

John Hinchliffe

## Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site: Lessons for the conservation and management of port cities

ALL YOU NEED IS DOCKS – The long and winding road to the conservation of Liverpool’s historic port city

Sea ports are an essential component in the broad cultural heritage of humanity. They are a pre-requisite of international civilisation, as they are the interface between land and sea, where goods and people are transferred and where global trading links are anchored.

By necessity, seaports must have docks where ships can moor and transfer their cargo. Some ports have natural sheltered deep water and can operate successfully using simple quays or piers but others, such as Liverpool, have a high tidal range and can only operate successfully by constructing enclosed wet docks to maintain a constant water level adjacent to the quays.

### Brief History of Liverpool

Liverpool was founded by King John in 1207, as a port from which to sail to Ireland and Wales, but few noteworthy developments occurred there in the first 500 years! A map of 1577 shows that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the nearby Chester on the River Dee was busier than Liverpool on the River Mersey. Liverpool’s growth as a port was hampered by the high tidal range of the river and the lack of protected moorings for ships.

However, in 1715 the Town Council opened the world’s first commercial enclosed wet dock (which later became known as Old Dock), constructed within an infilled tidal pool, and Liverpool began its rise to become one of the greatest international port cities.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Liverpool had constructed a further five enclosed docks along the tidal margins. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, seven miles of enclosed docks had been completed in a continuous line along the east bank of the river. It was a remarkable achievement of civil engineering and municipal enterprise.



Figure 1: Liverpool 1682

The tangible evidence of Liverpool’s global significance as an international seaport survives in many forms, especially in its surviving docks and warehouses. Liverpool has examples of many types of warehouses which demonstrate innovation and the evolution of warehouses as a building typology:

1. Warehouses in merchants’ houses
2. Warehouses attached to merchants’ houses
3. Warehouses detached from merchants’ houses
4. Early fireproof warehouses
5. Bonded Warehouses
6. Monumental dockside warehouses
7. Inland warehouses combined with showrooms
8. Specialist warehouses

Liverpool’s spirit of place is also a product of its intangible heritage: the memories and echoes of the lives of its dock



Figure 2: Old Dock



Figure 3: Waterloo Warehouse

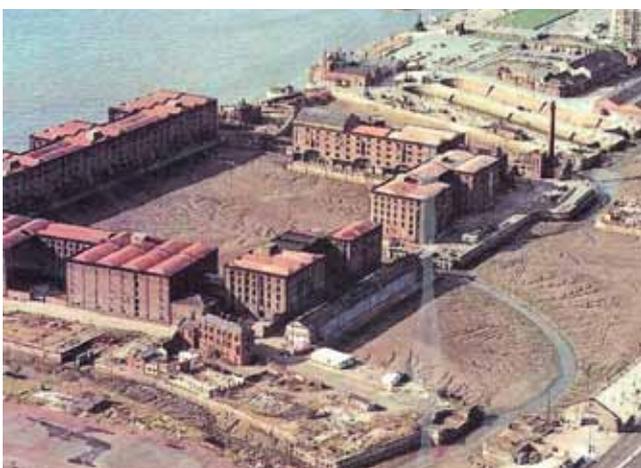
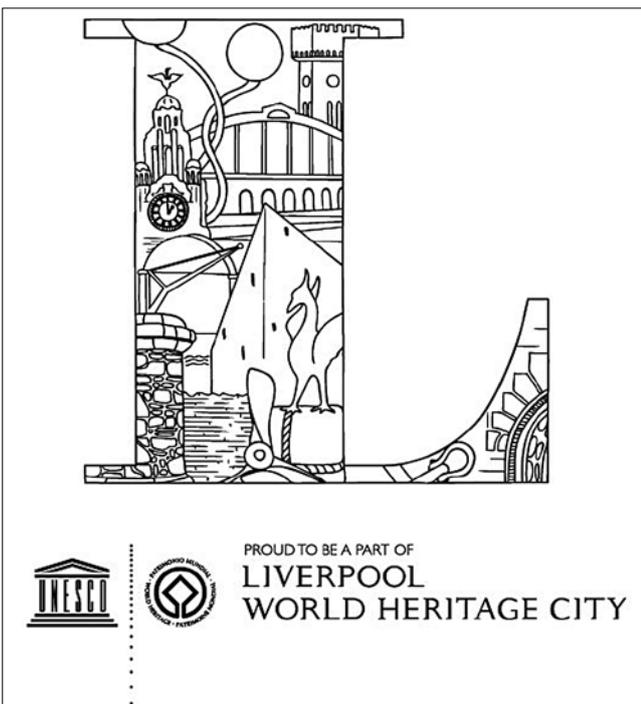


