E. Cuthbert Woods

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

TRANSACTIONS

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THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

" All delight is in masts and oars and trim ships to cross the stormy sea."—ODYSSEY.

TRANSACTIONS, VOL. VI. 1951-52

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The authors of papers alone are responsible for the statements and opinions in their several contributions

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THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

(Founded 1938)

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The objects of the Society are :—

1. To encourage interest in the history of shipping (particularly local shipping) by collecting and collating material relating thereto ;
2. To undertake an historical survey of Liverpool vessels, their builders, owners and masters ;
3. To disseminate such information by publications or by any other available means ;
4. To co-operate in every suitable way with other organisations in Liverpool or elsewhere having similar or cognate objects ;
5. To encourage the making and collecting of scale ship models, and their exhibition.

The annual subscription of ten shillings entitles members to attend meetings of the Society, to read papers before it, to take part in any excursions that may be arranged and to receive the annual " Transactions," and " News, Notes and Queries," issued from time to time.

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A Hundred Years of West African Shipping

By Michael M. Smye

Read 11th January, 1952

The Elder Dempster story is apt to be confusing. It might be said to begin in August, 1852, before Elder Dempster and Co. existed, when the African Steamship Company (which later came under the control of Elder Dempster and Co.) was incorporated by Royal Charter. The objects of this company were to carry out a contract for the carriage of mail to Madeira, Teneriffe and the West Coast of Africa; also to run services to Morocco and between Sierra Leone and the West Indies. For some time a service to Morocco did exist but I do not think the Sierra Leone/West Indies service ever materialised. Indeed it is difficult to visualise much success then or now for such a service.

The first vessels built for the African Steamship Co. were the *Forerunner*, *Faith*, *Hope* and *Charity*, followed by the *Candace* and *Ethiope*. All these were iron screw steamers built by Laird of Birkenhead. The largest (the *Charity*) was of not much more than 1,000 tons gross.

Sailings at this time were from London and trade was poor, so much so, that in 1860 it was proposed that the company be wound up. The directors were persuaded to institute sailings from Liverpool and these were more successful. In 1868 the mail contract was renewed and in 1869 sailings were increased. During the next twenty years the position deteriorated again however. The fleet was too small and the company suffered from lack of capital and from much competition. It was not until 1890, when Elder Dempster and Co. took over the company, that there was any real development.

In 1868 the British and African Steam Navigation Company was formed in Glasgow and a monthly service between Glasgow, Liverpool and the West Coast of Africa was maintained. The first steamers of this line, bearing the names *Bonny*, *Roquelle* and *Congo* (all of about 1,280 tons gross), were built on the Clyde by the firm of John Elder (later Randolph Elder). For some years all the B. and A. ships were Clyde built.

Elder Dempster and Co. was formed the same year as the British and African Co. and appointed Liverpool agents of the latter. Alexander Elder was a Board of Trade surveyor and

brother of John Elder the shipbuilder. John Dempster was in the office of W. and H. Laird, agents of the African Steamship Co.

Because of the dearth of cargo offering, calls at Glasgow were discontinued by the B. and A. Co. in 1874. In 1883 the company was registered as a limited company.

At this point something must be said of Alfred Jones, who contributed so much to the expansion of Elder Dempster and Co. and the companies managed by them. Alfred Lewis Jones was born in Carmarthen in 1845 and was apprenticed to W. and H. Laird at the age of 12. At 25 he was office manager and in 1875 he set up his own business in Liverpool. He chartered sailing vessels and then steamships. Elder Dempster and Co. were so impressed, and perhaps not a little alarmed, by his vigour and success that they gave him a partnership in 1879.

In 1884 Alexander Elder and John Dempster retired, leaving Alfred Jones in control of Elder Dempster and Co. In 1891 the African Steamship Co. closed their Liverpool office, appointing Elder Dempster and Co. managers. In 1900 Elder Dempster and Co. (in reality Alfred Jones) were in control of the British and African Co.

Alfred Jones might well have been content to sit back and consolidate his position here but he possessed almost limitless energy. He had formed the Bank of British West Africa in 1894 and in 1899 he extended the sphere of his activities to Canada when he bought the Beaver Line. The same year a new company, Elder Dempster Shipping, was formed. In 1902 the Imperial Direct Line came into being and a regular service between Avonmouth and the West Indies was started. Sir Alfred Lewis Jones, K.C.M.G., as he then was, died in 1909, never having quite recovered from the shock he received when he was in Jamaica during the great earthquake of 1907.

The acquisition of the Beaver Line led to ill-feeling with D. and C. MacIver, who had managed the line, and they competed for about a year with the Beaver Line under Elder Dempster management, chartering ships for this purpose. The Beaver fleet was extensively modernised and some very fine ships were built for the Canadian service. The *Milwaukee* class of 12 knot, 7,300 ton gross ships, and the similar *Lake* classes of 1900/2 were typical. As a matter of interest these vessels were actually registered not in the name of the Beaver Line

but in the name of Alfred Jones and/or that of his partner W. J. Davey. Many of the ships on the Beaver service had names beginning with the prefix *Mont* and some of these names were perpetuated by the Canadian Pacific Company after they bought the line. Immigrants were carried as well as cargo but results were poor because of low rates and considerable competition. During the Boer War, however, some of the big " M " ships earned high freights carrying troops, horses and mules from Canada and U.S.A. to South Africa. In 1903 the goodwill of the Beaver Line, which had proved something of a financial embarrassment to Alfred Jones, was sold to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, with nearly all the ships which Elder Dempsters had employed regularly on the Beaver service.

The Imperial Direct Line—or, to give its proper title, the Imperial Direct West India Mail Service—was subsidised by the Government. Unfortunately, the fine fast vessels built for the West India service, of which the 17 knot *Port Kingston*, of 7,600 tons, was the crack ship, were too big and too expensive to make a profit. They were all sold between 1909 and 1912. The company continued in existence as the Imperial Direct Line, but the West Indian service was given up and the cargo vessels allocated to the company were employed in the other Elder Dempster services. In passing, it may be mentioned that a second-class return ticket between Avonmouth and Jamaica cost £25.

In the 1890's and at the turn of the century the building of new ships for the Beaver and Imperial Direct Lines did not hinder the augmentation of the West African fleet. Services were started between Canada and South Africa and between New York and West Africa. About 1902, before the sale of the Beaver Line and the Imperial Direct Ships, the list of steamers shown in Lloyd's Register as owned by Elder Dempster and Co. and their associated companies was truly impressive. Many of the ships were, of course, smaller than those of to-day.

During the 1914-1918 war the number of vessels in the fleet was reduced from over 100 to less than 60. During a single year (1917) 24 ships were lost.

After the war, replacement was effected mainly by the construction of the " B " and " N " classes. The " B " Class was of fourteen vessels, each of about 5,300 tons gross. The " N " or *New* class of eight ships (like the " B " Class, a standard type of wartime design modified somewhat) were

allocated to the New York service, hence the names *New Brooklyn*, *New Mexico*, etc.

By the middle 'twenties the motor-ship had proved its worth and in 1926 and 1927 the motor mail liners *Accra* and *Apapa* were built. These vessels had extensive passenger accommodation and represented a big improvement on previous classes. The " D " Class of motor cargo ship was built between 1927 and 1928. Five out of the six vessels of this class were lost during the war, only the *Deido* surviving. The *Explorer* Class of 1929–30 (eight vessels) was a development of the " D " Class, these ships being larger—of about 5,000 tons gross against 3,800. The " S " Class of five vessels, a further development of this type of cargo motor-ship with some passenger accommodation followed during 1936–9. The *Abosso*, pre-war flagship of the fleet, came out in 1935.

All the big passenger-carrying ships were lost during the second world war. Only the old *Aba*, of all the mail-boats, survived after an eventful wartime career as a hospital ship. Too old for reconversion, she was sold in 1947 and gained notoriety by turning over in dock.

The present company, Elder Dempster Lines Ltd., which was incorporated in 1932, took over the fleet and assets of Elder Dempster and Co. and the companies managed by the firm—the African Steamship Co., the British and African Steam Navigation Co., the Imperial Direct Line and the Elder Line.

In 1946 Elder Dempster Lines (Canada) Ltd. was incorporated. The five Canadian ships owned by this company were originally on the Canada—South Africa service until this was suspended, and they are now employed on the West African services under British registry, chartered to the parent company.

Elder Dempster Lines acquired the British and Burmese Steam Navigation Company in 1952. The " K " Class of the latter company run in the West African services whilst the other B. and B. ships run, as hitherto, in the Burma trade under the management of P. Henderson and Co.

The new *Accra* and *Apapa* (of 1947–8) and the *Aureol*, of 1951 (flagship of the fleet), maintain the passenger and mail service between Liverpool and West Africa. Six vessels of the improved " S " Class represent the latest class of cargo motorship for general service. Several new ships are under construction however.

It is now one hundred years since the first regular mail and passenger service to West Africa began and a comparison of the early steamers with the modern *Aureol* shows the vast development that has taken place during the century.

The Cargo Motorship *Sherbro* (1947)

The Passenger Motorship *Accra* (1947)

SOME NOTES ON THE PORT OF HOLYHEAD

By KEITH P. LEWIS

Read 8th February, 1952

I make no apology for the subject of this paper before the Liverpool Nautical Research Society. As sentinel of the south-west extremity of Liverpool Bay, the port and its neighbourhood crop up in our local maritime history throughout the centuries. Sometimes in the dim past, Holyhead has been mentioned as an alternative port to Liverpool which, in fact, it has upon occasion displaced. In more recent times it has, and still has, functions of its own with others complementary to those of the Mersey. When I offered this paper to the Society, the lately-projected function of Holyhead as an oil-port had not been publicised, and it is interesting to note that in such a capacity it would seek to rival Merseyside as a major discharging point.

My own interest in Holyhead dates from a holiday there when a small boy and visits and further holidays in recent years, plus the bait of its isolated shipping interest, have made the subject of its history more attractive. I should say that I do not know of any " stiff-covered " work devoted solely to Holyhead. References are many, but as far as I know, they have not been collected and published.

Holyhead is situated on Holy Island, off the west coast of Anglesey. Holy Island is divided north from south by a marshy isthmus stretching eastwards from the popular holiday resort of Trearddur Bay. Whilst being higher on its western side, the southern half is gently undulating and marshy to the east, but the northern half of the island rises to the northward and the extreme height of Pen Caer Gybi, with a steep drop to the sea in the north-west, and the extremities of the North and South Stacks.

