

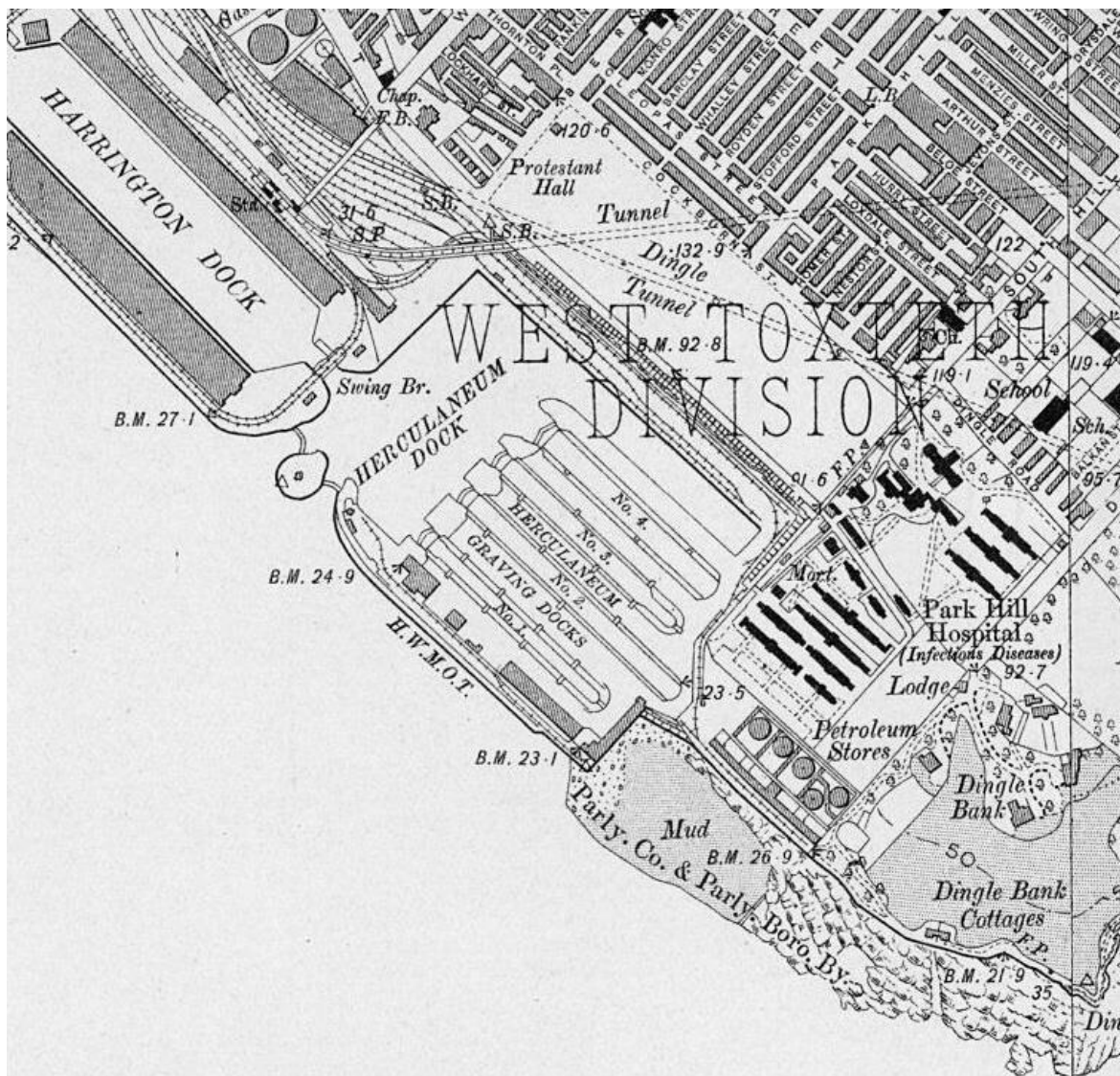
Audlem and District History Society

History Shorts 57 by Pauline Griffiths

Herculaneum dock, Liverpool

I grew up in South Liverpool down by the docks. If you came out of our house and looked left, you would immediately see the River Mersey and beyond that the Wirral and on a clear day, you could see Moel Famau and Snowdonia.

Our street was on a patch of land called the Shorefields because up until our houses were built, that's exactly what they were. Prior to the Herculaneum dock being built in 1866, to accommodate the expansion of the South Docks system to meet the needs of the Industrial Revolution, the land was used for farming. The area is called the Dingle and it resides within the parish of Toxteth, once a royal hunting park but more synonymous nowadays with the Toxteth riots of 1981.



OS Series 1888 - 1913, Six Inch Maps. Date: 1 January 1900
Reproduced by courtesy of the National Library of Scotland

It had a pottery on the site of the dock, called Herculaneum Pottery and interestingly, it employed potters from Stoke on Trent because those Potters knew how to throw a good pot or two! And of course, we didn't have a clue!



