, three cellars, a stable, three offices and a malting, were held on a lease from the Misses Peareth.<sup>45</sup> Edward Hall Campbell was recorded as the owner of the distillery in 1835. However, in 1844, it was reported that Campbell, who had died on 1 April 1844, had evaded excise duty to the value of £15,800, despite his premises adjoining the Custom House!<sup>46</sup> John Todd was the manager of the distillery at the time and remained so until he was declared a bankrupt in 1853. He was said to have destroyed the company books, taken a large sum of cash and fled to 'a country where only criminals are given up to the British government'.<sup>47</sup> The Crown seized the distillery buildings and the contents were auctioned off on 4th July 1853. These included 'Coffey's Patent Distilling Apparatus, capable of producing two thousand gallons of spirits per week'.<sup>48</sup> The former distillery buildings, on land still leased by the trustees of the late William Peareth, were sold on 16th October 1855.<sup>49</sup> A plan by the architect Andrew Oliver in the 1855 sale documents showed the complicated layout of buildings in this area, and may represent post-medieval property boundaries that were lost when the buildings were subsequently demolished (fig. 14). There were two parallel ranges of distillery buildings, one range backing onto Trinity Chare and the other backing onto Broad Garth.<sup>50</sup> There was a lane between the two ranges. The range backing onto Trinity Chare, and abutting the wall of the Custom House yard, contained from south to north a counting room over an open room, a warehouse with a cellar under, and the mash tub room. The range backing onto Broad Garth contained, from north to south, a room for the copper brewing vessels, a still house, malt lofts with cellars below and a kiln. This kiln may have been on the site of those mentioned in the sixteenth and