Outside the present-day town are remains known as Cytiaur' Gwyddelod, a collection of about 60 huts which once formed a prehistoric village, and nearby the Romano-British wall, Caer Twr. Also nearby are said to be Long Stones or Meini Hirion and elsewhere on the island, hut circles, one of the earliest tumuli known, shrines and holy wells and the sites of the seven old chapels which gave the island its name, and by obvious derivation suggest the reason for the Anglicised name of the town.

The Welsh name is Caer Gybi, the place of Saint Cybi, to whom the parish church is consecrated. An oratory is said to have been built on the site about A.D. 450, and the wall still surrounding three sides of the churchyard is authoritatively considered to date from the time of the Roman occupation and to be the oldest and most complete piece of Roman walling in Britain, a local claim substantiation for which may be hard to come by elsewhere. The fourth side of the churchyard was bounded by the sea and the old harbour.

The rise of a port in this locality would appear to be attributable to the nearness of this extremity of Great Britain to Ireland, coupled with reasonable accessibility from the South of England and, a major point, the nature of the coastline hereabouts, which is deeply indented with sheltered coves or " porths " peculiar to the neighbourhood. These range in size from Holyhead Inner Harbour in its original state, through the somewhat smaller Porth Dafarch, on the west coast of Holy Island and the lesser Porth y Post, down to very minor funnel and bottle-shaped inlets with which the coast is liberally punctured. Generalising, these " porths " are dry at low tides, are each steep-sided with a less precipitous approach to a shingle beach from the head, caused, I venture to suggest, by drainage from the hinterland.

Holyhead Inner Harbour was dry at low water, of head width equal to its opening, and draining a marsh on the site of the gasworks of to-day. Dredging and reclamation have altered the situation. The town no longer stands precipitately above a tidal harbour where vessels could lie aground at low water. In spite of this, it was easy to see why such a sheltered point should offer opportunities as a haven.

It was in 1573 that State letters between London and Dublin were first routed via Holyhead in order to avoid the detour necessary to reach Liverpool from Chester. This would appear to cast doubts on the efficiency of the ferry between Birkenhead and Liverpool, such as it was at the time, and also upon the packets which sailed to Ireland from Parkgate. The attractions of the Holyhead route in relation to others would seem to have been strong, for we read that the difficulties attending the nigh on two days' journey to the port from the Metropolis were aggravated by the crossing of the Conway River and the Menai Straits, to say nothing of the mountain barrier extending to the sea at Penmaenmawr. Possibly these

inconveniences, surmountable with effort, were of less account than the dangers attending the longer sea passage from the Merseyside area.

The British Government, through the Railway Executive, to-day controls the sea route from Holyhead to Ireland, as it did in 1646 when the House of Commons placed two sailing-packets on the Holyhead to Dublin service. The stage-coach appeared on the roads of England at this period and bumped its way to Holyhead, where passengers awaited a packet-vessel. In a guide-book of 1675, the town is described as being scattered and consisting chiefly of houses of entertainment for persons either bound for or arrived from Ireland. Dean Swift, on horseback from Chester in 1713 with his servant and a guide, reached Holyhead, where he was forced to spend several days before taking ship for Ireland. His customary misanthropy sharpened, one can only speculate on the identity of the innkeeper who supplied him with a loin of mutton " too tough to be chewed " and " the worst ale in the world," to say nothing of the vicar to whose companionship Swift declared he preferred that of a dog. Another visitor is said to have been John Wesley, founder of Methodism. He wiled away the tedious days of waiting in speaking, like Gillie Potter, in English to the indigenous population who spoke nought but their native Welsh, with what result of mutual understanding we know not.

The passing of the Road Acts brought about improvements in the approach to Holyhead in the early years of the 18th century. Powers were granted for the erection of turnpikes and the levying of tolls towards upkeep. Many of the toll-houses subsequently built still stand at intervals along that part of the A.5 main road to Holyhead which crosses Anglesey. The road from London did not follow its present course from the village of Valley, but sought the narrower crossing of the strait between Anglesey and Holy Island. The embankment, though only about 200 yards in length, is known as Four Mile Bridge. A culvert in its centre permits the tides to pass through. From Four Mile Bridge the old road crosses the island to Trearddur Bay and then forks, the right hand leading to the head of the Inner Harbour, and the left hand following the ascending and indented coast-line to Porth Dafarch which latter point it may have served when the inlet was a small port. The main road from Valley now crosses the strait by the mile-long Stanley Embankment, also carrying the railway, and takes a more direct route to the town.

It is said that there were two roads between Conway and Holyhead, one over the sand via Beaumaris and the other through Penmaenmawr and Bangor. The first-named route would be negotiable only at low tide, when it would be regarded as a lesser evil than the stiff country backing Penmaenmawr.

The five packet-boats on the station during the latter part of the 18th century were each of 70 tons and under contract to the Postmaster-General. The first stage-coach to carry mails plied between London and Bath in 1748. In the same year, Lewis Morris published his " Survey of Harbours and Roads," describing Holyhead as " just a rough natural harbour, no piers or warehouses. Station of the packet-boats (three in number) which carry mails between England and Ireland three times a week, weather permitting."

In the following year a regular Irish mail coach was established, with its Holyhead terminal at the " Eagle and Child " Inn, a hostelry standing in what is now Victoria Square. As such it no longer exists, and I am at present unable to say whether the building occupying the site is in fact the old inn premises or a rebuilding after closure.

Steam-packets came to Holyhead in 1820, when the *Ivanhoe* and *Talbot* commenced sailings between the port and Howth (for Dublin). Their success was such that two more, the *Lightning* and *Meteor*, appeared on the mail service in 1821. The road from London was improved, and in 1826 Telford's famous suspension bridge across Menai Straits was opened. This beautiful triumph of contemporary engineering remained unaltered until 1938 when a two-year reconstruction programme was embarked upon and completed in spite of the outbreak of war.

In 1826 Liverpool comes into the story with the opening of a local mail service from the Mersey to Kingstown, which had displaced Howth as the mail terminal for Dublin. The packets, operated by the Post Office, were superior to the Holyhead steamers which, though suffering falling receipts, continued to carry the mails from London.

The death-knell of the stage-coach was sounded in 1838, as far as the Irish Mail route was concerned, with the opening of the London and Birmingham Railway, and its eventual connection northwards through the Grand Junction system to the Liverpool and Manchester line. Through rail communication

with Liverpool put Holyhead off the map for the time being, and in the same year the Post Office contracted with the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company for the carriage of mails from the Mersey to Kingstown. Although Holyhead had temporarily lost the Irish Mail traffic, the signing of the new contract was an event of significance in the annals of the North Wales port, with which the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company was to become so firmly identified for many years.

The railway line from Crewe to Chester was opened in 1840, and with it came a renewal of Holyhead's importance, for an auxiliary service for the London mails was provided by a steamer from Kingstown to Holyhead, thence by mail-coach to Chester and onwards by train. Even then the port's future lay in the balance, for the possibility of rail communication was being explored from Chester to sites other than Holyhead as a port for Ireland. Porth Defarch had been suggested and, in earlier days, actually used by Irish invaders when making raids on Anglesey. The little fishing-village nestling in the shadow of the Great Orme's Head had yet to develop into the holiday resort of Llandudno, and the curving coastline thereabouts seemed ideal raw material for harbour works. So did Porth-din-Llaen in Caernarvonshire, which shared with the Great Orme neighbourhood the advantage of lying on the landward side of Menai Straits. Holyhead was chosen for its existing harbour facilities, both natural and such artificial works as then stood, but might in later years have had a serious rival as the Porth-din-Llaen area was inspected by the Great Western Railway before that company went further south to open a Welsh terminal, ultimately sited in Fishguard, for its Irish Sea services.

With the commencement of the construction of the Chester and Holyhead Railway an enlargement scheme was approved for the Port of Holyhead. The company was solely a track-owning concern and possessed of no engines or rolling-stock. The section of the line between Chester and Bangor was opened on May 1st, 1848, and three months later the Irish Mail Train ran for the first time. The London and North-Western Railway had been formed in 1846 from the amalgamation of the London and Birmingham with other lines, and they ran their locomotives and rolling-stock over the Chester and Holyhead system. Until the Britannia tubular bridge carrying the line across the Menai Straits was completed two years later, the rail journey to Holyhead had to be broken between Bangor and

Llanfair in Anglesey, horse-drawn coaches carrying passengers and mails by road across Telford's Bridge to join another train from Llanfair to Holyhead.

In 1849 the Government of the day invited tenders for the conveyance of the mails across the Irish Sea. The only one received came from the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, and after some slight modifications had been made, it was duly accepted. Before its ratification, however, the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company intimated their desire to tender, and a fresh invitation was published. Three tenders were received this time, one from the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company, a second from the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, and a third from an outside party. The Irish company's tender was far and away the lowest, and was accepted.

The City of Dublin Steam Packet Company had been formed in the 'twenties, since when they had traded across the Irish Sea. The company had entered Holyhead, somewhat precipitately, as early as 1834 when their steamer *Leeds* had sunk in the harbour, whither she had been towed after a stranding. The company's destinies were linked with those of the port when they secured the mail contract, and the establishment on such an important station gained thereby was a reward to the directors who, with commendable foresight, had realised what long-term advantages lay beyond their low tender. To operate the service, which commenced on May 1st, 1850, they purchased from the Admiralty two of the existing mail packets, the *St. Columba* and *Llewellyn*.

The appearance of the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company amongst the tendering parties arose from their having become shipowners. Opposition from the shipping industry having resulted in the dropping of a clause relating to ship owning from the Chester and Holyhead Railway Bill, the directors floated a separate company which, after the opposition had admitted defeat, secured Parliamentary authority to pass to full railway ownership. Four steamers were built with which they went all out to secure the lion's share of the passenger business from the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company. The latter used Kingstown, the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company and their successors in office making Dublin their principal Irish terminal until the early years of the 20th century.

The City of Dublin Steam Packet Company had the *Prince Arthur* built on the Thames in 1851 to supplement the

existing steamers based on Holyhead. A fine, two-funnelled schooner-rigged paddle-steamer, she was later transferred to the company's North Wales passenger excursion station out of Liverpool and was broken up in 1890.

The mail contract was renewed in favour of the Irish company in 1860, and to meet the demand for a reduced running time, four 1,400-ton steamers were ordered, the *Ulster*, *Munster*, *Leinster* and *Connaught*. The deep-water landing was made at the Admiralty Pier, a stone structure projected westwards from Salt Island. The latter is separated from Holy Island by a strait of negligible width and takes its name from a factory established there during the reign of Queen Anne. At the head of the Admiralty Pier stands the classical entrance erected by the " gentry of Anglesey " to commemorate the passing through Holyhead en route for Ireland of King George IV. Is said that whilst awaiting fair weather for the passage in a naval vessel, the gay monarch received intelligence of the death of his Consort, Caroline of Brunswick, the tragic figure whom he had cursed publicly and treated shamefully. Overjoyed at what to most men would have been the saddest of tidings indeed, the King forgot his maritime apprehensions and took passage in one of the regular packet boats.