Figure 4: Albert Dock circa 1980, prior to comprehensive restoration

Figure 5: Branding of WHS to enable business to show pride in the status



workers, merchants and sailors and the impacts on the millions of emigrants and enslaved Africans whose lives were transformed by their trans-Atlantic journeys on Liverpool-owned ships.

Liverpool’s economic decline and population loss during the 20<sup>th</sup> century created a desperate need for urban regeneration and for the city to find a new identity and purpose. Liverpool’s renaissance has been based on realising the communal, economic, townscape and historic value of its port heritage, as a unique and irreplaceable resource. The seed pearl of Liverpool’s regeneration began the 1980’s when the Albert Dock Warehouses were saved, conserved and converted into a mix of new uses, accessible to the public. The work of revitalising Liverpool’s port heritage has continued since that time and, although much of the waterfront has been rejuvenated, it is still “work in progress”. In the course of conserving, managing and regenerating the vast maritime heritage of Liverpool over the last thirty years, many lessons have been learnt, which could usefully be studied by other port cities. Many of these lessons will be obvious to port historians and conservationists but the benefit of stating the obvious is the avoidance of doubt!

**The Lessons from Liverpool:**

*Lesson 1 – Be proud of your maritime heritage – encourage it to be valued*

The citizens of Liverpool are traditionally proud of their maritime heritage but years of economic and social problems in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century led to the fading of the communal memory of the city’s past glories. Liverpool City Council and its partners, notably English Heritage, foresaw that if Liverpool could become a World Heritage Site (WHS), this international recognition would lead to a return of civic pride in the city and could be an inspiration for heritage-led regeneration. Verification of Liverpool’s claim of the global significance of its docks was provided by Dr Ray Bondin (ICOMOS Assessor) who confirmed in 2003 that Liverpool has “The biggest and most complete system of historic docks in the world.” Following much hard work by many people, the international significance of the port and city of Liverpool was recognized by UNESCO in 2004, when its historic waterfront, commercial centre and cultural quarter were inscribed onto the World Heritage list as “the supreme example of a commercial port of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.”

Building owners in Liverpool’s WHS are now displaying pride in the WHS status, through a new branding initiative which encourages them to put up window stickers to proclaim “Proud to be part of Liverpool World Heritage City”.

*Lesson 2 – Celebrate and enjoy your maritime heritage – make the most of the “soft values”*

Liverpool City Council capitalizes on Liverpool’s maritime heritage by organizing regular events such as river festivals, Tall Ships Races and the *On The Waterfront* festivals, which use the historic port as a venue and a backdrop. Spectacular films of the events are sometimes made available



Figure 6: Sound and light projection at the On The Waterfront Festival 2011



Figure 7: The six areas of distinctive townscape character of Liverpool's World Heritage Site

online so that even those who cannot attend can enjoy the events. (See the unmissable clips from 2011 at: <http://vimeo.com/26827092> and <http://vimeo.com/26884619>.) Such events harness local pride but also contribute to the visitor economy, with hundreds of thousands of visitors.

This lesson is part of the wider concept promoted by Eric van Hooydonk in his *Soft Values of Seaports*. He rightly advocates that the public will show greater support and appreciation of operational seaports if full advantage is taken of the opportunities offered by those ports in connection with their heritage, nature, education, art and employment.

