

# Blacon History Newsletter



February 2022

Welcome to the Blacon History newsletter, the Newsletter goes out either digitally or in printed format to a large number of Blacon residents. Our main aim is to research and distribute local historical information to our membership and the wider Blacon & Chester community. Additionally to work with the local community and schools to enable residents old and young to discover their local history and provide a sense of belonging. To work with other institutions to enhance and provide a local learning resource for those who are able and unable to access new technology.

Please contact us at [blaconhistory@gmail.com](mailto:blaconhistory@gmail.com)

Or take a look at our website <http://www.blaconhistorygroup.org/>

For more information If you are unable to access technology then contact either

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## The River Dee

The name Dee appears to derive from the Brythonic *dēvā*: "River of the Goddess"

The River Dee estuary is unusual in that comparatively little water occupies so large a basin. One theory is that larger rivers such as the Severn and the Mersey once flowed into the Dee. The current view is that the estuary owes its origin to the passage of glacial ice pushing south-eastwards from the Irish Sea during successive ice ages; eroding a broad and shallow iceway through the relatively soft Triassic sandstones and Coal Measures mudstones which underlie the area.

For a period, the Mersey may also have flowed into the Dee through Sealand by means of a channel which it cut through the base of the Wirral Peninsula, running through the Backford dip and near to what is now Blacon Point.

The low tide route of the River Dee ran from the Irish Sea to Chester along the bank below Parkgate, Burton, Shotwick and Blacon. This channel was prone to silting so that ships trying to get to the then port of Chester often ran aground because of the lack of water depth. Interestingly the centre of this channel was used to determine the boundary between England and Wales from Blacon Point to beyond Burton.

**Blacon is mentioned In 1698 William III, 1698-9: An Act to enable the Mayor and Citizens of the City of Chester to recover and preserve the Navigation upon the River Dee in the description below.**

**"and thence following the said River on the Northside thereof at Low-water Mark to that Part or Side of the said River which lyeth directly opposite to Blacon-Point aforesaid South-west by West from the said Blacon-Point and no further and from thence to the aforesaid Point of Land distant One hundred Yards from Blacon-Point South-east from the said Blacon-Point and from thence to the said Side of the River or Place where the River now runneth at One hundred eighty three Yards Distance from the said Starting Stone as aforesaid"**

**XVIII. And in respect of setting up Sluices, &c. for carrying off Water.**

**"Provided alsoe That it shall and may be lawfull to and for the said Ann Offley and the Lords Owners or Proprietors of the said Lordship or Mannor of Blacon and of the Grounds or Marshes contiguous and adjacent to the Banks of the said River "**

**XIX. And for Satisfaction to the said Ann Offley for any Damage that may be done by the cutting through the Marsh, and otherwise, as herein mentioned.**

**Provided alsoe That in case the new intended Channell shall be cutt or made through the Marsh now bearing Grasse within Four hundred and fifty Yards Southwards from that part of Blacon-hill which lyeth directly under the House called Blacon-house then the said Mayor and Citizens and their Successors shall and are hereby made**

.These paragraphs describes a Blacon House which stood on blacon hill and probably dates back to the 1700's .We don't know where this building stood was it possible a new building was built on the site of the original blacon Hall which was destroyed by the Royalist forces during the English civil war ?. More details of 1698 act below.

## **XXII. Proviso for compelling Corporation to furnish Two Ferry Boats, when the River is not fordable between Blacon Point and Burton Head.**

*Such Boats to be free; Corporation refusing, &c. to provide the same may be fined; Such Fine to be levied by Distress; Penalties how applied.*

¶ And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid That in case the Channel of the said River shall by the said Navigation become soe deep as that at Low-Water when the Tide of Sea is out of and no Flood of Fresh Water is in the said River the same shall not be fordable for Passengers on Horseback or for Carts or Carriages in any Part of the said River between Blacon-Point and Burton-Head .

This is an interesting passage describing a Ferry Service between Blacon Point and Burton head.

