

Newcastle Street, 1950 (Elswick, October 1950, Newcastle-upon-Tyne)

This black and white photograph, first published in the *Picture Post* in 1950, is taken from the top of a steep back lane leading down to the River Tyne, with a power station with six tall smokestacks on the opposite bank. A woman and child are heading down the hill, away from the camera.

The lane has pavements on either side, and is wide enough for two cars to pass. It runs between the backs of terraced Victorian brick houses. They appear to be so-called 'Tyneside flats' where each house holds two flats, one above the other. There are external staircases running down from the top floor flats into small yards enclosed by brick walls, with wooden gates leading from the yards to the back lane. The steep slate roofs are topped with squat chimneypots.

In the distance, on the other side of the river, there are the rectangular sheds and six slim chimneys – each 76 metres tall – of the Dunston Power Station, with clouds of smoke billowing from the chimneys, and pylons to carry away the electricity generated there. Beyond the power station, barely visible, hills covered with fields rise away from the river.

The grey skies are reflected in the damp paving stones, and slate roofs; the woman and child heading down the middle of the lane are almost silhouettes against the gleaming wet tarmac. The woman wears a calf-length overcoat and a print headscarf. She's carrying a handbag over her right arm and holding the hand of a child about 5 years old who wears a winter coat and warm bonnet. Halfway down the

lane, a couple of washing lines are stretched across between the yards on either side. One line of laundry is propped up with a long stick that stands upright in the middle of the lane.

The two silhouetted figures, the black-painted wooden gates marching down the hill, the washing pole and the six smokestacks form a series of verticals contrasting with the diagonal lines of pavement, walls and roofs that converge at the river.