



Parkgate middle slip in about 1930. The water was still just about deep enough for fishermen to unload their catch. At this time the marsh had reached Moorside.



Looking towards Sheldrakes at Banks Road, Heswall from Riverbank Road slipway. This photo shows how far the marsh had spread by 1998.

Changing the course of the River Dee and diverting the flow, caused rapid silting as tides deposited vast amounts of silt at Sealand. This created an ever spreading marsh which kept backing up along the estuary towards Parkgate and Heswall. Also due to the changing tidal flows, the Hoyle Lake (once a 30 foot deep anchorage at low tide) gradually filled in, due to shifting sand banks. The River Dee Company came to possess thousands of acres of marshland reclaimed from the sea which had spread from Sealand to Burton. The Company received thousands of pounds a year in rent from these lands and it appeared that it was more concerned in recovering and leasing the marshlands than keeping the New Cut to the required depth for shipping. This resulted in the responsibility of the maintenance and upkeep of the New Cut being taken out of the hands of the River Dee Company and given to the Dee Conservancy Board in 1899. Due to the progressive silting of the River Dee, which made it difficult for shipping to reach Chester, the Welsh ports along the New Cut had become more important. But eventually, partly due to gradual silting of the New Cut, shipbuilding had ceased by the Second World War and by the 1950s, merchant shipping was more or less finished. The last locally owned ships belonged to Coppack's, the old shipowning family from Connah's Quay. At Sealand (which means land reclaimed from the sea) Shotton Steelworks, R.A.F. Sealand, Deeside Industrial Park, Shotton Paper Mills etc and the houses of Garden City had been built. Along the Wirral coast, the marshes had choked Parkgate and Heswall and their fishing fleets were forced to operate from moorings at Sally's Cottage, Thurstaston. By the 1960s, the mud had ruined Gayton Sands and day trippers who once visited Heswall Shore for a Sunday stroll and ice creams at Mrs Mills shop at the bottom of Banks Road, or at Broadway Stores or Mathias' in Broad Lane, stopped coming. Heswall and Parkgate fishing fleets were in decline by the 1960s, and have long since ceased to operate. Also, due to Gayton Gutter becoming so shallow, the Dee Sailing Club abandoned its premises (now Sheldrakes restaurant) and built a new Club at Caldy which opened in 1982. However, boats can still use Heswall Boatyard for repairs, but due to Gayton Gutter being so shallow, it is becoming more and more difficult to get in and out. Sadly, the marsh continues to spread year by year; let's hope it never reaches Hilbre.




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