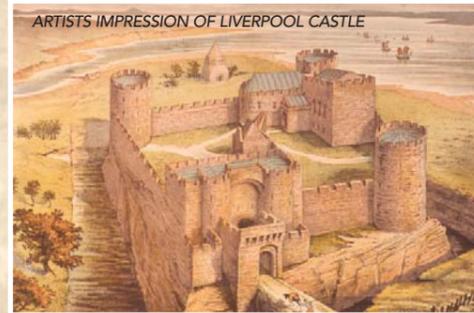
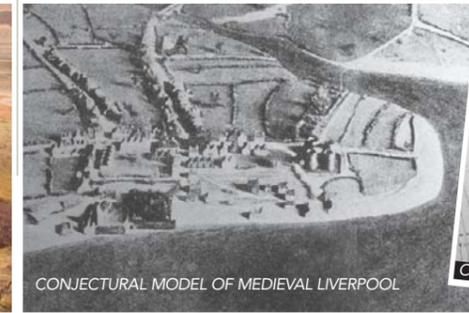


CONJECTURAL VIEW OF LIVERPOOL CASTLE CUSTOM HOUSE IN THE LATE 17TH CENTURY



ARTISTS IMPRESSION OF LIVERPOOL CASTLE



CONJECTURAL MODEL OF MEDIEVAL LIVERPOOL



CONJECTURAL MAP OF LIVERPOOL 1668 (IRVINES)

THE RISE OF THE PORT OF LIVERPOOL

by **Mike Royden** (Liverpool Historian)

Liverpool was many hundreds of years from becoming the city it is now. Its rise to prominence was primarily due to its Dock system and the ability of the port to enable ongoing trade around the world. Mike Royden is a noted Liverpool Historian and he begins the tale of Liverpool's Maritime, and also the city's, rise to world importance, right back at the start of the city's early days when all we had to offer was a pool!

When looking at the quaintly peaceful illustrations of the pool, where water gently lapped around sailing ships tied up below the castle, it is hard to imagine that this 17th Century sheltered fishing XE "fishing" hamlet would give birth to one of the greatest ports in the world. It just needed a kick start to get it going. Yet there had been little growth in the town from the time of the borough's foundation in 1207 to the mid-seventeenth century. Liverpool, as was the case in its surrounding townships, was too dependent on agriculture and its products for its lively-hood, though there was always fishing XE "fishing" and some maritime trade. The same

seven streets in their medieval 'H-plan' layout (see pages 8 & 9) continued to appear in the taxation lists, and even as late as 1660 there were only around 190 houses covering these main thoroughfares. Throughout much of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Liverpool was in a state of economic hardship, even decay. The population was ravaged by disease in the 1540s and '50s and a storm did serious damage to the haven in 1561. By 1571 Rauff Sekerston, M.P. sent a petition – clearly a cry of help – to Elizabeth I from the "decayed town of Liverpoole", reminding her what the town had and what her benefits were,

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FISHING VILLAGE

'Liverpoole is your owne towne. Your majestie hath a castell and two chantries...the taxes from the land...tax from the ferry and the two wind-mills, the customs tax of the port, a good haven (the pool), and all the whole towne and the comodities thereof is your majesties. For your own sake suffre us not utterlie to be caste awaye in your graces tyme but relief us like a mother' (taken from the Liverpool Town Books)

But little help came, and Elizabeth continued to refuse a new charter which would have granted further freedoms for the people of Liverpool. However, towards the end of the century she did grant letters of marque and privateering statues to Liverpool sailors which, despite being licensed piracy, brought a great improvement to the local economy. A key development came in 1647 when Liverpool was made a free and independent port, no longer subject to the Port of Chester, which was at that time the dominant port in the North West.

Rapid expansion was now encouraged and in the 1660s and 1670s the principal landowners laid out several new streets, including Lord Street, Moor Street, Fenwick Street, Red Cross Street and St. James's Street. The town's growing status was reflected in many of the new buildings constructed during the period, such as the Town Hall XE "Town Hall" (1673-4) Bluecoat School XE "Bluecoat School" (1721), the Custom House (1721), and the Churches of St.Peter's (1704) and St.George's (1734). Such growth was matched by the sweeping away of many

of the buildings which had served the town since the medieval period, notably the Castle XE "Castle", the Crosse Hall, the Townsend Mill and the old Tithe Barn. The ancient chapel of St.Mary del Quay lasted until 1814 and the Tower of Liverpool was demolished four years later.

The old Pool, which had acted as a magnet to King John's advisors in 1207, the early settlers, and generations of merchants and seafarers (not forgetting a mythical bird), was now being reclaimed by the end of the seventeenth century, although not totally, as it would provide the site for the towns' first wet dock. This was designed by Thomas Steers XE "Thomas Steers" and opened in 1715 (you can still view this dock today through the wholly inadequate glass panel below the large steps in Liverpool One). The Pool, now known as the 'Common Sewer', had become an eyesore; it was in need of dredging to make it fully navigable and was probably empty when at low water. A programme of draining and dumping of earth and rubbish was mounted to create valuable building land on the site. The opportunity to develop the area had been assisted in 1671 when the Corporation secured rights to the fore-

shore of the Pool and other privileges from the lord of the Borough, Lord Molyneux XE "Molyneux". In return, he was granted freedom to build a bridge across the Pool from Liverpool Heath to his new street in Castle XE "Castle" Hey (i.e. "Lord" Street. The site of the bridge today is where Lord Street and Church Street meet).

Industry in Liverpool was relatively minor until the late seventeenth century. Various medieval and post-medieval documents mention brewers, goldsmiths, weavers and smiths, but these were mainly essential crafts to support the local community, as was milling, which was probably the largest of all the industries. A respectable trade in pottery manufactured from local clays also continued throughout the post-medieval period. Certain industries expanded as a result of growing trade links with Ireland and the colonies, from which the latter led to the establishment of a local sugar refinery in the 1670s. By the eighteenth century, glass manufacture, iron-working, clock and watch-making and rope manufacture were all well established.

During the medieval and post medieval period there was a thriving fishing XE "fishing" industry in the water-side coves and inlets of the Mersey. In the late seventeenth century, the fisheries had become so extensive that they had become a hindrance to navigation. In 1697, Thomas Patten of Warrington, wishing to make the Mersey navigable to Manchester, believed the river to be over-fished and proposed to suppress the offenders. He wrote to Richard Norris of Speke XE "Speke" Hall to complain about the fisheries between his land and Garston XE "Garston" Dale,

'You very well know the mischiefs that are done in the River Mercy, or at least have frequently heard what vast numbers of salmon trouts are taken, so as to supply all the country and market townes for twenty

miles around; and when the country is cloyed, or when they cannot get sale for them, they give them to their swine. Your brother did formerly take three or four salmon a week at a fishing XE "fishing", in or near Speke XE "Speke"; but of late hath taken very few or none, of which he hath complained to me, and he imputes this loss to the destruction of the fry'.

How difficult today to imagine that there were once so many salmon at Garston XE "Garston" that they were fed to pigs!

So by the end of the seventeenth century, the small fishing port of Liverpoole was beginning to expand, but the kick start had yet to take effect and that was to be as a result of a discovery made in Cheshire in the 1670s.

To be continued...

Mike Royden's latest book 'Tracing Your Liverpool Ancestors' A Guide for Family and Local Historians has just been published by Pen & Sword, price £11.99 and is available in local bookshops. It can also be ordered online through his Local History website at www.roydenhistory.co.uk