



Stories of steps

Stories
collected
from the
Herculaneum
Steps,
Liverpool

"I remember coming down
meet me da

Stories of Steps

"Living at the Edge is a very real experience for those who live & work near the Herculaneum Steps. The steps have been a link to the River Mersey for generations, initially to get to work at the docks & in later years to socialise, exercise, shop & for recreation.

"As an artist I have been challenged & inspired by the people I met & the stories they shared. Participants gathered the stories & then worked together to create a way to share them.

"L@tE projects invite people to respond creatively to their environment. This project looked at how people & places are linked via their steps & how lives are affected by the city's development over time."

Janette Porter, Living at the Edge

"We helped develop this project to enable local people to explore what their local environment means to them & what their aspirations are for their surroundings & community." *Annie Merry, Operation EDEN*

"The Creative Communities initiative is the largest programme of public & community art in the UK. Unheard voices are being given their say & spectators are becoming participants, as thousands of local people play a role in defining & shaping the cultural & everyday life of the city. Stories of Steps has captured some of those untold stories & engaged people in a process of sharing & preserving memories about their local environment - where they live." *Councillor Berni Turner, Executive Member for Environment & Heritage, Liverpool City Council.*

"Cosmopolitan Housing Association are proud to be involved with this community project, which has allowed local people to reflect their memories that are recorded & documented for others to remember & enjoy."

Diane Maddock, Cosmopolitan Housing





“I remember, this is going back almost 50 years ago, there used to be a policeman in a hut at the top of the steps. The seafarers and dockers used to go up and down as the ships were in the docks below.”

“My mother told me she used the steps to go down to a boat my Grandfather owned that was kept near the dock - in the boat she would curl up with a good book and have an uninterrupted read. Later I remember Shellmex taking over the old hospital building and seeing oil tankers from the steps.”



“It’s quicker to get down to the prom and the Britannia in the summer.”

“We used to make houses in the trees over the redbrick wall – the policeman’s fields.”

“I carried a ‘coach’ pram complete with baby from the bottom to the top after mistakenly believing I was fit and strong enough to do it (silly boy). Approx 30 mins after starting I arrived at top totally knackered.”



“I can go down but I can’t get back up, it takes me a long time to get back! I used to go down with the kids & the pram, it was a long way back.”

“My recollection is when dock was open – a policeman’s box / hut was here, cos every dock gate had a policeman there. Shell, Esso, Fina, National Oil companies were here & Dingle Oil Carriers. I used to bring my children here to watch.”

“I use the steps to go to the local shop and get the buses to town. I use the steps every day.”



“You should get a story about the tenements – 6 blocks – Dingle House, South Hill Road, South Hill House, Dingle Lane, Beloe St, Dingle Mount”

“Well ... we got the bus at the Pier Head – we used to get off at the Iron Bridge, but the bus went past so we had to go into that new estate. So we looked for the old steps to see if they were still there. We started walking up and we were absolutely knackered and we still had to walk up the streets to the Beresford for oxygen and a pint.”





“The steps are $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way on my long run. Always UP!!
Through Princes Park, then Sefton Park, on to Otterspool Park and then the prom. Run to the top of the steps before Garswood Street and back to Devonshire Road.”





“I’m not from the area and my first impression was the view, which you don’t get anywhere else. Also the contrasts between old & new. There’s a sense of history but also of things happening.”

“I was not allowed to use the steps as a child because my mum did not want me to be far away from her.”

“I remember watching the boats at the bottom of the steps! When we were kids we used to go down the steps, a gang of us, and then we’d go on the swings behind Shorefields School. We used to go to Browns Farms to buy big arms full of rhubarb for 3 pennies.”



“I like to walk down the steps to the waterfront.”

“In the middle of the 1950s my husband worked as a sparky on the Pilot Boats. When the ships far out in the river had trouble with electrics he would go and fix them day and night. We lived close by so he used to go down the dockers’ steps. His office was by the 3 houses on the far side by the river.”