Improvements to the Admiralty Pier included its extension in a wooden jetty carrying the railway line and a station under cover of which passengers and mails could be transferred from train to steamer, and vice versa, with a minimum of inconvenience.

The Chester and Holyhead Railway Company had been absorbed into the London and North-Western system in 1859, and the marine side had not been inactive when next the mail contract came up for renewal. A service to Greenore had been opened in 1873 and continued in strength and frequency, apart from war years, until last month when the surviving once-weekly cargo service was abandoned. The passenger service to Dublin had been improved by the addition of two fine paddlers, *Lily* and *Violet* for night work.

In June, 1880, King Edward VII, as Prince of Wales, visited Holyhead to open what was the London and North-Western Railway Company's greatest enterprise, in the port to that date, the Inner Harbour, where the railway station of to-day flanks a terminal watercourse wide and deep enough for use by any cross-channel steamer likely to be built as far as could be seen at the time. The *Lily*, commanded by Captain

Beammer, served as the Royal Yacht on this occasion, which is commemorated by the clock-tower on the harbour side of the hotel, also closed in recent weeks, at least as far as residents are concerned. The harbour had been navigable to existing channel-steamers at all states of the tide, the marsh, drained at its head and land on both sides of the harbour reclaimed to give a V-shaped entrance narrowing to an apex where stands the hotel building. To the west, reclamation had, over the years, transferred the situation of the straggling town which no longer perched on a precipice above the sea. Instead, a series of streets led down to the new thoroughfare, Victoria Road, and railway line serving the Admiralty Pier, with accompanying sidings. The fish jetty forming a part of these works was subsequently removed. To the east, a considerable area of land was reclaimed backing Turkey Shore, a new graving dock constructed and cargo quays. Apart from the laying out of a football ground, little use has been made of the land reclaimed on this side of the harbour.

A feature of the Inner Harbour from the sea approach is the obelisk erected on a nearby spur. This is to the memory of Captain Skinner, a pioneer officer and adviser of the Post Office packets who lost his life when he was washed overboard from his vessel during an exceptionally rough crossing.

It was during this period that suggestions were made for the development of Holyhead as a port of call for Atlantic liners where train connection with London could conveniently be made. It was confidently expected that further docks and harbour works would make Holyhead a terminal in this respect to the detriment of Liverpool, but nothing came of the suggestion or its anticipated development. Needless to say, the increasing size of the mail-vessels demanded heavy dredging of the harbour works in later years.

In 1883 the London and North-Western Railway Company owned the Inner Harbour works ; the express steamers *Lily*, *Rose*, *Shamrock* and *Violet* on the Dublin route, with a fifth unit, the *Banshee*, building ; the Greenore packets and a leavening of cargo steamers. Some reward was expected for this effort in the shape of the mail contract, then due for renewal. They tendered and got it, but not for long. Home Rule agitation was in full swing and the success of the largest private joint stock company in Great Britain in securing the contract put the cat well and truly amongst the pigeons. The ditching, to put it crudely, of the Irish company released political feeling

which bulged contemporary issues of "Hansard," and the Government deemed it wiser to call again for tenders, and later, in 1883, the contract was awarded to the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company for twelve years. The Company improved the four paddle-steamers and ordered a fifth, the *Ireland*, the largest and fastest steamship of this type of her day.

The company continued to use their old berth at Holyhead, the mail jetty at the end of the Admiralty Pier. A single line of the London and North-Western Railway skirted the western side of the main station, followed the line of Victoria Road and led across the bridge to Salt Island and thence to the pier. There are many people in Holyhead who recall the detaching of the express engine which had brought the 15-coach train from Euston each day and the substitution of the little shunter for the three-quarter mile trip from junction to steamer. They also recall, as children, being allowed in those unfenced and spacious days to ride in the empty carriages which were marshalled along the line, to make up the mail trains.

On the renewal in their favour of the mail contract in 1895 for another 20 years, the directors of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company ordered four twin-screw steamers from Lairds' to replace the old paddlers *Ulster*, *Munster*, *Leinster* and *Connaught*, whose names they took. The London and North-Western Railway had improved the Greenore route by the addition of screw steamers, but the Dublin express service was still operated by paddlers. Their replacement was a matter or urgency born of prestige in a competitive field. Whereas Lairds' had built the old packets, Denny and Brothers were the contractors for four twin-screw steamers. Construction was spread over the five years 1897-1902 and they emerged as the *Anglia*, *Cambria*, *Hibernia* and *Scotia*. Soon after their completion, the railway moved their express terminal in Ireland from Dublin to Kingstown.

The rival concerns working the Holyhead routes were together assailed by what threatened to be tough opposition arising from the completion of the packet station of Fishguard in 1906. An express steamer service was operated to Rosslare by the Great Western Railway, of England, and the Great Southern Railway, of Ireland, working through a subsidiary company, and four turbine steamers, each of greater tonnage than anything out of Holyhead, were placed on the station. I have seen no statistics which might indicate any effect on traffic through Holyhead brought about by this enterprise,

but the building programme of the London and North-Western Railway in succeeding years showed no hint of retrenchment; in fact, the reverse was the case. It is worth noting that one of the four Fishguard-Rosslare steamers was sold within a few years of her commissioning and that ships built to replace the remaining three, when they reached the end of their respective lives, were of modest dimensions by comparison.

In 1895 the mail contract had been renewed in favour of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company. Ordinarily it would have expired in 1915, and from the trend of events it would appear that the directors of the London and North-Western Railway intended to make a determined effort to secure it on renewal. They planned to have some ammunition in the locker and designs were drawn up for an improved *Hibernia* class of steamer, turbine-driven and capable of a speed of 25 knots, but they were only plans, for the First World War intervened.

Obligations under the terms of the mail contract left the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company immune from the immediate requisitioning of tonnage which affected other cross-channel undertakings. The four railway express steamers were snapped up at once and the marine department at Holyhead fitted them out as armed merchant cruisers. Three survived the role for conversion to other duties, the *Anglia* becoming a hospital ship and sunk by enemy action on November 18th, 1915. The *Hibernia* was sunk as an armed merchant cruiser whilst in the Mediterranean. She had been renamed *Tara*, and there was heavy loss of life amongst her complement, many of whom were the original crew. There was further loss of life from privations undergone by the survivors who had been delivered into the hands of the Turks at Bardia by the U-boat responsible for the sinking. Holyhead families were bereaved in November, 1917, when the Greenore steamer *Connemara* was involved in collision in Carlingford Lough and sank with her entire crew and passengers in appalling weather. The *Connaught* had been taken by the Admiralty and was lost, and the *Leinster*, bound for Holyhead on October 10th, 1918, was torpedoed and sunk with heavy loss of life shortly after passing the Kish Lightship.

When peace came, the terms of the mail contract were fulfilled by the surviving *Ulster* and *Munster* helped out by the *Curraghmore*, a turbine-steamer intended for the London and North-Western Railway's Greenore service. In 1920 the latter

tendered successfully for the mail contract. This was final victory after a 70-year battle, but the change also affected what had become the accepted order of things in Holyhead.

Soon after, the first of the 25-knotters appeared on railway account. She was the *Anglia* and portrayed a magnificence in cross-channel design which will never be seen again, either in external appearance or interior decoration. The *Ulster* and *Munster* were laid up until sold to scrappers by the liquidators of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company. The Liverpool-Dublin service passed to the British and Irish Steam Packet Company. After serving the Holyhead station since 1850, the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company ceased to exist, its functions thereon being taken by the Railway Company. The Salt Island offices and workshops were closed—all joinery appliances were manually operated in the latter—and many employees became redundant in spite of what had been hoped to the contrary. Rationalisation led to unemployment aggravated by nation-wide hard times, whilst disorders in the Irish Free State affected the tourist trade and the demand for passenger shipping. To this should be added a probably slackening of trade through Holyhead occasioned by the gradual improvements in the night routes from Liverpool to Dublin and Belfast direct. Although the comparatively shorter sea passages to Kingstown for Dublin and Greenore for Belfast might have tempted the poor sailor, the alternative of a full night's rest, an uninterrupted anaesthetic on the longer trip, was an attractive one.

The Greenore passenger vessels, three in number, were sold, and in 1935 the pioneer turbine mail-steamer *Anglia* which had spent the greater part of her life laid-up, was scrapped. Turbine-driven cargo-steamers replaced older vessels during the 'thirties and improvements were effected aboard the remaining three mail-steamers. In 1939 an order was placed with the Fairfield yard for two turbine-driven steamers, each to be of 5,000 tons gross. They were never built. In the same year the Urban District Council made application for Holyhead to be treated as a " special area," so bad was the unemployment situation. Also in that year, the jetty leading from the Admiralty pier, with its wharf and railway station, was dismantled to leave no trace of a scene of once bustling activity, and the pier resumed its century-old appearance.

Whatever ambiguity the pedants of the Ministry of Information had intended with the phrase " North-West Port," the German Air Force had no illusions as to where was meant in the majority of cases, as we here know to our cost. Holyhead came in the category, but was considered worthy of only a handful of bombs although a Netherlands naval base was established in the port during the war. One bomb completely destroyed the comparatively new Church House, another fell in the road and badly splattered one of the massively-built chapels with which the town abounds, another damaged some property scheduled for demolition, and so on. And there were no casualties !

The mail-boats were not so lucky. The *Scotia* received a direct hit off Dunkerque whilst evacuating French troops and sank with heavy loss of life amongst troops and crew. The *Cambria* was twice attacked in the Irish Sea by aircraft whilst maintaining her regular services. She drove off the attackers but suffered casualties amongst her crew. In August, 1940, the British and Irish Steam Packet Company's cattle-carrier *Meath* blew up and sank off the entrance to the Outer Harbour.

As in 1918, the end of hostilities found two mail steamers, both of which were suffering from the inevitable effects of prolonged hard driving and scanty maintenance. In 1947 they were supplemented by the steamer *Princess Maud*, drawn from the London, Midland and Scottish Stranraer service. As regrouping had swallowed the London and North-Western Railway after World War I, so did the London, Midland and Scottish disappear after World War II. All the Holyhead railway fleet hoisted the flag of British Railways. The directors of the Company had lost no time in replacing the order cancelled through the war in 1939. This time they went to Harland and Wolff of Belfast for two motorships, *Cambria* and *Hibernia*, which are the last word in vessels of their class. The old steamers of the same name were towed out of Holyhead for scrapping in 1949.

