

**EDWARD LEAR, 1812-1888**

Lear was a creative soul; an Artist, Illustrator, Author, Poet and Musician. In his 20s he often stayed with the Earl of Derby at Knowsley Hall, illustrating his private menagerie and producing his first nonsense poems for the Earl's children.

In 1835 Lear painted his first known watercolour, a view from Knowsley over the fields towards Liverpool and beyond, past the liminal edges of land and water, marshes and dunes to where the Mersey feeds into the Irish Sea; he knew something of this place.

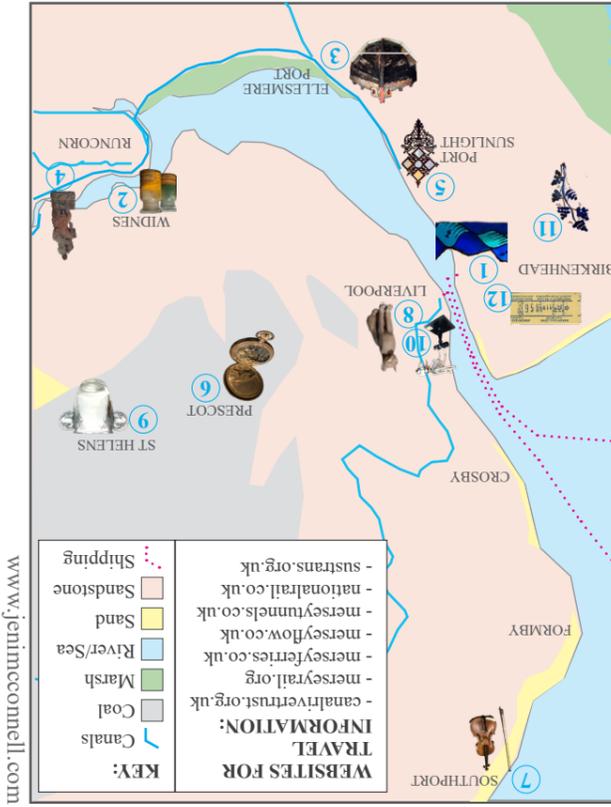
**The Owl and the Pussy-Cat**

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea  
 In a beautiful pea-green boat,  
 They took some honey, and plenty of money,  
 Wrapped up in a five-pound note.  
 The Owl looked up to the stars above,  
 And sang to a small guitar,  
 "O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,  
 What a beautiful Pussy you are,  
 You are, You are!  
 What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!  
 How charmingly sweet you sing!  
 O let us be married! too long we have tarted:  
 But what shall we do for a ring?"  
 They sailed away, for a year and a day,  
 To the land where the Bong-tree grows,  
 And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood,  
 With a ring at the end of his nose,  
 His nose, His nose,  
 With a ring at the end of his nose.  
 "Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling  
 Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."  
 So they took it away, and were married next day  
 By the Turkey who lives on the hill.  
 They dined on mince, and slices of quince,  
 Which they ate with a runcible spoon;  
 And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,  
 They danced by the light of the moon,  
 The moon, The moon,  
 They danced by the light of the moon.

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- DESTINATIONS:**
- 1 Birkenhead Priory & St Mary's Tower
  - 2 Catalyst Science Discovery Centre & Museum
  - 3 National Waterways Museum
  - 4 Norton Priory Museum & Gardens
  - 5 Port Sunlight Village & Museum
  - 6 Prescott Museum
  - 7 The Atkinson
  - 8 The Garstang Museum of Archaeology
  - 9 The World of Glass
  - 10 Victoria Gallery & Museum
  - 11 Williamson Art Gallery & Museum
  - 12 Wirral Transport Museum



**The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea...**

EXPLORING 12 MUSEUM COLLECTIONS  
 CONNECTED BY ONE GREAT RIVER

## TO UNDERSTAND THE COLLECTIONS - look to the place ...

### THE LAND, THE RIVER AND THE SEA

The area of North West England in which these fascinating museums are located is generally low lying, with a dominant underlying geology of sandstone. In the north east the South Lancashire coal beds and sand deposits also appear.

