

HULL'S OLD TOWN DOCKS

Before the 17th century trade was carried out in Hull from privately owned wharves on the River Hull and a wealthy merchant class built up and lived on the nearby High Street. These wharves were inadequate for bigger vessels and an expanding trade and town centre docks were thought to be the answer. The Old Harbour, as the lower part of the River Hull reaching the Humber Estuary was called, became overcrowded and congested with bigger and bigger boats. You must bear in mind that workers lived in Town Centres and there was no such thing as commuting to work and so the notion of Town Docks was born.

The first dock, which at the time was the largest in the Country was the Old Dock, later called Queens Dock and now a City Centre Garden, was designed by John Grundy and opened in 1778. At this time access to the sea was via a bridge (Monument Bridge) and though a lock pit, eventually to the Humber and the Sea. This dock closed in 1930 and was filled in to form the Park, but the access to the River Hull still exists (behind the technical college).

It is now a park, having been filled in in 1930. A photograph of it today can be found in the Picture



Gallery on the website.

The second dock was the Humber Dock, now called the Marina which opened in 1809 (designed by John Rennie and William Chapman).



It was accessible from the Humber via a basin (where the modern link to the Humber exists from the Marina). It was 7 acres in size – the same size as now. The excavated soil formed land upon which the Pier area was built and upon land in Humber Street nearby a magnificent building called the Theatre Royal was built, though this building has long since disappeared. The splendid Pilot Office was built in 1819 on part of this reclaimed land.

The third Dock linked these two and at first carried the name Junction Dock was opened in 1829 and was designed by James Walker. Much of it now is occupied by a shopping centre on stilts, Princes Quay and it is now known as Princess Dock.



It is slightly smaller than the Humber Dock (Marina). It is 6 acres in size, the Humber Dock being 7 acres, both being smaller than the first dock, Queens Dock at 11 acres.

The final town dock was the Railway Dock, an extension of the Marina, some 3 acres in size and opened in 1846 to serve the needs of a rapidly growing rail system, and was the link between sea and rail. It is now part of the Marina- an extension, which sits alongside the Holiday Inn.

The decline of these docks was led by Whaling, which virtually ended in 1840, fishing, with its 736 trawlers, was conducted from newer Riverside Docks to the North of the Town Docks and the commercial docks with capacity for much larger vessels, were created south of the Town Centre docks. As stated Queens Dock closed and was filled in in 1930, the Junction Dock (Princess Dock) had virtually ended its commercial traffic by the turn of the last century, the Railway Dock became eventually a picturesque adjunct to the Holiday Inn and the Humber Dock became a Marina by the 1970's.

So that completes the information about the Town Docks, which declined in trade by the 1900's with the opening of the docks on the river front and the increased mobilisation of dock workers.