



Liverpool Docks

Written and researched by University of Oxford intern
Sarah Reeves
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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Albert_Dock,_Liverpool

The Port of Liverpool docks system is located on the eastern side of the Mersey estuary, owned and operated by the Mersey Docks and Harbour company, and also houses the Royal Albert Dock and waterfront, being one of the most visited multi-use tourist attractions outside of London. Aside from the *Edmund Gardner* and *De Wadden*, both currently maintained on the quayside by National Museums Liverpool (NML), the dock contains a significant number of historic vessels listed on the National Register of Historic Vessels, including four National Historic Fleet vessels, as well as a number of maritime skills providers.

Liverpool Docks appears to be at a point of fundamental importance in its future development, carrying both significant threat to its historic environment and assets, and substantial opportunity for the alignment of interested parties to a common object of large-scale redevelopment and regeneration, sensitive to the demands of local industries and global markets. It is the focus of a number of several significant regeneration projects, including a 'Waterfront Transformation Project' (2022), aiming to redevelop the Maritime and International Slavery museums and Canning Graving Docks, and to revitalise waterfront facilities. With various heritage interest groups involved in the project, including NML, it is likely that this project will be sympathetic to the dock's historic character. The primary threat to the harbour is navigating the numerous interested parties, including the Canal and Rivers Trust, NML and private retailers, and ensuring that large-scale investment projects in the future are sensitive to its historic character.



Brief history of Liverpool Docks

The Port of Liverpool docks system is located on the eastern side of the Mersey estuary, owned and operated by the Mersey Docks and Harbour company. The port today is one of the busiest commercial ports in the UK, handling and distributing containerized cargo to North America and non-EU destinations from its two container terminals, the Royal Seaforth Container Terminal and a new £300m deep-water container terminal at Liverpool2. It also has a substantial leisure complex, with the Royal Albert Dock and waterfront developed as a multi-use cultural centre, being one of the most visited multi-use tourist attractions outside of London.

While the borough of Liverpool was founded by King John (1199-1216) by royal charter in 1207, it saw little substantial development until the early 18th century, when a relative decline in Irish and European trade coincided with a significant expansion in West Indian and North American trade, leading to the construction of the world's first wet dock (Thomas Steers' Old Dock), completed in 1715. Subsequent constructions and redevelopments through the 18th and 19th centuries and centrality to Britain's involvement in the trans-Atlantic trading triangle of sugar, tobacco and enslaved peoples led its wealth to periodically surpass that of London, and to be considered '*the New York of Europe*'.¹

Liverpool's centrality to the histories of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and abolition (1807/1840) through William Roscoe's Liverpool Abolitionist movement, features prominently in the docks, for instance in the Albert Dock's International Slavery Museum. But it also has other historical associations, of both national and global significance. Historian Sven Beckert in his *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (2014) described Liverpool as "...*the most pro-confederate place in the world outside the Confederacy itself*" during the American Civil War (1861-65) in which, owing to its close economic dependence on cotton imports from the Confederate South – itself a legacy of the Atlantic slave trade - it actively engaged in the provision of armed vessels.² The CSS Shenandoah, purchased by US representatives for the Confederate Navy, constituted the final act of the American Civil War, when its Captain James Waddell lowered its flag, and presented a letter surrendering to the British government at Liverpool Town Hall.³

Liverpool was also at the forefront of British seacraft engineering and development, as the launching port for the Cunard Britannia-class steamships and the first year-round transatlantic steamship service (1841), and the launching of George Garrett's early submarine *Resurgam* (1879). Its strategic importance and central commercial function led to its heavy bombing during World War II, suffering a blitz only second to London with 80 Luftwaffe raids on Merseyside and the estuary region. The Battle of the Atlantic, the longest continuous military campaign of the war, and pivotal to the Allied victory in its succession of blockades and counter-blockade measures, was planned and executed from Liverpool. This history is recorded in the Western Approaches HQ Museum behind Princes Dock.

Associations and interested parties

Governmental and sub-governmental: Liverpool Docks, by virtue of its situation as city authority, commercial terminal and significance in the histories of the British Empire and globalisation has several parties and initiatives addressing the balance of progressive development and protectionist conservation. Natural England has designated the Liverpool Bay (2010) and Mersey Estuary Special Protection Areas (1995), which protects the estuary waters and its species from over-development and pollution. Heritage England (HE) has designated 1542 listed buildings in Liverpool City, and initiated the Heritage Schools programme, funded by the Department for Education, which seeks to connect children to their local heritage through engagement

¹ *The bankers', insurance managers' and agents magazine*, 11. (1851), 783.

² Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A global history* (New York: Vintage, 2014).

