

= Newcastle town wall =

The Newcastle town wall is a medieval defensive wall , and Scheduled Ancient Monument , in Newcastle upon Tyne , England . It was built during the 13th and 14th centuries , and helped protect the town from attack and occupation during times of conflict . It was approximately 3 kilometres ( 2 mi ) long , at least 2 metres ( 6 @. @ 5 ft ) thick , up to 7 @. @ 6 metres ( 25 ft ) high , and had six main gates : Close Gate , West Gate , New Gate , Pilgrim Gate , Pandon Gate and Sand Gate . It also had seventeen towers , as well as several smaller turrets and postern gates . The town wall was kept in good repair whilst there was a threat of invasion from Scottish armies , and the town was successfully defended on at least two occasions ; but with the decline of the border wars between England and Scotland , the wall was allowed to deteriorate .

During the English Civil War , the Scots were able to breach the wall using mines and artillery . By the mid @-@ 18th century the wall had become obsolete and , as the town was redeveloped , large sections were demolished leaving only parts standing . The most substantial remains are the West Walls , on the western side of the city .

= = Construction = =

The town wall was constructed during the 13th and 14th centuries to repel Scottish invaders . Newcastle is about 97 kilometres ( 60 mi ) from the River Tweed , which marks the border between England and Scotland , as it did then . At that time there was a power struggle between England and Scotland , that eventually led to the Wars of Scottish Independence . The Scottish kings were always ready to take advantage of any weakness in the English rule to invade the North of England . An example of this is David I of Scotland , who took advantage of the civil war between Stephen and Matilda to invade Northumberland in three successive years ? 1136 ? 8 . In the Treaty of Durham ( 1139 ) , David ? s son Henry was given the earldom of Northumberland . Newcastle was not included in this grant but the Scots ignored this clause and occupied Newcastle until 1157 . Although the town had a strong castle , built by Robert Curthose in 1080 , and improved by Henry II between 1172 and 1177 , it did not provide sufficient protection for the local merchants ' properties , and so it was decided that a fortified town wall was needed .

A special tax , or " murage " , was levied by the borough to pay for the construction , murus being Latin for wall . It was first levied in 1265 , so it can be assumed that construction began soon after that date . The payment of murage continued for the next hundred years , so construction was probably not finished until at least the mid @-@ 14th century .

The plans for the route of the wall changed somewhat during construction . In the original plan , the castle was to be included in the wall as a strongpoint . However the castle was set on high ground above the river bank and there were strong objections to this route , as it would miss out the area by the river where many of the principal burgesses lived , leaving their residences without protection . The route was therefore changed so that the wall turned southward at the Neville Tower and ran down to the river . A similar adjustment to the route was made to the east of the city . In 1299 the village of Pandon was formally incorporated as part of the city , and so the wall made a sharp turn to the east to skirt around Pandon until it reached the river . From Pandon , the wall ran westward along the river , separating the town from the quay . Here , the wall was pierced by a number of water gates that allowed access to the river for loading and unloading of ships . In 1616 it was ordered that these gates were to be closed at night to prevent servants from throwing rubbish into the river . One or two were left open to allow seamen to return to their ships , but these were watched all night .

When completed , the wall was approximately 3 kilometres ( 2 mi ) long , at least 2 metres ( 6 @. @ 5 ft ) thick and up to 7 @. @ 6 metres ( 25 ft ) high . It had six main gateways and seventeen towers as well as several smaller turrets and postern gates . The towers projected out from the walls and were within bowshot of each other , so that attackers trying to scale the walls were exposed to fire from both sides ( i.e. , from the towers ) , as well as from the front ( i.e. , from the walls ) . The postern gates were provided for institutions , such as the Dominican Order of Blackfriars and the

Hospital of St Mary the Virgin , so that they could access their property outside the walls . Even before the walls were complete , they were supplemented by an outer ditch , known as the King ? s Dyke . The ditch was over 11 metres ( 36 ft ) wide and 4 @. @ 5 metres ( 15 ft ) deep in front of the Herber and Morden Towers . It was completed by 1317 .

= = Subsequent history = =

The town wall was kept in good repair whilst there was a threat of invasion from the Scots . In 1342 , David II of Scotland invaded Northumberland and laid siege to Newcastle , without success . In 1388 , another Scottish army under the Earl of Douglas assaulted the town , but was repulsed . As the border wars between England and Scotland became less frequent , and in particular following the union of the two crowns in 1603 , the wall was allowed to deteriorate .

