



Northumberland Square, North Shields

History, investigation and landscape assessment

Lucy Jessop and Chris Curtis



Northumberland Square, North Shields

History, investigation and landscape assessment

Lucy Jessop and Chris Curtis

NGR: NZ 35545 68556

Print: ISSN 2398-3841

Online: ISSN 2059-4453

The Research Report Series incorporates reports by Historic England's expert teams, their predecessors and other researchers. Many Research Reports are interim, to make available the results of specialist investigations in advance of full publication. Although subject to internal quality assurance they are not usually refereed externally and their conclusions may sometimes have to be modified in the light of information not available at the time of the investigation. Where no final project report is available, readers should consult the author before citing these reports.

For more information email Res.reports@HistoricEngland.org.uk or write to:

Historic England, Fort Cumberland, Fort Cumberland Road, Eastney,
Portsmouth PO4 9LD

Opinions expressed in Research Reports are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily those of Historic England.

Summary

Northumberland Square was built at the start of the 19th century as part of the expansion of North Shields. The houses on the north side of the square were completed by the 1810s, whilst development around the other sides continued piecemeal over the following decades. The east side was built by the 1850s and the west side by the 1880s. The south side contains a Presbyterian chapel and a public library, built in the 1850s and 1974 respectively. The square garden has undergone several transformations, from a formally arranged private garden for the enjoyment of its residents to a public space. It was redesigned in 1948, and again in 1984; that layout of 1984 was still in evidence in 2020. It was redesigned once more in 2022-3.

Contributors

Lucy Jessop and Chris Curtis carried out the initial research and investigation, and wrote the draft report, with photography by Lucy Jessop and aerial photography by Robyn Andrews. The present report is a revision of the draft by Lucy Jessop and it was edited by Rebecca Lane; Peter Latham carried out picture research and desktop-published the report.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, for permission to view and reproduce the engraving of the proposed column for Northumberland Square, and to Susan Lynn of the North Tyneside branch of the Northumberland and Durham Family History Society, who kindly shared her research on the families of Dockwray Square and Northumberland Square. Tyne and Wear Archives were immensely helpful in allowing access to, and reproduction of parts of, the earliest deed available for property on the square. We also thank Northumberland Archives, Durham University Library, Historic Environment Scotland and Harvard University for permission to publish some of their images.

Archive location

Historic England Archive, The Engine House, Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon SN2 2EH.

Front cover image: Aerial view of Northumberland Square, looking southwards over Howard Street to the Tyne, taken on 10 November 2023. [34193_002 © Historic England Archive]

Date of survey/research/investigation

Investigation and research November and December 2020.

Draft report issued January 2021.

Report revised December 2023.

Report published January 2024.

Contact details

Historic England, 37 Tanner Row, York YO1 6WP.

Lucy Jessop: lucy.jessop@historicengland.org.uk 01904 601892.

Contents

Introduction	1
Landscape, geology and topography	2
History of Northumberland Square	4
The development of North Shields	4
The history of the square, its garden and its design.....	10
The buildings around the square.....	27
Residential garden squares in north-east England and across Great Britain	39
Conclusion	46
Bibliography	49
Endnotes.....	50

Introduction

In November 2020, architectural investigators from Historic England researched the history of Northumberland Square, an early 19th-century garden square in North Shields (Figure 1). Northumberland Square lies at the heart of the North Shields High Street Heritage Action Zone, a collaboration which ran between Historic England and North Tyneside Council between October 2020 and March 2024. This investigation was intended to further the understanding of the history and significance of the square prior to its redesign by North Tyneside Council, which was carried out in 2022 and 2023. The report was revised in 2023 using additional information not available during the Covid pandemic, and it was published in 2024 in order to celebrate the completed work on the garden and the end of the Heritage Action Zone.

The report considers the history of Northumberland Square and its developers within the context of the growth of North Shields and particularly its expansion in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The research was intended to inform the redesign of the garden square, and as such it focuses on the history of the garden, rather than the buildings of the square itself, which are not covered in detail. The report also discusses the design of the garden in comparison to examples in north-east England and throughout Great Britain at a similar date.



Figure 1: Location of Northumberland Square, North Shields.

[© Crown Copyright and database right 2024. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900].

Landscape, geology and topography

The town of North Shields, in the ceremonial county of Northumberland, is situated on the north bank of the River Tyne, about 2km or 1.22 miles south west of Tynemouth, where the Tyne enters the North Sea. The quayside of Newcastle upon Tyne lies 11.8km or 7.3 miles to the south-west of North Shields. North Shields is currently administered by North Tyneside Council, a metropolitan district council.

The north bank of the Tyne in the vicinity of North Shields is considerably steeper than the south bank, with a dramatic quality appreciated and conveyed – often in exaggerated fashion – by 19th-century illustrators (Figure 2). The steepness of the bank should not be underestimated. Union Quay, for instance, is 5m above the high-water mark but Tyne Street, running parallel 50m to the north, is some 20m above it. The gradient becomes less extreme to the north of Tyne Street, although Northumberland Square, the subject of this report, is still at 35m above the high-water mark. This topography made the physical expansion of the settlement challenging, with several flights of steps and a few steep roads linking the earliest development on the quayside to the expanded settlement to the north. The bank remains largely undeveloped even today, and it is often green and wooded. The earliest settlement occurred in the riverside area with its quays, at the foot of the bank (see below), sometimes on reclaimed land.

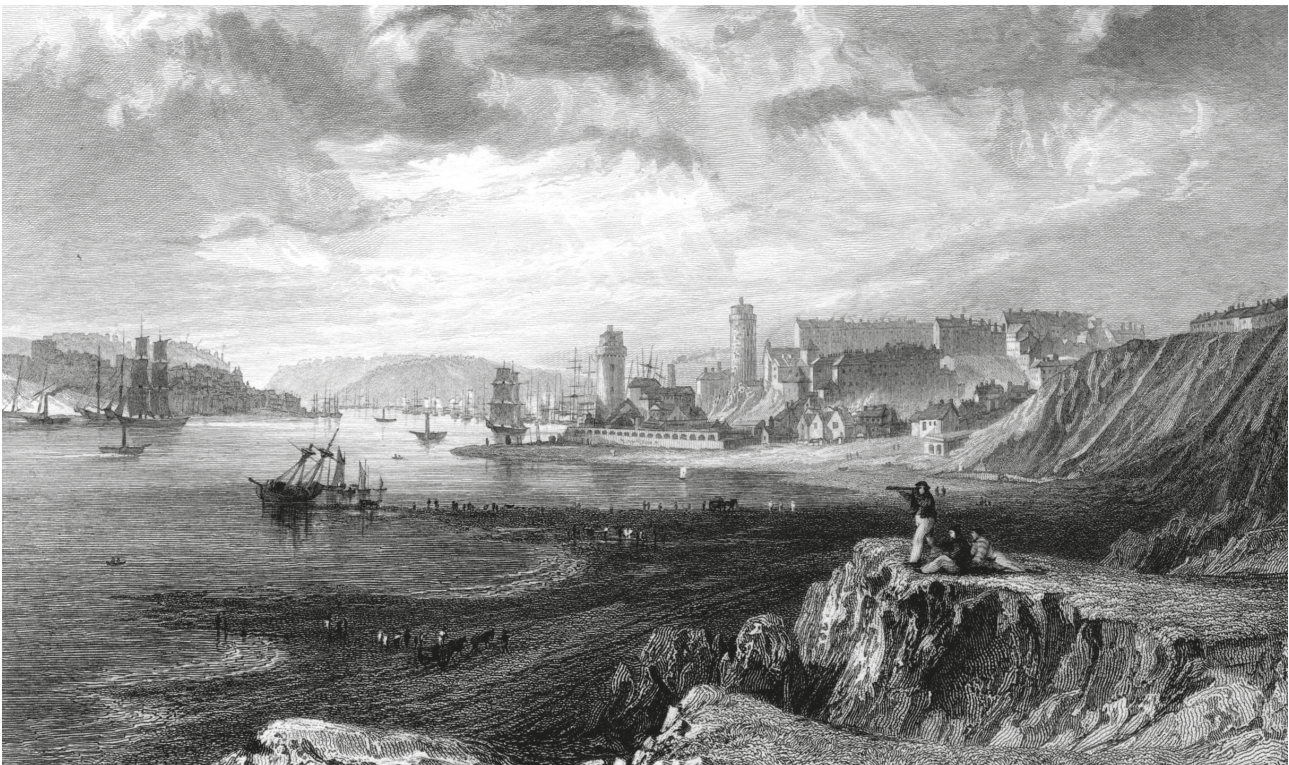


Figure 2: View of North and South Shields from Tynemouth. Drawn by T. Allom and engraved by W. Miller, from T. Rose, *Westmorland, Cumberland, Durham, and Northumberland, Illustrated*, 1832. [Creative Commons licence]

Geologically, both the quayside area and the town to the north of it sit on the Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation; the quayside beneath the bank is sandstone but the bank and the majority of modern North Shields is built on mudstone, siltstone and sandstone.¹ Superficial deposits under the bank and the main town are Devensian Till, which is a mixture of clay, gravel, sand and boulders. It is no surprise, then, that coal deposits have been exploited around North Shields, Newcastle and southern Northumberland since the medieval period; in addition, the Tyne and its outflow into the North Sea enabled coal to be easily shipped out of the area. Much of the historic economy of Newcastle, Tynemouth and Northumberland has depended upon coal, shipping and shipbuilding, all of which were key also to the inhabitants of North Shields.

History of Northumberland Square

The development of North Shields

The medieval settlement of North Shields on the north bank of the River Tyne was originally part of the parish of Tynemouth and it was thus owned and controlled by Tynemouth Priory.² The priory was founded in the 7th century by Edwin, King of Northumbria, in a place that had already been used militarily by the Romans. The monastery's timber buildings at Tynemouth were rebuilt in stone by St Oswald, King of Northumbria (603/4-42, reigned from 634), and it became associated with the Benedictine order as well as having a sisterhood of nuns.³ Monarchs and saints, including the royal St Oswin (died 651), were buried there, but Tynemouth Priory's buildings were destroyed in Viking raids in 788, 794, 800, 865, 876 and 1008, and thus required frequent rebuilding.⁴ The church of Tynemouth was given by Waltheof, Earl of Northumberland to the monks of Jarrow in 1085, and it became a centre of pilgrimage with a new monastery built adjacent to the church (completed in about 1110).⁵ By the 12th century, Tynemouth Priory was a rich and powerful institution, with lands throughout modern Northumberland and as close to Newcastle as Jesmond.⁶

The priory controlled a sea port at Tynemouth, but a river port was a desirable and valuable addition to the monastery's trading ability. Early North Shields grew from a scattering of the priory's fishing shiels – huts for accommodation and the storage of equipment for fishermen – into a network of early yards, harbours and quays close to the river, beneath the steep north bank of the Tyne.⁷ The gradient of this bank dictated that the settlement expanded to the east and the west more easily than it did to the north, sometimes on land directly adjacent to the river reclaimed by the priory.