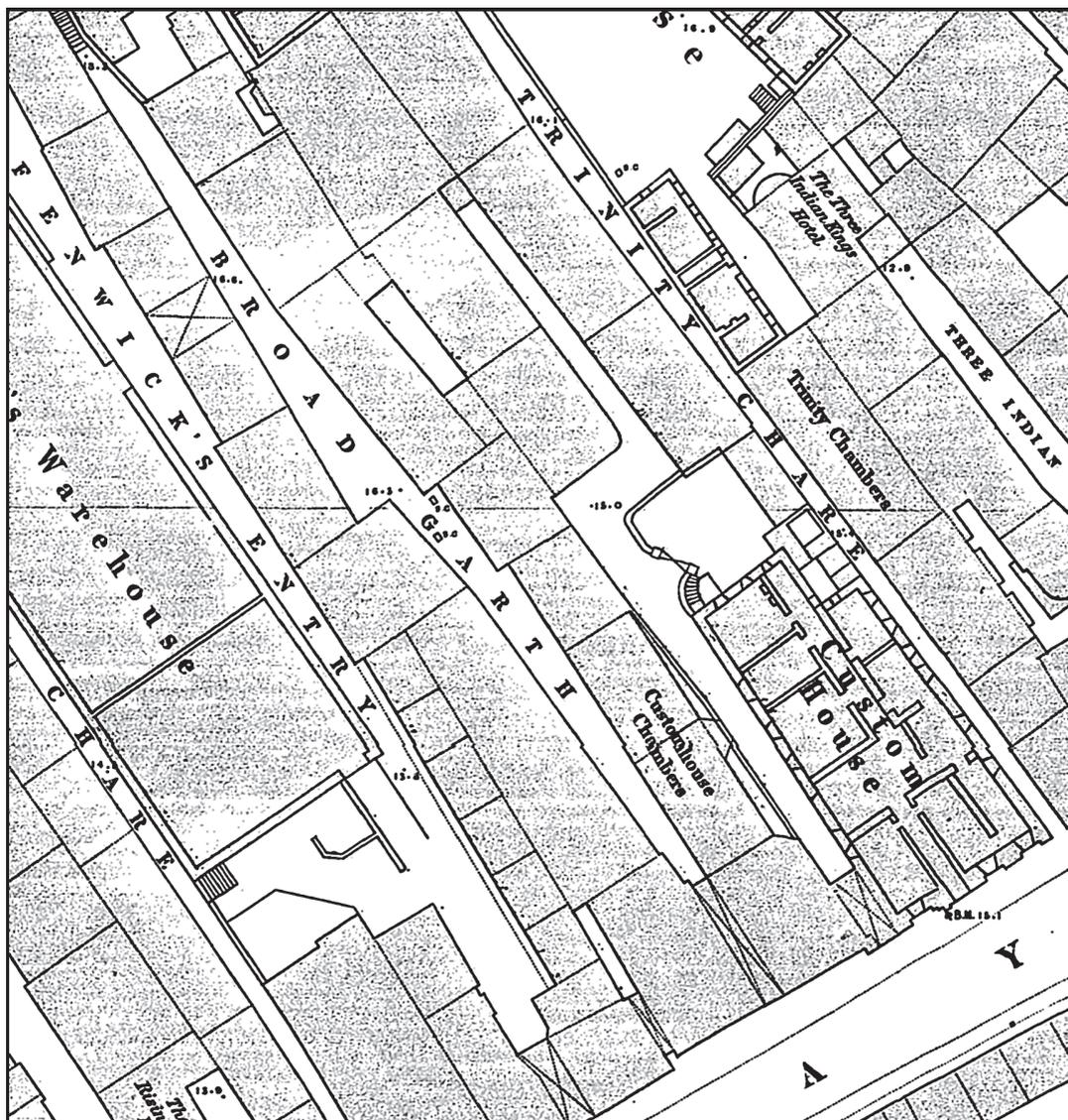


Fig. 13 The Custom House in 1861. Note the internal plan of the Custom House, the new buildings to its north, and also the very large Queen's Warehouse between Plummer Chare and Fenwick's Entry. Ordnance Survey 1:500 Town Map.

seventeenth-century leases and wills noted above. In Broad Garth there was a long cistern for distillery wash and a draw well.

These structures were demolished and a new warehouse and offices constructed by 1861, when the new layout north of the Custom House was shown on the 1:500 Town map by the Ordnance Survey (fig. 13). The new buildings on the site were illustrated in 1868, when they were surveyed for the Executors of James Joicey.<sup>51</sup> The buildings were of brick with stone