Intersected by a significant waterway, the Mersey changes as it flows west from its tidal extremity at Warrington to a snaking estuary. Narrowing between Runcorn-Widnes and Birkenhead-Liverpool, it then opens through Liverpool Bay into the Irish Sea and the world beyond. Daily, the river's tidal ebb and flow scours the deep channel, lifting and tumbling mud and sand, regularly shifting its course, making navigation difficult. Once out into the bay, the water begins to deposit its load, adding to the sandbanks and sandy coastline from Formby to Southport and beyond. Where water meets land there are no dramatic cliffs, estuarine edges are marshy, coastal edges undulate with dunes. Human intervention has been shaped by these features, both inextricably intertwined, telling the history of this place.

Early travellers and settlers took advantage of coastal edges, river narrows and vantage points. Roman invaders bridged the Mersey at Warrington. The coastline saw huge invasions by Vikings, who left their mark in the region's DNA. Ethelfleda, Queen of the Mercians, built a fortified burgh at Runcorn and nearby in 1070 Halton Castle was built; where King John stayed as he granted Liverpool its charter, in 1207. At this time Wirral, Delamere and West Derby were Royal hunting forests.

The earliest recorded ferry crossings were established in 1150 by **Birkenhead & Norton Priors**, who had rights to receive part of the tolls for offering a safe river passage. Devastating floods in 1331 affected farming land and must have affected river crossings too. It is suggested that the largest surviving medieval statue of St Christopher, the patron saint of travellers at **Norton Priory** was created in response to these, dating to the period when its status was raised to mitred abbey. Both priories closed in the Dissolution of 1536 and both sites were attacked, or used, during the English Civil War.

### INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

If we turn our backs to the river we find evidence of resources which have significantly shaped the industrial history of this region; coal, salt, iron ore, oak forests, rich clay and fertile agricultural land. These drove the imperative to mechanically produce goods with which to improve our lives.

The Canal Age began with two significant firsts; the opening of the Sankey Canal in 1757 and the Bridgewater Canal in 1776. Both canals opened onto the river, at Widnes and Runcorn respectively, giving a direct passage to Liverpool for onward shipment to coastal towns and the world. Inland, along the Sankey Canal, The British Plate Glass company opened in 1772, then Britain's largest industrial building - the town of St Helens and glass making were inextricably linked, using local sources of high quality sand and abundant local coal - take a look at **The World of Glass**. Nearby Prescott was well known for its pottery but more significantly as 'the town of little workshops'; referring to the watchmaking and associated toolmaking industries that were dotted across the town. Prescott's watch movements were regarded as the best in England and the best files in Europe. **Prescott Museum** has some of these spectacular delicate objects on display.

More canals began to connect to the Mersey, forming key links between inland resources, coastal towns and the wider world. In 1795 the 'Port of Ellesmere' began and expanded rapidly. Today, you can see many types of canal boats in the historic port buildings at the **National Waterways Museum**, including the last surviving all wooden Mersey flat, Mossdale. Mersey Flats mainly carried salt and coal; key components of the alkali industry, which explains why soap making and the wider chemical industry dominated here from the mid 1800s. Take a journey to Gossage's old soap factory offices, now **Catalyst Science Discovery Centre & Museum** to learn how this place has been changed by its watery connections.

Along with developments in rail and road, these rapid transportation changes provided ways for people to travel.

### A LIFE WITH LEISURE

Away from industrial towns, William Sutton saw the benefits of clean coastal air and opened the first bathing house at South Hawes in 1792; Southport was born. The history of Sefton's Coast with its strong connections to the sea, sport, leisure and nature are brought together at **The Atkinson**.

Steam ferry services and the first tramway in the country brought rapid change to Birkenhead in the 1800s. Take a trip on the historic trams at **Wirral Transport Museum** then visit the **Williamson Art Gallery & Museum** to see models of vessels that journeyed along this great river - you'll get a spectacular view of it from St Mary's Tower at **Birkenhead Priory**. Not far upstream, in 1888, William Lever established his soap factory and unique village environment for workers and their families. Discover fascinating stories of their lives at **Port Sunlight Village & Museum** where houses, green spaces and education were all well provided for.

As our access to, and understanding of the world developed, educators gathered objects which related to their area of interest. Liverpool University's collections are displayed at **Victoria Gallery & Museum**. There's an internationally important display of false teeth, including 'Waterloo teeth' and amazing skeletons. One is very curious; an Owl.