Three passenger-mail vessels, four cargo steamers, the little dredger *Pick me Up*, and a coal hulk to-day comprise the Holyhead railway fleet. Theorists may argue on the relative merits to the community of multiple effort in competition vis-a-vis agreement with rationalisation. In Holyhead, even before January 1st, 1948, the latter had won hands down. Until the start of the first World War the port was a very busy

place, but to-day unemployment is said to be heavy by comparison with the rest of England and Wales. " The Railway," with its trains, boats and installations, is the main industry employing 75 per cent of the population. Silica and limestone are quarried from Holyhead Mountain, overlooking the town, and two small light engineering firms have established their factories near the Inner Harbour. Otherwise the population of 10,000 is supported by the town's function as a market for a wide rural area, or employed in the administration of its own urban and local affairs. Small wonder that the immigrant population of retired Liverpolitans have high rates to pay out of their already well-taxed incomes.

The Inner Harbour used by the railway steamers has additional protection as it leads off an outer roadstead enclosed by a breakwater 1⅓ miles long from its shoreward end to its eastern extremity. Built by Sir John Hawkshaw between 1847 and 1873, it cost a million and a half, which sum was borne by the Government of the day. The original plan was for a second eastern arm with a new centrally sited pier for the packet steamers, but this part of the scheme was abandoned. Hundreds of workmen were employed quarrying the millions of tons of stone required for the foundations. These are more than 300 feet wide for the whole length and in some parts are extremely deep. The work was frequently interrupted by storms, and within three years, 1849 to 1852, no fewer than twenty workmen lost their lives. All the rubble for the base came from the Mountain, while the gigantic blocks of the wall were brought by a busy fleet of sailing ships from the quarries at Red Wharf Bay. The building of the Breakwater had a great effect upon the town itself, the population increased from 3,869 in 1841 to 8,863 in 1851. The wages of a mason were 3s. 6d. per day, and a labourer received 2s. 6d. daily. The Breakwater was opened with great pageantry in August, 1873, by the Prince of Wales.

To-day, proposals centring around the Breakwater will, if acted upon, have far-reaching effects on Holyhead. Following on a survey of the district by the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty, suggestions are being made for a tank farm to be served by vessels using the Breakwater as a mole along which oil pipes would be laid with intermittent discharge points. For reasons not fully stated it is said that loaded tankers would be saved the voyage to Liverpool, suggesting that Holyhead might again attempt to rival the Mersey. If the tankers do come,

it will not be long before ancillary industries follow, such as a dockyard, but where this would be and the position of such works in relation to the town's residential and resort character remain to be seen. Between the wars, the Urban District Council built a seaside promenade serving the bathing beach between Salt Island and Porth y Felin Creek, fronting the Outer Harbour, and the Breakwater where the tankers may discharge their cargoes. References as to the unspoilt character of the harbour to-day can be obtained post-free from the two elderly seals who spend their retirement in Porth y Felin Creek ! No doubt they would pack their bags in the face of an oil-carrying incursion !

The breakwater itself, planned roughly like a stretched-out letter " Z," is being constantly reinforced on its seaward side with material from the silica quarries, from which a single-line railway leads to the commencement of the stone-work, thence to the extremity where stands a lighthouse. A piece of apparatus similar in construction to a coaling-gantry is mobile the length of the breakwater and serves the dual purpose of loading stone from the wagons for shipment and dumping reinforcement material into the sea, which soon makes short work of it and awaits the next lot. On being informed of this Sisyphean way of earning a living, I asked the obvious question and was told that Holyhead Mountain can supply silica at the present rate for the next 2,000 years, so no one is particularly worried—yet !

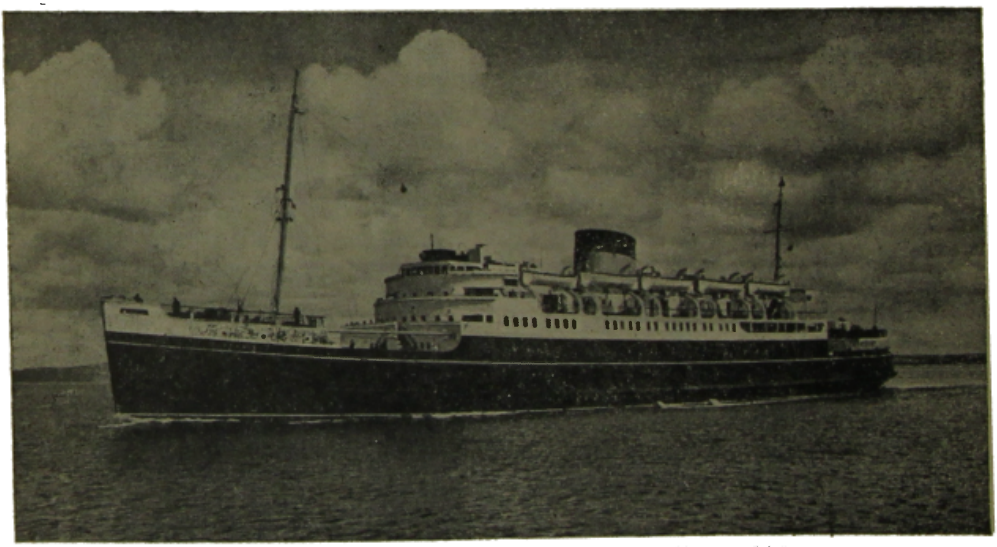
The house, Soldier's Point, is said to have been built in the style of Hampton Court Palace for Sir John Hawkshaw. Numerous legends surround it and there are tales of heartbreak and suicide arising from changes in the original design of the breakwater. Soldier's point, now a hotel, has fine terraced gardens, private beach, boathouse, open-air plunge bath and a spurious ruin atop a rocky islet. Also a hotel is the nearby house formerly occupied by the Captain of the Port, known as Government House. Both buildings are the property of the Railway Executive, from whom private operators rent them. The properties are situated near the head of the breakwater, and any construction of bulk-liquid tanks or pumping machinery hereabouts in connection with the projected plans for the breakwater must seriously prejudice the survival of the town's small but pleasant tourist industry. The Breakwater and Outer Harbour is subject to the Ministry of Transport

who, presumably, will have the last say in matters, although the relief of local unemployment and the encouragement of industry is a number one priority of the local Council.

I do not think that our Vice-President would forgive me if I omitted to mention the South Stack Light. I cannot trespass on his preserves, however, as I am very ignorant of its history and hope that he will have something to say about it in a few minutes. This stormy sentinel, beloved of many an artist, must have stood for at least a century on its rocky island, bound to Holy Island by only a slender suspension bridge approached by 400-odd steps down the cliff-face. These in turn are approachable by road, but the North Stack, contrary to popular belief a coast-guard station and not a lighthouse, is accessible only by a narrow path over the coastal promontories, and all supplies have to be delivered on the foot of man or beast. Until a few years ago this lonely outpost would despatch its trained donkey into Holyhead town once a fortnight. It knew the way and the stores at which to call where the shopkeepers would load up the animal's pannier baskets with a pre-arranged order. Back it would trot in fine style, but history does not relate if it also paid the bills.

On the side of Holyhead Mountain stands the former telegraph station from which inward bound ships were observed and details signalled back to Liverpool through a chain of stations which were described by Mr. A. M. Fletcher in a paper some years ago. The rocky coastline in the neighbourhood has claimed many ships. The sailing-ships *Kirkmichael* and *Osseo* were wrecked against the breakwater, the *Primrose Hill* near the South Stack, and Baring Brothers' *Norman Court* at Porth Ruffyd. The figurehead of the last-named is preserved at Rhos Neigr, Anglesey. The Warren Line Steamship *Missouri* came to grief in the 'eighties at Porth Gof Du.

Holyhead Inner Harbour in 1951.



The Motorship *Hibernia*, one of the two fine passenger liners which operate the Holyhead—Dun Laoghaire service to-day.

NOTES ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF THE PORT OF LIVERPOOL

By A. S. MOUNTFIELD

Read 14th March, 1952

In a discussion of Port problems it might very readily be said that we should look forward rather than back. Nevertheless, so great a man as Edmund Burke said :

> " People will not look forward to prosperity who never look backward to their ancestors."

Therefore I trust that these notes on the earlier history of our Port, the history leading up to our present constitution, may not be without some grain of value as indicating how our present methods of government came into being. Only the other day I was asked to state shortly the history of town dues and I said—"Commencing with Domesday Book." That record makes it quite clear that the revenues from this river were the Crown's. A great medieval lawyer said that every navigable river was a King's Highway.

This paper is an endeavour to recount the stages of the growth of authority over and control of the organisation of our Port and the reasons for those stages.

All those interested in local history are aware of the manner in which some remote degree of authority and control became attached to the tiny fishing village on the tidal estuary of the Mersey. King John, having acquired the Lordship of the county between Mersey and Ribble, was faced with the necessity of providing a Port by which men and provisions could be moved to Ireland. Some writers say he selected Liverpool because of the signs even then apparent of the silting up of the Dee. Ramsey Muir, on the other hand, says John wished to be free of the influence of the powerful Earl who held Chester. However, on August 28th, 1207, he gave the charter from which point the known history of the Port dates. This charter seems really to have been an invitation to settle on burgages in and around Liverpool and to enjoy certain feudal rights including, and this is very important, " all the liberties and free customs which any free borough on the sea has in our land." In other words, they were to be free of the dues paid for the use of the harbour to the Lord of the Manor. Thus perhaps the town dues of which we shall hear more came to some degree of definition. These " liberties " were part of the rights of the

Hansas or groups of merchants which existed for centuries both in this country and on the continent, and which contributed so much to the growth of cities like Antwerp, and to the formation of the Hanseatic League. Hansa really means an entrance fee and the name became applied to these groups of merchants who gradually became more and more powerful. Virtually, trade rested in the hands of the citizens.

Blackstone said that the considerations upon which petty customs or the more ancient part of it which came only from exports was vested in the King were said to be two: (1) because he gave the subject leave to depart the kingdom and to carry his goods along with him; (2) because the King was bound of common right to maintain and keep up the ports and havens.

The ancient and petty customs form part of the jura regalia of the Crown. Lord Hale, in an ancient 17th century book, maintained that the Crown had a right to create ports.

We must, however, remember what the Webbs say in Volume 3 of their English Local Government: "The town dues of Liverpool, like those of Bristol, were really local taxes, imposed from time immemorial on the foreigner by the authorities of the town as part of its corporate income."

Twenty years later a second Charter was granted by Henry III—the burgesses in that period having apparently become sufficiently prosperous to begin to bargain. It makes Liverpool a Free Borough, thus confirming the privilege which John had granted and placing Liverpool in the same legal position as the more ancient port of Bristol.