*Lesson 3 – Understand the wider urban landscape of your port city – Undertake detailed studies of the urban fabric and landscape*

As part of Liverpool's nomination process to become a WHS, the candidate site was assessed and subsequently divided into six areas of distinct townscape character, which had evolved as a result of different historic uses:

1. The Pier Head – the visual and spiritual focal point of the city
2. Albert Dock Conservation Area – an ensemble of docks and warehouses south of the Pier Head

3. Stanley Dock Conservation Area – an ensemble of docks and warehouses north of the Pier Head
4. Castle Street Commercial Centre – the palaces of commerce
5. The William Brown Street Cultural Quarter – Liverpool's historic expression of its interest cultural values
6. Lower Duke Street Merchants Quarter – early inland warehouses and merchants' houses

The identification of these six areas and their morphology assisted in the proper description, understanding and planning for those historic "quarters" of the city, which still have different characteristics of form and function.

*Lesson 4 – Understand the port city's historic and intangible significance*

UNESCO considers that Liverpool has *Outstanding Universal Value* because Liverpool:

1. Played a leading role in the development of dock construction, port management and international trading systems in the 18th and 19th centuries
2. The buildings and structures of the port and the city are an exceptional testimony to mercantile culture.

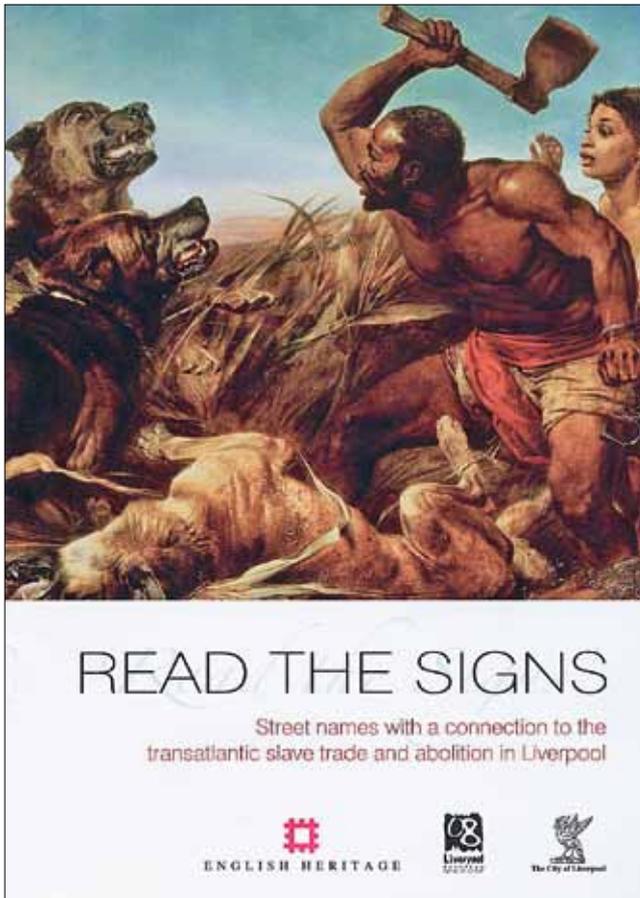


Figure 8: Identify intangible heritage of the port

3. Liverpool played a major role in influencing globally significant demographic changes in the 18th and 19th centuries, through: a) its involvement in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and b) its involvement as the leading port of mass European emigration to the New World.

Visitors come to Liverpool to trace their *Genealogical Roots* and the *Geographical Routes* of their ancestors!

It is important to encourage understanding and interpretation of historic and intangible heritage, especially through events, displays, museums and publications as well as through urban planning and building conservation.

*Lesson 5 – Ensure that better understanding of port heritage leads to informed conservation and better planning*

English Heritage was the lead partner in the *Historic Environment of Liverpool Project* (HELP) from 2001 until 2010 which was established to encourage better understanding, management and celebration of the city’s extraordinary cultural heritage.

HELP was an umbrella programme which:

1. Encouraged partnership working of major public sector organisations
2. Public engagement and
3. Brought together around 15 interlinked projects.

HELP was grouped into three key themes:

1. Investigation and Characterisation
2. Managing the Historic Environment
3. Access and Celebration of cultural heritage

A key output of the project was the publication of a series of popular books on Informed Conservation, which has enhanced knowledge and enabled more informed planning decisions.

