
6-8 CHARLOTTE SQUARE,
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION RECORDING
BY WATCHING BRIEF

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6-8 CHARLOTTE SQUARE, NEWCASTLE

Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief

Prepared by

The Archaeological Practice Ltd.



Frontispiece: North-west side of Charlotte Square facing the town wall, showing the site of works with original eighteenth century house in foreground, nineteenth century and later buildings to rear

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND
2. FIELDWORK
3. CONCLUSIONS
4. REFERENCES

FIGURES

Frontispiece:

Figure 1: Location of the Charlotte Square site in Newcastle upon Tyne

Figure 2: Hutton's map of Newcastle, 1770

Figure 3: Oliver's map of Newcastle, 1838

Figure 4: 1929 plan of the building complex (Cacket & Burns Dick Architects, Drawing no. 1293/6), showing the location of the excavated stone foundation wall

PLATES

Front Cover: South-east frontage of Charlotte Square, showing front entrance to no. 6 (blue door)

Frontispiece: North-west side of Charlotte Square facing the town wall, showing the site of works with part of eighteenth century house in foreground, nineteenth century and later buildings to rear

Plate 2: View of stone foundation wall from the South

Plate 3: View from East of stone foundation directly underlying brick wall

Plate 4: View of stone foundation wall from the North

Plate 5: Close-up view of stone foundation wall from the North

SUMMARY

This document provides a report on an archaeological watching brief carried out during development works at 6-8 Charlotte Square, adjacent to the medieval town walls on the west side of Newcastle.

Three foundation pits and trenches were investigated, but only one, on the line of an early nineteenth century building, produced masonry remains of any potential interest, in the form of a rough sandstone wall. Full excavation of this structure, however, suggested that it formed a foundation for the nineteenth century building behind the eighteenth century houses fronting Charlotte Square. A number of ceramic and other finds, dateable to the later medieval and early modern periods, attest to earlier phases of activity on the site.

It is concluded that the recent development works behind Charlotte Square did not impact significantly upon either upstanding remains or sub-surface deposits of archaeological importance.

1. BACKGROUND

Archaeological recording work was carried out on behalf of Bill Hopper Design following the demolition of modern structures attached to the rear of former eighteenth century houses, grade 2 listed buildings, on the north-west side of Charlotte Square. The proximity of the site to the medieval town walls suggested that medieval archaeological deposits could survive on the site. The potential of such remains surviving on the site was considered by the Tyne and Wear County Archaeological Officer to be sufficiently high to merit archaeological monitoring of ground-disturbing works.

2. FIELDWORK

2.1 Fieldwork Methodology

Through close liaison with the works foreman, the archaeological contractor was able to view all major excavations carried out during development works. Where features of potential interest appeared following machine excavation, the archaeological contractor cleaned all relevant surfaces by hand before carrying out appropriate recording, then carried out any further invasive excavation deemed necessary. Only one of the pits excavated on the site revealed features of any note.

2.2 Features revealed by fieldwork

A heavily-mortared stone wall was discovered during monitoring of excavations into the lower walls and footings of a nineteenth century building, the shell of which has been left largely intact behind the listed eighteenth century former house structure. The wall, which appeared to have been faced rather better on the north-west than the south-east side, was some 0.75 metres high and 0.65 metres wide, but an extension to its rear (south-eastern) side (probably to accommodate a hearth) increased its width to 0.80 metres along a 0.60 metre section. Excavations in front of both faces showed that the wall sat upon an apparently natural deposit of clay.

Finds of three small sherds of medieval pottery within or upon the natural clay deposit reinforce the known picture of medieval activity in this area, but allow no additional conclusions to be drawn on the character of that activity. Similarly, finds of post-medieval and early modern pottery, clay pipes and other occupation debris, including animal bones and a crab claw, indicate human activity without defining much of its character.

The land to both sides of the wall had at some stage, possibly soon after its construction, been infilled with quantities of brick rubble and other debris.

2.3 Interpretation of Results

The interpretation of the above evidence is that the stone wall revealed during the recent excavations was constructed as a foundation course for a building of probable early nineteenth century date, the remains of which presently occupy the site. It is also just possible, however, that the wall represents the remains of the nineteenth century structure built in stone, the above ground part of which was replaced in brick during alteration works in the late 1920s and/or early 1930s (see *Frontispiece*). The increased width of the wall at the point it was revealed by excavation may be explicable by the existence of the remains of a fireplace over the wall at this point.

Something of the history of the site can be gained from a basic survey of historic map evidence. Hutton's town map of 1772 (Graham 1984) shows Charlotte Square without any of its later additions to the north-west, showing in their place only a sub-division of the ground, presumably in the form of gardens. Roper's map of 1808 reveals a similar picture (op. cit.), but Wood's map of 1827 shows some development behind, though not conjoining, the present premises. By 1838, however, as revealed on Oliver's map of that year (op. cit.), it is clear that some accretion had taken place to the buildings on the north side of Charlotte Square, with development occupying much of the area on the inside of the town walls between Charlotte Square and Stowell Street. It is this phase of construction activity that is considered likely to account for the stone foundation wall discovered during the recent works.

