



Above The medieval core of Liverpool and the outline of the Liver Pool.

The Old Dock proved to be an enormous success, as it meant that ships could be loaded in one and a half days, instead of the 12 to 14 days that had been needed previously. Liverpool grew rapidly and soon overtook Bristol to become the second largest port in the country after London. The position of the port meant that Liverpool was also convenient for the slave trade, forming the apex of the trading triangle between Africa and the West Indies, and by 1792, the port possessed over half of the English slave trade. Following the Slave Trade Act of 1807, Liverpool became an important port for cotton, located as it was close to the cotton and textile mills of Lancashire.

By the end of the 19th century, a massive 9% of all world trade went through Liverpool Docks, but by this time the Old Dock was long gone; it had been superseded by many bigger and deeper docks, constructed out into the Mersey. The Old

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Dock, the world's first commercial enclosed wet dock, was backfilled in 1826.

The Paradise project (now known as Liverpool 1), was undertaken as a massive rebuilding of 43 acres of the city centre to redouble the retail area and revivify the dock front. It was in the course of this activity that the Old Dock was rediscovered. This huge project has now changed the entire character of the city centre. There is a neat synergy between the original construction of the dock to further Liverpool's commercial gains in the 17th century, and the likewise commercially-driven 21st century rejuvenation, which has shifted attention back to the original heart of the city. Because of the recognised archaeological importance of the dock, almost all of it has been preserved within the development's design. This has entailed considerable further excavation (undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North between 2001 and 2008) to determine the lines of the wall, and the north-eastern corner of the dock has been preserved within a large secant pile-enclosed box which will eventually become the Old Dock Information Centre.

Below These timbers supported the wall of the dock during construction.



How the Old Dock was built

The construction of the dock was a formidable task, as it was built entirely by hand. Building