The trading ability of the town was limited by the power of neighbouring Newcastle upon Tyne. Newcastle's burgesses, fearing competition, protested about the priory's development of North Shields and, in 1290, the prior of Tynemouth appeared before Parliament and then King Edward I to account for building 26 houses there instead of the shiels he was allowed.⁸ He was fined, forced to tear down the quay he had built below the high-water mark and forbidden to hold markets at Tynemouth and North Shields, at a time when the latter could send to sea 200 boats.⁹

But North Shields flourished again. By 1447 the priory had erected 200 houses, taverns, shambles and maltings on land it had reclaimed, consisting of about four acres below the high-water mark reclaimed about 1390.¹⁰ The town regained its market in 1304 and it continued to expand, constructing 14 staithes between 1386 and 1429.¹¹ The burgesses of Newcastle fought back, and an Act of 1530 protected Newcastle's trade and hindered the development on North and South Shields for two centuries.¹² Though this Act, the priory's dissolution in 1539 and long-standing competition with Newcastle hindered much

development, salt making and nearby coal mining brought a larger population to the town in the first half of the 17th century; hearth tax returns showed that there were 180 householders in North Shields in 1664.¹³

Ralph Gardner's map of the River Tyne shows North Shields in about 1651 to consist of buildings on both sides of a single street running parallel with and close to the river, on a narrow strip of reclaimed land, with many ships docked nearby.¹⁴ Its only connection by land was a road leading up through a narrow valley to East Chirton (Figure 3). The medieval houses of North Shields had been roofed in turf or thatched, but by the later 17th century there were 'lofty houses, solidly built of brick or stone, with rounded gables and red-tiled roofs' on the flat land beneath the bank; there were none on the 'higher plateau' above.¹⁵

The early 18th century saw another check to North Shield's prosperity, due to further interference from the businessmen of Newcastle and the decline, then obsolescence, of the salt trade.¹⁶ Shipping, however, became the town's principal concern and its connection with Newcastle was improved by turnpike Acts of 1749.¹⁷ In the mid-18th century, North Shields was described as a 'poor miserable place', but by 1855 it was a

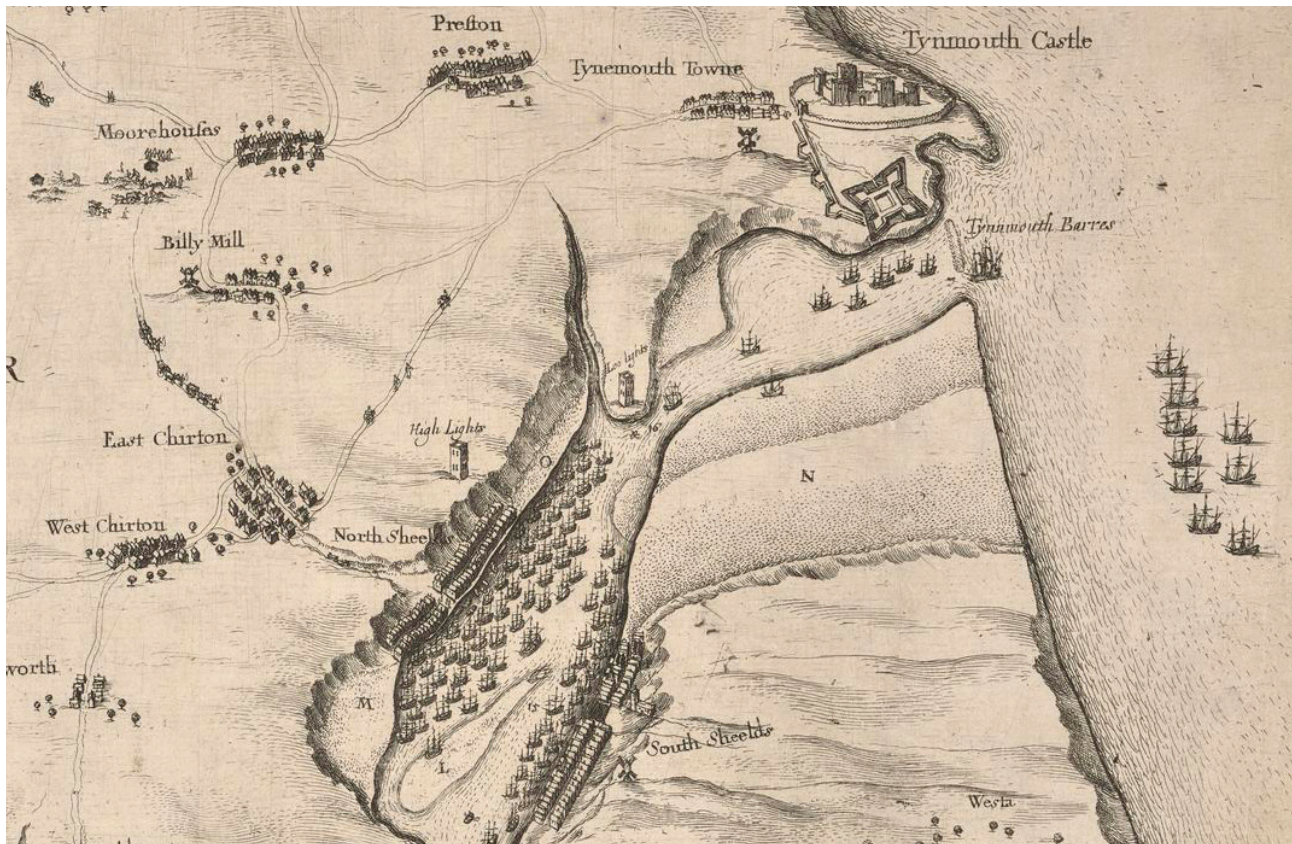


Figure 3: Detail of Ralph Gardner's map of the River Tyne, showing North Shields and Tynemouth, 1651. [Q.6. 125 © Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0]

'large, populous, and flourishing town, with many handsome streets, squares, and public buildings'.¹⁸ The long-contested market was granted in 1803, and in 1806 a market place was set up on the New Quay, a development by the Duke of Northumberland, which was overlooked by a grand new hotel.¹⁹

The first major development on the hill above the quayside was Dockwray Square (Figure 4), built in the mid-1760s to the north of Tyne Street which ran along the top of the scarp overlooking the earlier settlement on the quayside.²⁰ It was a rectangular residential square of terraced houses constructed around a large garden, open on the south side to provide views over the river. The developer was the Rev. Thomas Dockwray (1725-83), vicar of Stamfordham, Northumberland, whose maternal relatives, the Toll family, had owned the bank head area since about 1667.²¹ He was also responsible for the much smaller, wedge-shaped Toll Square to the east of Dockwray Square.

Although it was to decline considerably in status over the 19th and 20th centuries, Dockwray Square was for many decades the home of many of North Shields' leading citizens, including shipowners and merchants. Its garden appears to have only been a



Figure 4: The north-west corner of Dockwray Square, photographed in May 1949.
[NBR AR49/7207 © Historic England Archive]

grass lawn with a circular walk and herbaceous borders within railings which, in 1841, was reported to be unkempt with overgrown shrubs.²² Dockwray Square's houses were substantial in size and Craster gives the start of construction as 1763.²³ Local historian Susan Lynn suggests that the land was portioned up and bought by shipowners, who built their own houses of two to four storeys in height on generous plots, but with little uniformity of design.²⁴

North Shields' expansion accelerated at the start of the 19th century. Bateson describes how the layout of the expanding town on the plateau above the river generally followed the post-enclosure field system, consisting of a multitude of small, long, freehold plots aligned north to south.²⁵ By the mid-19th century, the town had five iron foundries, shipyards, dry docks, a tannery, sail and rope works, salt works, factories for making hats and for processing tobacco, breweries, and staiths for coal and lime (Figure 5).²⁶ The industrial elements of the settlement were still largely focused on the quayside although some were operating from the plateau above.

Bedford Street and other streets nearby, to the west and north-west of Dockwray Square, were developed by a businessman named John Wright (1730-1806), who was responsible for laying out the streets, and for selling freehold building plots to individuals.²⁷ This included the laying out of the square which was to become Northumberland Square. Wright acquired all of the farmland between Norfolk Street and Newcastle Street in 1796 from Frederick Howard, 5th Earl of Carlisle (1748-1825), and he became the developer of Northumberland Square and the land around it.²⁸

The creation of Northumberland Square as a residential garden square, however, took many decades, following the sale and demolition of Wakefield House in 1806 (see below). The earliest of the square's houses, on the north side which had been the site of Wakefield House, probably occurred between 1806 and 1810, after which the square garden was probably laid out (see below). The topographer and historian Eneas Mackenzie (1778-1832) referred to Northumberland Square as Northumberland Place in 1825, although his description of the buildings and the garden makes it clear that he meant the square (see below). He noted that Howard Street was then unfinished, stating it was ultimately intended was to be extended into 'Northumberland Place', which indicates that Howard Street and Northumberland Square were part of a single scheme.²⁹

There is no evidence for the choice of the square's name, though it was probably named after the Duke of Northumberland, Lord of the Manor of Tynemouth and already an important developer of North Shields. The incumbent of the period was Hugh Percy (1742-1817), the 2nd Duke, who succeeded to the title in 1786; he was also patron of the nearby Christ Church, the Anglican church on the north side of Albion Street, also known as Albion Road. A similar street-naming concept continued nearby, with Howard

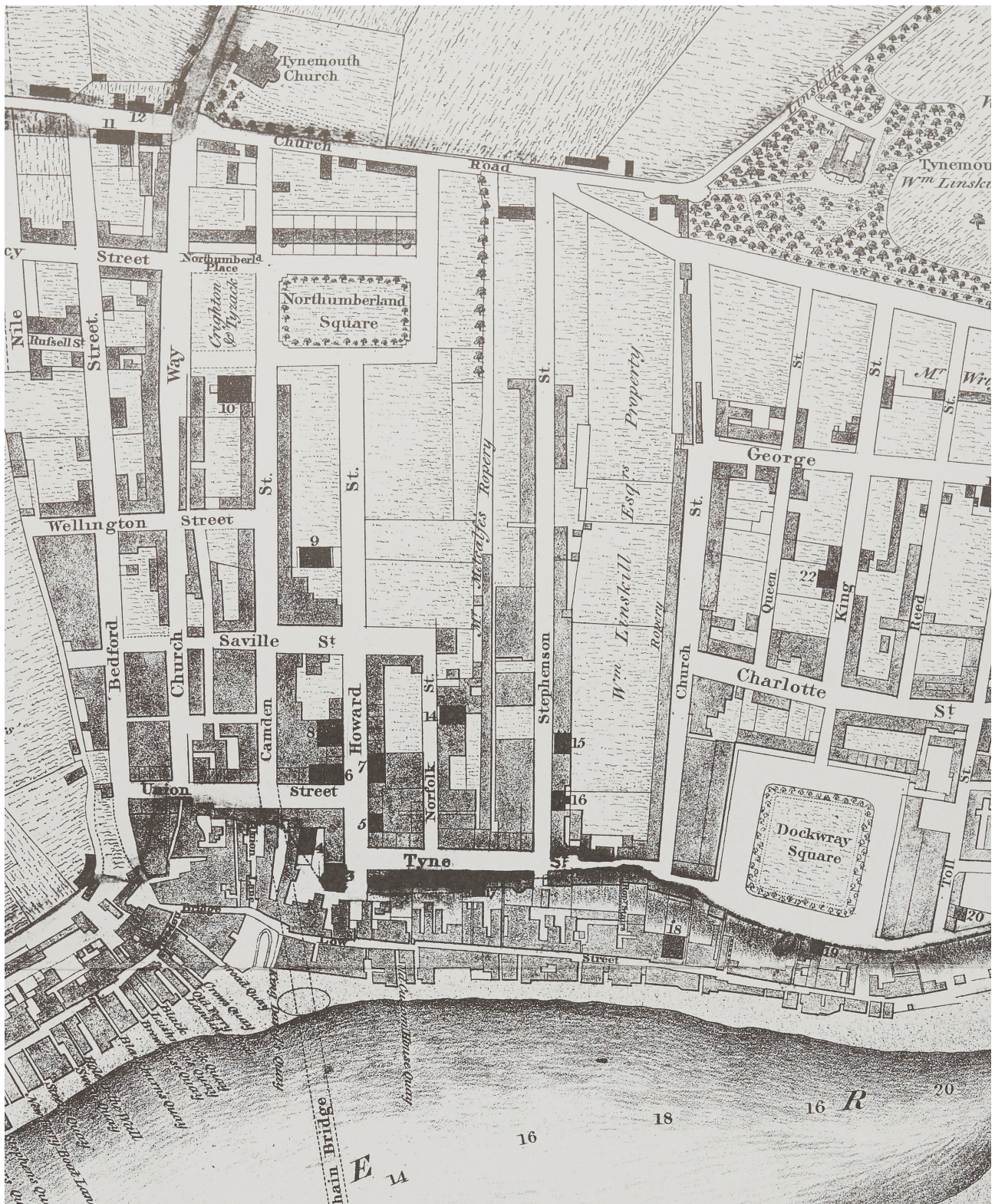


Figure 5: Detail of a map of North Shields by John Wood, 1826, from his Town Atlas of Northumberland and Durham, 1820-1827. [© Durham University Library]

Street named for Lord Carlisle, in the manner of London's West End, where streets often bear names related to their aristocratic former landowners. Albion Street to the north, however, is a literary or poetic reference to Great Britain.

North Shields continued its growth throughout the 19th century, its wealth based principally on the coal trade and ship building. Whilst Dockwray Square eventually declined in social status, and the ship-owners and middle classes deserted it, Northumberland Square and its surrounding area retained their high status into the 20th century. Even before the Second World War a large proportion of the area was transformed by clearance. The street pattern, particularly to the east of Howard Street and Northumberland Square, was reduced, with rows of earlier housing removed. This was particularly the case in Stephenson Street, Linskill Street, Church Street, Queen Street and King Street. They were replaced in the late 1930s by pairs of brick houses, such as the southern end of Church Street becoming Pearson Place with its substantial semis under a shared hipped roof. The southern end of Queen Street had buildings of a similar size and shape, but these were shared between four houses instead of two. This development first appears on the Durham OS 1:2500 map published in 1941.