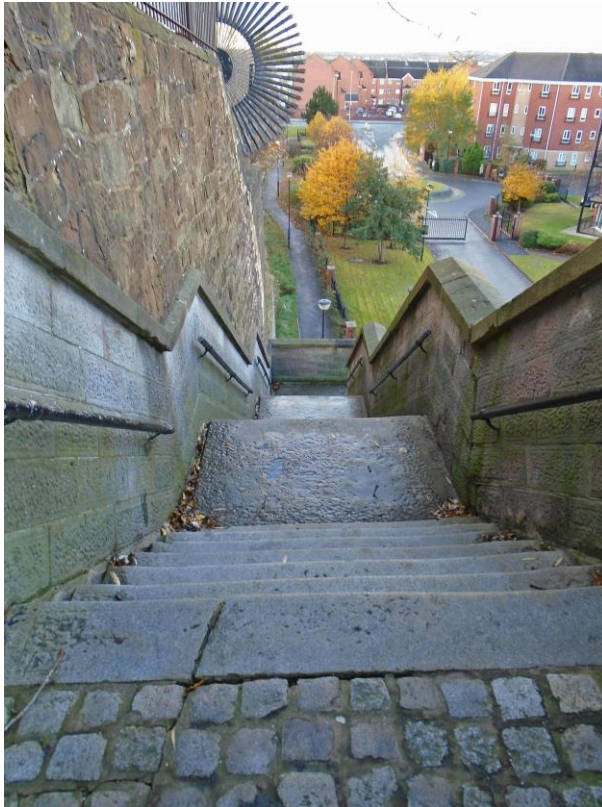
*Herculaneum pottery. **Left** Jug in the Art Institute of Chicago (Sailko CC BY 3.0)
Right. Stoneware coffeepot, c1800-1810. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. (CC BY-SA 3.0)*

It has been difficult to ascertain exactly when our streets (made famous by the 1980s sitcom 'Bread' and the Boswell family) were built but my guess is early 20th century. They are working class houses, a block of a dozen or so streets and terraced with back passageways.



As a kid, I used to love going 'down to the bottom' and peer over the railings to watch the boats unloading their cargoes into the wagons and being railed away. Coal was the main product discharged. Most coal that came into Liverpool was exported but the coal discharged in our dock was likely to have been for domestic use as it was loaded into railway wagons. There were also plenty of warehouses on the dock.

Pauline, aged about five, at the railings!



Being a naughty kid, I always wanted to be where I shouldn't so I would always try and get on the dock myself by using the dockers' steps. These always seemed so steep and plentiful and frankly, quite daunting for a child. They were intended to be that way as the docks operated on a casual 'first come, first served' basis and the steps facilitated the queue for labour. There was some fine architecture at the bottom of those steps, including watering troughs for horses and smaller bowls for dogs! This is where my adventure ultimately finished ... there was a guard at the bottom, who would send me packing!

*Herculaneum steps
(Rodhullandemu CC BY-SA 3.0)*

My family had settled in this area of Liverpool to take advantage of the expansion of the docks into South Liverpool. The Dingle saw a mass influx of immigrants from elsewhere and it was predominantly known as the Welsh area of Liverpool due to its abundance of Welsh chapels. My family originated from mid-Wales where they were blacksmiths. They came to shoe the horses on the Dock road, quickly learned English and established businesses on the South Docks. It became a Protestant enclave, although Catholics also settled here after the Irish potato famine immigration to Liverpool. The Herculaneum dock must have been very important in its day as it had its own station on the Overhead Railway which originated in the North Docks and terminated in the Dingle. It closed in 1956.



Overhead Railway electric train emerges from Dingle station tunnel with the Shorefields streets above. (Photo source unknown)

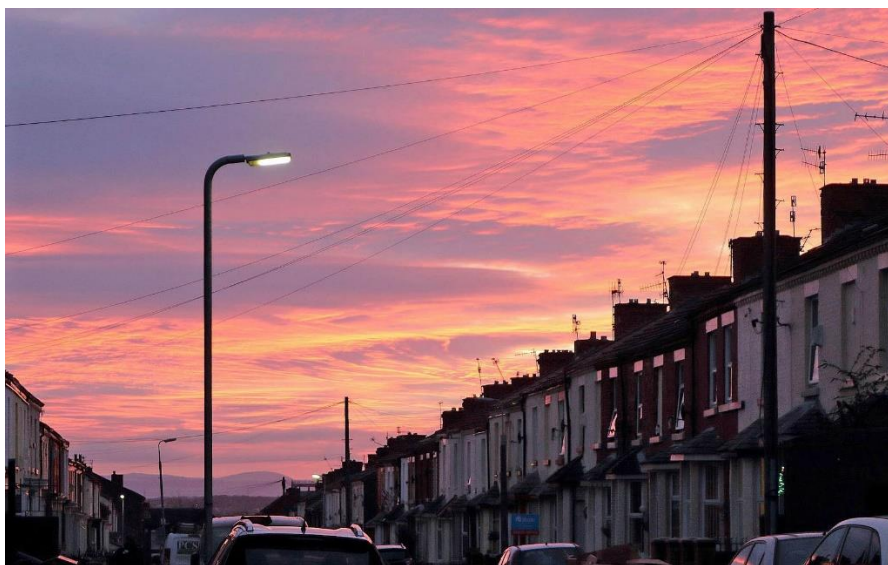
Joining the Common Market and the EU meant that Liverpool was on the wrong side of the country and the port of Liverpool went into a steep decline. We all remember the dockers' strikes and the impact of the economic stagnation on the city's fortunes.

Sadly, the Herculaneum dock had had its day ... in the 1970s, it stood idle, silting up fast while it awaited its fate. The dock finally closed in 1972. The Liverpool Garden Festival of 1984 rejuvenated the area spectacularly for a while but then faded away again for lack of funds. In 2004, the dock was bought by David McClean homes and City Quay homes are now built on it.



*Housing on the site of the former Graving Dock No. 4 of Herculaneum Dock.
(Phil Nash, Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 & GFDL)*

The railings at the bottom of 'our street' still remain and Moel Famau can still be seen on a clear day. The noises from the dock and the infamous Mersey foghorn are now long gone but my fond memories of both live on.



View of Moel Famau down Moses Street, Dingle. (Phil Nash CC BY-SA 4.0 & GFDL)