John Garstang, an Archaeologist and Egyptologist, began working for Liverpool University in 1902. His amazing collection from his excavations in Egypt and the Near East is on display at **The Garstang Museum of Archaeology**, which also holds his excavation notes and photographs which enrich this fascinating collection.

### CONNECTING COLLECTIONS ...

There are many connections between this unique place and its museums and galleries that can spark our imagination ....  
 ... where will you explore first?

#connectingcollections



**1** **BIRKENHEAD PRIORY & ST MARY'S TOWER**

Priory St, Birkenhead, CH41 5JH  
thebirkenheadpriory.org



Explore c12 priory remains, museum and c19th church, of which the tower survives. The monks provided a ferry service to Liverpool, as depicted in the stained glass window.



The drawing shows the scale of the priory before the Dissolution and shows Liverpool castle over the river. In 1357 a prior was charged with keeping 20 pigs in the woods of Birkenhead. During the English Civil War, Royalist troops were garrisoned here, leaving behind the broken glass bottle necks. The site is an oasis of calm in an industrial setting. Don't miss the fabulous 360° view at the top of the church tower - what will you see?

**2** **CATALYST SCIENCE DISCOVERY CENTRE & MUSEUM**

Mersey Road, Widnes, WA8 0DF  
catalyst.org.uk



Pick up an interactive Big Kid/ Little Kid tablet at reception and head to the top floor where there are fabulous 360° views. You'll see images to compare how this place looked so strikingly different in its industrial past, where canals meet the river and Gossages soap was made before



Lever Brothers bought it out and moved production to Port Sunlight. See 131 years of amazing engineering feats of bridging the river since 1868. The rail bridge was then the longest in England and overlays the location of Ethelfleda's defensive burgh. Can you see Halton Castle?

**3** **NATIONAL WATERWAYS MUSEUM**

South Pier Rd, Ellesmere Port, CH65 4FW  
canalrivertrust.org.uk



See the world's largest canal boat collection in this place which began as the 'Port of Ellesmere', connecting to Liverpool and the world beyond with main cargoes of coal, timber and iron ore. See inside workers cottages at Porters Row, a working engine-room plus boats of every description across the site. Don't miss the starvationer which brought coal to the surface of the Bridgewater Canal; sparking the move to the Industrial Revolution. Connect to the interactive stories told around the site. See the silver spoons that commemorate



the 1894 opening of the Manchester Ship Canal. Until 1841 the packet-boat service was the quickest route to Liverpool.

**4** **NORTON PRIORY MUSEUM & GARDENS**

Tudor Road, Runcorn, WA7 1SX  
nortonpriory.org



Norton Priory is the most excavated monastic site in Europe. Boasting the ruins of an Abbey, 12th century undercroft and an 18th century Walled Garden with the National Quince collection, all located within a tranquil oasis of woodland and wildflower meadows. The new museum displays thousands of artefacts from Norton's 900 year history including the internationally significant 14th century statue of St Christopher. See the 1150 ferry charter and a locally discovered pilgrims vase brought from Egypt in c9th.



Listen to extracts from Mary Brooke's diaries of 1820s life - she wrote of taking the Packet to Liverpool to buy a new teapot.

**5** **PORT SUNLIGHT VILLAGE & MUSEUM**

King George's Drive, Wirral CH62 5DX  
portsunlightvillage.com



Start at the multi-award winning museum, housed in the former Girls' Club in the heart of this striking village to learn about the characters and events that created the unique vision you'll see today. Hear and read about the social history, see a model of the village and factory and learn more about



William Lever's vision for providing for his soap workers with housing, green spaces, education, health services and so much more. Take a good look in the Edwardian worker's cottage next to the museum and then set off to walk around the fabulous site, including visiting the Lady Lever Art Gallery.

**6** **PRESCOT MUSEUM**

The Prescott Centre, Aspinall Street, Prescott, L34 5GA  
prescotmuseum.org.uk



Prescot was once known as the 'town of little workshops' which is reflected in the museum collection and the cultural identity of its community. The colourful displays of images and artefacts tell the story of Knowsley and



its people - how they lived and worked. Walk in to the museum and you'll cross the beautiful Arts & Crafts mosaic from BIC Cables entrance floor. There are almost 14,000 objects, including photographs, tools, ephemera, costume, domestic items, coins, badges, trophies, architectural fragments and militaria. Find the story of 'perrying', giving money to the poor from the Town Hall windows and the local Mugg Fair - and don't miss the dog boots.