Figure 6: RAF aerial photograph of North Shields, taken on 23 April 1958.
[RAF 58/2425/PSFO/0055 23-APR-1958 Historic England Archive (RAF Photography)]

After the Second World War, further redevelopment occurred around East Stephenson Street and the neighbouring areas between Tynemouth Road to the north and Upper Pearson Street and George Street to the south (Figure 6). Some of Camden Street and Church Way were already cleared by 1941, to be replaced by the North Shields shopping centre (renamed the Beacon Centre) in the late 1970s.³⁰ Dockwray Square was redeveloped twice, with demolition of the last of its houses in the late 1950s and rebuilding as flats by George Wimpey and Co. Ltd. in the early 1960s.³¹ These flats were then replaced by houses by Persimmon Homes in the early 1990s.³²

The history of the square, its garden and its design

In July 1792, a John Wright of North Shields and William Wright of Lincoln's Inn, Middlesex, conveyed a field in Tynemouth called North Close to a banker named George Wakefield; this field became part of the gardens of the large mansion he built, called Wakefield House. North Close, overlooked by Wakefield House which was constructed on its north side, became known as Northumberland Square. The square's dimensions are given as 148yds by 102yds (about 135m by 93m), which vary from the current measurements of Northumberland Square; the square as built measures 144yds by 104yds, or 131m by 95m from building to building, which may suggest a small change in layout during its execution. Wakefield House is discussed below.³³

A further part of the North Close was sold by John Dyson and Robert Chapman on behalf of John Wright to Wakefield in 1799 for £1,100; a draft sale document states that this parcel of land measured 324ft (or 108yds) from east to west and 150ft (50yds) from north to south.³⁴ This equates to the length of the north side of the square as built between Upper Camden Street to Norfolk Street (about 328ft), though not the depth either to the back lane (partly known as Back Albion Road) which is about 86ft, or all the way to Albion Place (about 220ft). This deed is cited in one in possession of Tyne and Wear Archives dated January 1810, concerning a parcel of ground, already built on, measuring 108ft from east to west and 33ft 6in from north to south; a plan contained in the document shows that this was not a neat rectangle (Figure 7). It describes the land as 'whereon Wakefield House lately stood', bounded by land owned by the vendors Alexander Crighton and Benjamin Cowle Tyzack to the east, west and south, and by the King's highway to the north leading from North Shields church to Dockwray Square, which must be Albion Road, Parsons Row and Church Street (Albion Road is named Church Way and Church Street led from it to the back of the west side of Dockwray Square on Wood's map; most of Church Street has been subsequently cleared) (see Figure 5).³⁵ It makes no mention of the names Northumberland Square or Northumberland Place, or of a square garden, suggesting that the intention of building a garden square was not fully formed at this date.

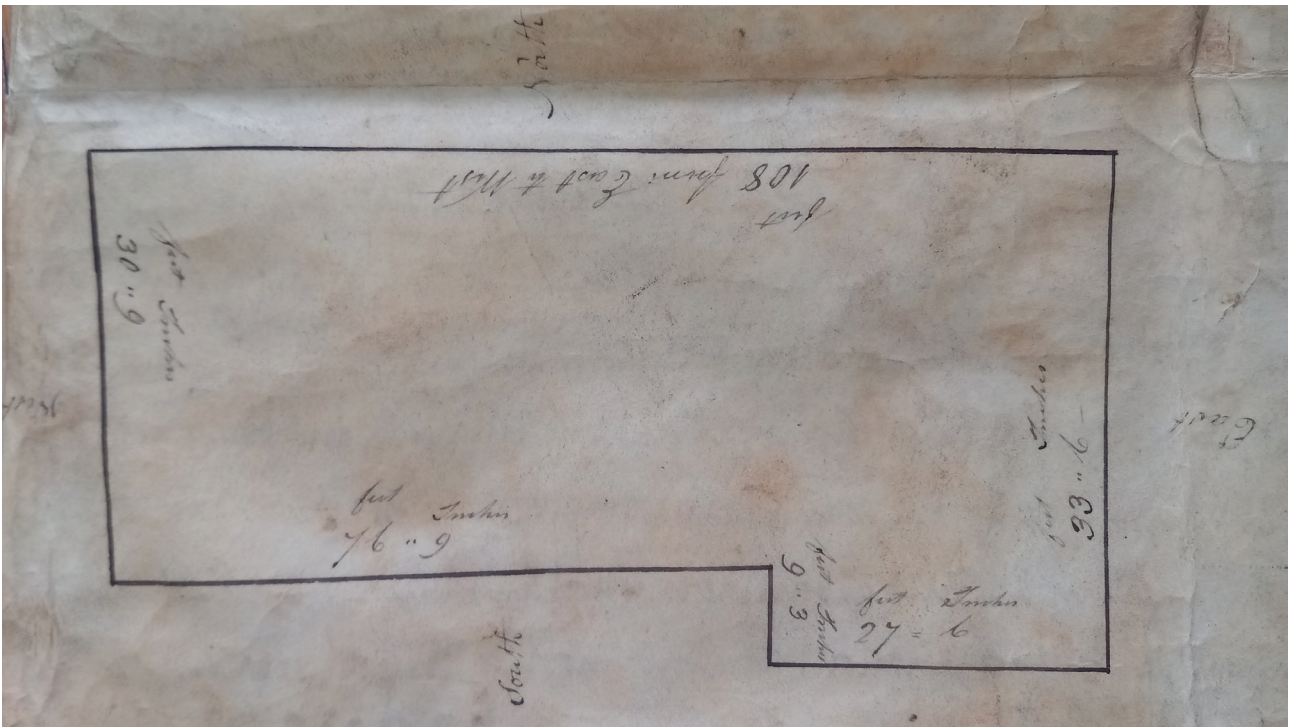


Figure 7: Plan of the north side of what became Northumberland Square, known as the site 'whereon Wakefield House lately stood'.

[DX743/1 Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, reproduced with permission]

The earliest building erected appears to have been a 'mansion' or 'great house' built from 1796 on a plot which now constitutes the north side of the square by the Quaker banker and shipowner George Wakefield (about 1764-1806); it was named Wakefield House. The Wakefield family were in residence by 1802, when the birth of their daughter at the house was announced.³⁶ The house's magnificence shocked some of his Quaker contemporaries and it appears to have alienated him from the Society of Friends; in 1806, shortly before his sudden death, he and much of his family left the Friends and were baptised at Christ Church.³⁷ The appearance of the house before its demolition is not recorded.

When the sale of Wakefield House was advertised on 16 September 1806, it was described as a 'large, substantial and elegant mansion' with 'a Shrubbery at each End of the House, a Garden, and Green House'. The shrubberies and garden suggest that the house had land to the south and north, or to the east and west, but which remains unclear though the former is more likely. The size of the property, however, was not in doubt: the sale included six stables, a double coach house, its own brewery, farmyard, pond and cellars. The house itself contained five bedrooms, two dressing rooms, a nursery, laundry and a water closet on the first floor, and six further bedrooms in the attic. The ground floor, in addition to the usual service areas, contained a drawing room,

dining room, library, 'Library Relief', study and office. The mansion was 'in every Respect adapted for the Residence of a genteel family'.³⁸ Interestingly, a John Wright was one of those who would show potential purchasers around the property, suggesting that he was partially handling the sale. The auction was set for 13 November 1806 at the George Inn in North Shields but presumably no buyer was keen to maintain such a substantial residence.³⁹ No purchaser could be found so Wakefield House was pulled down and the present north side of the square was constructed, possibly 'faced with stones from the mansion'.⁴⁰

The design of an urban square with private square garden, a palatial house on one side and other houses around it is reminiscent of earlier developments in London, such as Southampton, later Bedford, House (1638-40), with its square on to the south created in 1661 when the interior of the house was being fitted out; it is now known as Bloomsbury Square.⁴¹ Leicester House and Leicester Square, of the 1630s, is a further example of a large house taking up one side of a residential London square.⁴² The Northumberland Square development appears to be emulating such London examples, in a small town so distant from the capital. It expresses the aspirations of North Shields and its rich individuals, whose developments may have been competing with Newcastle, rather than the capital. Perhaps a similar scheme where a long street forms an axis to a key building and gardens can be found in Bath, with the construction of Pulteney Bridge (1769-77), Great Pulteney Street (1780s-90s), the Sydney Gardens (1792-94) and the Sydney Hotel (now the Holburne Museum, 1794-96).⁴³

The initial purchaser of Wakefield House in 1806 may have been William Batson of Newcastle, Esquire, who on 14 and 15 November 1809 leased and released the plot described as 'whereon Wakefield House lately stood' to Alexander Crighton and Benjamin Cowle Tyzack of Tynemouth (see above).⁴⁴ Batson is probably the Alderman Batson who later commissioned Richard Grainger to develop Higham Place for him in Newcastle in 1819.⁴⁵ The same document states that the buildings on the plot had been erected by Crighton and Tyzack, which suggests that they were put up between the auction after Wakefield's death in 1806 and the consequent demolition of the house, and early 1810, when the property was bought for £700 by David Crighton, gentleman, of Tynemouth, and his trustee, Alexander Bartleman.⁴⁶ The Crighton family were ship and property owners in North Shields, according to the will of Alexander Crighton senior, who died in 1807 and appears to have been the father of both David Crighton and his brother Alexander; it is unclear which of the two Alexander Crightons is the one mentioned in this document, though it was probably the father rather than the son.⁴⁷ Alexander Bartleman, a ship owner and brewer, was the brother-in-law of Alexander Crighton, senior.

Maps of the 1820s show that it was only the northern side of the square which was initially developed (see below). The uniformity of design of the south elevation of these buildings suggests that either they were constructed by Crighton and Tyzack and then sold on, or that they were built by individual owners to an agreed design. The 1810

indenture gives some picture of what had been built, with some interesting instructions about what should and should not be done to them. David Crighton agreed with Alexander Crighton and Benjamin Tyzack that he:

...shall not and will not at any time hereafter make put or place any Window or Windows in the said Messuages Dwellinghouses or Tenements ... to face or front towards the South (Except on the Lower Story of the said Messuages Dwellinghouses or Tenements and Premises).⁴⁸

In addition, Alexander Crighton and Tyzack were allowed to:

...rest Timbers and Build upon the Yard Walls and other Walls of the said Messuages Dwellinghouses or Tenements... making good any Damage or Injury done thereby

and must:

...keep in good Repair the Flags or Flagged Pavement all along the North Front of said Messuages Dwellinghouses or Tenements.⁴⁹

This suggests that the houses on what became the north side of the square were already built by 1810, and that their southern elevations facing the square should be relatively unchanged; the 'lower storey' perhaps refers to their basements. But it is interesting that the yard walls (which face north) could be built on by the previous owners who still possessed the surrounding property and that they would maintain the paving north of the houses as well.

Some of these houses were occupied by 1815, when a newspaper announced the marriage of Matilda Green, daughter of William Green of Northumberland Square.⁵⁰ In 1816, the bankruptcy of Joseph Ranney of Northumberland Square, 'Ship-Owner, Dealer and Chapman', was published; here, 'chapman' suggests that he was also a merchant.⁵¹ Ranney was typical of many of the early occupants of the square: a directory of 1827 noted that Northumberland Square and Place, along with Dockwray Square and the new town, was 'where many of the principal ship owners, merchants, and gentry now reside, in spacious and handsome mansions.'⁵² At that date, eight ship owners were listed as living in the square, with another three in neighbouring Northumberland Place.⁵³ The garden of Northumberland Square was not described in this publication but that of the perhaps more important Dockwray Square was, 'tastefully embellished with a border of odoriferous shrubs, and skirted with iron palisades'.⁵⁴

The square's importance was confirmed in April 1817, when a chapel for an unnamed denomination was planned for Northumberland Square, with builders invited to inspect architectural plans at the shop of William Barnes in Howard Street.⁵⁵ This was an Independent non-conformist chapel, which stood at the north end of Camden Street

and it thus was sited in the south-western corner of the square, although its address was always Camden Street rather than Northumberland Square.⁵⁶ The large houses of Northumberland Square also made them suitable to be used as schools, with a Mrs Home running a boarding school in the square in 1828.⁵⁷

The earliest description of the garden of Northumberland Square was published by Eneas Mackenzie in 1825:

It is intended to carry this street [Howard Street] northward to Northumberland Place, an elegant range of stone buildings, having a large shrubbery in front, tastefully laid out, and enclosed by ornamental iron railing.⁵⁸

The date at which the square garden was laid out is not known, but its earliest depiction was by John Wood in his *Plan of the Towns of North Shields and Tynemouth / From actual survey. / 1826*, printed by A Forrester in Edinburgh (see Figure 5). This plan shows the completed north side of the square, with the end houses with their central projecting bows facing the garden; all other plots remain vacant at this date, including the plot to the west, named as owned by Crighton and Tyzack. The square garden is depicted as a rectangle with elaborate corners formed by square rebates housing a convex curve and with trees planted around the perimeter. No walks or further planting is shown, in a similar manner to the depiction of the earlier Dockway Square, which suggests that either neither square was yet landscaped or, more probably, that the cartographer was not concerned by such matters. Northumberland Place to the west of Northumberland Square is also shown and named.

