

MERSEY GATEWAY ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

Exploring the Mersey Estuary



Historical Overview

The Mersey Estuary has a long history of industrial activity, dating back to the Industrial Revolution. Factories and shipyards once lined the river, significantly impacting water quality and local wildlife.

By the mid-20th century, pollution levels in the Mersey were alarmingly high. The estuary was once considered one of the most polluted in Europe, with little to no aquatic life in certain areas.

Over the past 50 years however, significant efforts have been made to restore and protect this vital ecosystem which today is thriving and full of life.

The Mersey Basin Campaign (1985-2010) played a crucial role in cleaning up the river. It brought together businesses, local authorities, and communities to improve water quality and restore habitats. Today, it's considered one of

the most successful environmental clean-up projects in the world.

- Widnes dock was the first rail-to-ship dock in the world.
- The Sankey (St. Helens) canal opened in 1759 and is the first of the industrial age.
- Until the 1960's Wigg Island was a chemical works, producing sulphuric acid and fertilizer, and mustard gas during World War II.
- The name Runcorn derives from Old English words for 'a wide cove'.

Local Ecology

From mudflats and saltmarshes to hedgerows and woodland, the Upper Mersey Estuary is a dynamic and unique natural place. With a rich tapestry of different habitats, the area provides a heaven for wildlife, from birds and mammals to plants and plankton.



- There are over 50 species of fish living in the river Mersey today!

- Mersey salmon - Atlantic salmon migrate up the Mersey once a year to spawn. Young salmon will remain in the upper freshwater regions of the river for up to three years after they hatch, and once they are big enough, they will return to the Irish Sea during springtime.
- The river Mersey runs 70m from Manchester/peaks to Liverpool Bay. It has the 2nd highest tidal range in the UK.

- The estuary is home to many plant species of interest, including orchids like fragrant orchid, marsh orchid, and bee orchid.
- The Upper Mersey Estuary and surrounding canals are used several of the UK's 18 species of bat including: pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule, and an unidentified myotis sp.

Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust



The Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust (MGET) works to promote the conservation, protection, and improvement of the Upper Mersey Estuary and surrounding greenspaces.

- We work with local communities to showcase what's on their doorstep and highlight how important the estuarine and surrounding habitats are for our wildlife.
- The Upper Mersey Estuary is an internationally renowned Living Laboratory, offering us opportunities to study our local environment. We monitor the environment which helps

us to understand changes within the estuary and beyond.

- Projects are an important element of our work, and we are continuously working on new ideas in areas such as citizen science, eDNA and habitat enhancement.
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For more information: www.mget.org.uk or find us on social media @mgenvtrust.