³ <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/american-civil-war/end-of-war> (Accessed 28/07/22)



projects and taught curriculum, as well as to their wider community.⁴ Liverpool City Council has also designated a number of conservation areas in the city and waterfront including Stanley Dock (2002), Albert Dock (1976) and Duke Street Conservation Areas, which are subject to additional planning controls under article 4 directions, requiring planning permissions for ‘...any works that change the external appearance of a building, or affects its grounds’.⁵

The Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network, CITIZAN, in partnership with HE and various parties, have created several digital Low Tide Trails (LTT) for Liverpool Bay, including ‘Liverpool: Docks, Liverbirds and Beatles’ which follows the waterfront from the Old Dock site to George’s Dock and Albion House.⁶ The organisation seeks, in all of its LTTs, to encourage the recording and investigation of archaeological features exposed on the foreshores at low tide, as well as the investigation of lesser known historical assets such as the HMS Conway Anchor on the Albert Dock. While there are significant evidential histories of Liverpool Docks from the early 18th century through to the post-war period, the investigations of the Merseyside Maritime Museum and Liverpool History Society have emphasised the ephemeral and associative histories linked with the docklands, providing crew for John Franklin’s Northwest passage expedition (1845-48) and vessels for the Confederate cause in the American Civil War (1861-65).

Local interest groups: A number of local interest groups are active in Liverpool Docks. The Liverpool History Society has a wide remit, including the annual publication of the ‘Liverpool History Journal’, guest speakers and walking tours. It has a significant social media presence, although this does not currently extend beyond its paid membership. The Daniel Adamson Preservation Society and the Steam Tug Kerne Preservation Society both regularly organise open days and public sailings, with well-developed social media presence and accessible websites. There are various organisations interested in the functionality and history of the dockland waterways, including the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Society, Liverpool Nautical Research Society and the Mersey Ferries Heritage Society.

Maritime infrastructure and businesses: Liverpool Docks has a well-established base of maritime skills and services providers registered on the Shipshape Network Directory of Skills & Services, derived in part from its significant history of trans-Atlantic and domestic commerce:

- University of Liverpool’s MEng Engineering students.
- Liverpool Power Boats
- Liverpool Marina Bar and Grill
- Liverpool John Moore University’s Faculty of Technology and Environment.
- Mike Clarke
- GJW Direct
- Ensign Flag Co.
- Arthur J Gallagher
- Lloyd and Jones Engineers
- ERIKS industrial services
- Norwest Marine
- Rachel Mulhearn Associates
- York Marine
- Doug Edwards Yachts
- Martin Dewhurst photography
- Oakdale Mersey Flat CIC⁷

⁴ <https://www.liverpooecho.co.uk/in-your-area/heritage-school-award-st-charles-12257045> (Accessed 27/07/22)

⁵ <https://liverpool.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-permission/article-4-directions/> (Accessed 27/07/22)

⁶ <https://citizan.org.uk/low-tide-trails/liverpool-bay-liverpool-docks/> (Accessed 27/07/22)

⁷ Extracted from https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/shipshape-search?search_api_fulltext=liverpool (26/07/22)



Condition of heritage assets

Existing protections: Liverpool city and waterfront has 1542 listed buildings, including four Scheduled Monuments, and 29 Grade I listed buildings. While many of these are located in and around the city centre, approximately 95 are located in the docklands area, tracing the docks' development from the 18th century Old Dock (1710-16) to its expansion and redevelopment into the 19th century. Notable buildings include the Edward, Atlantic and Britannia Pavilions, all part of Hartley and Hardwick's Albert Dock complex (1841-47), Town Hall, and Merseyside Maritime and International Slavery Museum, all Grade I listed. There are 19 vessels assigned to the Merseyside region on the National Historic Ships Registers, 13 of which are currently located in Liverpool Docks. These include *Edmund Gardner*, *Kerne*, and *Daniel Adamson* which are National Historic Fleet vessels. The *Edmund Gardner* is maintained by Merseyside Maritime Museum as a museum ship, while the *Daniel Adamson* regularly features in maritime events and offers public sailing trips and open days..

Registered Historic Vessels currently at Liverpool Docks:⁸

Registered vessel	Details
<p><i>Hen</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/561/hen</p>	<p>73ft cargo vessel, built in 1925 by Cochrane and Sons of Selby.</p> <p>Employed in transportation of cargo across River Hull, later moved to Liverpool in 1993.</p> <p>Currently owned by Mersey Tank Lighterage in group of commercially operated historic vessels in Liverpool Docks.</p>
<p><i>Edmund Gardner</i> (National Historic Fleet)</p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/444/edmund-gardner</p>	<p>177ft diesel-electric pilot cutter, built in 1953 by Philip and Son of Dartmouth.</p> <p>Employed in provision of pilot service for vessels entering and leaving the Mersey, until withdrawal from service in 1981.</p> <p>Purchased by Merseyside Maritime Museum in 1982, currently maintained in dry dock as museum ship.</p>
<p><i>Brocklebank</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/629/brocklebank</p>	<p>92ft motor tug built in 1964 by W.J. Yarwood and Sons of Northwich.</p> <p>Used for ship handling at Liverpool, and occasionally Heysham, Larne and Barrow.</p>