Rook's *Plan of North Shields*, published in 1827 (Figures 8 & 9), depicts the garden of Northumberland Square in far greater detail, showing a symmetrical layout of curved walks and shrubberies within the rectangular enclosure. The corners of the square are depicted here as a convex curve set at right angles to the walls within a shallow set back. The layout suggests that there were four entrances into the garden, one in the centre of each of the four sides, from which point the paths converge and diverge. Rook's plan shows the detail of the garden described by Mackenzie in 1825.⁵⁹ The discrepancy between Wood and Rook's designs may be explained by Wood's lack of interest in the layout of the gardens; his plan is generally less detailed than Rook's, as shown by his similar depiction of the other gardens in the area. It is also possible that Wood surveyed the square long before he published his plan. In any case, the garden shown in Rook's depiction was laid out by 1827, if not earlier.

An 1828 newspaper advertisement for the sale of two houses in Northumberland Square almost certainly refers to two of the houses on the north side of square. It lists all the prerequisites of a respectable middle-class home, including yards, gardens and coach houses to the rear. It states that the houses had 'a share of, and a participation with the other mansions there, in the enjoyment of the entire area of the square.'⁶⁰ This shows



Figure 8: Part of a plan of North Shields and Tynemouth by John Rook and son, 1827. [EP 52/A/190 © Northumberland Archives, reproduced with permission]

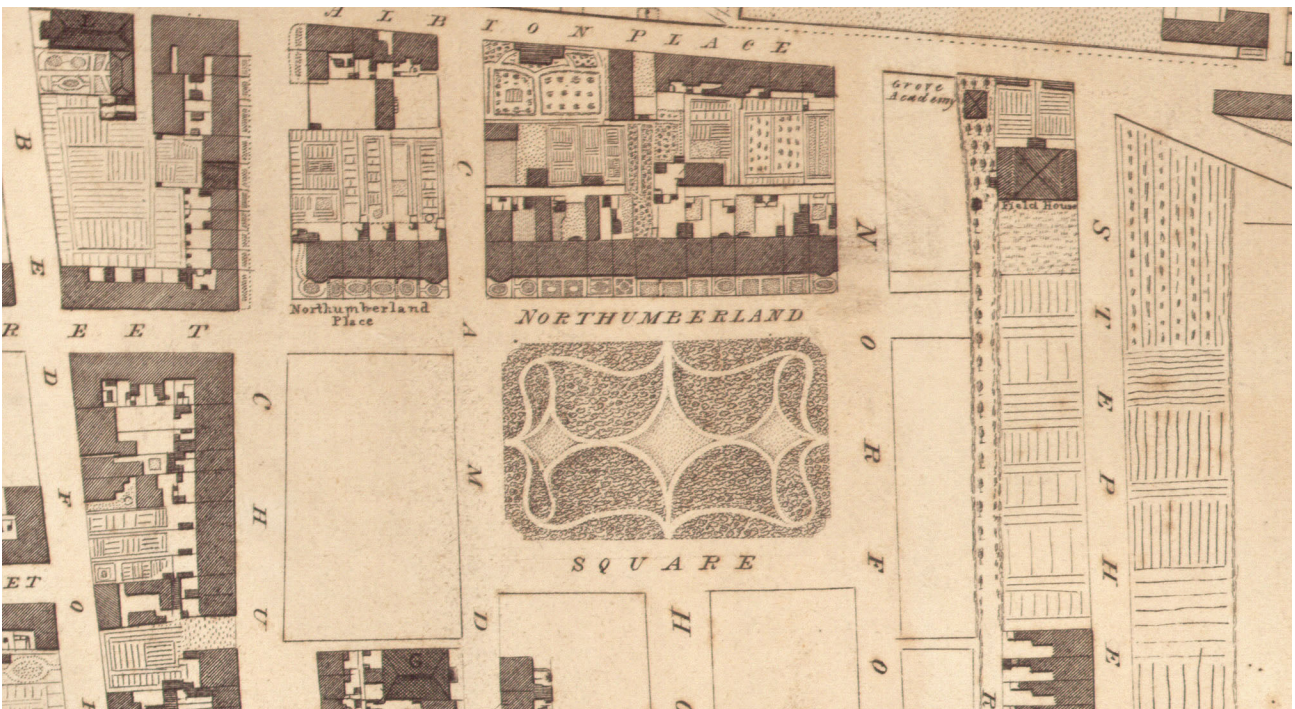


Figure 9: Detail of Figure 8, showing the design of Northumberland Square's garden, 1827. [Northumberland Archives, EP 52/A/190, reproduced with permission]

that at this date the garden was a private communal garden along the lines of many of London's residential squares. Six freehold sites of building ground were available to purchase in 1829 facing the west side of Northumberland Square; the square was described in the advertisement as 'the pleasantest Part of the Town of North Shields'.⁶¹ This suggests that there were no plots built upon on the west side of the square before this date. A further advertisement of 1831 confirms that some of these plots remained undeveloped: a parcel of land on the west side of Northumberland Square was up for auction, consisting of two sites facing the square (about 18yds in length), three fronting Northumberland Place (50yds in length), and two more 'in the Churchway' (18yds long). Interestingly, it is described as the most valuable ground in the area 'both for Situation and Respectability', demonstrating the high social cachet of the neighbourhood with its sewers, pavements and 'many other expensive Conveniences' already 'done'.⁶² An advertisement offering the freehold of 10 Northumberland Square for sale in 1836 mentions that it had a 'Flower plat and neat Iron Railing' fronting the square but also 'a Share of the Area in Front, surrounded with Iron Railing'; this confirms that the garden was still owned and controlled by the householders of the square at this date.⁶³

A move to make the square garden more of a public than private place was made in 1832, when it was proposed to install a column supporting a 'Colossal Statue of the Noble Earl' on a mound 'in or near the Area of Northumberland Square' to commemorate Charles, second Earl Grey (1756-1845). Grey was a Northumberland man and he was the Whig prime minister between 1830 and 1834; at this date, he had just overseen the passing of the Reform Act in 1832 which initiated significant electoral change. The argument of the proposers was that this position would enable the monument to be seen from several directions, notably from Howard Street, but also from as far as South Shields and County Durham.⁶⁴ Despite the publication of an engraving of the proposal by the architect John Green (1787-1852), this monument was not built in North Shields; instead, it was incorporated into the Grainger Town development in Newcastle, started in 1837, and Green's son Benjamin (about 1813-58) is generally considered to be its designer.⁶⁵ It is indicative of the status of Northumberland Square at this date, however, that the statue was considered for this position.

Green's engraving (Figure 10) shows that the column was probably intended to stand in a semi-circular recess on the south side of Northumberland Square's garden. Its backdrop is a mass of trees and the roofline of some of the houses on the north side of the square, complete with ranks of chimney pots. The garden and the monument are shown as railed in the same way, with tall spear-headed uprights and a continuous horizontal upper rail, with slightly larger foliate or flame-like corner posts. The monument itself was to have a square pedestal with pronounced cornice, on which the profile of the Earl's head was to be sculpted within a wreath of leaves. The fluted Doric column rises from the pedestal, its base decorated by eagles at the corners bearing a swag and its capital with some more elaborate mouldings, including egg and dart. A full-length statue of the Earl in draped robes sit on the top, on its own cylindrical pedestal, to complete the full classical effect of the monument. Significant changes were made to the monument's

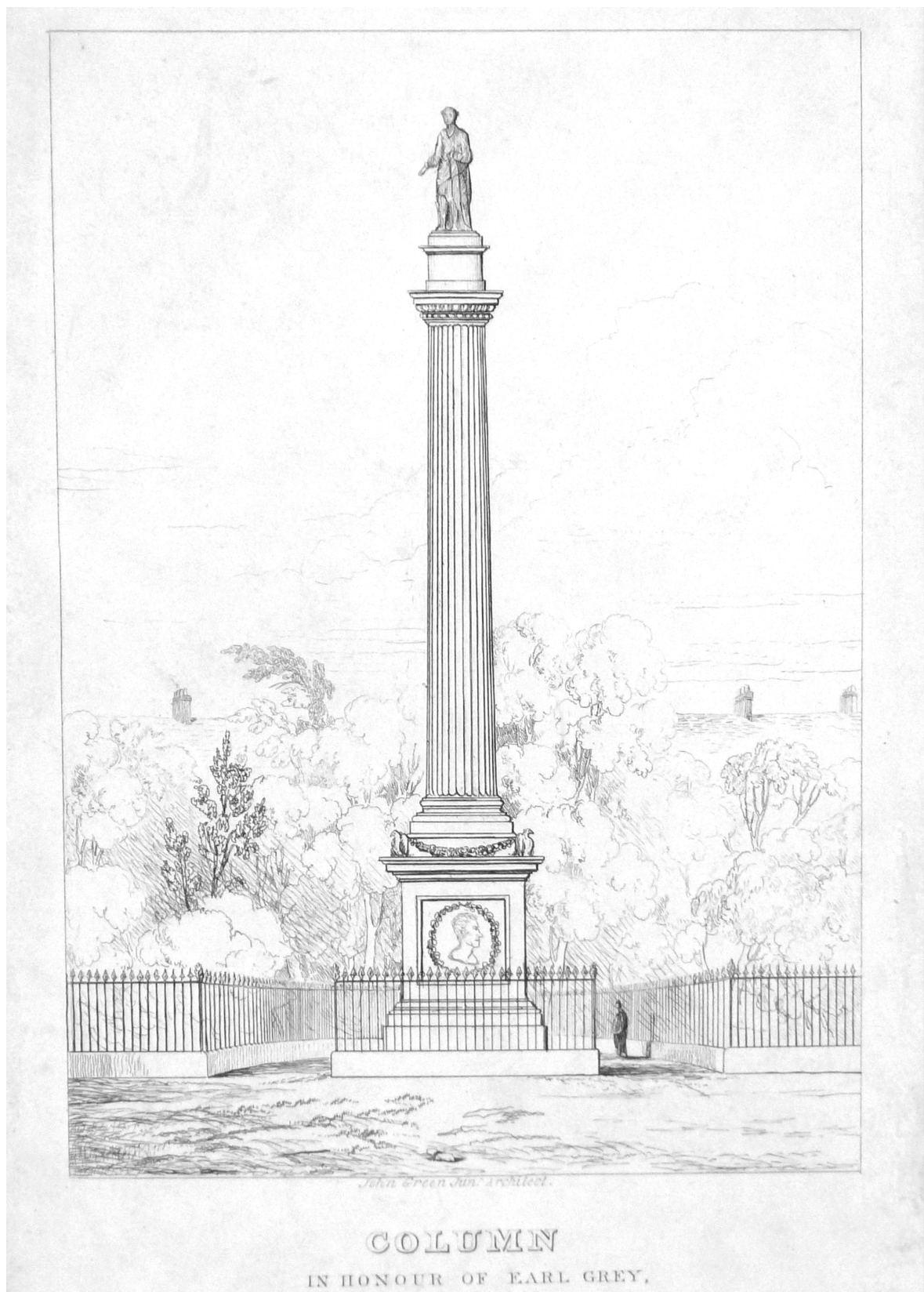


Figure 10: Engraving for a proposed column in honour of Earl Grey for Northumberland Square, by John Green, 1832. [Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, TWCMS D4829, reproduced with permission]



Figure 11: Grey's Monument, Newcastle upon Tyne, as seen from Grainger Street.
[Lucy Jessop © Historic England]

design when it was eventually executed in Newcastle (Figure 11). The earl's statue wears the cloak and insignia of the Order of the Garter, to which Grey was admitted in 1831.⁶⁶ It stands on a square pedestal above a Doric column with a different capital; the large square pedestal for the entire monument has an inscription rather than a low-relief profile of the Earl, and there is no foliate decoration.

The arrival of the Newcastle and North Shields Railway's extension to Tynemouth affected Northumberland Square considerably in 1846. It is not known whether this was the date that the square garden became public, but the railway's cut and cover tunnel was under construction that year under the southern side of the square. It is clear that, at this date, the south side of the square was still largely undeveloped, with the side elevations of the terminal houses of Howard Street facing north towards the garden, but how the planned railway line precisely affected development above ground in this area is unclear. A section about 30yds long collapsed at the east end of Northumberland Square on 30 September 1846, delaying the completion of the line which was scheduled for a week or two later.⁶⁷ The railway finally opened the following year.⁶⁸



Figure 12: 1:528 OS town plan surveyed in 1857 and published in 1861.

[© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2024). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024.]