The improved knowledge, management and celebration of the historic environment have enabled better planning decisions to be made.

*Lesson 6 – Get statutory protection for historic port structures*

A survey of all buildings in the WHS in 2005 demonstrated that many of the unlisted buildings were of significant architectural or historic interest but, because they were not listed, did not benefit from full legal protection. The HELP Programme resulted in a subsequent review of listed buildings within the WHS and the addition of many historic port buildings on to the statutory list, such as inland warehouses and the early fireproof warehouse at Vulcan Street/ Waterloo Road.

*Lesson 7 – The public are attracted to mixed uses in historic buildings with a waterside setting*

In the early 1980s, much of Liverpool’s historic port was abandoned, dis-used and derelict. This was a symptom of industrial obsolescence and the future for the historic port looked bleak. The Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC) took a massive leap of faith to invest much public money into the restoration and creative re-use of several historic docks and warehouses on the premise that the public are attracted to mixed uses in historic buildings with a waterside setting. The MDC was proved right as the restoration of the Albert Dock in particular has been an outstanding success. Its restoration was undertaken in accordance with clear conservation principles. It annually attracts over 4 million visitors a year and is an international icon of heritage-led regeneration.

*Lesson 8 – Public authorities should deliver regeneration of under-used port heritage by any means necessary*

Public authorities should deliver regeneration of disused historic ports *by any means necessary*, using a wide range of planning and conservation tools:

1. Regeneration frameworks – such as Liverpool Vision’s Strategic Regeneration Framework, which established the principle of reclaiming the waterfront
2. Planning policies – such as those in Liverpool’s Unitary Development Plan which established regeneration and conservation policies
3. Management Plans – such as the Liverpool WHS Management which has the vision for the future that “The

organisations and people responsible for the management of the World Heritage Site are committed to ensuring that *Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City* will be managed as an exemplary demonstration of sustainable development and heritage-led regeneration.”

4. Detailed Planning guidance – such as the Liverpool WHS Supplementary Planning Document (2009) which addresses the key planning, regeneration and conservation issues which affect the WHS and clarifies the policies for the benefit of developers, building owners and decision-makers
5. Public Funding – a cocktail of funding from a variety of sources has transformed much of Liverpool’s port heritage
6. Private Sector – the private sector of developers and land-owners have primary responsibility for maintaining and enhancing their land and buildings and a constructive working relationship is required so that mutually shared objectives can be agreed and achieved

The establishment of a consensual management framework for port heritage is the most important requirement.

*Lesson 9 – Carry out a comprehensive townscape analysis to identify key planning and conservation issues*

The key planning and conservation issues will vary between port cities and so solutions or policies from elsewhere cannot necessarily be imported from elsewhere. It will always be necessary to undertake a comprehensive planning and townscape analysis to establish key issues and policies. As a pre-requisite of preparing the Liverpool WHS Supplementary Planning Document, an Evidential Report was produced, which formed a base-line of townscape information. The Evidential Report identified that the key planning and conservation issues for Liverpool included:

1. The need for design guidance
2. The need for policies for tall buildings
3. Building heights in the WHS
4. The protection of views
5. The future of the redundant historic water-spaces.
6. The replacement of existing buildings
7. The re-use of Historic Buildings
8. The Dock Wall
9. Archaeology
10. Conservation standards
11. The Liverpool Waters site

It is also essential that developers for developers undertake their own detailed view analysis and heritage impact analysis to assess the impact of proposed development on the historic port.

*Lesson 10 – Identify buildings that make a negative contribution to the historic urban landscape and encourage their remodelling or removal/replacement*

Not all buildings within Liverpool’s historic port are heritage assets or contribute to the outstanding universal value