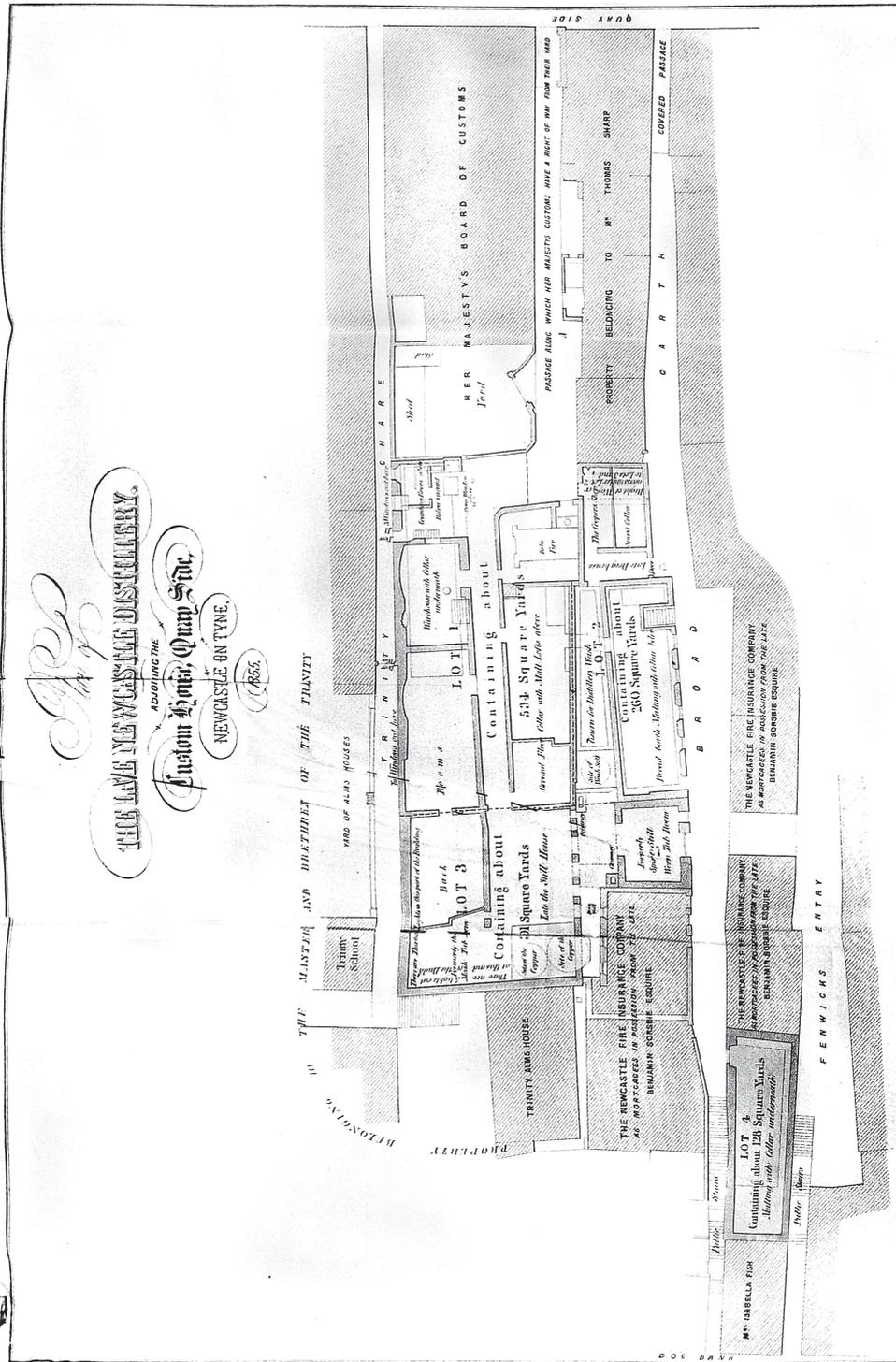


Fig. 14 Plan of the late Newcastle Distillery adjoining the Custom House, Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne 1855, by Andrew Oliver. Reproduced by permission of Newcastle City Libraries. Compare this earlier layout of the area north of the Custom House with that in Fig. 13 in 1861.