The design of the square garden, however, remained little changed for many decades. The Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:528 town plan published in 1861 but surveyed in 1857 (Figure 12) shows a similar layout to that shown in Rook's plan of 1827, and it is also identical to that on the 1:10560 1st edition OS map surveyed in 1858 and published in 1865. The position of the paths and entrances are the same, and the space between the paths appears to be heavily planted with shrubs. There are three diamond-shaped clearings with curved edges laid out on the long axis in the centre of the garden; the central one is larger than those to either side. By this date, the square was already being used, at least occasionally, for public events. In 1856 the borough of Tynemouth Floral and Horticultural Society held an exhibition in a temporary but 'spacious pavilion' in Northumberland Square, which perhaps took place in the central diamonds.⁶⁹ Tents were erected, and a band provided musical entertainment. The following year saw a performance by the North and South Shields Military Band in Northumberland Square on a July evening.⁷⁰

In about 1860, Northumberland Square was described as a 'square with good buildings on three of its sides occupied by the principal ship owners &c of the Town' while its garden was a 'square enclosure with walks & scattered Forest Trees in the Centre of the above Square'.⁷¹ This suggests that at least some houses had been put up in the preceding three decades on the eastern and western sides of the square; for a discussion of this, see later. A slightly different description of the garden occurs later in the same document, where it states that it is an 'oblong enclosure of ornamental ground with walks & Trees interspersed enclosed by an Oval Wall with Iron Railing'.

The 1:500 town plan surveyed in 1894 and published in 1896 (Figure 13) shows that the general shape of the garden remained the same as in the 1840s, including the perimeter path and the smaller, outer curved diamonds. However, some substantial changes had already occurred: the central part of the garden had been cleared, leaving most of the trees or shrubs intact around the outside of the garden, with a few trees standing around the edge of an enlarged central lawn. The scale of this lawn suggests that the garden may by this date have had more public use. Later OS maps published in 1918 (Figure 14) and 1938 show that this arrangement endured until the Second World War. Some of the iron railings were removed from around the square at the start of the war in September 1939 to provide access to an air raid precaution shelter which was constructed in the square; the rest were removed a year later.⁷² This may have been a trench shelter, although there is no evidence for its exact location.⁷³ Such shelters consisted of trenches lined and roofed with reinforced concrete and they tended to be buried after the war, rather than fully removed. Many remain *in situ*. Aerial photographs from 1942 show the square entirely grassed, though many trees still stood (Figure 15).

Local authority presence was gradually established in the square, with the Board of Guardians purchasing No. 5 (the North Shields Club) in 1904.⁷⁴ The town clerk's office of the County Borough of Tynemouth was based in No. 14 from 1915, and the Water Department operated from No. 5 in 1938.⁷⁵ This may explain why wartime saw



Figure 13: 1:500 OS town plan surveyed in 1894 and published in 1896.

[© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2024). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024.]

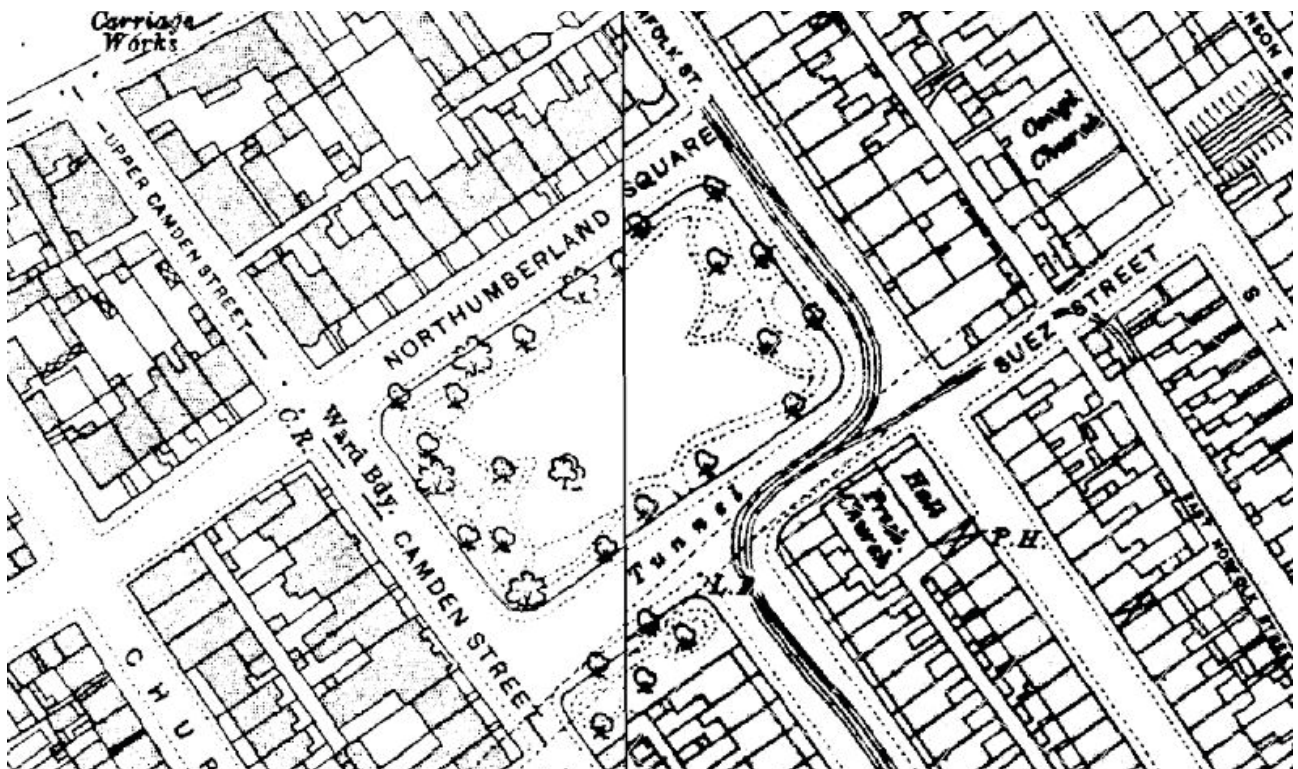


Figure 14: 1:2500 OS map surveyed in 1912-13 and published in 1918.

[© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2024). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024.]



Figure 15: RAF aerial photograph of Northumberland Square, taken on 16 August 1942.
[Detail of RAF FNO/98/FP/1051 16-AUG-1942 Historic England Archive (RAF Photography)]

increased local authority interest in Northumberland Square. In 1943, the council voted to build a new civic centre and town hall on the north side of the square, intending to demolish the existing early 19th-century houses.⁷⁶ Though nothing was to come of this, Northumberland Square was chosen as the location of a central bus station for North Shields in February 1945, making it a transport hub close to the commercial centre of the town; however, this did not seem to require changes to the garden.⁷⁷ One alderman, during discussions of this matter, described the square as ‘the one place in the town that can be made presentable in a very desolate town’.⁷⁸

However, there was opposition to the Tynemouth Corporation’s efforts to acquire the ‘unsightly’ Northumberland Square (and its garden), Northumberland Place, Albion Road, Church Way and Spring Terrace area for a new civic centre in 1946. Home and

business owners grouped together with tenants to complain that this was ‘a strange time to interfere with the business centre of the town’ when traders and professionals were ‘endeavouring to re-establish themselves on a pre-war footing’.⁷⁹ This shows that although there was a strong council presence in the square by this date, it was still, as it is today, a place that people lived as well as worked. In 1948, the garden was brought under council control, redesigned and opened as a public amenity in August 1949 by the Duchess of Northumberland; the mayor of Tynemouth, Alderman Richard Irvin (see below), was also present, and he called it ‘a bonny park in the centre of the town’.⁸⁰

The 1955 OS map (1:1250) shows the layout of the new gardens (Figure 16). The square retained its former entrances on the cardinal points, and it gained concave instead of convex corners for four more entrances. Railings were not reintroduced. The internal layout is shown as straight and geometric, with a central diamond of paths and flower beds and paths radiating out to the entrances. More trees were planted, in a less dense manner than in the 1918 map. An aerial photograph from 1958 shows this scheme’s straight paths, formal flower beds and crazy-paved paths, and the trees which were retained from previous designs (Figure 17).

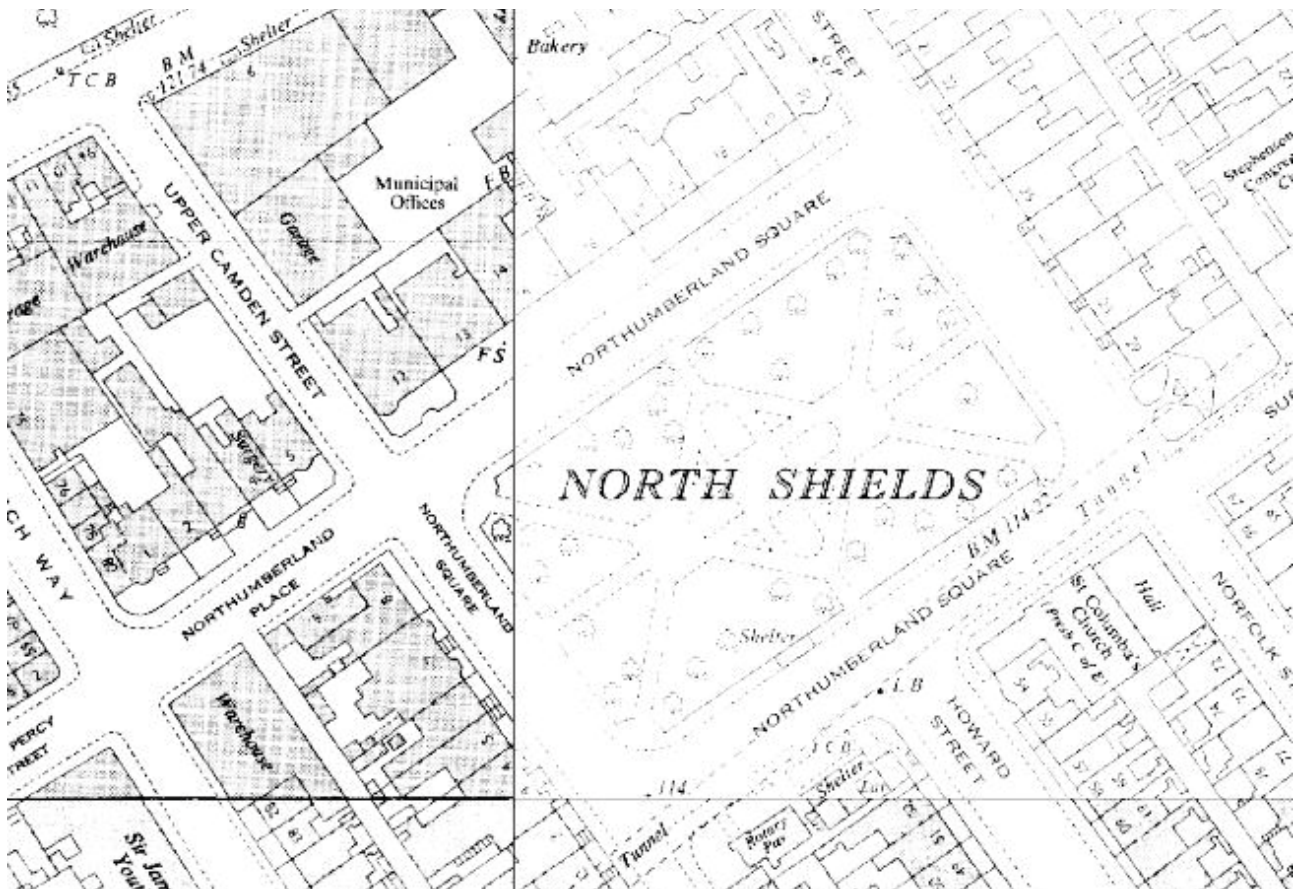


Figure 16: 1:1250 OS First Edition (National Grid) map, published in 1955.

[© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2024). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024.]

The post-war square garden continued to evolve. It was given a concrete fountain lit with multi-coloured lights in 1958, gifted to the town by former alderman Richard Irvin.⁸¹ The same year saw the arrival of the wooden dolly, a wooden statue of a fisherwoman carved by Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson Ltd., of Kilburn, North Yorkshire, after a 1902 original by May Spence (1857-1957). Spence's figure had replaced several ships' figureheads which had stood elsewhere in North Shields, notably on Custom House Quay.⁸² But by the time of the 1970 OS map (Figure 18), the central diamond was cleared of its beds, paths, and fountain leaving an empty and presumably grassed space. A series of shelters were placed around the edge of the park, facing away from it but inset into its long-established boundaries. It is not clear if these were simple shelters for resting or whether they were bus shelters.

