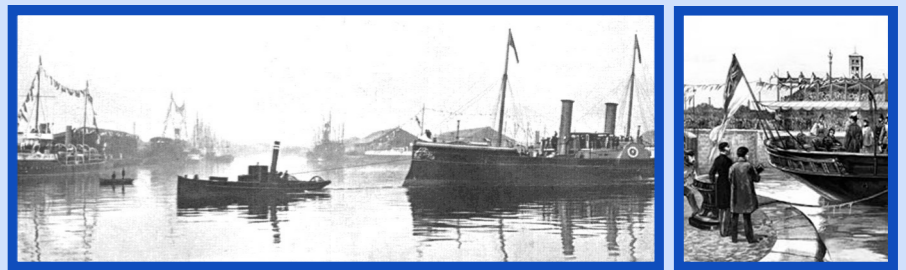
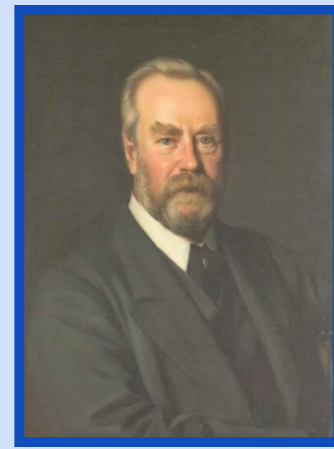
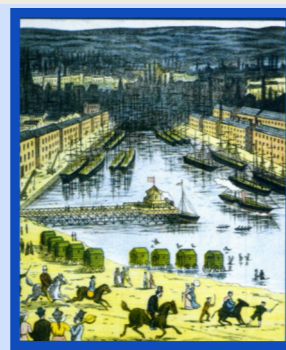
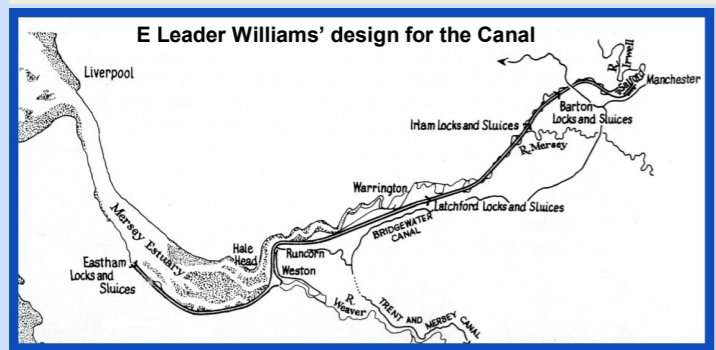


# Manchester Ship Canal



## Another canal?

In the 130 years following the 1761 opening of the Bridgewater Canal, Manchester became one of the world's foremost industrial cities. Great rivalry existed between Manchester and Liverpool. Port taxes levied at Liverpool made imports and exports more expensive for Manchester merchants, who had long wanted a direct link to the sea. The Bridgewater Canal extension to Runcorn was a valuable link, but required transfers from barges to ocean-going vessels in the Port of Liverpool.



Lord Wilbraham Egerton



Panorama of the canal entrance at Eastham during construction

## Canal technology and fortunes for entrepreneurs

Although steam cranes, 'steam-navvies' were used, as can be seen in the picture above, much of the work was done by human navvies, working in huge gangs. Hut villages, such as that shown below near Warrington, sprang up along the line of the canal and just as quickly disappeared when the navvies moved on.

A tale is told of Tommy Mosedale, whose land, rich in clay, was crossed by the canal. He saw his chance, set up a brick kiln, took the clay being dug out, made bricks and sold them back to the Ship Canal Company - and to others - thereby making a fortune.

The canal linked by locks to the Bridgewater Canal at Runcorn while Pomona locks in Manchester docks form another link to the older canal as the colour picture shows.

Bridges had to be constructed to carry roads and railways across the canal, high enough to allow ocean going vessels to use the Ship Canal. The vessels needed special funnels and masts - some telescoped, others were removed at Runcorn.

Sadly, James Brindley's aqueduct at Barton stood in the way of progress and had to be demolished to make way for the Ship Canal. It is still possible to see the piers of the old structure, beside the swing aqueduct, which is another world first in engineering terms.

The canal was opened to traffic on 1 January 1894 and opened by Queen Victoria on 21 May of that year. She was the guest of the Earl and Countess of Ellesmere and stayed once again at Worsley New Hall. The pictures above show boats dressed overall and the Queen aboard the steam boat being towed by a tug during the opening.

## SALFORD QUAYS



THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR SALFORD DOCKS

Ideas for a ship canal had been discussed since the 1820s but never acted upon. In 1844 ownership of the Mersey & Irwell Navigation was transferred to the Bridgewater Trustees, and in 1872 it was sold to The Bridgewater Navigation Company for over £1million (£73.6 million today). The navigation had by then fallen into disrepair; in 1882 it was described as being 'hopelessly choked with silt and filth' and was open to 50-ton boats for only 47 out of 311 working days.

In a 1876 letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, George Hicks said that improvements to the river navigation were needed. Engineer and manufacturer Daniel Adamson worked with Hicks and others to develop a plan for a canal from Manchester, which involved canalising the rivers Irwell and Mersey as far as Thelwall, near Warrington. From here to the estuary the river Mersey meanders, so a straight bypass channel was needed to reach the south side of the Mersey estuary near Ellesmere Port at Eastham locks. The route was chosen to minimise the number of locks needed - at Mode Wheel (Salford), Barton, Irlam, Latchford (Warrington) and Eastham. It was a huge project, requiring Acts of Parliament before it could go ahead. There was great opposition especially from Liverpool and from railway companies. Cartoons such as the one above suggested that in future there might be bathing machines and a seaside pier at Manchester Docks!

An enormous amount of money was needed and in addition to wealthy backers, ordinary people were encouraged to buy shares - a voucher scheme allowed them to pay small amounts until they had enough for a £10 share. It was often called 'The People's Canal'. The Ship Canal Company was obliged by law to buy both the Mersey & Irwell Navigation and the Bridgewater Canal companies and a cheque for £1,710,000 was written. It was the largest cheque ever presented up to that date.



Work began in 1891 at Eastham, where Lord Egerton of Tatton, Chairman of the Company, used an ordinary navvy's spade to cut the first sod. All the Directors followed suit and the cut sods were loaded into a barrow and wheeled away by Edward Leader Williams, the canal's Chief Engineer, pictured here on the right. He was knighted at the opening ceremony.



Until the 1970s the canal was busy with ships from all over the world. Manchester Liners, for example, brought grain from the Canadian prairies, through the Great Lakes and along the St Lawrence Seaway, across the Atlantic and into Manchester Docks where Kellogg's turned it into breakfast cereals.

In recent years, the huge increase in the size of shipping made the canal uneconomic and trade declined. Pleasure use continues as shown below and there are ambitious plans to regenerate the canal for commercial use.

Meanwhile the docks have been transformed into Salford Quays, complete with the Lowry, Imperial War Museum North and the BBC's Media City.