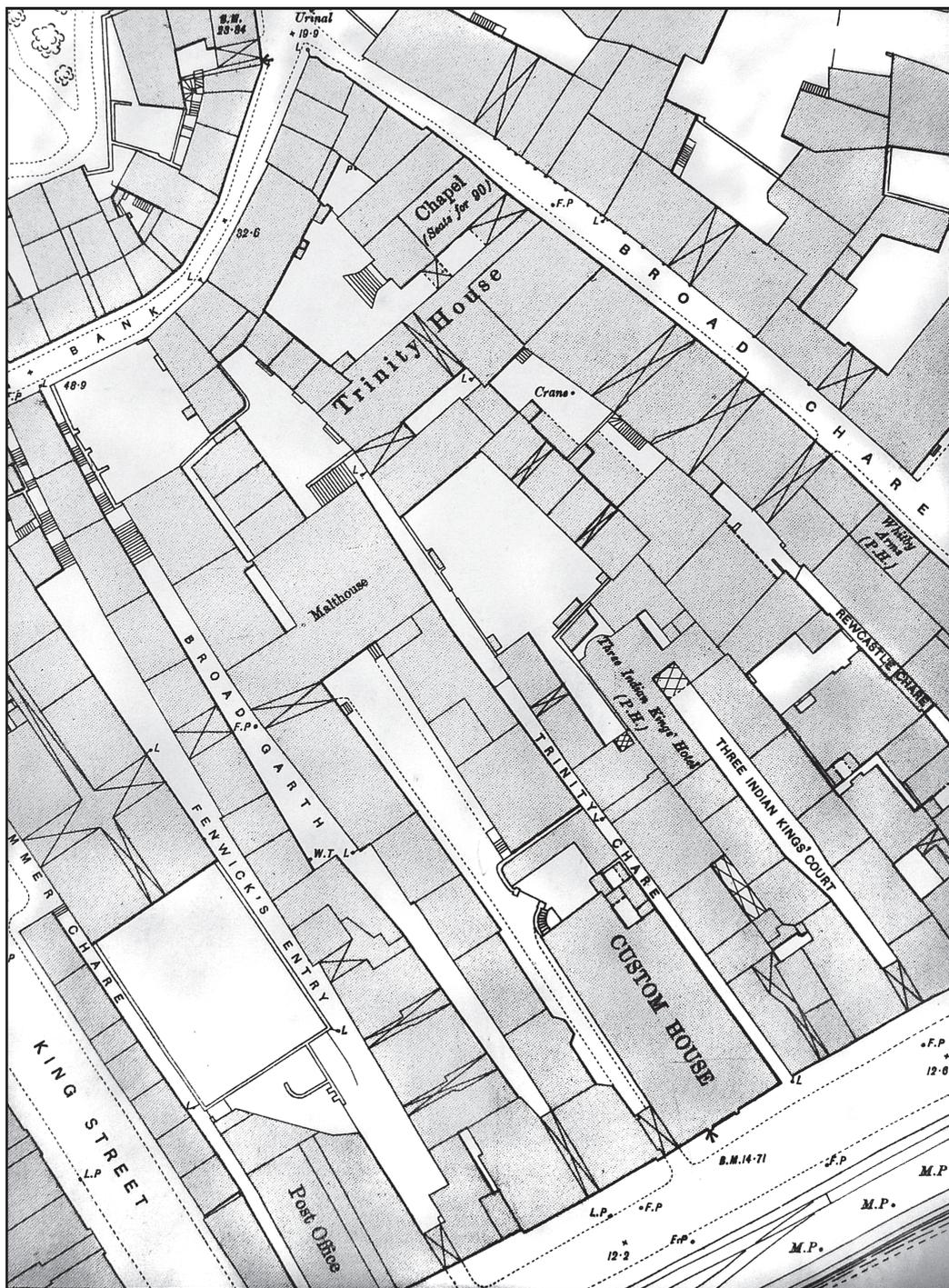


Fig. 15 1896 Ordnance Survey map.



Fig. 16 Custom House Yard in 1967, before the demolition of the warehouse (Newcastle City Libraries).

dressings, and included some fine details, such as the chamfered window heads and sills, the door surrounds, and the curved bricks used for the window surrounds that are lighter than those of the walls. At eaves level two levels of bricks were corbelled out to carry the gutters and there were shaped stone kneelers at the gables. Large plate glass windows provided light for the office range on the east side of the courtyard, which had entrances on Peacock Chare and Trinity Chare. The buildings were shown as a malthouse in the Ordnance Survey map of 1896 (fig. 15). There was a covered passage through to Broad Garth from Peacock Chare, presumably to move products in and out of the malthouse. The map showed that from Broad Garth another covered passage led to Fenwick's Entry and to King Street. These two roads were much wider than the entry points from the Quayside to Peacock's Chare and Broad Garth and may have been an alternative access route to and from the malthouse, but the demolition of the buildings formerly on the west side of Peacock Chare enabled a widening of Peacock's Chare at the northern end for access from the Quayside to the malthouse and to the new buildings. In 1940 the former malthouse buildings were identified as a bakery on the Ordnance Survey map of the Quayside.<sup>52</sup> The warehouse was demolished (fig. 16) and

replaced by the Blue Anchor Quay Peppercorn Court development in 1985–7 (Kane 2015) but the eastern office range is now the Annexe to Trinity Chambers.

The Long Room was extended to the east sometime between 1909 and 1920, following the amalgamation of the Boards of Customs and Excise (Kane 2011a). This is indicated by the rectangular windows on this side. The lowest four metres of the old east wall were taken down and cast iron columns and joists inserted to support the original roof (fig. 10). The extension had a flat roof.