“I have to use the stairs to get to work and back each day.”





“My memories ... Stone building at top of steps called the ‘crow’s nest’. We used to try to get past the crows nest! ... Indian ships arriving in and the sailors used to swim in Mersey ... Lady lived at top arguing with her hubby on a crane in front ... Dockers used to give sandwiches to the kids after work ... I was not allowed to use steps – only dockers were allowed”

“I ran down the steps and took a picture of the Queen opening the garden festival”



"I never got on them steps because the policeman stopped ya. He wouldn't let you past – I've never been down them steps."

"I remember coming down here in 1960 to meet me dad coming off the banana boats from Trinidad."

"I climb the steps most days to get to work at Halewood, where I work. The best thing about it is coming down, the worst is coming up pushing the bike."



“My story of steps is walking down to go to the gym (Greens) every day.”

“Irish Kelly boats were here with coal, where 2 big cranes would lift wagon and put on boat. Capstan (electric) would shunt wagons down. There were 3 or 4 railway lines along. Summer walks, especially if tide was low. Graving docks with oil pipes where they used to do repairs.

Buoys stores which repaired the buoys and replaced gas bottles (along the front).”



We used to call it
the house.

I did it easily to
do the work of my
own way but at 7
remember

just
there was a
gate
This gate had
to be brought
to me
not moved

South wall
2nd, 1st

long steps
which had big
holes in them
filled with water
as there were
mounds of sandstone

When the shore was
here it was slow.

large stones at
the bottom small ones

which we used to
collect + take home +
we used to clean the
steps, our mothers gave
us a bucket of water
+ we always love doing this at
look us along the all over
mothers seemed delighted with
the sandstone

once in
a head
land by
the water
+ single
the water, crack

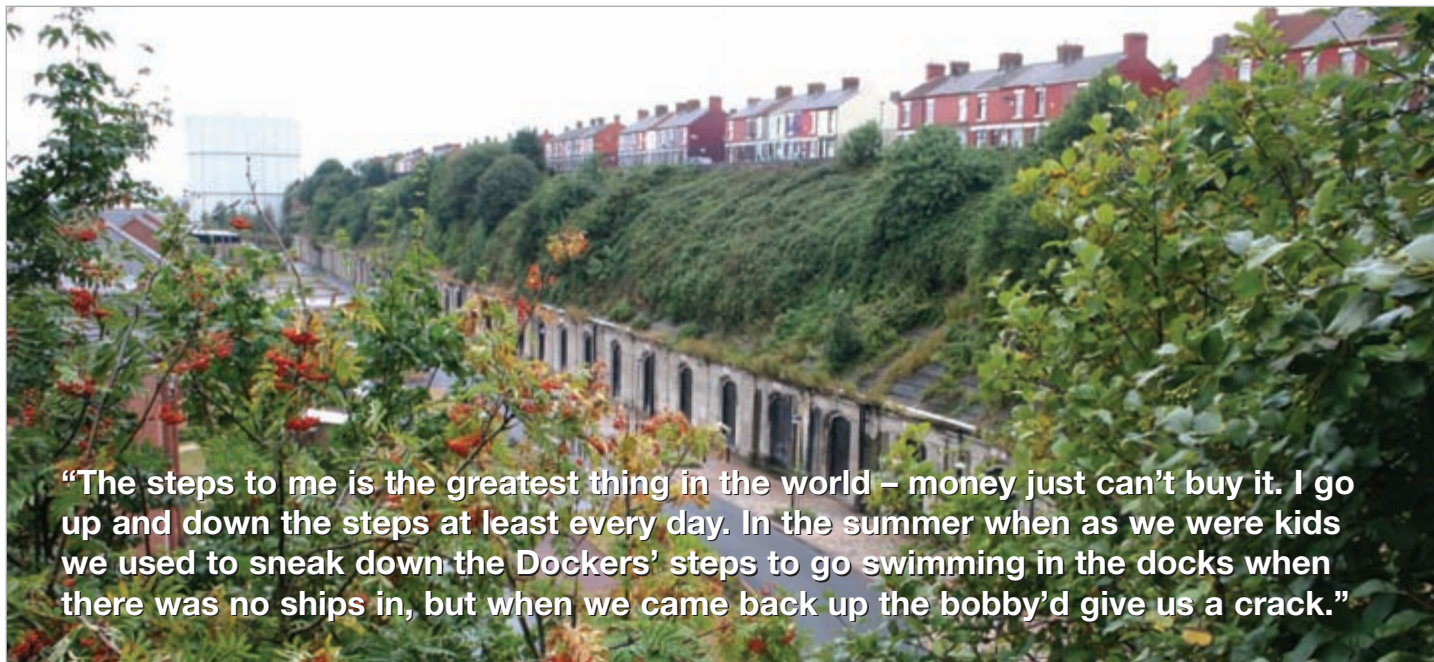
I remember
running for
school to
see the place
the first
I was about
8 or 10

