

HULL'S OLD TOWN DOCKS

Before the 17th century, the trade was carried out in Hull from privately owned wharves on the River Hull. A wealthy merchant class built up, living on the nearby High Street. These wharves were inadequate for bigger vessels and an expanding trade, so 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 increasingly congested with bigger and bigger boats. You must bear in mind that workers lived in town centres in those days, and there was no such thing as commuting to work. So, the notion of Town Docks was born.

The first dock, which at that time was the largest in the country, was the Old Dock – later to be called Queens Dock. It was designed by John Grundy and was opened in 1778. (This is now a city garden – Queens Gardens). At this time access to the sea was via a bridge (Monument Bridge), and through a lock pit to the Humber and eventually the sea. This dock closed in 1930 and was filled in to form the gardens. A photograph of it today can be found in the Picture Gallery on the website.

The old access to the River Hull still exists, behind the Technical College.

The second Dock was the Humber Dock, (now the Marina) which opened in 1809. It was designed by John Rennie and William Chapman. It was accessible from the Humber via a basin (where the modern link to the Humber now exists, from the Marina). It covered seven acres, the same as now.

The excavated soil formed land upon which the Pier area was built, and nearby in Humber Street a magnificent building – The Theatre Royal - was built. Sadly, this has long since disappeared.

In 1819 a splendid Pilot Office was built on part of this reclaimed land.

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

The Queens Dock, the largest, covered 11 acres. The Humber Dock was 7 acres, and the Junction (Princes) Dock 6 acres.

The final Town Dock was the Railway Dock. An extension of the Marina (some 3 acres in size) it opened in 1846 to serve the needs of a rapidly growing rail

system, and was the link between sea and rail. It is now the part of the Marina, an extension which sits alongside the Holiday Inn.

The decline of these docks was lead by the decline of the whaling industry, which virtually ended in 1840. Fishing, with it's 736 trawlers was conducted from the newer Riverside Docks to the north of the Town Docks, and commercial Docks with capacity for much larger vessels were created south of The Town Docks.

As stated, The Queens Dock closed and was filled in in 1930.

Junction Dock (Princes Dock) had virtually ended its commercial traffic by the turn of the century.

The Humber Dock became a Marina.

The Railway Dock eventually became a picturesque adjunct to the Holiday Inn by the 1970's.

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