During the next century there was a constant development and in 1382 a new charter was granted by the ill-fated Richard II which restricted the apparent monopoly of trading granted by the early charters and admitted "foreigners," as they were termed, to trade provided they paid the dues of which the townsmen were free. It is apparent that in some way this grant was linked with the Peasants Revolt and the attack on the landed oligarchy in the shape of John of Gaunt, whose leases gave much power to Lancashire interests. In other words, the King seems to have yielded to popular clamour and played off one side against the other. Perhaps it was the first faint whisper of the challenge of Manchester.

It is round the question of dues and tolls that the constitutional history of our Port tends to centre. These were

described at a somewhat later date as the " customs and anchorage or key-toll of the water of the Mersey within the Lordship of Liverpool."

Royal or national customs do not seem to have been paid until Tudor times, perhaps because the foreign trade of the Port was so small. There must have been quays or wharves of some kind and for the unloading of goods at these, conveyed by small boats from vessels in the stream, the burgesses charged their dues. But we know so little of how the operation worked—whether importers came to the Moot Hall or to some customs hut to make their payment—who regulated the charges and how, all this is lost in obscurity.

But in the middle of the 16th century we begin to see a little more clearly. The citizens of Chester claimed that Liverpool was merely " a creek within their port." Muir says that Elizabeth's government made Chester the centre of a customs district of which Liverpool formed a part, and the customs dues were paid in Chester. But the burgesses of Liverpool fought the matter vigorously and brought the question of the ancient rights to notice, cunningly pointing out that it was an insult to the Royal Duchy. They then ordered their water bailiff to take possession of any ships entering the Mersey which did not pay their dues in Liverpool. The mention of water bailiff reminds us that he seems to have been the first properly appointed port officer, dating from 1551—later it was decreed that he was to have a coat at the town's charge and a silver oar as a warrant. (His office is still preserved.)

At this date the ships owned in Liverpool numbered 15, the largest being of 40 tons burthen with a crew of 12 men.

The seeds of constitutional control are sown, for on February 20th, 1572, a circular was sent to the civic authorities requesting them to assist the Customs Officers in the collection of their dues which many merchants seemed to delight in evading. The offices of Recorder and Town Clerk seem at this time to have been combined, as witness the fascinating records of the Liverpool Town Books. Here one may begin to perceive something of the working of the system. The town seal was required to be put on the cocket or clearance document for a ship, on which the King's Customs had to signify payment, before the Water Bailiff would allow a ship to leave. This practice still in a sense appertains, as the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board Act of 1858 says that " The Collector . . .

of Customs . . . may refuse to receive any . . . cocket . . . for any vessel liable to the payment of rates . . . until the said rates shall be paid," an invaluable and rare protection to the Port Authority. What sort of cargoes did they handle ?

Inward—Raisins, hides and furs, sheep fells, yarns, eels and salt fish from Ireland.

Outward—Grain, cheese, salt, bowstaves, leather goods, and so on.

Occasionally they got a craft from France with luxuries. " Trifles that little availe," as a 15th century economist complained.

The Librarian of Henry VII said that Liverpool had good merchandise and much Irish yarn that Manchester men do buy there.

We can perhaps see the rough master mariners of the period coming to make their payment at the Recorder's house and the Water Bailiff, a seaman himself, in doubt as to whether he should arrest a particular ship or what steps he should take concerning a wreck in the river. In 1577 the civic authorities had a problem of a different order for the quay of the river was found " sore gone to decay " and a Convocation of Citizens agreed to " move all owners of ships if they would but bestow every man 4d. towards the amendment, the town would make up the rest."

This is the first mention of port works that I can find, but the progress of the port under this regime was slow. The burgesses clung too closely to their privileges. There was a lack of true public spirit. They hampered free import and export by stopping, for instance in April 1587, the export of grain because that raised the price in the town and neighbourhood, a far cry from the centralisation that we shall hear of later.

But new times were coming. The Elizabethans were opening up new lands, in particular Virginia, and in 1648 we note the arrival of 30 tons of tobacco, upon which a duty of £3 was levied for town dues and haulage or warehousing.

The dispute with Chester over jurisdiction had lingered on many years and on January 15th, 1646, the town defined their claim to be a free port as follows :—

> " It is desired that the officers of Chester may not usurp any power or authority in this Port as our Charters and ancient grants are that we shall enjoy all such liberties and privileges as any other Port within the King's Dominions."

Subsequently, the customs authorities defined the boundaries, much as they are to-day, and the matter was settled.

The awakening spirit of the nation as regards the sea showed itself in a Bill in 1664 directed to the erection of light-houses which a Town's Meeting in Liverpool opposed, " testifying their utter dislike thereof."

On November 9th, 1651, it is reported that " after great wind and storm the Mayor called the whole town together into the hall where they counselled all in one consent and assent for the foundation and making of a new haven."

About this time Liverpool began to share in the tobacco and slave trade with Virginia. Trevelyan says : " The increase in the size of merchant ships and longer voyages were to enhance yet further the supremacy of London at the expense of lesser Ports that had sufficed in the past. In 1682 the customs administration of London cost £20,000 a year. Bristol £2,000 a year—the rest, no-where." But in 1666 occurred the Great Fire of London and this with the Dutch Wars dislocated the markets, so that Liverpool started to get a hold. A local landowner recorded his part in an adventure of £80 to the Barbados in a ship called *Antelope*, resulting in a profit of £10.

The Council were beginning to realise, as foreign shipping to the Country's new possessions developed, that they must look after their magnificent river. On November 3rd, 1675, the dumping of clay and rubbish was stated to be causing shallows and a system of local fines was instituted.

Towards the end of the 17th century the old and vexed question of the Freemen came to a head as regards their exemption from the town dues. Some of the citizens of London, engaged in the cheese trade, who bought cheeses from Lancashire and Cheshire, claimed exemption as Freemen under Royal Charter and absolutely declined and refused payment.

The Council promptly distrained upon 6 cwt. of cheese. The Cheesemongers issued a writ and much money was needed by the Council, who had to issue town stock to cover their expenses. The hearing was fixed for June 25th, 1696, at the Exchequer Bar. The suit dragged on for years and finally seems to have come to a conclusion in 1700 with a compromise agreement.

In 1702 the Council were busy making regulations with regard to anchorage—an urgent necessity in a river of strong tides with shipping devoid of any mechanical aid. But we now come to the first great point in the modern history of the Port—the construction of the first or Old Dock.

It was rapidly developing West Indian trade which led to the necessity for making some more secure discharging and loading place for ships than was provided by the ancient Pool, although a quay had been provided there some time in the 16th century. At the time of the Restoration someone on the Council had the prescience to acquire sufficient land to enable the Pool to be enlarged. Finally, in 1708, the move was made and on November 3rd of that year the Council resolved to treat with and agree for a person to come and view the ground and plan of the intended dock. Mr. Thomas Steers was the choice (although according to Touzzeau, one Henry Huss with a Mr. Sorrocold were also concerned). The estimate of cost submitted in the autumn of 1709 was £6,000, and the Council set about obtaining an Act. The Town Clerk was made the Clerk regarding the dock (probably a secretary to a Special Committee). The Council at the same time considered including in the Act powers to buoy Formby Channel, but left this to Trinity House.

Various sums of money for the construction of the new works were obtained on loan but work did not proceed very rapidly, and it was 1715 before it was opened. The Council were, of course, entirely without experience of such works and found it necessary to borrow £8,000 for excess expenditure at 4 per cent, the lender " taking the Act of Parliament for the dock as security."

This dock has often been called the first dock, but this is not really so. The first dock in which ships of a given burden could lie afloat all through the tide was built at Rotherhithe in 1700, now Greenland Dock.

Although Mr. Pepys, on January 15th, 1660, speaks of a dock at Blackwall, this was probably a semi-enclosed creek. He says :—

> " So after a cup of burnt wine we took barge and went to Blackwall and viewed the dock."

It is interesting to note that the stones from the old castle, acquired by the Corporation, were used in the walls of the dock.

Thomas Steers was made Master of Attendants or Dock Master at a salary of £20 from the Corporation and £30 from the Dock Trustees. So the first distinct sign of autonomy for those directly charged with responsibility for the Port is apparent. We may add that our friends the London Cheesemongers opposed the powers sought to construct the dock. Trade developed rapidly, following the opening of the dock and in 1737 fresh powers were obtained to construct another dock on the river side of the Old Dock, many years later called the Salthouse Dock, after a salt works established by the Blackburne family, of Hale, which adjoined it. After that, of course, the years show a record of Parliamentary powers as the Georges and other docks were constructed.

A contract was entered into with a Mr. Edward Litherland for the construction of the outer wall of the new dock. Meanwhile, Mr. Steers extended his sphere of influence for, in November, 1736, he was charged with regulating the buoys on the banks of Hoylake, then the gathering ground for ships making the Port. The small vessels then using the port crept along the Welsh coast and so into the Horse, Hoyle and Rock Channels. It is interesting to note that the early charts, on which the navigation was based, were the children of Charles II's interest in navigation, as it was at his direction that the first real survey of these approaches had been made by Captain Grenville Collins.

It will be noted that the Dock Committee are extending their influence over the conservancy of the vital sea channels which were to prove their life blood.

In September, 1761, we have the first mention of a Dock Committee who were to take into consideration the preservation of the navigation of the port and harbour. Actually, the question of conservancy was not actively pressed until the next century, but the step was a significant one. A probable result of their labours was the obtaining of an Act enabling them, *inter alia*, to make a new wet dock. The result was the

Georges Dock, for which the Corporation gave the land, with peculiar results in the present century when they had to buy it back from the Dock Board who, as we shall see, took it over at their inception from the Dock Trustees.

The extending dock construction needed new financial terms. In 1793 Liverpool was in a financial crisis and the rate of interest for the loans required, secured by bonds on the Dock Estate, was rapidly increased to 5 per cent. This was the period when owing to the French Revolution and the approaching war the Corporation took the far-seeing step of securing a loan from the Bank of England to assist commercial life in the town, a matter of some note in economic history.

In this same year the Dock Committee was made a permanent committee. The relationship of Dock Committee and Corporation at this period is an interesting one as in the closing years of the century a long dispute raged as to the rating of the dock duties (as a result of which they were held not to be rateable—a decision of much import even to-day) and secondly, the Trustees of the Docks were as a separate body named in a bill proposed to be promoted to raise money for the defence of the port against the French.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there came the necessity of providing bonded warehouse space. This was provided by private enterprise. It was necessary to meet the increasing transit trade in tobacco, coffee and sugar. As a result of petition from Liverpool merchants the provisions of the 1803 Bonding Act, previously applicable to London only, were extended to Liverpool. An illustration of the growing interest of government, represented in this case by William Pitt, in trade.