3. CONCLUSIONS

A heavily mortared stone wall discovered during monitoring works at the rear of 6-8 Charlotte Square is considered to be the foundation course for a building of probable early nineteenth century date.

Finds of three small sherds of medieval pottery within or upon the natural clay deposit at the foot of the wall, along with finds of post-medieval and early modern pottery, clay pipes and other occupation debris, from mixed deposits to either side of it, indicate continuous human activity in the area without defining much of its character.

The destruction of part of the wall discovered during the recent works is not considered to have resulted in a loss of significant cultural heritage value.

4. REFERENCES

Graham F, 1984, *Maps of Newcastle*. Newcastle: Frank Graham Press.

Tyne & Wear County Specialist Conservation Team, 2003, *Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief at 6-8 Charlotte Square, Newcastle upon Tyne*. Unpublished document.

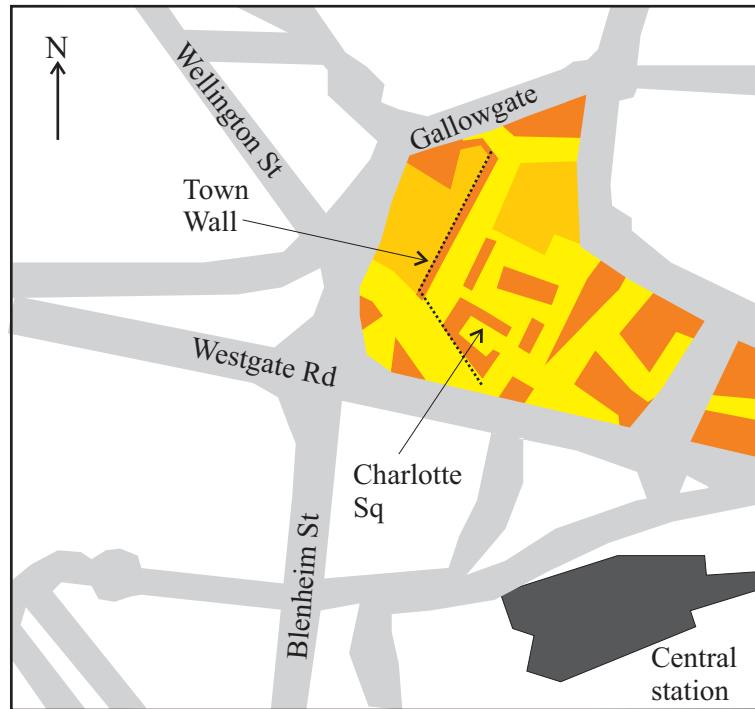


Figure 1: The location of Charlotte Square in central Newcastle

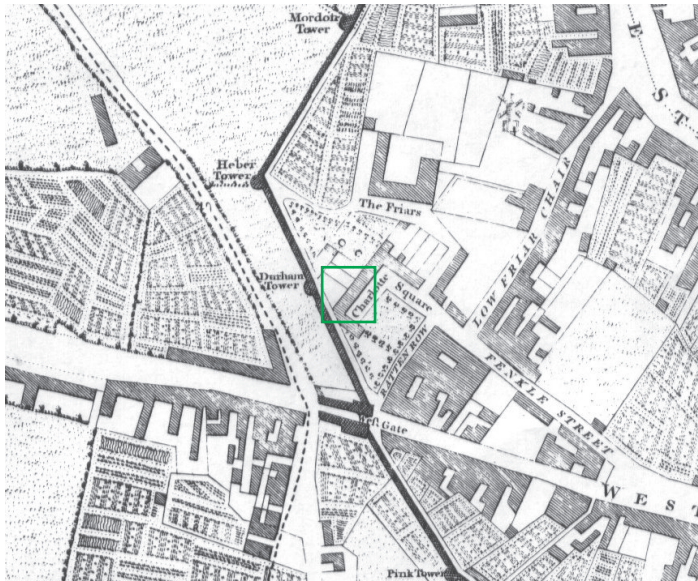


Figure 2: Hutton's map of Newcastle, 1770

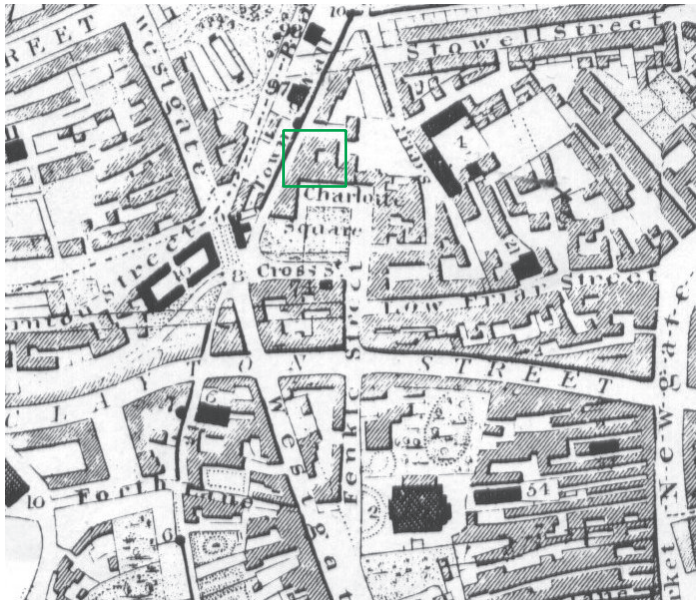


Figure 3: Oliver's map of Newcastle, 1838

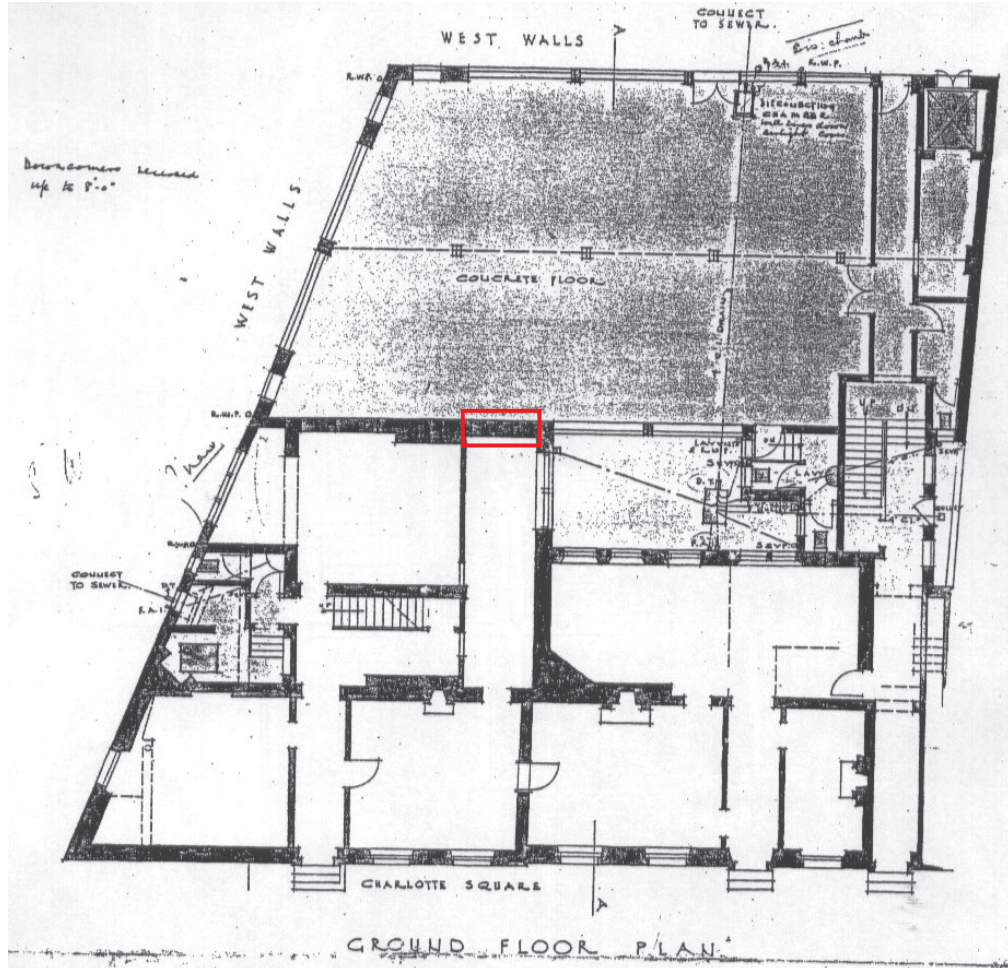


Figure 4: 1929 plan of the buildings complex (Cacket & Burns Dick Architects, Drawing no. 1293/6), showing the location of the excavated stone foundation wall



Plate 2: View of stone foundation wall from the south



Plate 3: View from E of stone foundation directly underlying brick wall

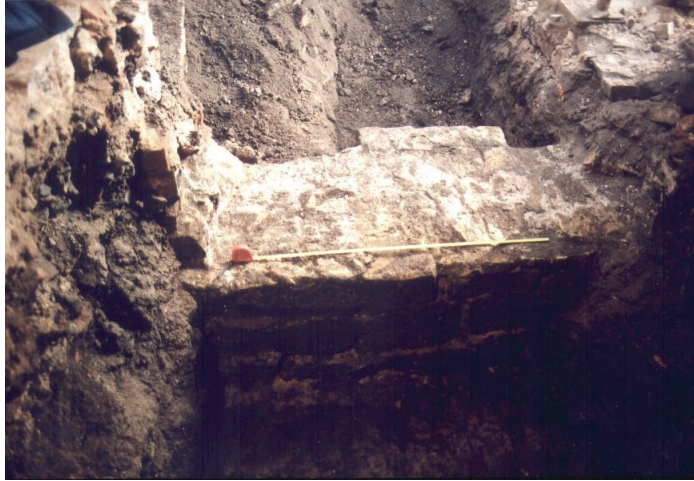


Plate 4: View of stone foundation wall from the north



Plate 5: Close-up view of stone foundation wall from the north