When the former brewery was acquired in 1967 its warehouse was demolished, the offices retained but remodelled, and a connection to the Long Room was made at the first floor level (McConnell 1993, 6). In 1986 major repairs were required, as the stone façade added by Smirke was not securely connected to the brick front, whilst the unsafe rear of the section of the building over Peacock's Chare was taken down and rebuilt and a concrete slab inserted over the passage through the building.<sup>53</sup> The link building between the former brewery offices and the end of the Long Room block was built in 1986.<sup>54</sup> With the amalgamation of Customs and Excise branches in northern England in 1995 the Newcastle Region merged with that of Leeds, the new Headquarters for collections in Northern England: Newcastle's long domination of Customs collection was ended. The Customs and Excise offices moved to the Regent Centre in Gosforth and the Custom House on the Quayside closed on 7 August 1998 (Kane 2011b).<sup>55</sup> The acquisition of the Custom House by Trinity Chambers in 2003 demonstrated the new focus of the Quayside as a legal centre, following the opening of the new Crown Court in 1998.

## CONCLUSION

The Custom House and the history of its site encapsulate many themes of previous research: the struggle of Newcastle authorities to maintain their monopoly on trade on the Tyne and the wider North East region; the creation of port facilities by land reclamation; and the role of corporate and individual enterprises in these processes. The combination of ad hoc arrangements and personal interest eventually led to the logical position of a Custom House in the centre of the redeveloped Quayside, where its officers oversaw the highest levels of trade on the Quayside during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank Mr Simon Stewart of Trinity Chambers for his support which led to the initial research on the Custom House as a private publication; to Mr Peter Kane, formerly of HM Customs & Excise for extensive information on the Custom Service in Newcastle, and to the staff of The National Archives, Tyne & Wear Archives Service, Newcastle City Library and Durham University Library Archives and Special Collections.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Excise had offices in Newcastle on Pilgrim Street (Oliver 1831, 91).

<sup>2</sup> Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums, Discovery Museum, Newcastle (hereafter TWAM), Calendar of Common Council Books of Newcastle (hereafter CCCB) 1646–1766, 589/6–14.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Durham (1731–1783) owned a house, garden and stable in Hanover Square (Durham University Library, Archives Special Collections (hereafter DULASC), DPRI/1/1783/D15, Will of Thomas Durham). In his will he ordered the Hanover Square property to be sold, but his properties

on the Keyside, Middle Street and the Groat Market were to be held in trust for his nephew's son Peter Bernardeau Durham. On 19th August 1770 a Mr Tuffs opened the Old Custom House as a chapel (Mackenzie 1827, 408). The Old Custom House survived until 1925, when it was demolished during the construction of the Tyne Bridge. Its exact location was the small courtyard between Lombard House on Lombard Street and the buildings facing Sandhill.

<sup>4</sup> TWAM, CCCB 1743-66, f.125.

<sup>5</sup> This was also the case with the creation of Mosley Street in the 1780s, which overcame the problems of east-west movement through the upper town caused by the deep dene of the Lort Burn. Mosley Street connected the older Pilgrim Street with the new Dean Street, created by culverting the Lort Burn and laying out a new street over it. This initiative was possible because Alderman Edward Mosley purchased and demolished properties in the area (Brand 1789, I, 328).

<sup>6</sup> TWAM, 543/123, Some of the craftsmen involved in building St Ann's Chapel were Thomas Gunn and George Anderson, bricklayers, Surtees and Liddel for timber, and Newton was paid £90 for slates for the new chapel in November 1766.

<sup>7</sup> *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury* 21 October 1854, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> DULASC, DPR/1/1/1612/P3/1, Will of Roger Perith.

<sup>9</sup> John Whyteheved may have been a relation of Alan Whitheved.

<sup>10</sup> DULASC, Shaftoe (Beamish Papers) GB-0033-SHA/167/1-16, Certified copies of documents relating to premises in the Keyside, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1466-1629.