The effect of the Napoleonic Wars on Liverpool was two-fold. First, there was a natural disposition for traffic to seek the western ports of Liverpool and Bristol to avoid the French naval activity in the Channel. Secondly, the embargo placed by Napoleon on trade with the whole of the continent under his domination forced English trade to find new fields, particularly America and the West Indies and Africa. Despite bad trade and a bad harvest in 1811, the tonnage using the port increased between 1800 and 1825 from 450,000 to 1¼ million, while the average size of ship due to the increasing number of deep sea craft increased by 50 per cent.

Between 1811 and 1825 the dock water space was doubled.

These developments were also involving constitutional problems, for the cotton trade was developing by leaps and bounds with the advent of machine-driven looms and this and other interests were seeking representation.

Between 1802 and 1806 national trade was 12 per cent down, yet Liverpool was scarcely affected.

The trade order of Liverpool's commerce was very different from to-day. It ran—West Indies, Russia, Africa, America.

In 1798 a very loud echo of the previous century's dispute with the London Cheesemongers blew up. The Londoners made the old claim that as Freemen of London they were exempted from the payment of tolls anywhere in the country. Eventually the claim came for trial, when it was found that only *resident* Freemen within the liberties of the city of London were so exempt—a very big distinction.

The Corporation obtained powers in 1811 to fill in the site of the Old Dock and on that site in the fullness of time the Customs House was erected to stand until the Second World War. This Act also gave power to charge dock rates as distinct from town dues, on goods. This Act formed the Corporation into a body corporate for the purpose of working the docks under the style of the Trustees of the Liverpool Docks.

Up till 1813 all goods for India had to be carried in East India Company's ships which only used London. Tea was first brought to Liverpool in 1833. The subsequent construction of the Albert Warehouses (opened 1847) may be said to be the direct outcome of the warehousing demands of the Eastern trade. The East India Company would not carry exports of cotton manufactures because of fear of the impoverishment of the peasants upon whose taxation they depended. The end of the monopoly started Lancashire cotton exports.

With the end of the French Wars the business of the port was growing rapidly and changing. The town dues which brought in £255 in 1704 produced £22,000 in 1829. The number of vessels had increased in 50 years from 2,374 to 11,383. Some change in constitutional methods was called for, for rather extensive irregularities of a fraudulent nature in connection with contracts were discovered in 1822, and as a result after mediation by the Liverpool Member, Mr. Huskisson, an Act was obtained in 1825 altering the constitution of the Dock Committee providing for the election of

eight out of the 21 members by the dock ratepayers. A three-quarters majority was now required to provide for annulment. The Chairman was to be elected by the Council who were to continue as trustees and to have a veto power on the proceedings. This same Act gave powers of northern extension and brought to note the great engineer Jesse Hartley. He was a Master Worker in granite, a man of his time, rough in speech and strong of purpose, and his memorial, like Wren's in St. Paul's Cathedral, can be seen in the massive river walls which arose under his direction and have so well stood the test of time.

As an indication of the potentialities of trade in 1830 Liverpool's trade was 165,000 tons. London's 600,000.

The Chester and Birkenhead Railway was opened in 1838 and terminated near the present Town Station. In the 'forties they extended to the Float. Then the Birkenhead, Lancashire and Cheshire Railway was opened.

As an example of the outlook of an able administrator of that period, Mr. Bramley-Moore, we may quote his speech on dock extension of 1846 :—

> " When trade can be carried on with less expense, as will be the case when the Liverpool, Ormskirk and Preston and Bolton and Bury Railways are constructed, then it will find a mart in districts hitherto almost inaccessible."

And again :—

> " When we take into account the immensely rich coalfields that the Liverpool, Bolton and Bury Railway passes through it requires no great stretch of imagination to assume that this trade alone will require a dock for its own special use."

These men were fully alive to the immense changes the Railways were bringing.

We may note in passing that the first goods station opened along the Liverpool line of docks was Park Lane in 1828. Then followed Waterloo and after that a rapid growth coincident with the extending dock system. Rail and dock came together.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Sankey Canal had been opened and about the same time the River Weaver made navigable. Then came a canal through the

Potteries and later the Leeds and Liverpool, whilst the Bridgewater Canal was opened in the latter part of the century.

Turnpike roads were being improved all the time and generally transport was being speeded up.

Towards the end of the first half of the nineteenth century American trade accounted for 50 per cent of Liverpool's increased commerce. Factors in the general advancement were the free trade policy, the discovery of gold mines in California and Australia and the repeal of the navigation laws, i.e. restrictions of foreign shipping.

The Dock Committee very wisely first gave attention to their front door, the approach channels, realising that it was no use having great dock systems if the ships could not get to them. They obtained reports from three eminent engineers, who reported that the secret lay in the upper estuary which acted as a storage bottle from which the ebb tide issued to scour the outer channels. The terrible example of the Dee, where the navigation had been destroyed, was, of course, ever before the eyes of the shipowners and traders of the Mersey. There can be little doubt that these Reports were vital in drawing public attention to this great problem and resulted in the Conservancy Act of 1842.

As a first step the Council passed a resolution on April 1st, 1829, to the effect that they were strongly of opinion that the conservancy of the river should be vested in some body or person. One of the Borough Members, Mr. Huskisson, whose statue still stands in Canning Place, took up the case, and there appeared to be a general concensus of opinion in government circles that a Bill should be produced. Unfortunately, Mr. Huskisson was killed as the result of an accident at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway and things seem to have become held up. Eventually, however, slow pressure brought its reward in the Conservancy Act of 1842 (a Bill promoted by the Corporation of Liverpool at its own cost) which vested the conservancy of the river and estuary in the Lord High Admiral, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests. These gentlemen exercised their functions through an Acting Conservator, who by tradition is a retired Hydrographer of the Navy, and their powers passed to the Minister of Transport in 1919. The chief duty of the Acting Conservator is to exercise powers of control over works in tidal waters,

i.e., below high water mark of a 31-ft. tide, and the function is an admirable example of beneficial public legislation, not hampering to development, but always watchful in the public interest. It is interesting to note that in the public concern which led to the adoption of the legislation of 1842 Captain (afterwards Admiral) Denham, that irrepressible enthusiast, sometime Marine Surveyor to the Dock Trustees and a noted hydrographer, played no small part.

We now approach the last great struggle over the old question of town dues which was, in the light of the vast reforms now coming into being, to form the culminating issue of decision in the constitution of the port authority. It will be remembered that the Corporation had received these dues for many centuries, first as lessees of the Crown and then as lessees of the Molyneux family, and later as purchasers of such rights from the Molyneux family. We must also remember the rights of exemption for Freemen, both of Liverpool and, in a very restricted degree, of other free boroughs. We have noted the fights with the London Cheesemongers and a similar contest had been waged with the Lancaster Freemen. Now matters took a different turn.

On May 5th, 1830, the Mayor laid before the Council correspondence which had passed between him and Mr. Joseph Hornby, Chairman of the Committee of Merchants, relative to what was termed an illegal exaction of town dues. A number of principal merchants had determined to have the rights of the Corporation tested. On July 7th following two specific instances of non-payment of dues arose and the whole question was referred to the Town Clerk to investigate.

The firm which seemed to have taken the initiative (Bolton, Ogden and Co.) continued to resist and arrears of dues accumulated. The firm commenced a suit in Chancery calling on the Corporation to prove their rights and an answer was filed and much legal argument ensued between Corporation and Chancery Officers. Meanwhile, 53 other firms refused to pay dues. Eventually a test case was brought on for hearing on February 14th, 1833, before Lord Chief Justice Denman. The result was a verdict for the Corporation but the defendants lodged a Bill of Exceptions just at the time when the Royal Commission on Municipal Reform was about to commence its sittings. The Commissioners held a meeting in Liverpool and it

was finally agreed that both sides should pay their own costs and terminate these protracted proceedings, thus leaving the title to the town dues with the Corporation.

The Municipal Reform Act of 1835, the outcome of the Royal Commission, recognised these dues and allowed them to go into the general purse of the Corporation for the good of the Borough.

This was the first round.

The second round was about the docks of Birkenhead. The Wallasey Pool was the counterpart of the Pool on the Lancashire side and an equally obvious site for dock development. The Liverpool Corporation, as Dock Trustees, noted with alarm during the period 1819-1830 that certain prominent local citizens were buying land along the margin of the pool and proclaiming their intention to build docks. The result was a purchase by the Corporation of some 280 acres of the land in question for £180,000, and the promoting of a bill in 1828 seeking power to construct docks. This the Dock Committee successfully opposed and the bill was withdrawn. No further action was taken until 1843 when certain Birkenhead interests formed a company and retained a great Engineer, Mr. Rendel, who prepared plans for the construction of docks on the Pool. Application was then made to the Corporation to purchase the land in the names of several persons and a long, involved and somewhat short-sighted debate ensued. Eventually the sale was confirmed by 31 votes to 25, apparently without any realisation of the creation of another port by the sale of their birthright. Only one member, Mr. Eyre Evans, in forthright terms described the transaction as " worthy of a grocer at the corner shop in a small street."

A week after this decision the Birkenhead Commissioners (forerunners of the present Council) heard plans described to them for the development scheme. A bill was promptly produced and it became apparent that the Liverpool Corporation had (in Picton's words) been well shorn.

This was a step of no small importance. It led to a somewhat futile and wasteful battle between rivals over a period of some 12 years, leading eventually, as we shall see in due course, to one of the earliest experiments in co-ordination of public utility undertakings.

In 1844 the Birkenhead Dock Act appointed " Commissioners " with power to construct a dock and tidal basin in Birkenhead and a year later a company was incorporated with power to make and maintain docks and other works at Birkenhead. The powers of the Commissioners were in 1848 transferred to Trustees. But these early years of dock development in Birkenhead were difficult ones. Although backed by the influential landowning interests of Cheshire the promoters did not have the necessary financial backing and a state approaching insolvency resulted.

So many interesting things arose in the years that followed over this Birkenhead question—notably the dispute with the Vyner family over the land around the Float and Wallasey Pool. The Corporation believed they had become the owners outright and the Dock Board took over in 1857 in this belief, but it was not so and large sums had to be spent to acquire the absolute title.

