

Liverpool timeline 1919-1933

1919:

- June: serious race riots at a time when Liverpool was hit hard by the post-war dislocation of international trade. Charles Wootton, a black ship's fireman (variously described as from either Bermuda or Trinidad), drowned in Queen's Dock, having been chased through the streets by a baying crowd of white 'John Bulls'.
- August: major disturbances and looting as a police strike occurred amidst widespread industrial militancy. The city centre resembled a 'war zone' with London Road described as 'the Ypres of Liverpool'. Warships were stationed in the Mersey and tanks and troops despatched to the city to restore order.

1920:

- February: Harrods dropped plans to open a Liverpool store, a symbolic precursor of the city's downward spiral in the inter-war decades.
- November: the 'Liverpool spectacular' of the night of 27-8 November when squads of local IRA guerrillas (or 'Shinners' as they were known) spread along the waterfront attacking warehouses and timber yards causing thousands of pounds of damage, during which a civilian watchman was shot dead.

1921:

- June: further IRA attacks, this time on railway, telephone and telegraph lines across Merseyside
- September: unemployed demonstrations demanding work or substantial maintenance with the Communist-led National Unemployed Workers Movement to the fore. On 12 September, demonstrators occupied the Walker Art Gallery but were forcibly evicted by police – 50 of the 156 arrested (including John Braddock and his future mother-in-law, Mary Bamber, mother of Bessie) sustained injuries.

1922:

- December: Liverpool contingent of the National Unemployed Workers Movement set out to join the hunger

march to London, recounted by George Garrett in 'The First Hunger March'.

- December: opening of the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight

1923:

- March: J.H. Hayes wins Labour's first parliamentary seat in Liverpool at a by-election in Edge Hill division: retained the seat with an increased share of the vote at the General Election in December.

1924:

- September: Liverpool 'Civic Week' at the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley, promoted as 'the second city of empire, a claim no longer justified, however, in demographic and statistical terms. Similar exercises in 'civic boosterism' to attract much-needed inward investment were held in the following years.
- September: Liverpool Memorial Hall opened by Lord Mayor, straight from the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley, at Givenchy lès la Bassée, the French mining village, in memory of the many Liverpoolian territorials who fought and fell there, notably in heroic defiance of German attack in April 1918.

1925:

- September: Labour Party Conference held in Liverpool, Communists banned from membership of the party.
- December: first shaft of the Mersey tunnel ceremonially sunk by Princess Mary. One of the outstanding engineering achievements of its age, the Queensway road tunnel opened to traffic in 1934.

1926:

- May: under the leadership of the Merseyside Council of Action, 100,000 workers called out locally in the General Strike, with little sign of weakening before the TUC called it off on 12 May.
- October: British Enka Artificial Silk factory opened at Aintree, the first success in attracting significant inward industrial investment to diversify the local economy.

1927:

- January: first meeting of the Executive Committee of the Bluecoat Society of Arts; having saved the Queen Anne building from demolition, the oldest in the city centre, the Society developed its use as the UK's first arts centre.
- July: Gladstone Dock system opened by King George V amid lavish civic celebration, a major investment in forlorn hope of placing Liverpool 'beyond serious rivalry as an emporium of sea-borne merchandise for many a day to come'. As it was, Liverpool was already losing 1% of its trade every year to other British ports.
- October: Knotty Ash estate bought by the Corporation for housing purposes. (see below on Speke, 1932)

1928:

- Dixie Dean scored a Football League record of 60 goals in the season as Everton won the First Division title
- September: inauguration of air liner service between Liverpool and Belfast

1929:

- April: ceremonial opening of the city section of the East Lancs Road, a major infrastructure investment to 'remove Liverpool from its geographical corner'.
- November: death of T.P. O'Connor, Irish nationalist MP for the Scotland division since 1885. Replaced by the staunchly Catholic Davie Logan, returned unopposed as Labour candidate in the ensuing by-election in December.

1930:

- February-May: major controversy within the Labour party, recently enlarged by the absorption of those who had previously supported Irish Nationalist and Catholic parties, when the site of the Brownlow Hill workhouse, formerly the largest in Europe, was sold by the Council to the Catholic Church for the construction of a cathedral
- September: Great Rail Pageant to celebrate the centenary of the Liverpool-Manchester railway, held on the largest open-air stage then erected in Britain.

1931:

- Highest recorded population for Liverpool in the decennial census: 855,688
- Summer: exhibition of Jacob Epstein's *Genesis*, a controversial sculpture of a pregnant woman, a cultural 'freak show' which attracted large crowds to the Bluecoat, bringing in much-needed funds.
- October: Tories won 10 seats in Liverpool in the General Election, gaining Edge Hill, Everton, Kirkdale and West Toxteth from Labour; only the Scotland division retained by Labour.
- The overall volume of trade through the Liverpool docks in 1931 was only 42% of the figure for 1924, a disastrous fall with adverse implications for the wider economy.

1932:

- April: the boundary was extended to include Speke, part of the 'suburbanization' of Liverpool. During the inter-war decades around 140,000 people, 15% of the total population, were rehoused in 33,555 new suburban houses, often outside the borough boundary. Homes built in the 1920s on low-density greenfield sites were mostly aimed at 'general needs'; those constructed in the 1930s were linked to slum clearance with replacement housing consisting either of inner-city flats built on cleared sites or suburban houses built to inferior standards than those of the 1920s.
- The worst year of the depression following the Wall Street crash of 1929: unemployment in Liverpool stood at 108,000 workers, a rate of 28% (even worse for the young with only 56% of men in their twenties in regular employment). Four years later in 1936, the unemployment rate was still high at 26%, double the national average.
- September: unemployed riots in Birkenhead and in Islington Square, Liverpool
- Total insured employment in Merseyside declined between 1924 and 1932 by 21% in transport; 25% in commerce; 33% in river and dock services; 39% in railways; and by over 50% in shipbuilding and repair.

1933:

- June: impressive ceremony at laying of the foundation stone of the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Christ the King to Lutyens' epic design – 'the cathedral that never was'.
- July: opening of the municipal airport at Speke
- Publication in New York of Pat O'Mara *The Autobiography of a Liverpool Irish Slummy*.