<sup>11</sup> DULASC, Shaftoe (Beamish Papers) GB-0033-SHA/167/1a, 20 July 1466, Lease by John Prior of Tynemouth to John Baxter of the town of Newcastle upon Tyne, merchant, and his wife Isabella a messuage and garden. Rent: 20s. a year to be paid in two equal instalments.

<sup>12</sup> This may have been the Thomas Hardbread (not the best reputation for a baker!) who served as Sheriff of Newcastle in 1485 and 1493 (Welford Newcastle I, 387 and 402). Robert Harding leased a tenement in Grype Chare near the Quayside to William Hayrbred in November 1489 (Welford 1885, I, 394). Harding was Mayor of Newcastle in 1498.

<sup>13</sup> Christopher's sons were named in his will as Thomas, Hugh, Christopher and Anthony, so the John Chaytor named in the next lease was probably his father. The career of Christopher Chaytor (1494-1592) is summarised by Newton (2015a, 100) and Green (1871, 260). His royal connections gave Chaytor opportunities to aggrandise himself and his family, including the purchase of Butterby manor, near Durham (Surtees 1860, 203).

<sup>14</sup> DULASC, GB-0033-SHA/167/3a, 2 May 1546, Assignment of two messuages formerly belonging to the monastery of Tynemouth.

<sup>15</sup> TWAS, C&G 2/11/2 3rd July 1550. Release and Quitclaim of Rauff Hollandsyde, Co. Durham, Esq. to Edmund Ellyngtoon, slater, and Agnes his wife, of a tenement in the Keyside, Newcastle upon Tyne.

<sup>16</sup> DULASC, GB-0033-SHA/167/3b, 16 September 1560, Will of John Clarke of Newcastle upon Tyne, mariner.

<sup>17</sup> DULASC, GB-0033-SHA/167/4a, 12 October 1574, Sale of a house on Newcastle Quayside.

<sup>18</sup> In his will of 2 December 1588 Robert Barker, Alderman, left to his son Robert 'my house in the Kay-side, now in the tenure of Cuthberte Wymprey [Humphrey], beare-brewer', who may have been a relation of Robert Humphrey (Surtees Society, 1860, 177).

<sup>19</sup> DULASC, GB-0033-SHA/167/6(i)c Grant of a messuage by Thomas Browne to Roger Rawe.

<sup>20</sup> DULASC, GB-0033-SHA/167/9, 20 June 1600, Sale of property on Newcastle Quayside from Benjamin Browne to Christopher and Jane Peacock.

<sup>21</sup> DULASC, GB-0033-SHA/167/8, 29 September 1600, Lease of property in the Keyside.

<sup>22</sup> DULASC, GB-0033-SHA/167/11b, 16 July 1629, Quitclaim by Jane Johnson, widow of John Johnson, mariner, of a great messuage on the Quayside sold to John Peacock, baker and brewer 7 January 1622.

<sup>23</sup> DULASC, GB-0033-SHA/239, 6 July 1694 Christian Greene lease of one sixth of a sugar house in Peacock Chaire to Mr Timothy Davison.

<sup>24</sup> DULASC, DPRI/1/1670/P5, Will of William Peareth, 3 January 1670.

<sup>25</sup> DULASC, DPRI/1/1729/P2, Will of Henry Peareth, 27 July 1727.

<sup>26</sup> Society of Antiquaries of London Library: Coleraine collection, portfolio iv, f.61, 'The Prospect of Newcastle upon Tyne' 1723 by Samuel Buck.

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> TNA, CUST 84/11, Letter of 1 March 1766.

<sup>29</sup> TNA, CUST 84/131, 4 January 1763 – 14 October 1766, Board to Collector 8 March 1766, Collector to Board 31 March 1766.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Newcastle Courant 27 March 1731: 'To be Sold ... at Mr *Durham's* Houfe, in the Cufom-Houfe Entry, a large Quantity of very good Red Port Wine, and a large Quantity of very good White-Wine, late belonging to *William Allen*, Efq. of *Lym Regis*, and feized by Extent'.