In considering this period of the hungry 'forties it is necessary to have regard to the general condition of the Country at that time. In 1848 and 1849 great depression was felt in trade and a great influx of emigrants from Ireland arrived, with acute results on the national and municipal economy. The position had been complicated by the Irish Potato Famine of 1845. But there was a forward outlook in men's minds of which the Reform Act of 1852 and the Municipal Reform Act had been symbols, preparing the way for new thought. Trevelyan says that the latter Act " meant the transference of municipal authority to Dissenters and shopkeepers in place of the co-optive oligarchies of Tory lawyers, churchmen and noblemen's agents who had enjoyed a close monopoly of the old corporations." New classes of governors were arising, not only in the municipalities but in the opposition to them, and the difficulties of trading life rendered them keen to follow up every weakness of municipal life as soon as their interests became affected. Meanwhile, great developments were following the rapid growth of railways. In 1843 there were 2,000 miles of railway in Great Britain, in 1848 there were 5,000 miles. It is true that in 1847 steamships were few, with a tonnage of 116,000 tons out of a total 3,000,000, but the number of vessels entering the Port of Liverpool had risen from 7,276 in 1820 to 20,457 in 1850. Week by week new industries were starting, some speculative, for this was an age of speculation, based largely on the railway operators, but many of sterling worth.

The effect of these complications, and in particular the claims for relief in respect of the large numbers of Irish peasants who arrived in search of work, had a very direct effect on Municipal finance. Certain legislation had been adopted for the purpose of making corporate property liable to rates in certain cases, and it was urged that the Dock Estate should be so rated. The merchants and shipowners who paid the dues were divided on the subject of the exemption of the Estate, or otherwise, from municipal rating, and in 1848, on the motion of a leading merchant, Mr. William Earle, a special committee was set up to consider the matter. This Committee recommended that the dock property should be rated and a bill to give effect to this was promoted and strenuously opposed. In the end the bill was dropped and never revived.

But the feeling of resentment amongst the trading community at the union of town and port, with its consequent financial implications, had become established and as a result the American Chamber of Commerce, an association of merchants in Liverpool representing perhaps half the trade of the port, promoted a bill in 1851 to alter the constitution of the Dock Committee. The bill did not go so far as to propose to alter the trust, i.e., the vested ownership of the Corporation, but to leave complete powers of management in the hands of the Dock Committee, the Corporation only having the power to appoint five Members of the Committee out of a total of 21.

Eventually the bill in an amended form became law, the number of the committee being increased to 24; 12 elected by the Town Council and 12 by the dock ratepayers. The principle of " he who pays the piper calls the tune " was coming into its own. The committee was given status as the Committee for the affairs of the Estate of the Trustees of the Liverpool Docks.

Year by year trade expanded, despite the Crimean War, and in 1855 it became necessary for the Trustees to approach Parliament for the purpose of obtaining power to buy land at the north end of the Estate for extensions. This bill was referred to a committee presided over by that celebrated Victorian, Mr. Labouchere, and was at once involved in a warfare with Birkenhead interests. These interests, now hopelessly insolvent, saw their opportunity to force the Liverpool Dock Trustees to purchase their properties and they were successful. An agreement was reached, based on the

recommendation of Mr. Labouchere's Committee, that the Birkenhead properties should vest in the Liverpool Corporation payment of a sum of over £1,000,000.

It is now time for us to turn to the final stages of the constitutional struggle, the outcome of which was the setting up of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, the present port authority.

To realise some of the motives that lay behind the minds of those who planned the grand objective one must again have regard to the background of the time. Hard-hatted, hard-headed manufacturers and railway shareholders, brought up on doctrines of free competition, survival of the fittest and all the glorious individualism of the Victorian era, were the protagonists. They saw with apprehensive eyes the growing burden of the poor law finance and a suspicion grew up that the port was being administered for the benefit, not of the vast Northern community upon whose trade it depended but for the townspeople, and especially that small group who were free from town dues.

Conclaves were held in the smoke and gloom of Lancashire towns, and in London, and, as a result the Parliamentary Session of 1857 saw a bill promoted by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, the Manchester Commercial Association and the Great Western Railway with the object of creating a new trust to take over the port. It was also proposed, and this is where the Great Western came in, to transfer to such new Trust the Birkenhead Estate and, most important item, the town dues. It would appear that those responsible for the bill had had in mind certain recommendations of the Commissioners of the Board of Trade who had been appointed in 1853 to enquire into the charges and dues leviable in the United Kingdom. The Commission had laid down certain general principles of port administration which provided broadly for a single body of conservators for each public harbour and for the transfer of municipal tolls to such conservators.

Feeling between Liverpool and Manchester interests rose high, the Liverpool case containing the words " Its (Manchester's) Municipal body finds that it cannot vie with that at Liverpool and it seems determined, therefore, to spare no efforts to bring down the Corporation of Liverpool to its own level. For many years past no opportunity has been lost of discussing the question of the Liverpool Town Dues in the Town Council of Manchester . . . and an agitation has been

got up throughout the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire to deprive the Corporation of Liverpool of those dues. Public meetings have been held and speeches delivered displaying a great amount of ignorance on the subject and a bitter feeling of hostility to Liverpool and her dues . . . the literary services of Miss Martineau have been retained and she has published an artfully written pamphlet under the title of " Corporation Tradition and National Rights."

This pamphlet is worthy of notice.

After summarising in most vivacious manner the early history of the port, this lady (whose mind had that peculiarly earnest attribute which one connects with Victorian discussion) deals in some detail with the negotiations of the 'Forties with which we have very shortly dealt. Dealing in somewhat arbitrary manner with the financial policy of the Trustees she says: " With . . . every hint of a new port to supersede Liverpool the credit of the Liverpool Docks Consolidated Debt would sink till ruin overtook the unfortunate bondholders whose fathers believed the Dock Estate the best security in the world."

The real weight of her case was made to turn on the comparatively insignificant question of the Freeman's exemption from town dues. She quotes the evidence of Mr. Shuttleworth, Town Clerk of Liverpool, to the effect that " freedom in Liverpool can only be acquired by birth or servitude : and as to all Freemen who are not born or serving their apprenticeships or admitted free on the 5th of June, 1835 (the operative date of the Municipal Reform Act) they have no exemption from town dues." It appeared that the highest number claiming exemption within the six years previous to this had been 282, to which were added a few London, Bristol, Waterford and Wexford Freemen. The remark of a Liverpool merchant that his freedom saved him £200 a year is commented on with a certain irony, as is also " the benefit to such families as the Horsfalls, Shands, Gladstones and Sandbaches," names which have a familiar ring in business circles of modern times.

It is amusing to see that she instances Fleetwood as a serious competitor with Liverpool for the cotton carrying trade, and a somewhat unfortunate remark given in evidence on behalf of the Corporation is quoted. This was: " There are not any obligations imposed on the Corporation in respect of their receipt of these dues. The amounts levied are paid into and

form part of the borough fund of the Borough of Liverpool." It seems to one reading this evidence now that the Corporation had given away their case.

A witness in 1855 seems to sum up public opinion:— " The whole interests of the Mersey ought to be merged in one management, and that management should be a public management." To this might be added Miss Martineau's opinion, that " The Mersey must be treated, not like a fishpond of King John's but a national highway of commerce"; a comment which owes much to her reading of Adam Smith. She deals with the cry raised by firm individualists of the time of " Centralisation " and says in words that have point to-day that even those " who believe that management by a government department is better than another experiment of management by any sort of corporation, still allow that a certain amount of the representative element must be admitted."

But the conclusion of the matter she found to be this:— " Whatever may be the ultimate decision . . . no new claim can ever be advanced to improve and ornament a town at the expense of the commerce which passes its gates. No citizens will ever again dream of escaping the ordinary charges of town life because their borough lies at the mouth of a river : and no town clerk will ever again be heard to congratulate his fellow-citizens on their borough being paved, lighted, watched and guarded, extended and adorned by the inhabitants of other boroughs."

So the matter came to the arbitrament of the Mother of Parliaments, and I now quote from the speech of Mr. Hope Scott on behalf of the Corporation of Liverpool against the Mersey Conservancy and Docks Bill on Tuesday and Wednesday, June 23rd and 24th, 1857, before the Select Committee on Private Bills. The printed speech produces a book of some 224 pages and an interesting opening gambit is the following passage:—" I am aware that a Member of the Government has uttered against us sentiments of sufficient range and strength, not only to take away our town dues but to strip us of all our possessions and franchises ; dislodging by the way some of the principal corner stones of the constitution of the country." He went on to go far down into the principles which actuate constitutional government and challenged the justice of the step which had been taken in

dealing with evidence before the 1855 Committee set up to consider the administration of the port. He suggested that the principle of a Government Department (in this case the Board of Trade) being brought into direct contact with Committees on Private Bills, other than through the Government, was wrong. " It is that which is termed abroad bureaucracy and is certainly one of the elements most foreign to the feelings and habits of Englishmen."

We must remember how Mr. Labouchere had summed up the findings of that 1855 Committee. " I can only repeat that my impression is that the interests of the public are strongly involved in an agreement which will make the whole docks system on both sides of the Mersey one system, which will put it all under the management of one public trust and that the whole shall be purely and simply for the general interests of commerce." Now Mr. Hope Scott attacked the Board of Trade for daring to criticise the Liverpool project of coming to an agreement with Birkenhead based on local economics. On and on went the speech, delving into the obscurest corners of the negotiations which had been vainly proceeding between Liverpool and Birkenhead, citing the evidence of the famous engineer, Brunel, who had represented the Great Western Railway, dealing with " original plane " and " sketches prepared," but all leading to one inevitable result. The Conservancy Act of 1842 was dragged out against the background of municipal finance and responsibility and the powers and duties of the Acting Conservator are closely analysed.

Towards the long drawn-out conclusion Mr. Hope Scott quoted again from the Board of Trade Report. " They (the Liverpool Corporation) then vigorously opposed the Birkenhead Docks Bill. The subsequent history of Birkenhead is the history of a struggle with Liverpool and with Liverpool taxation." As Mr. Hope Scott said, that disposed of the matter and Liverpool's character. But he defended the City manfully. " Reformed or unreformed the Liverpool Corporation has shown the same spirit, has acted upon the same wise and liberal principles and has thereby developed a commercial scene such as is unequalled, I believe, at this moment in any port of Europe or America." " Sir," he goes on to say, " Manchester says it has made Liverpool. Sir, the East and West Indies, America and Africa and Australia have made Liverpool, just as they have made Manchester." One last

quotation before we leave this great debate. "What is the next thing ? It is to pull down Liverpool, to make Liverpool forsooth the Piraeus of such an Athens as Manchester."

These old quarrels rankled for a long time. In 1883 a pamphlet called "The Liverpool Toll Bar" was printed in Manchester. It contained this: "'One dog, one bone' has been Liverpool's motto and no little pettifogging tradesman in Slocum Pogis was ever so jealous of his neighbour as Liverpool has been."

But 1857 brought days of municipal government of our port to an end. The House of Commons Committee found the preamble to the bill proved but suggested no provision with regard to compensation for the town dues. The Corporation, however, pressed this claim before the House of Lords Committee and on the 6th August the Lord Chairman stated that compensation for their loss be agreed. So the Corporation came to terms and agreed to withdraw their opposition to the bill in consideration of the sum of £1,500,000.