“I used to take old stale crusts to the blacksmith’s horse at Leeches on South Hill Road – it was lonely.”

“We still have a walk down the steps along Sefton Street, through Brunswick station and back up to Cockburn Street. We just do it for exercise.”

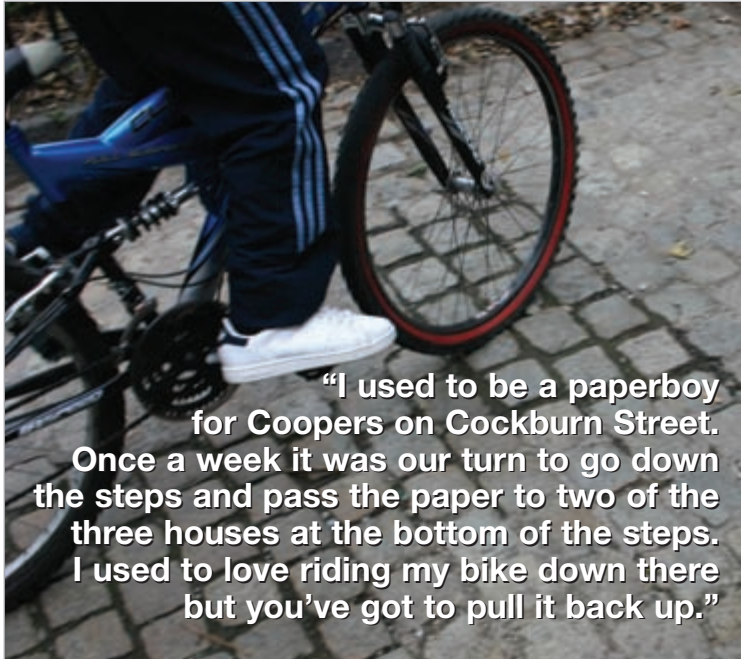
“I went down the steps for the garden festival. Gates were open at sunrise and closed at sunset – they go down there to the Britannia. The residents association fought to keep the steps open.”





“The steps to me is the greatest thing in the world – money just can’t buy it. I go up and down the steps at least every day. In the summer when as we were kids we used to sneak down the Dockers’ steps to go swimming in the docks when there was no ships in, but when we came back up the bobby’d give us a crack.”





"I used to be a paperboy for Coopers on Cockburn Street. Once a week it was our turn to go down the steps and pass the paper to two of the three houses at the bottom of the steps. I used to love riding my bike down there but you've got to pull it back up."

"I have suffered for many years with severe depression and it was suggested to me that I join a gym to relieve my stress. I joined Greens gym on Riverside Drive and now feel after 6 months at the gym a lot more positive about myself as I walk down the steps to get there."