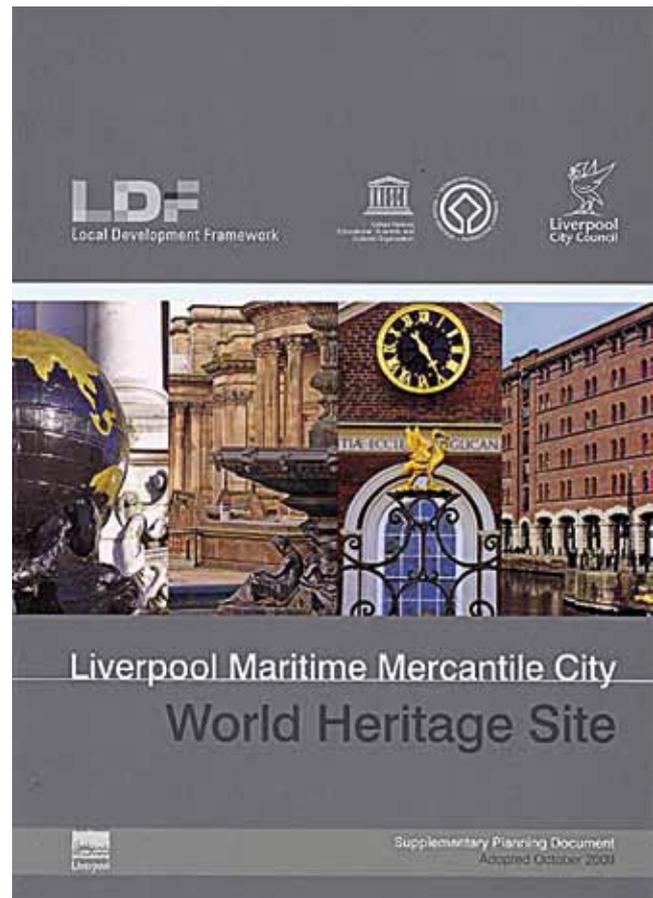


Figure 9: Produce detailed planning guidance for development, regeneration and conservation

of the WHS. Liverpool City Council commissioned a study to identify those building which make a neutral or negative contribution to the historic urban landscape. It then confirmed that it would not object in principle to their remodeling or demolition and replacement.

## Conclusions

1. The conservation and management of Liverpool’s port heritage are based upon the principle of the “virtuous circle of cultural heritage”  
Improved Understanding of Cultural Heritage results in More Enjoyment of Cultural Heritage, which results in Greater Valuing of Cultural Heritage, which results in Better Caring for Cultural Heritage which results in and Improved Understanding of Cultural Heritage and so the circle goes on!
2. The public authorities in Liverpool are always keen to learn and share best practice in the conservation and management of its cultural heritage. From 2008 until 2011, Liverpool was a member of URBACT’s HerO (Heritage as Opportunity) Project, which was a European networking project to develop sustainable strategies for living historic cities, including the port cities of Naples and Valletta. The outputs of the HerO Project should be of interest to everyone who is responsible for the conservation

and management of historic cities. Those outputs include a paper on *The Untapped Potential of Cultural Heritage* and a guidebook on how to prepare Integrated Cultural Heritage Management Plans.

3. All historic ports and all historic cities are unique, but many have common characteristics and face similar challenges. Liverpool does not claim to have all the answers nor to have achieved perfect solutions and it still has many challenges ahead. UNESCO welcomed Liverpool as case study in the conservation of port heritage *in progress* and so it is pleased to share its experiences and the lessons it has learnt to provide a communal reservoir of knowledge for other port cities to study and benefit from.

For further information, visit [www.liverpoolworldheritage.com](http://www.liverpoolworldheritage.com) and [www.urbact.eu/hero](http://www.urbact.eu/hero) or contact [jnshinchliffe@gmail.com](mailto:jnshinchliffe@gmail.com)

## Abstract

### **Welterbestätte Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City: Lehren für die Erhaltung und Bewirtschaftung von Hafenstädten**

**ALL YOU NEED IS DOCKS – Der steinige Weg hin zur Bewahrung von Liverpools historischem Hafenviertel**

Seehäfen stellen im umfassenden kulturellen Erbe der Menschheit eine essenzielle Komponente dar. Sie sind Voraussetzung für eine international ausgerichtete Zivilisation, denn sie bilden die Schnittstelle zwischen Land und Meer, über die Güter und Menschen überführt werden und an der weltweite Handelsbeziehungen ihre Verankerung haben.