⁸ Extracted from https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/the-registers/find-a-vessel?f%5B0%5D=vessel_region%3Amerseyside (26/07/22)



	<p>Purchased by Merseyside Maritime Museum in 1989, maintained in Albert Dock.</p>
<p><i>Oleco</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/2113/oleco</p>	<p>48ft gaff rigged schooner built in 1930 by Walter Reekie of Anstruther.</p>
<p><i>Kerne</i> (National Historic Fleet)</p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/34/kerne</p>	<p>76ft steel tug built in 1912 by Montrose Ship Building Co, Montrose.</p> <p>Employed in general dockyard duties at Chatham dockyard, later operated on the River Mersey by Straits Steamship Company Ltd from 1949, towing barges.</p>
<p><i>Seaport Alpha</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/2260/seaport-alpha</p>	<p>74ft In-shore Defence Tug built in 1943 by Richard Dunston of Thorne. Based at Portsmouth Pool under Admiralty control until removed to Southampton in 1946. Later relocated to Liverpool from 1986.</p>
<p><i>De Wadden</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/2409/de-wadden</p>	<p>116ft auxiliary schooner built in 1917 by Gebr van Diepen of Waterhuizen, Netherlands.</p> <p>Transported cargo between Rotterdam and Bergen, later purchased by Richard Hall of Arklow, southern Ireland for trade with Liverpool.</p> <p>Employed in transportation of cargo supplies to Ireland during Second World War.</p> <p>Purchased by Merseyside Maritime Museum in 1984 and now at risk of deconstruction.</p>
<p><i>James Jackson Grundy</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/1992/james-jackson-grundy</p>	<p>98ft weaver packet built in 1948 by W.J. Yarwood and Sons of Northwich.</p> <p>Transported soda around Mersey and Irish Sea waters, until purchased as training vessel for Northwich Sea Cadets in 1980.</p> <p>Returned to cargo transportation between Liverpool and Sutton Mill Quay in 2010.</p>
<p><i>Impala</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/3480/impala</p>	<p>34ft leisure cruiser built in 1933 by Staniland and Co. of Thorne.</p>
<p><i>Albaquila</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/2133/albaquila</p>	<p>47ft motor yacht built in 1947 by William Osbourne of Littlehampton.</p>



<p><i>France Hayhurst</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/2437/france-hayhurst</p>	<p>65ft steel tug built in 1937 by W.J. Hardwood and Sons of Northwich. Employed as maintenance craft, later inspection vessel, on River Weaver. Restored to seaworthy state in 2005 after abandonment on the Aire and Calder, currently undergoing restoration.</p>
<p><i>Daniel Adamson</i> (National Historic Fleet)</p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/15/daniel-adamson</p>	<p>109ft steel tug built in 1903 by Tranmere Bay Development Co of Birkenhead. Employed as stern tug by Manchester Ship Canal Co, later becoming static exhibit at Boat Museum, Ellesmere Port in 1984. Dry-docked in Liverpool since 2004 and, having undergone a major Heritage Lottery funded conservation project, is now maintained and operated by the Daniel Adamson Preservation Society.</p>
<p><i>Gainsborough</i></p> <p>https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/3525/gainsborough</p>	<p>71ft narrowboat built in 1934 by Harland and Wolff of North Woolwich. Used extensively on Bridgewater Canal, later the River Soar.</p>

Successful restorations: Liverpool Docks has seen a number of successful heritage restoration initiatives in recent decades, particularly during the city’s application for UNESCO World Heritage Status (2004-2021) and it was awarded ‘European Capital of Culture’ (2008). During this time, Historic England released ‘On the Waterfront: Culture, Heritage and Regeneration of Port Cities’ (2008) investigating the conservation and regeneration of Liverpool’s historic environment and assets, while the opening of the International Slavery Museum (2007) and Liverpool One (2008) headed the mid-2000s regeneration of the Albert Dock and waterfront area. Both the Stanley Dock and Duke Street Conservation Areas have seen limited regeneration, with Stanley Dock’s northern warehouse reopening as the Titanic Hotel Liverpool in 2015, and several of Duke Street’s Grade II listed buildings converted into residential complexes. The International Slavery and Maritime Museums have effectively restored public interest in the outstanding global and local historical significance of the Liverpool Docks, organising permanent and rotating exhibitions investigating Liverpool’s historic associations, including *Titanic* and the White Star Line, and the American Civil War (2011). National Museums Liverpool have recently been awarded £57m for the redevelopment of both museums.⁹