Thus did the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board come into being—a body of 28 Members, 24 elected by the Dock Ratepayers, 4 nominated by the Government. The Lancashire towns, whose will had largely brought this event to pass, were not forgotten, for although not specifically mentioned in the Act at this time later legislation provides for information to their Town Clerks in the event of a Poll being necessary to select elective Members, and with such minor amendments as this the Board continues to function to this day. The Act reads: "That the rights now lawfully exercised by the Trustees of the Liverpool Corporation and by the Corporation of levying rates and dues on shipping . . . shall be transferred to the new trust . . . and applied to the benefit of the Port of Liverpool, and of the shipping and trade of the said Port."

That is the corner stone. It implies the setting up of a separate entity, a republic if you like to call it so, as individual a world as any of the great Hanseatic Ports of the past, and this bold step has borne fruit in the foundation of other great Trusts. In 1859 the Clyde Trust, then the Humber Conservancy Board, and in the first decade of this century, out of a jumble of private companies, the Port of London Authority.

How have they handled their stewardship ? Within the next four years they were obtaining powers to enclose the Dock Estate to the northward virtually as far as the existing northern boundary of the Gladstone system. During the 30

years following the constitution of the Board all know principles of economics as practised in the eighteenth century seemed to become unsound and men viewed, despite setbacks of great hardship, an apparently limitless expansion of trade. The last great purchases of land took place just after the turn of the century—the land to the north of the Gladstone, the Dingle lands and Tranmere.

As I see it, the development of the port has taken place in three main phases corresponding to phases in the national economy. First the period ending with the seventeenth century —a phase in which it was only necessary to give safe anchorage for the small vessels on short sea voyages. This called for no more constitutional organisation of a port authority than is called for in many a little south coast harbour to-day. Secondly, the phase of construction and expansion of dock works commencing with the Old Dock and culminating with the outbreak of war in 1914. I know people will say the Gladstone system was built after the first War, but it was planned and actually commenced by 1908. Third, the phase in which we now live when minds are turned not to an endless expansion of trade but to an increased tempo in handling existing traffic.

In the years that have passed since their constitution the Board have had to deal with the impact of four other Authorities on the Estuary, each meeting some economic tendency of the time.

These are :—

1. *Garston Docks*, the construction of which was actually commenced by the St. Helens Railway Company in 1853, towards the close of the railway boom, and which, of course, have developed as a part of the railway undertaking. Linked with this because of its effect on the town dues is ;

2. *The Upper Mersey Navigation Commission*, founded in 1876 to replace the individual efforts of shippers and traders to buoy the upper estuary. This is an elective body but also provides for representation of certain authorities and may be said to have used this Board's constitution as a guide. It is linked with the Garston Docks because the right of the Board to claim town dues at Garston was brought by the Upper Mersey Trustees who were given power to raise their own tolls.

3. *Manchester Ship Canal Company*, which after long negotiations and much bitter local feeling was constructed under a main Act of 1885 on a line unwillingly agreed to by the Board. This is really a municipal enterprise for although a public company the Manchester Corporation have a controlling interest. The protection given to the Board is in these words—" That nothing in this Act shall be deemed to affect any of the rights or privileges of the Port or Harbour of Liverpool."

4. The construction of *Bromborough Dock* by Lever Bros. This dock is within the Port and the Board's right to town dues has been preserved in an Agreement entered into with Levers, which also preserves the fact that the dock is used as a private dock designed for Levers' traffic and that a " concession " is paid to the Board on other kinds of traffic.

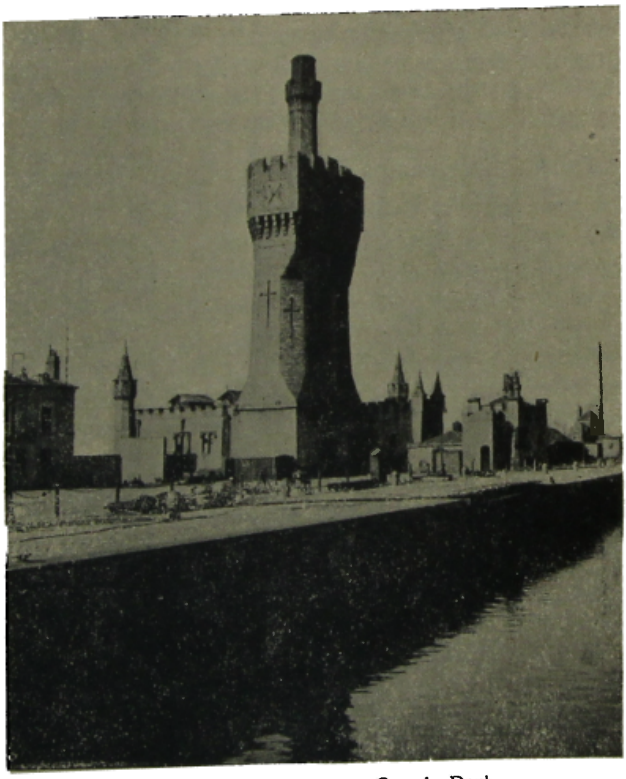
It is now time, perhaps, for us to sum up the main features that the construction of the Board achieves.

First, it is the setting up of a Trust of 28 Members, 4 nominated by the Government, and 24 elected by the Dock Ratepayers ; the vesting in this Trust of the Dock Estate and the conservancy of the port, i.e., right up to Warrington, the Upper Estuary being an essential feature of any protection of the sea approaches ; the carrying out of many duties in connection with such things as master porterage and warehousing. The Trust were empowered to collect revenue from ships and goods within certain statutory maxima or ceilings laid down by Parliament and as part of this revenue were empowered to purchase from the Corporation of Liverpool the right to collect the town dues, which to the ordinary public form part of a composite rate. Any alteration in these dues has to be sanctioned by the Minister of Transport as successor to the Board of Trade, there being no statutory maxima for these.

The significant fact that shows itself in the long period of the Board's constitution is the absence of any general desire to effect a change, although from time to time local Authorities have raised the question of their direct representation.

The conditions, volume and content of trade have changed enormously, new continents have been opened up and developed and still our 28 Members meet at 1 p.m. on Thursday and conduct their business. The reason for this permanence

of constitution lies, I think, in the fact that the constitution of the Board is an elastic one. By this I mean that a friendly caucus for the 24 Elective Members' seats takes place each year between the shipowners and traders who come as a general rule to mutual agreement on the representation of various trading interests, ships, grain, cotton, fruit and the rest. Something of this nature was done right back to the early days of dock electoral representation. I say as a general rule because every few years it comes about that agreement cannot be reached and the machinery laid down by Parliament for a Poll is put into operation.

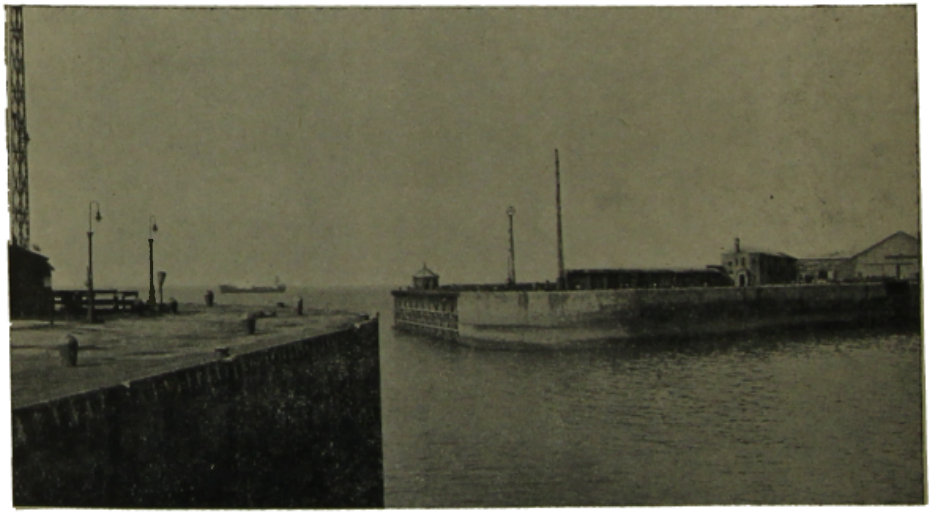


The Hydraulic Tower at Canada Dock

But in broad terms the good rule of " he who pays the piper calls the tune " applies. Now, where does this lead us to? It leads, in my opinion, to the fact that the present system of public ownership and administration is a good system, and provides for local autonomy. A centralised government simply

does not work when applied to the highly individual problems of a port which is, when all is said and done, a small republic with its own rules, its practices and its endless peculiarities of geography.

We have traced the story of government of a great national asset from the early days when some honest burgher in a leather jerkin argued with the Masters of little craft which had crept up the coast to this sheltered anchorage. We have seen the solemn burgesses of Tudor days debating the rights and wrongs of the Molyneux case and whether indeed that great family had the right to wrecks, which it was the unfortunate problem of the town to remove out of harm's way. We have noted the Town officials of Stuart times composing their endless sentences on the case of town dues, and the London Freemen. Then there has dawned the day of big business and with the background of the Virginia Plantations the need of dock construction. Perruques sat in Committee on it and doubtless arguments of high finance passed for long hours over the wine while churchwarden pipes were puffed. Gradually some sort of



Now doomed to extinction, the River Entrance to Canada Dock

co-ordinated control over port and channels was achieved, and as the century wore on grim-faced manufacturers began to urge their claims for consideration on the urbane merchants and ship-owners who, in their classic stone houses, weighed the results of their voyages and the cargoes which they tallied

in their great ledgers in those rooms smelling of spice—hardware to the West Coast, slaves on the middle passage, sugar home. What strange thoughts must have passed in some of those grave minds as the century of enlightenment, of Wilberforce and freedom, dawned. Still the City Fathers watched the revenues from a swiftly growing trade and thought of how fine their city, of which they were justly proud, could be made to look in consequence, and meanwhile in the grim cotton towns that the Chartists knew, the hard-headed manufacturers looked at the Mersey Toll Bar and talked and wrote and thought in the light of the political economy of the time, and as a result the Dock Board was born. Watch and ward the Board must keep for they have to contend not only with the chances and changes of trade in a world which has developed out of all recognition, but with the forces of nature in their estuary. But they do not forget that, as has been well said, " By the law of England every tidal navigable river is a King's Highway. That has been the law of this country as far back as Bracton."

So ends our tale. What changes the thoughts of man may yet make we know not—only that the King's Highway and the works upon it must be maintained for the common good. These destinies are safe in the hands of the great trust which we have the honour to serve.