<sup>31</sup> TNA, CUST 84/12, Outport records, Collector to Board 4 July 1766 – 22 December 1768.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, CUST 33/6, Smirke's report to the Board of Customs, 16 May 1829.

<sup>33</sup> TNA, CUST 33/6 Newcastle: accommodation at new Custom House 1826–36.

<sup>34</sup> The Peacock Inn was a convenient place for socialising. The *Newcastle Courant* of 22 January 1831 (p.4) reported that the Mayor attended a dinner at Mrs Coxon's Peacock Inn, Quayside, given in honour of John Bowman, chief clerk of the Customs at Newcastle, by 'a numerous body of the merchants of this town'. Elizabeth Coxon, victualler, of The Peacock Inn, Peacock's Chare, was noted in Parson and White (1827, 197).

<sup>35</sup> TNA, CUST 33/6, Abstract of Tenders for Works to be Done in Executing the Additional Building, 22 June 1831.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, CUST 33/6, Letter from Smirke to Board, 18 August 1832.

<sup>37</sup> TNA, CUST 33/6, John Wardle to the Board of Customs, 28 December 1833.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholl also carved the pediment of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, the panels on the Oxford and Cambridge Club, Pall Mall, London (also for Sir Robert Smirke and Sydney Smirke in 1835) and the four stone lions and mermaid and triton lampstands outside St George's Hall, Liverpool of 1855 (Roscoe and Hardy 2009, 881–3).

<sup>39</sup> The Coat of arms is a late version of that of the Hanoverian dynasty, which came into use when the Electorate of Hanover was elevated into a kingdom in 1814 in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. It has an inescutcheon of the Hanoverian arms, ensigned (surmounted) with a crown replacing the earlier Elector's cap. William IV, king in 1833, was the last British monarch to be ruler (Elector or King) of Hanover as well as Britain.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, CUST 33/6, Memorandum explanatory of my account by Sidney Smirke, 23 May 1834.

<sup>41</sup> TNA, CUST 33/6, Accounts examined by John Wardle, 25 June 1834.

<sup>42</sup> TWAM, L589/21, CCCB 1824–1835, 315.

<sup>43</sup> TNA, CUST 33/6, Letter from Smirke to Board, 4 May 1835.

<sup>44</sup> Goods that were removed from ships at the Quayside were moved to bonded warehouses until they were sold. The owners of the warehouses were approved by the H.M. Customs, and paid a bond to guarantee that goods would not be removed from the warehouse unless duty had been paid. They charged importing merchants to store their goods in the warehouses. The merchants obtained a financial advantage, as they would only pay duty when their goods had been sold and were about to be removed from the warehouse, avoiding the payment of all duties on arrival at the port (Kane 2012).

<sup>45</sup> *Newcastle Courant* 21 July 1827, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Newcastle Courant* 28 May 1844, p. 4; *Newcastle Journal* 15 June 1844, p. 3; *Newcastle Courant* 21 June 1844, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> *Newcastle Courant* 27 May 1853.

<sup>48</sup> *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury* 25 June 1853, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Newcastle Journal* 13 October 1855, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Newcastle City Libraries, Local Studies Library, Seymour Bell Portfolio 16, item Quayside 6, Plan of the late Newcastle Distillery adjoining the Custom House, Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne 1855, by Andrew Oliver.

<sup>51</sup> TWAM, Newcastle Building Plans, T186/3263, Plan of Property in Trinity Chare, Quayside, Belonging to the Executors of the Late James Joicey, September 1868.

<sup>52</sup> Ordnance Survey 1:1250 County Series, Durham, 3rd revision 1940.

<sup>53</sup> Newcastle Council Planning Department, application 1985/1343/01/GOV.

<sup>54</sup> Newcastle Council Planning Department, application 1986/0972/01/GOV.

<sup>55</sup> On 18th April 2005 the two revenue collecting departments of HM Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue were amalgamated into a new department, HM Revenue and Customs.

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