"I remember when I was little – we used to watch the trains and we'd stand on the bridge and the trains would let their smoke out."



“My story of the steps is of new years eve many years ago. Hundreds of locals would gather along by the railings to watch the new year come in. The ships blew their hooters and fireworks would go off. Most of us would go down the steps to get a better view of all the ships in the Mersey. Alas this tradition has slowly died.”



“I used to take me pram up and down with 2 kids in it. Me husband used to lift the pram up to get it back up the steps. He’d walk all the way to the Britannia and back.”



“I was a season ticket holder for the Garden Festival and used the steps every day to visit.”





“As a very young child, 3-4 years old, standing at the rails watching the ships at work in the Herculaneum Dock.”



“Seeing the progress on the Riverside with the new development from the 1980s onwards. A new confidence in the area.”

“The water came straight up and the coal boat came into the dock. As children we used to watch the boats. Used to live near mill – this was a day out with 4 sisters - we’d watch for hours the coal getting unloaded onto little trains”



“I have never been to the steps before but I came to the Herculaneum Dock on my 16th Birthday in 1984 when it was a car park for the garden festival. At that time it was just a piece of filled-in waste ground with stone chippings, used as a car park and we got on the miniature railway to take us to the festival gate. My family thought it was a really good way to use a park and ride. I realised where I was today by looking at the doors to the stores from the steps.”



"I remember coming down the steps with all my family in 1984 after five o'clock to get cheap entrance to the Garden Festival."

"New Year – all streets would open their doors, congregate along Grafton Street and have a jig in the street."

"By Greens there used to be a bridge which linked to a station in Park Road, linked to Herculaneum Station. Rumour has it that they filled in the dock and buried a lot of anthrax hides. It was a fever hospital before the oil tankers."

"We used to walk down to go to the Cassie shore to have a swim"





"I go down the steps every day with the pram, it's dangerous - too steep!"

"We used to come down to the cast iron shore with mum, aunties & cousins. We would share sandwiches & homemade lemonade. We used to play in the water – I learned to swim here. We had lovely days, like a holiday."

"I used to hang around here when I was a lad. We used to make dens over the fence with wood. I was the youngest and smallest and me mates would give me a lift over. I got stuck once and the fire brigade had to come and get me."



“At bottom of steps is a sandstone wall with dates in from 1800s. The corporation cemented over the dates during the garden festival. Have these been uncovered? The dates were graffiti from 1800s.”

“The dockers walking up the steps at lunchtime and knocking off time. They used to walk up the entry at Garswood Street towards Cockburn Street. My uncle Harold used to walk up the steps wearing a bowler hat – he was a boss.”

“The flood....it was very, very heavy rain and it came up to the railings and it flowed down the steps and over the embankment into the Herculaneum, they put in more grids. It's never been like that again, there wasn't enough grids.”




“I walk to and from work every day on these steps it's good exercise I meet lots of people on the steps, there's one guy called Sam he's so nice so friendly.”

“The public had no access to here – it wasn't opened up till 1984. It was a dangerous area here – an old dock there with no railings.”

“Me granddad worked for a shipping company. He used to get the train up to Dingle Overhead, go down the steps to the caves. When he came back up I'd help him with the nuts, bolts and rivets – that was in the 50s.”





“My strongest memory was watching the ships coaling – we used to go round the bottom & the ships would go and coal and we’d end up covered in coal slack & everything. But they used to fascinate me. We couldn’t go down to the Mersey – there were docks all along there.

We had one of the sea captains here, with a garden full of shells from all over the world.”

“My memory of the steps has been using the steps from our local gym, Beresford Road / Cockburn Street. Most of the lads run from the gym along Grafton Street, down the steps, along the Dock Road towards Jericho Lane, turn back again and back up the steps to the gym. To this day loads of youngsters and a lot of grown ups still use the steps as part of their training. As long as I can remember we have used this way and hope the future generation will do the steps.”



Thanks to

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