

A Speedy History

Transport in Liverpool



1207-1715 **Boats and Bogs**



Liverpool in 1680, by an unknown artist. Part of the Merseyside Maritime Museum's collections.

Ships have crossed the River Mersey for centuries and the famous ferry service was begun by the monks of Birkenhead Priory by 1150, before Liverpool had even been founded. When Liverpool was founded in 1207 the easiest way to get to the small town was still by sailing ship. At this time ships from the UK, Ireland, and France brought people and goods in to the growing town. Larger ships would harbour in the River Mersey and the 'Pool' of Liverpool and smaller vessels called lighters would ferry goods and people to the shoreline.

Much of Liverpool was surrounded by boggy marshland which made overland road travel by coach difficult and slow. Horse-drawn coaches in the 1700s would travel at top speeds of 8 miles per hour and the trip to London would take three full days.

Increased trade with America in the late 1600s led to the merchants of Liverpool to seek a drastic new technological advance to keep ships and goods safe whilst visiting the Port of Liverpool.

1715-1830 **A World First**



Prospect of Liverpool (cropped), 1725, by an unknown artist.
Part of the Merseyside Maritime Museum's collections.

On 31 August 1715 Liverpool opened the world's first commercial enclosed wet dock, a revolutionary new piece of engineering designed to protect ships visiting the port. Ships could offload and load cargo in record time and before long ships from all around the world brought their goods to Liverpool. London, Bristol, and Chester lost significant amounts of trade as a result. More docks were built and within a century Liverpool was connected by canal to Leeds and much of the rapidly industrialising North.

A stagecoach began to operate between Liverpool and Manchester in 1757 but was still slow and cumbersome due to the local geography and areas around Warrington were still impassable in carriages. Travel to Manchester on these carriages took a full day and a team of 6-8 horses to pull coaches across an unforgiving landscape.

1819-1830 **The Steam Revolution**



Lion Locomotive, built in 1838.
Part of the Museum of Liverpool's collections.

In 1819 the SS Savannah, the first steamship to conduct a trans-Atlantic crossing, came in to the Port of Liverpool. It stayed in port for 25 days and in that time thousands of people came to visit the technological marvel. It would be many years before steamships ruled the waves but when they did more trade than ever flowed in to the Port of Liverpool.

On 15 September 1830 the world's first timetabled passenger railway opened between Liverpool and Manchester. This technological advance revolutionised transport of people and goods between the Port of Liverpool and the industrial heartlands of the North. Liverpool continued to grow and the goods transported along the railway caused local towns and communities to grow too. Before long railways were stretching across the planet.

1869 and 1897 **Trams**



Liverpool's last tram leaves service in 1957.
Photograph by Harold Douglas Avington.
Part of the Museum of Liverpool's collections.

On 1 November 1869 horse-drawn trams began to operate a circular route around the city centre and other lines took passengers to Walton and Dingle. Soon the track was extended further and by 1875 the Liverpool Tramways Company operated 2,894 horses and 207 tramcars in the city.

The line began to be electrified in the late 1800s. By the early 1900s over 100 million passengers were using the fully electrified service each year.

After the Second World War buses began to replace trams in the city and tram routes began to close in Liverpool from 1947. The last tram in Liverpool pulled in to a depot at Bowring Park on 14 September 1957 and the lines fell silent.

1893 **An Electrical Marvel**



The Liverpool Overhead Railway approaching James Street Station, by J. D. Gomersall.
Part of the Museum of Liverpool's collections.

On 6 March 1893 the Liverpool Overhead Railway opened, the world's first electric elevated line. It ran from Dingle to Seaforth along the line of Liverpool's docks and at its height it carried 20 million passengers every year. The UK's first railway escalator was installed on the line in 1901 to carry passengers up to the platform at Seaforth Sands.

The line experienced heavy bombing during the Second World War and went in to decline. The last trains ran on the line on 30 December 1956 and the Liverpool Overhead Railway was almost entirely demolished by late 1958.

1933 and 1934 **Over and Under**



Detail of photograph showing the first cars to enter the Queensway Tunnel after the opening ceremony. Part of the Stewart Bale Collection, Merseyside Maritime Museum.

In 1933 an airport was opened in South Liverpool and offered services to London and Ireland. During the Second World War the airport was used by the RAF, returning to civilian use after the war and by 1948 over 75,000 passengers were flying out of Speke Airport.

Today Liverpool's John Lennon airport carries almost 5million passengers yearly.

On 18 July 1934 the Queensway Tunnel was opened by George V, connecting Liverpool and Birkenhead by road. At the time it was opened it was the longest road tunnel in the world and the opening ceremony was watched by 200,000 people.

1960s and 70s **The Rise of the Car**



The first Ford Anglia comes off the production line at Halewood, 1963. Part of the Museum of Liverpool's collections.

On 2 October 1963 Ford Motor Company opened a plant at Halewood, building the Ford Anglia on Merseyside. This was the first mass-produced car made in Merseyside. The first Ford Anglia was offered as a prize in the Liverpool Echo. The winner could not drive and the car was bought back by Ford and later gifted to the museum. Today the plant is owned by Jaguar Land Rover and employs around 4000 people.

In the early 1970s construction on the M62 began, linking Liverpool by motorway for the first time with Manchester and Yorkshire.

For more information about our land transport collections at the Museum of Liverpool please look at our online collection pages here-

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/collections/transport/>

You may also wish to book on our Transport Through Time school session here-

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/schools-and-groups/workshops/transport-through-time.aspx>