The scheme still extant in 2020 dated to 1985, when a planning application was submitted to landscape the garden and erect lighting, railings and an obelisk.⁸³ An article in the *Newcastle Journal* explains that the landscaping programme, costing £60,000, was to 'restore the square to its former splendour'.⁸⁴ Apart from mature trees around the edges of the garden, nothing in the square pre-dates the 1985 scheme, which



Figure 17: This RAF photograph taken on 23 April 1958 shows the post-war garden design. [Detail of RAF 58/2425/PSFO/0055 23-APR-1958 Historic England Archive (RAF Photography)]



Figure 18: 1:2500 OS First Revision map of North Shields, published in 1970.

[© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2024). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024.]

replaced the former axial arrangement of paths with an asymmetrical series of winding paths leading from the entrances on each side and corner (Figure 19). The garden was enclosed with arrow-head cast-iron railings in an attempt to restore its pre-war image. However, the railings are formed in panels rather than individually fitted into the coping stones and the coping itself is made of precast concrete blocks. Identical railings can be found fronting various buildings around the square, indicating they might have been replaced as a comprehensive scheme which was perhaps publicly funded. The square and garden's street furniture include lampposts, benches and bollards designed in a Victorian style, but they clearly belong to the 1985 scheme (Figure 20).



Figure 19: View of the square garden in 2020 from the roof of No. 16. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]



Figure 20: The southern side of the square in 2020, with its 1980s benches, railings, paving and bollards. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]

The buildings around the square

The construction of the buildings around the square and in the surrounding area occurred piecemeal over many decades. Rook's map of 1827 shows that at that date there were only houses on the north side of the square. Their classical ashlar elevations are arranged as a single composition, with seven five-bay, two-storey houses flanked by full-height projecting bows; a central house with a parapet breaks slightly forward of the building line (see Figure 9). Projections, such as the bows, and the corners of the central house are quoined. The use of ashlar for all the south-facing elevations is perhaps the only indication that the stonework of Wakefield House might have been reused on this side of the square; the sides and rear are all built in brick (Figure 21). Ashlar was confined to the quoins, basement, parapets, string courses, doorcases and window heads of contemporary Northumberland Place. In design, they are not dissimilar to the houses built in Dockwray Square some 40 years before, some of whose elevations were also ashlar although others were brick.⁸⁵ The doorcases today are largely quite plain (see below), with the exception of No. 18, which has a pair of columns with fluted capitals supporting a Doric entablature – complete with a frieze of triglyphs and metopes of bucrania (sheep skulls) – and a pediment (Figure 22). This image also shows that a short run of railings remained on the west side of the steps up to the front door, showing that the original railing design for this side of the square possibly had slender uprights, no finials at all and a top rail. Some evidence remains for the railings of No. 20, on the corner of Northumberland Square and Upper Norfolk Street (Figure 23).



Figure 21: The ashlar-fronted houses on the north side of Northumberland Square. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]



Figure 22: The Doric doorcase of No. 18, photographed in 1969, with its frieze of triglyphs and bucrania. [AA68/1960 © Historic England Archive]



Figure 23: No. 19 has coping stones which show the original position of the iron uprights of the railings. The gateposts may also be original. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]

Only one of the front gardens shown by Rook remained in 2020, the rest of which were paved and used for parking. By 2023, however, recent renovations of many of the houses included the restoration of a line of railings, behind which were planted beds and paving to bring back the concept of front gardens to most of the houses, now converted to flats. In 1827, however, there was a substantial network of gardens and orchards at the rear of each house, stretching all the way to Albion Road, as well as what were presumably stables; a parallel back lane running east to west still mostly bisects the plots.

By the 1850s, the east and south sides of the square were under construction. The contract to build the Presbyterian chapel on the south side of the square was signed in September 1856; designed by John Dobson, the builders were James and Matthew Robson of North Shields.⁸⁶ The contract was worth £1885, and the foundation stone was laid in October 1856 by the MP William Shaw Lindsay.⁸⁷ The chapel was formally opened on 27 December 1857 (Figure 24).⁸⁸ Its design is classical, executed in ashlar, with a rusticated ground floor containing a single, central doorcase. The first floor has round-headed windows with their impost mouldings and keystones, framed by Tuscan corner pilasters and three-quarter columns which support a substantial, finely moulded but simple entablature and a balustrade. It is now known as St Columba's United Reformed Church.



Figure 24: The south side of the square, including the Presbyterian chapel, now St Columba's, in 2020. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]

The town plan surveyed in the later 1850s and published in 1861 (see Figure 12) shows that the development of North Shields carried on apace, with all of the neighbouring streets now lined with buildings. Interestingly, Northumberland Square still contained many vacant plots, including the Corporation Yard on the south-east side and a large open space surrounding the Presbyterian chapel to the south. To the west, three houses (now gone) had been built to the north of the Independent chapel of St Andrew, with a timber yard to the north of them (see Figures 13-18 for the chapel). The plot where the Central Library now stands was open, and it appears to be part of the road.

To the east, this plan shows that the housing of Upper Norfolk Street had been extended to form the northern end of the east side of the square. These six houses (Nos 22-26) were built by the early 1850s; one was offered on a three-month lease in 1851, containing six rooms, two kitchens and a water closet, which indicates that these were smaller houses than those on the north side of the square.⁸⁹ These houses were constructed piecemeal, but largely with a similar formula of brick walling with details – notably doorcases, window surrounds, cornicing and basements – in ashlar, with flights of steps up to the front doorways. They have a fairly uniform pattern of three bays and two storeys over a cellar, with stone or stucco door surrounds, architraves and cornices (Figure 25). A few houses retain fragments of their original railings, in a variety of simple styles (Figures 26 and 27). These include corner posts with moulded bands and a slender lily-like moulding near the base, such as at No. 24, which may have



Figure 25: Houses on the northern end of the east side of Northumberland Square. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]



Figure 26: The cast-iron foliate finials of railings outside No. 29. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]



Figure 27: Simple cast-iron railings outside No. 24. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]



Figure 28: The houses on the east side of Northumberland Square.
[Lucy Jessop © Historic England]

been finished with an elaborate foliate finial in the manner of that at No. 29. The houses to the south on this east side of the square are very similar in style and were probably built soon after in the 1860s (Figure 28). Today they have mostly lost the railings to their areas and steps, some of which have been replaced with railings identical to those surrounding the square garden.

Many of the seven five-bay houses on the north side of the square were already subdivided by the late 19th century, making 11 separate residences in all. They were split vertically, rather than being turned into flats, with the addition of new front doorways. These were either paired, such as those for Nos 17a and 17b, which share a pediment over their fanlights, or individual, such as Nos 19 and 20. The 1:528 town plan published in 1861 (see Figure 12) shows that three of the seven houses were subdivided at this date; these were the two corner houses and the house directly west of the central five-bay house. By the time that the 1:500 town plan was published in 1896 (see Figure 13), the house directly to the west of the central one had been divided into two, creating Nos 17a and 17b. Today, only No. 18 remains its original size; however, its current layout has not been assessed for this report. Nos 7-16 have recently been redeveloped into flats; their doorways now reflect the later divisions rather than the original plots, although No. 16's doorway is in its original central position.

The west side of Northumberland Square, as we see it today (Figure 29), was mostly developed in the 1870s, though there were a trio of earlier houses north of the Independent chapel which, with the chapel, were considered in the 19th century to be part of Camden Street (see above). Houses on this side of the square were largely individually designed, although two were built as a pair; the straight joints indicate piecemeal development, probably by individual builders. They are built of buff brick



Figure 29: The buildings on the west side of Northumberland Square. The former North Shields Club is on the far left of the photograph. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]

with stucco or painted stone dressings and they all have two storeys, though their varied window designs and surrounds, string courses, cornices and parapets reveal their different construction phases. They have recently had dormer windows added to their attics.

The southernmost plot on the west side of the square, adjoining the three earlier houses, was the home of the North Shields Club, a non-political club for the gentlemen of the town (now No. 4). The plot was bought in 1877 and shares were issued in order to raise capital for the building and institution.⁹⁰ It opened in July 1878, providing rooms for drinking, dining, reading the news, playing billiards and cards, and smoking, as well as kitchens, larders and pantries.⁹¹ The central doorway has a Tuscan doorcase, bearing the date 1878 on its parapet; it is flanked by a pair of two-storey square bays housing two plate-glass sash windows. A roundel above the central paired windows of the first floor contains the intertwined initials of the North Shields Club.

The OS town plan of 1896 (see Figure 13) shows the built environment of the square almost complete and largely in its present state. The east side of the square was finished, apart from a vacant plot to the south which remains empty today, and houses had been built on the west side of the square on the site of the timber yard (see above). The Presbyterian Chapel is shown as complete on the south side of the square, with a central block and wings to either side, whilst the future library plot is occupied by what appears to be another public garden.

No pre-war images of Northumberland Square can be found to demonstrate what the square garden's railings looked like prior to their removal during the Second World War, although the illustrations relating to the Earl Grey statue may suggest the general form (see Figure 10). Indeed, no cast-iron railings from the first phase of the square's development in the 1810s survive, either around the garden's perimeter or in front of the houses on the north side of the square. However, a block of stonework on the outer corner of the square outside No. 20 shows that the railings used there, on the edge of a former front garden on the north side of the square, were individually inserted into the stone (see Figure 23). This is typical for railings of this date. The image of No. 18



Figure 30: Cast iron railings with simple spear heads and an urn finial for the terminal post outside 5, Savile Place, Newcastle upon Tyne. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]

(see Figure 22) taken in 1969 concurs, although such a fragment may not reflect the entire railing scheme of the north side and the central garden. Some contemporary, local examples of this type of railing can be seen outside No. 5 Savile Place, Newcastle of about 1810, where the uprights have spear heads, and an urn surmounts the end finial (Figure 30).⁹²

Liverpool has excellent survival of urban examples of domestic and garden railings of a similar type. Liverpool's examples include the slender posts with delicate pointed heads used widely in Chatham Street (No. 171 is dated 1816, Nos 161-9 (odd) are 1820s), at Nos 25-29, Hope Street, and parts of Falkner Street and Bedford Street South (both 1820s) (Figure 31).⁹³ A little later, the designs become more elaborate, such as the fleur-de-lys-headed railings and stone gate piers of Falkner Square (about 1835). Abercromby Square of the 1830s displays a design which returns to a simpler spear-head design. The photographic evidence of 1969, then, alongside the Liverpool examples suggests that the original railings of Northumberland Square were slender uprights with pointed heads with an upper rail running just below them, and no lower rail.



Figure 31: A view of the corner of Falkner Street and Catharine Street, Liverpool, showing their simple cast-iron railings with spear head finials. [© Stephen Richards and licensed for reuse under Creative Commons licence CC BY-SA 2.0 DEED]

The subsequent OS map series shows no major changes to the square until the post-war period, and it is clear from the built fabric around the square that nothing new was built in the intervening years. The exceptions are No. 25 on the east side of the square, which was probably refaced in the 1930s to give it an Art Deco look, and the east wing of the Presbyterian Chapel on the south side of the square which was rebuilt in the 1920s.

The Central Library (Figure 32) was opened in 1974 in Northumberland Square, occupying what had formerly been a garden on the south-west corner of the square. Built in the Brutalist style, the building was a departure from the predominant classical style of the surrounding houses, though its bay windows and continuous glazing lighten the concrete and brick elevations. However, despite the mismatch in styles, the building's massing is appropriate for the site and it does not detract from the setting of the central garden. It also provides public views over the garden. The central library was the last major intervention to the built fabric around the square, and it provides a link to the 1970s shopping centre and the railway station to the west.



Figure 32: The central library on the south side of Northumberland Square.
[Lucy Jessop © Historic England]

Residential garden squares in north-east England and across Great Britain

The construction of Northumberland Square was clearly of great importance to North Shields as it developed from a small quayside settlement subsidiary to Tynemouth into a substantial town in its own right, but its local and regional contexts should also be considered. Nationally, the residential garden square is a form most closely associated with London, but it is also found in towns and cities across the United Kingdom. Locally, as we have seen, Northumberland Square was preceded by the larger Dockwray Square of the 1760s (see above).

The residential garden square was popularised in central and western London in the 17th and 18th centuries, proliferating and crystallising into various forms by the 19th century.⁹⁴ Early square gardens, privately owned and run by the residents, often only consisted of open grass plats. The development of planting took place gradually over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, and iron railings became the normal means of enclosure. Early 19th-century plans of London squares indicate a wide variety of garden layouts, including a significant amount remaining as grass plats.

C. and J. Greenwood's plan of London published in 1830 but surveyed between 1824 and 1826, for instance, shows a variety of plan forms in use across the city, most of which consist of a geometric arrangement of paths, lawns and shrubberies based around the shape of the garden and often with paths on axis. London's Russell Square, laid out in 1801-04 and designed by Humphry Repton (1752-1818), is near contemporary with Northumberland Square; it includes winding paths similar to those found there, as well as convex corners, perimeter shrubbery and other planting (Figure 33).⁹⁵ Nearby is Mecklenburgh Square, which was developed as part of the Foundling Hospital estate, with which Northumberland Square shares several similarities (Figure 34).⁹⁶ Its garden, still private today, was laid out in 1809-10 within cast iron railings, with a perimeter shrubbery and path, and various meandering walks, grass plats and shrubberies.