Die internationale Bedeutung des Hafens und der Stadt Liverpool wurde von der UNESCO im Jahr 2004 anerkannt, als das historische Hafenviertel und Handelszentrum als „herausragendes Beispiel eines Handelshafens des 18., 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts“ in die Liste der Weltkulturerbestätten aufgenommen wurde.

Der Vortrag gibt einen kurzen Abriss der Geschichte Liverpools, von der Eröffnung des weltweit ersten Schwimmdocks 1715 bis hin zum Status der Stadt als eine der großen Hafenstädte der Welt am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts. Der Niedergang im Verlauf des 20. Jahrhunderts machte eine tiefgreifende Erneuerung der Stadt erforderlich. Sie musste eine neue Identität und Bestimmung finden. Die Wiedergeburt Liverpools basierte auf der Realisierung des kommunalen, wirtschaftlichen, stadtlandschaftlichen und historischen Werts seines Hafens. Er stellt ein einzigartiges und nicht zu ersetzendes Kapital dar.

Die Erneuerung Liverpools begann in den 1980er Jahren, als die Lagerhäuser des Albert Docks gerettet, erhalten, einer Reihe neuer Verwendungen zugeführt und für die Öffent-

lichkeit zugänglich gemacht wurden. Die Wiederbelebung des Hafens wurde seitdem fortgeführt. Und obwohl ein großer Teil des Gebiets verjüngt wurde, ist vieles immer noch „im Bau“. Im Verlauf der Erhaltung, Bewirtschaftung und Erneuerung des riesigen maritimen Erbes Liverpools wurden Erfahrungen gesammelt, die auch anderen Hafenstädten von Nutzen sein können:

*Lektion 1 – Sei stolz auf Dein maritimes Erbe.*

*Lektion 2 – Genieße und feiere Dein maritimes Erbe.*

*Lektion 3 – Entwickle ein Verständnis für die urbane Landschaft Deiner Hafenstadt.*

*Lektion 4 – Erkenne die historische und unangreifbare Bedeutung der Hafenstadt.*

*Lektion 5 – Stelle sicher, dass ein besseres Verständnis des Erbes, das der Hafen darstellt, zu einer von Kenntnisreichtum geprägten Erhaltung und zu besserer Planung führt.*

*Lektion 6 – Sorge dafür, dass historische Hafenstrukturen gesetzlich geschützt werden.*

*Lektion 7 – Am Wasser gelegene historische Gebäude, die verschiedenartig genutzt werden, sind für die Menschen besonders attraktiv.*

*Lektion 8 – Die Behörden sollten alles daran setzen, eine Erneuerung durchzuführen.*

*Lektion 9 – Nimm eine umfassende Analyse des Stadtbilds vor, um wichtige Planungsfragen zu ermitteln.*

*Lektion 10 – Ermittle Gebäude, die sich auf die historische urbane Landschaft negativ auswirken und ermutige dazu, sie zu beseitigen/ersetzen.*

Zwar sind alle historischen Häfen und Städte einzigartig, viele haben jedoch die gleichen Merkmale und stehen vor ähnlichen Herausforderungen. Liverpool gibt weder vor, auf alles eine Antwort noch perfekte Lösungen gefunden zu haben. Viele Herausforderungen liegen noch vor uns. Die UNESCO sieht Liverpool als Fallbeispiel für eine fortlaufende Bewahrung des Hafenerbes. Die in Liverpool gemachten Erfahrungen stellen ein Wissensreservoir dar, das andere Hafenstädte nutzen und von dem sie profitieren können.

Weitere Informationen erhalten Sie unter [www.liverpoolworldheritage.com](http://www.liverpoolworldheritage.com), oder setzen Sie sich mit John Hinchliffe unter [jnshinchliffe@gmail.com](mailto:jnshinchliffe@gmail.com) in Verbindung.

## Sources of Illustrations

Fig. 1; Fig. 2: National Museum Liverpool

Fig. 3: English Heritage

Fig. 4; Fig. 5; Fig. 6; Fig. 7; Fig. 8; Fig. 9: Liverpool City Council

\* The photo rights have been clarified by the author and he has the responsibility