Under threat or unknown: Where UNESCO’S withdrawal of its awarded World Heritage Status derived largely from the Liverpool Waters and Everton stadium waterfront projects, there is now both significantly less protection for the historical environment, and less restriction on the scope, scale and character of future planning developments. Despite the ongoing commitment of Liverpool City Council and related parties to heritage conservation and regeneration in the docklands, Liverpool still has 22 listed buildings or Conservation Areas on HE’s Heritage at Risk Register (2021), including Stanley Dock recorded as ‘*improving significantly*’ but still in ‘*very bad condition*’ and Duke Street, both proximate to the waterfront. The substantial concern for the

⁹ <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/winners-of-57m-liverpool-museums-revamp-announced/> (Accessed 27/07/22)



condition of Liverpool's heritage assets in local media, most recently responding to confirmation of planning permissions for the construction of a 330-home Central Docks residential high-rise complex, part of Peel L&P's Liverpool Waters project.¹⁰ Liverpool City Council's Tall Buildings Supplementary Planning Document has determined to 'protect and enhance heritage assets, their settings and views' (3.7), while identifying locations with:

'...a theoretical potential to accommodate tall buildings...[and where] a proposed tall building is meaningful and makes a positive contribution to Liverpool's regeneration, is proportionate with its height to its context, responds appropriately to local character, and addresses all sensitive aspects in the city' (3.8)¹¹

Despite this sensitivity, HE continues to emphasise in relation to the Duke Street Conservation Area that,

'...care must be taken to ensure that the setting of the warehouse and its place in the local hierarchy of buildings have been respected: the height, massing and location on plot of the proposed new development are vital ingredients of successful schemes.'¹²

Threats and opportunities:

Liverpool Docks appears to be at a point of fundamental importance in its future development, carrying both significant threat to its historic environment and assets, and substantial opportunity for the alignment of interested parties to a common object of large-scale redevelopment and regeneration, sensitive to the demands of local industries and global markets. It would also be sensitive to the amplification of evocative and powerful historical associations with local, global and social significance, such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, early modern global commerce and the industrial revolution. The successful regeneration of warehouses into residential or entertainment complexes such as Stanley Dock's northern warehouse and the Titanic Hotel, for instance, could be aligned with Liverpool City Council's plans to remove Stanley Dock from the Heritage at Risk register, and HE's expressed interest in the conservation of historic warehouses.¹³ There must also be peripheral engagement with Natural England, who have recorded stakeholder concerns for increasing recreational pressure derived from rapid waterfront developments across the estuary including Liverpool waterfront, and:

"Increasing development pressure around the Mersey Estuary, for example the proposed airport expansion (Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan to 2050) ...has the associated concerns for squeeze on available habitats for birds"¹⁴

There appears to be a high degree of local investment and communal identity in the historic docks, likely a legacy of the city's earlier campaign for UNESCO status, with institutions local higher education such as the University of Liverpool, local heritage societies and tourist tours and retailers making use of the waterside facilities. Liverpool City Council's Tall Buildings Policy does refer to community and heritage interests in relation to the selection of appropriate sites for high-rise constructions, namely, HE and the Merseyside Civic Society.¹⁵

¹⁰ <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/romal-wins-appeal-over-100m-liverpool-waters-scheme/> (Accessed 27/07/22)

¹¹ Liverpool City Council, 'Tall Buildings Supplementary Planning Document – Draft for Public Consultation' (2022), 66.

¹² <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/1122> (Accessed 27/07/22)

¹³ Colum Giles and Bob Hawkins, 'Storehouses of Empire: Liverpool's historic warehouses' (2004)

¹⁴ 'Mersey Estuary SPA Factsheet' (2016)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/851110/Mersey Estuary SPA Factsheet.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/851110/Mersey_Estuary_SPA_Factsheet.pdf) (Accessed 27/07/22)

¹⁵ 'Tall Buildings', 3.15.



HE has released a number of reports investigating certain aspects of Liverpool's historic environment which could form the basis for further developments, such as guided walks, public exhibitions and updated information boards. For instance, 'Read the Signs – Street Names in Liverpool Connected to the Trade in Enslaved Africans' and its associated 'Read the Signs' exhibition and pamphlet (2008) could be instituted in relation to Liverpool's place in histories of enslavement and abolition, global trade and commerce, and local stories of civic development and industry.¹⁶

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CITIZAN, 'Liverpool Bay: Docks, Liverbirds and Beatles'

Historic England, 'Read the Signs – street names in Liverpool connected to the trade of enslaved Africans' (2008)

National Museums Liverpool, 'Liverpool and the American Civil War'

¹⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/the-slave-trade-and-abolition/read-the-signs/> (Accessed 27/07/22)