Outside London, garden squares were often built in affluent new suburbs of existing towns and cities such as Bath, Liverpool and Edinburgh's New Town, often laid out by ambitious developers in the later 18th and early 19th centuries. Hamilton's 1827 Plan of the City of Edinburgh shows a variety of garden squares, some of which were laid out in a formal geometric style and others with wandering paths, trees and lawns. George Square (Figure 35), laid out in 1766 with a garden designed about 1813, has chamfered corners, a border of shrubbery and a winding perimeter path; this is similar to the original layout of Northumberland Square, although it has a central oval instead of the curvaceous diamonds of Northumberland Square.⁹⁷ George Square is still a private garden and retains its original iron railings, which are slender and without finials (Figure 36). In Bath, St James's Square (Figure 37) is the nearest comparison in date. It was constructed in 1790-94 to the north of the Royal Crescent, shown in 1883 when the



Figure 33: Map showing the layout of Russell Square, London, in the mid-1820s, from C. & J. Greenwood, Map of London: made from an actual survey in the years 1824, 1825, & 1826, published in 1830. [Reproduced with permission, Harvard Map Collection, Harvard University]



Figure 34: The layout of Mecklenburgh Square, London, as shown by the Greenwoods, Map of London: made from an actual survey in the years 1824, 1825, & 1826, published in 1830. [Reproduced with permission, Harvard Map Collection, Harvard University]



Figure 35: George Square, Edinburgh, from Robert Hamilton, Plan of the City of Edinburgh and vicinity, 1827 [Reproduced with permission, Harvard Map Collection, Harvard University]



Figure 36: The east side of George Square, Edinburgh, about 1940, showing the railings of the houses and the square garden. [SC 1122113 © courtesy of Historic Environment Scotland (B C Clayton Collection)]



Figure 37: Map showing St James's Square, Bath, from the 1:500 OS town plan of Bath, surveyed in 1883, published in 1886. [© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2024). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024.]

OS Town Plan was surveyed with curved corners, a grassy plat and perimeter path.⁹⁸ It continues to be a private residential square garden, with railings replaced in the 1980s and now consisting of not much more than grass and trees.⁹⁹

The most pertinent local example is nearby Dockwray Square in North Shields of about 1765 (Figure 38). Although much larger than Northumberland Square, by the early 19th century Dockwray Square appears to have followed the London fashion of a simple grass plat surrounded by a slightly meandering perimeter path within a shrubbery, and a small central planting of trees or shrubs. The path was accessed via a single gate on the north side. In 1825, Mackenzie described Dockwray Square's garden as extensive, 'embellished with a border of odoriferous shrubs, and enclosed with iron palisades tastefully disposed'.¹⁰⁰ It does not appear to have contained the elaborate and symmetrical arrangements of paths found at Northumberland Square. By the mid-20th century the garden was entirely grassed, a fate which Northumberland Square escaped, and the railings were removed. The garden remains, although the buildings around it have been rebuilt several times since 1945.

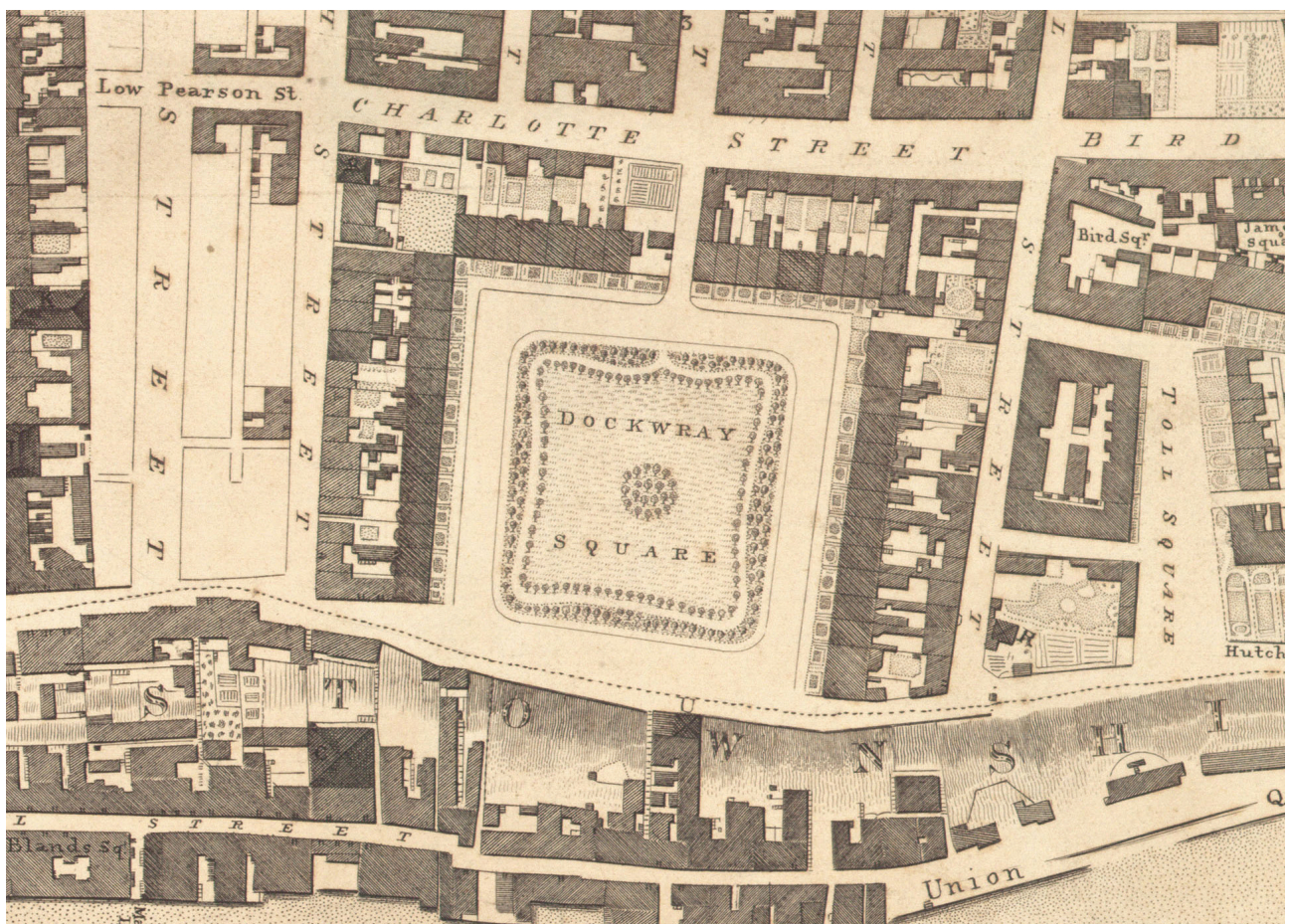


Figure 38: Dockwray Square, as shown by Rook in 1827. Detail of Figure 7.
[EP 52/A/190 © Northumberland Archives, reproduced with permission]

Neighbouring Newcastle upon Tyne, in contrast to North Shields and other developing cities nationwide, had fewer garden squares than one might expect. Charlotte Square of 1770 was the principal one, but it was shoe-horned into an awkward plot close to the town wall which prevented much building on the south-western side of the square. The great Grainger Town developments produced grand residential terraces such as Leazes Crescent (1829-30) and Leazes Terrace (1829-34) alongside a public park instead of grouping them around garden squares. The showpiece Eldon Square (1825-30) was the main garden square developed by Grainger, with a heavily railed garden and houses on three of the four sides; it is now greatly changed (Figure 39). Other key developments, principally to the west of the city, such as Ravensworth Terrace, Swinburne Place, Greenfield Place (all built in the 1820s) and Summerhill Terrace (1840s) had individual gardens for each property grouped together instead of a large communal one.

Sunderland also saw considerable development in the early 19th century, particularly on the adjoining Fawcett and Sunnyside estates. Two gardens were constructed in this period south of the high street: The Shrubbery, situated on the west side of Fawcett



Figure 39: Eldon Square, Newcastle, in about 1840. Engraved by Collard after a drawing by T. M. Richardson senior. [Newcastle Library, image in public domain]

Street, and Sunnyside Square, both of which were laid out at some point between 1800 and the 1840s (Figure 40). Both (presumably intended at least initially as private gardens for residents) were known by the 1850s as shrubberies, with railings containing meandering paths, asymmetrical grassy plats, and shrubs around the perimeter as well as in clumps within the plats.

Northumberland Square, then, is part of a national trend in 18th- and 19th-century Britain for building residential garden squares in fashionable and affluent new suburbs. However, North Shields' new northern suburbs were not built on the same scale as in other larger towns and cities. Its development, including that which took place in and around Northumberland Square, was a piecemeal process taking decades, which was probably typical of most of the regional development of the time.

Many garden squares continue to be private, for the enjoyment of residents only, such as Mecklenburgh Square, London, and St James's Square, Bath. However, many of the more centrally located ones such as London's Russell Square subsequently became public spaces as did Northumberland Square. Northumberland Square's history of public use is reflected in its history of continual redesign.



Figure 40: The Shrubbery (left) and the long Sunnyside Square (right), Sunderland, as shown on the 1:528 OS Town Plan, surveyed in 1858 and published 1859. [© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2024). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024.]

Conclusion

Northumberland Square, along with Northumberland Place and Howard Street, provide a strong visual reminder of how North Shields expanded northwards in the later 18th and early 19th centuries. Some of the original street plan and nearly all of the original buildings to the east of Howard Street have been replaced during the 20th century, including key historical sites such as Dockwray Square. The survival of Northumberland Square with many of its houses and its square garden, then, gives the viewer a sense of what much of North Shields looked like before the Second World War, inter-war and post-war clearance, and subsequent rebuilding. It is interesting that the square's value and significance may have been understood enough in the 1940s to have escaped planned municipal redevelopment, although much of the argument may have been economic (see above).



Figure 41: The wooden dolly, as photographed in 2020. [Lucy Jessop © Historic England]

Despite the piecemeal construction and materials of the square's surrounding buildings, their sash windows and mainly two-storey designs give a pleasing early to mid-19th-century appearance, which the 1985 scheme of low walls with railings and garden design enhanced. Then, the wandering paths were subservient to the trees and lawn, rather than being a feature in themselves. The low boundary wall, railings and street furniture were clearly designed to look historically appropriate (although not accurate) for an enclosed 19th-century garden square. However, close scrutiny revealed the use of modern construction and materials; their design includes a lower rail, which is contrary to contemporary early 19th-century design. They have been retained in the redesign of 2022-23.

Layers of archaeology may remain beneath the square. The garden was the location of an air raid precaution shelter during the Second World War. There is a small chance that the shelter or part of it survives intact, as many shelters were simply backfilled and abandoned after the war rather than completely removed. However, the garden has been completely landscaped twice since the Second World War, reducing the likelihood of any survival.

The square as a whole has important historical associations with the growth of North Shields as a town in its own right, with its efforts to assert its economic and political independence from nearby Newcastle. As a high-status residential square, it has been the home of many of North Shield's leading citizens, many of whom are commemorated with plaques on the surrounding buildings. The status of the square was such that it was first choice for a monument to Earl Grey after the passing of the Reform Act in 1832, although the resulting monument was raised in Newcastle instead. In 2020 the square was home to North Shield's wooden dolly sculpture, the restored one made in 1958 by Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson's workshop at Kilburn, after the wooden 1902 original by Spence (Figure 41). Today the dolly stands in the library, overlooking Northumberland Square, although a replacement is planned for the centre of the square.¹⁰¹

Northumberland Square's garden has been used as a public amenity from the mid-19th century. It has gradually been transformed from a private to a public space, with every attempt at formally laying out the garden making way for pragmatism, such as the clearance of the central area to make space for events. Today the garden is a public park, and the surrounding buildings are used for both housing and office space. The park is well used by the public informally throughout the year and for organised public events such as the annual Christmas fair and market. Its redesign reflects the public nature of the space while recalling elements of its early 19th-century design and the retention of some of the mature trees – not original but certainly of some age – maintains the sense of an urban oasis.

The garden's redesign in 2022 and 2023 drew on some key historical elements of its early 19th-century appearance, based on evidence from the draft of this report. These can be seen in the layout of the curving perimeter paths and a recreation of the central concave diamond (Figure 42).



Figure 42: An aerial photograph of the new layout of Northumberland Square, taken on 10 November 2023. [Detail of HEA_34193_033 © Historic England Archive]

Bibliography

Bateson 1895: Bateson, E. 1895 *A History of Northumberland*, Vol. 8 (Kent).