## **SHIP BUILDING ON THE RIVER DEE [Near Chester]**

The Romans were the first to build a ship of any size on the Dee and their boatyard was probably on what historically was known as the Roodeye [Roodee] here in Chester. However, it was not until medieval times that serious boatbuilding began although it did not become a substantial industry until the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The relevantly local supply of timber from Delamere and North Wales was probably an important factor ?

Records have revealed that small scale shipbuilding also began in 1740 when land was let for the purpose of shipbuilding on the Roodeye. Not surprisingly the simultaneous canalization of the Dee from Chester past Connahs Quay lead to shipbuilding being more commercially viable. Again records show that at least 450 ships were built from the 18<sup>th</sup> century which was far more than in the nearby Merseyside.

Inevitably the canalization of the Dee meant shipyards were built along the entire length of the tidal reaches particularly on the Welsh side of the river in Saltney, Sandycroft, Queensferry, Connahs Quay, Flint, Bagillt, Mostyn and Talacre most of which also had the benefit of the nearby railway later on. Difficult as it may be to imagine now there was also yards in Parkgate and Neston.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century Chester shipyards included :-

- John & Joseph Troughton – Chester Roodeye by the Chester Old Gas works site [1738-1818]
- Peter Jackson – River Dee Co Yard [1767-1800]
- Thomas Makin- – River Dee Co Yard [1787-1791]
- William Courtney – River Dee Co Yard [1800-1820]
- Wm Mulvey – River Dee Co Yard [1820-1852]
- John Wilson – Chester Roodeye [1828-?]
- George Cramm – Chester Roodeye [1852-1856]
- Wm Beshton – Chester Roodeye [1855-1865]
- Cox & Miller –River Dee Co Yard [1857-1869]

Dave Cartwright

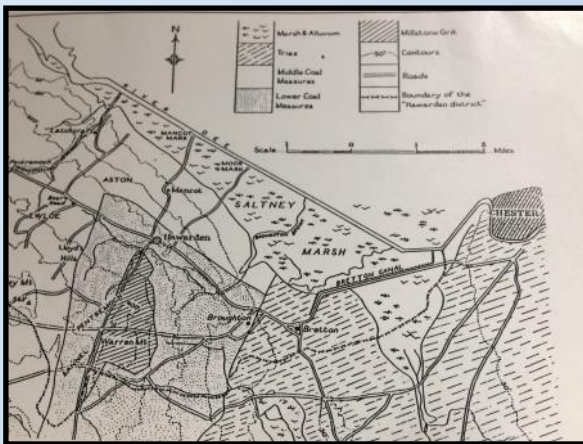
Acknowledges Mike Griffiths' "The History Of The River Dee" and David Berry's "The Dee Way" for their factual content.

It is quite amazing to imagine that most of the ships built here in Chester would have had to navigate the ever shifting sands of the Dee as they passed by at Blacon Point mentioned in the earlier article.

Sadly despite the canalization of the Dee in circa 1740 and the later reluctance for financial reasons to continue with the dredging maintenance ship building declined on the river Dee and unfortunately for Chester the Mersey and the port of Liverpool took over.

Dave Cartwright

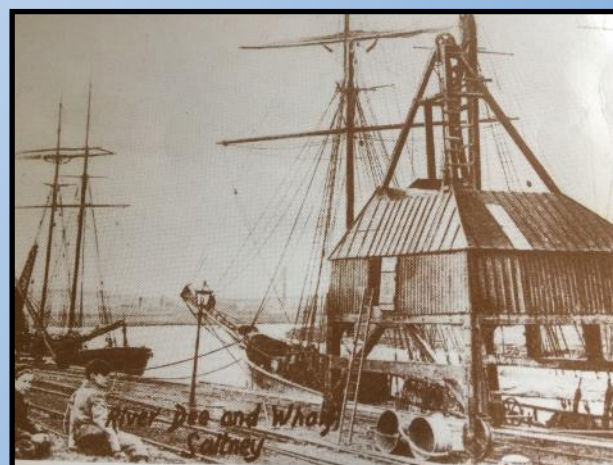
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**Dee Estuary circa 1750**



**crichton's Yard & Slipway**



**.River Dee & Saltney Wharf**

Acknowledgement Images and photographs Saltney History society