In 1640 , during the Bishops ' Wars and in 1644 , during the English Civil War , Scottish armies were able to invade Newcastle despite the presence of the town wall . In 1648 the Parliamentary governor had the wall repaired . Further repairs were carried out in 1667 . During the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 , it was substantially strengthened in preparation for an invading Jacobite army , but there were no attacks on those occasions . A long decline then began , during which the wall was demolished piecemeal to make way for new developments and to create better access to the town centre . The last repairs to the wall were made in the early 19th century , during the Napoleonic Wars . After this it was thought that the town no longer needed a defensive barrier .

The first part of the wall to be demolished was the stretch on the quayside , as it was regarded as " a very great obstacle to carriages and a hindrance to the despatch of business " . The quayside section was pulled down in 1763 and the Sand Gate followed in 1798 .

= = Gates = =

There were six main gateways through the wall , they were ( clockwise from western end ) :

Close Gate ? This gate was situated at the end of Close , the street that ran west from Sandhill , parallel with the river . In early times , Close was the principal residence of the wealthy traders of the town , and was lined with merchants ? houses backing on to the river , with their own wharves . It is believed that the town wall ran only a short distance eastwards along the river from the Close Gate . On the north side of the Close Gate was the Whitefriars Tower , and it was the section of wall near there that the Scottish forces under General Leven broke through in the siege of 1644 , after breaching the wall by use of mines and artillery fire . Close Gate was demolished in 1797 .

West Gate ? This gate led to the West Road which followed the line of the old Roman Wall . It had large oak gates and iron doors , and was described by the antiquary , John Leland , as " a mightye strong thinge . " It was , at one time , used as a prison , and later became the hall of the incorporated company of House Carpenters . 17 prisoners were held there during the Civil War , but they managed to escape . It was demolished in 1811 .

New Gate ? This gate had heavy fortifications , and from 1399 , these were used as the town gaol . Condemned prisoners would be taken from there along Gallowgate to the gallows on the Town Moor . East and west wings were constructed in 1702 and 1706 , respectively ; a north gate was later added . By 1820 , the gaol was considered to be in a poor state of repair and insecure . A new gaol was built in Carliol Square , and the demolition of New Gate began in June 1823 . The east wing was pulled down first , followed by the west wing and the north gate ; the oldest part of the structure remained standing but , despite opposition , it was removed the following September . New Gate is believed to have replaced an earlier gateway known as Berwick Gate .

Pilgrim Gate or Pilgrim Street Gate ? This gate , at the north end of Pilgrim Street , led out towards Jesmond . Pilgrims would use this gate when travelling to St Mary ? s Chapel , which was situated overlooking what is now Jesmond Dene . A room above the entrance was used by the Joiners ' Company . It was demolished in 1802 .

Pandon Gate ? This gate led northeast from the village of Pandon and had folding iron gates , but no portcullis . Until 1648 , it was used as a hall for the Barber Chirurgeons . It was demolished in

1795 .

Sand Gate ? This gate led to the riverbank to the east of the town . It was demolished in 1798 .  
Until 1695 the Gates were closed at night .

= = The walls today = =

Large amounts of the wall were demolished during the 18th and 19th centuries ; the most substantial remains are on the western side of the city . The longest continuous section runs the length of Back Stowell Street , in the Chinatown area . It includes three towers : Herber Tower , Morden Tower and Ever Tower ; since 1964 , Morden Tower has been used as a venue for poetry readings . At the northern end of this section , the wall has been cut through by St Andrew 's Street , with fragmentary remains in St Andrew 's churchyard , opposite ; at the southern end , Stowell Street cuts through onto Bath Lane . The outer ditch has been recreated along this part of the wall . From Stowell Street , a complete section of wall , which includes Durham Tower , stretches southeast along Bath Lane , ending close to Westgate Road . The walls between Westgate Road and St Andrew 's Street are known as the West Walls . Near the river , a partially demolished section of wall is visible on the steep bank between Hanover Street and Close which , between the 1840s and the 1980s , was covered by warehouses . Another substantial portion of the wall stands north of Hanover Street , adjacent to Orchard Street , and the excavated foundations of Gunner Tower can be seen in Pink Lane . On the eastern side of the city stand three towers : Plummer Tower in Croft Street , Corner Tower at the junction of City Road and Melbourne Street , and Sallyport Tower in Tower Street . Plummer Tower was modified by the Company of Cutlers in the 17th century , and the Company of Masons , who added an upper storey and a new western facade , in the 18th century . Sallyport Tower was altered by the addition of a banqueting hall on the first floor in 1716 which was used by the Shipwrights ' Company . The walls are a Scheduled Ancient Monument .