Beltz 1841: Beltz, George 1841 *Memorials of the Order of the Garter from its foundation to the present time....* (London).

Cullen and Lovie 2003: Cullen F. and Lovie D., *Newcastle's Grainger Town: An Urban Renaissance* (London).

Craig 2004: Craig D. J. 2004, 'Oswald [St Oswald]', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford).

Craster 1907: Craster H. H. E. 1907 *A History of Northumberland*, Volume VIII: The parish of Tynemouth (Newcastle and London).

Garson 1926: Garson, W. S. 1926 *The Origin of North Shields and its Growth* (North Shields).

Gibson 1849: Gibson, W. S. 1849 *A Descriptive and Historical Guide to Tynemouth... with notices of North Shields...* (North Shields).

Longstaff-Gowan 2012: Longstaff-Gowan, T. 2012 *The London Square: Gardens in the Midst of Town.* (London).

Mackenzie 1825: Mackenzie, E. 1825 *An Historical, Topographical, and Descriptive View of the County of Northumberland* (Newcastle upon Tyne).

Parsons and White 1827: Parsons, W. and White, W. 1827 *History, Directory, and gazetteer of the counties of Durham and Northumberland....*, I (Leeds).

Phillips 1894: Phillips, M. 1894 *A history of banks, bankers, & banking in Northumberland, Durham, and North Yorkshire, illustrating the commercial development of the north of England, from 1755 to 1894* (London).

Usherwood, Beach and Bell 2000: Usherwood, P., Beach, J., and Morris, C. 2000 *Public Sculpture of North-East England*, Volume 3 of Liverpool University Press – Public Sculpture of Britain Series (Liverpool).

Whellan 1855: Whellan & Co. 1855 *History, Topography and Directory of Northumberland* (London and Manchester).

Worsley 1996: Worsley, G. 1996 'The "Best Turned" House of the Duke of Bedford', *Georgian Group Journal*, Vol. VI, 1996, 63-73.

Endnotes

- 1 British Geological Survey, Geology Viewer: see <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk>, accessed 14 September 2023.
- 2 Gibson 1849, 145.
- 3 Gibson 1849, 6-7; Craig 2004, via <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20916>, accessed 9 January 2024.
- 4 Gibson 1849, 10-11.
- 5 Gibson 1849, 12.
- 6 Gibson 1849, 30-31.
- 7 Gibson 1849, 51.
- 8 Many antiquarians and authors of directories give 1280 as the date, except for Craster, who accurately dated the prior's appearance before parliament to 1290, and cited the *Rotuli Parliamentarii*, vol. I, p26, see Craster 1907, 287-8. A more modern source is 'Original Documents: Edward I Parliaments, Roll 1', in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry and Rosemary Horrox (Woodbridge, 2005), via British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/roll-1>, accessed 11 December 2023.
- 9 Whellan 1855, 469.
- 10 Gibson 1849, 146; Craster 1907, 289.
- 11 Craster 1907, 84, 290.
- 12 Craster 1907, 292-3.
- 13 Craster 1907, 299, 305.
- 14 British Museum Q.6.125: Ralph Gardner, engraved by Wenceslaus Hollar, *The River of Tyne leading from the Sea on the east, to Newcastle on the West...*, 1651.
- 15 Craster 1907, 306.
- 16 Craster 1907, 309-10.
- 17 Craster 1907, 310-11.
- 18 Whellan 1855, 467.
- 19 Craster 1907, 311.
- 20 Gibson 1849, 148 gives the date as 1765, Craster 1907, 271 as 1763.
- 21 Susan Lynn, pers. comm. Also see Craster 1907, 269-71.
- 22 *Tyne Pilot Newspaper*, 1841, cited by Susan Lynn.
- 23 Craster 1907, 271.
- 24 Susan Lynn, pers. comm.
- 25 Bateson 1893, 311.

- 26 Gibson 1849, 150-151.
- 27 Mackenzie 1825, 444-5.
- 28 Mackenzie 1825, 444-5; Garson 1926, 8; Craster 1907, 266.
- 29 Mackenzie 1825, 444-5.
- 30 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 6 January 1977, 9.
- 31 *Shields Evening News*, 12 May 1959, 3; *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 17 March 1966, 11
- 32 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 28 March 1990, 28.
- 33 Susan Lynn, pers. comm.
- 34 Northumberland Archives, SANT/DEE/1/23/41: draft release, bargain and sale from John Dyson and Robert Charman on the behalf of John Wright to George Wakefield, all that piece or parcel of ground in the parish of Tynemouth near the town of North Shields...called the North Close, July 1799. SANT/DEE/1/23/42 is a draft abstract of purchase of what appears to be the same land parcel by Wright from Dyson and Charman, dated June 1802.
- 35 Tyne and Wear Archives, DX743/1: five-part release of the site of Wakefield House, North Shields, 2 January 1810.
- 36 *Tyne Mercury*, 21 September 1802, 2.
- 37 Phillips 1894, 170-171; death notice, *Tyne Mercury*, 15 July 1806.
- 38 *Tyne Mercury*, 16 September 1806, 1.
- 39 *Tyne Mercury*, 4 November 1806, 3.
- 40 Phillips 1894, 170-171.
- 41 Worsley 1996, 63.
- 42 Worsley 1996, 66.
- 43 National Heritage List for England (NHLE) entries for Pulteney Bridge (NHLE 1394514), 8-20 Great Pulteney Street - north side (NHLE 1396183), Sydney Gardens (NHLE 1001258), Holburne Museum (NHLE 1395305), accessed 10 Jan 2024 via www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/.
- 44 Tyne and Wear Archives, DX743/1: five-part release of the site of Wakefield House, North Shields, 2 January 1810.
- 45 Cullen and Lovie 2003, 12.
- 46 Tyne and Wear Archives, DX743/1, as before.
- 47 England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858, probate of Alexander Crighton of North Shields, 9 December 1807, via www.ancestry.co.uk, accessed 25 January 2024.
- 48 Tyne and Wear Archives, DX743/1, as before.
- 49 Tyne and Wear Archives, DX743/1, as before.
- 50 *Durham County Advertiser*, 29 July 1815, 3.

- 51 *The London Gazette*, 13 August 1816, issue 17163, 1588.
- 52 Parsons & White 1827, 463.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 479.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 463.
- 55 *Tyne Mercury; Northumberland and Durham and Cumberland Gazette*, 1 April 1817, 3.
- 56 Depicted on the 1:528 Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Tynemouth, including North and South Shields, published in 1860. The congregation of St Andrew's was formed in 1817 as a breakaway from the original Scotch Church in Howard Street, according to <https://www.urch-northern-synod.org/about-us/nonconformist-histories/>, accessed 6 November 2023.
- 57 *Newcastle Courant*, 12 July 1828, 1.
- 58 Mackenzie 1825, 445.
- 59 Mackenzie 1825, 445.
- 60 *Tyne Mercury; Northumberland and Durham and Cumberland Gazette*, 1 July 1828, 3.
- 61 *Newcastle Courant*, 31 January 1829, 3.
- 62 *Newcastle Courant*, 17 December 1831, 1.
- 63 *Newcastle Journal*, 11 June 1836, 1.
- 64 *Newcastle Chronicle*, 16 June 1832, 3.
- 65 Usherwood, Beach and Morris 2000, 96-98. This publication states that Benjamin Green was the brother of John, but evidence from Ancestry amongst other sources confirms that he was his son.
- 66 Beltz 1841, cxliv, ccxvi.
- 67 *Illustrated London News*, 3 October 1846, 14; *Newcastle Guardian*, 3 October 1846, 4.
- 68 The Tynemouth Extension Railway was originally an extension of the Newcastle and North Shields Railway, but it was absorbed by the Newcastle and Berwick Railway in 1845 before work started. It opened in 1847. See https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=1376318&resourceID=19191, accessed 21 September 2023.
- 69 *North and South Shields Gazette*, 4 September 1856, 5, and *Newcastle Journal*, 13 September 1856, 6.
- 70 *North and South Shields Gazette*, 22 July 1857, 1.
- 71 The National Archives OS34/405/51 and 135, Ordnance Survey Name Books for Tynemouth, Northumberland, about 1860, transcribed in <https://namebooks.org.uk>, accessed 15 September 2023.
- 72 *Shields Daily News*, 9 September 1939, 3; *Shields Daily News*, 12 September 1940, 3
- 73 <https://northshields173.org/north-shields-air-raid-shelters/>, accessed 7 December 2020.
- 74 *Shields Daily News*, 7 January 1904, 4.
- 75 *Shields Daily News*, 29 November 1915, 1; *Shields Evening News*, 26 March 1938, 3.

- 76 *Shields Evening News*, 29 July 1943, 3.
- 77 *Shields Evening News*, 19 February 1945, 5.
- 78 *Shields Evening News*, 22 February 1945, 5.
- 79 *Shields Evening News*, 13 December 1946, 3.; *Shields Evening News*, 18 December 1946, 8.
- 80 *Shields Evening News*, 26 January 1948, 5; *Shields Evening News*, 25 May 1949, 4; *Shields Evening News*, 9 August 1949, 11.
- 81 *Shields Evening News*, 3 October 1958, 1.
- 82 <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/history/north-shields-iconic-wooden-dolly-19021493>, accessed 7 December 2020; information from Susan Lynn, pers. comm.
- 83 North Tyneside Council planning application 85/01202/LAREG3, retrieved 13 October 2023 from <https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1079/search-planning-applications>.
- 84 *The Newcastle Journal*, 22 March 1985, 9.
- 85 See images in Historic England's red box collection, www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places, under Tynemouth, Other Places: Tyne and Wear; Tynemouth Secular. Images taken in 1948-9 show that the first three houses on the north side of Dockwray Square and then Nos 22-23 had ashlar fronts but there was a brick house at no. 24; Nos 28 and 29 on the same side were also ashlar. The west side, such as Nos 4 to 8, were all brick, as were Nos 37-42, presumably on the east side, although there were a pair of two-storey stone-fronted houses there too, possibly No. 36.
- 86 NHLE 1355010, accessed 14 November 2023 via www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/.
- 87 *North and South Shields Gazette*, 24 September 1856, 1, and 23 October 1856, 2.
- 88 *North and South Shields Gazette*, 17 December 1857, 1.
- 89 *Newcastle Journal*, 19 April 1851, 1.
- 90 *Durham County Advertiser*, 30 March 1877, 5.
- 91 *Newcastle Courant*, 5 July 1878, 4.
- 92 See NHLE 1024782, accessed 14 November 2023 via www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/.
- 93 For Nos 161-171 (odd) Chatham Street, Liverpool, see NHLE entries 1068309, 1356333, 1068310, 1356334, 1068311 and 1068312, accessed 14 November 2023. For nos 128 and 130 Bedford Street South, Liverpool, see NHLE 1025131, accessed 14 November 2023 via www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/.
- 94 As widely discussed throughout Longstaffe-Gowan 2012.
- 95 See NHLE 1000213, accessed 14 November 2023 via www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/.
- 96 See NHLE 1000212, accessed 14 November 2023 via www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/.

- 97 Many of the buildings around George Square are designated by Historic Environment Scotland (HES); Nos 16-29 are Category A, see <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB28810>, accessed 14 November 2023. HES's description states that George Square, by the architect James Brown (1729-1807), laid out in 1766 and built between 1766 and 1779 'represents a milestone in the development of planning in Edinburgh because of its size and the coherence of its design.' The garden itself is thought to have been laid out with the perimeter planting and central feature with paths 'leading to the four sides of the square' after animals were excluded in 1813.
- 98 1:500 Ordnance Survey plan of Bath, Somerset XIV.1.23, surveyed 1883, published 1886.
- 99 <http://www.sjsbath.co.uk/index.php/history>, accessed 7 December 2020.
- 100 Mackenzie 1825, 445.
- 101 <https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/news/32379/famous-wooden-dolly-finds-new-home-north-shields>, accessed 15 November 2023.



Historic England

Historic England's Research Reports

We are the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's historic environment.

We carry out and fund applied research to support the protection and management of the historic environment. Our research programme is wide-ranging and both national and local in scope, with projects that highlight new discoveries and provide greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of our historic places.

More information on our research strategy and agenda is available at HistoricEngland.org.uk/research/agenda.

The Research Report Series replaces the former Centre for Archaeology Reports Series, the Archaeological Investigation Report Series, the Architectural Investigation Report Series, and the Research Department Report Series.

All reports are available at HistoricEngland.org.uk/research/results/reports. There are over 7,000 reports going back over 50 years. You can find out more about the scope of the Series here: HistoricEngland.org.uk/research/results/about-the-research-reports-database

Keep in touch with our research through our digital magazine Historic England Research HistoricEngland.org.uk/whats-new/research