**SAIL AWAY, SAIL AWAY . . .**

When the **Owl** and the **Pussy-Cat** set sail to sea in Edward Lear's nonsense poem, it seems a curious pairing of two creatures we almost know for certain would not get on. Yet, their love for each other and for music and dancing seems to run deep. Their journey is long and finally the magical day arrives and continues into the night as they dance on the sand by the light of the magical moon ...

Come and visit our exciting locations to find tales of watery travel, of leisure & pleasure, inspiration & exploration, world firsts, hard work and inventions in collections that begin to explain more about this exciting place ...

what will you see on your journey there, and what will you discover on your visit?

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**7** **THE ATKINSON**

Lord Street, Southport PR8 1DB  
theatkinson.co.uk



With so much sand and miles of wonderful coastline, you'll find lots in the museum which tells the story of this lovely area through time. The locally found Crossens canoe is nearly 1500 years old, and the Egyptian artefact collection which was gathered by a Liverpool lady, Mrs Goodison, is vast and beautifully displayed. There's fun to be had looking at the Meccano and Dan Dare displays, then there's stories of cars racing on the sands and breaking world records.



You'll find the cork life-jacket in a display about the dangerous coast, lifeboats and maritime disasters. Where do you think the pottery face is from?

**8** **THE GARSTANG MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY**

14 Abercromby Square Liverpool, L69 7WZ  
liverpool.ac.uk/garstang-museum



The ancient objects in this collection were mainly discovered by Professor John Garstang, who the museum is named after. He explored Egypt and the Near East between 1902 and 1914. There are fascinating displays of early tools and pottery, shabtis, coins and an Egyptian mummy.



This ivory label from a 3000 year old tomb is one of the earliest pieces of writing from Egypt, and mentions the first king, Hor-Aha. See if you can find the silver sandals on display, or the mummified cat that was unexpectedly found in a child's coffin. There's so much to see.

**9** **THE WORLD OF GLASS**

Chalon Way East, St Helens Merseyside, WA10 1BX  
worldofglass.com



Glass manufacture in St Helens glass developed from the local high quality sand and coal. You'll see the remains of the first regenerative glass making furnace in



England, sat alongside the Sankey Canal. International glass collection spanning 5000 years. Victorian furnace, glass blowing demonstrations and the stunning Manchester Airport Chandelier. Social history and local industries of coal, pottery, steam engines and so much more. Don't miss the locally made fancy toilet & curious clay pipes.

**10** **VICTORIA GALLERY & MUSEUM**

Ashton Street, Liverpool, L69 3DR  
vgm.liverpool.ac.uk



This stunning Alfred Waterhouse designed building opened as a museum and gallery in 2008. It displays the curious, beautiful and bizarre collections of The University of Liverpool that have been



gathered over the last 130 years, including an internationally important display of dentures made from human teeth. The fossil footprint in the Geology collection is very significant; it is the first ever one of its type found, imprinted into the local red sandstone. Do you think the footprints could be from something as curious as the creatures in the poem? See what you think.

**11** **WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY & MUSEUM**

Slatey Road, Birkenhead CH43 4UE  
williamsonartgallery.org



This striking listed building displays fascinating collections of maritime models of Mersey boats, Cammell Laird ships and other sea-going vessels and related objects. There's early pottery from Liverpool and Seacombe, and a large display of



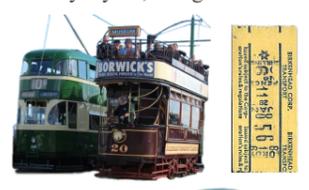
beautiful Arts & Crafts work from the Birkenhead firm of Della Robbia. The work is colourful, they were known for using a characteristic turquoise. The mock Elizabethan furniture displayed is from Arrowse Hall, the property was at one time owned by William Lever.

**12** **WIRRAL TRANSPORT MUSEUM**

1 Taylor Street, Birkenhead CH41 1BG  
mtps.co.uk



Birkenhead was the first place in Europe to adopt a street tramway. Here you can experience a journey from Woodside to the museum on trams dating back as far as 1901. The collection at the museum houses trams from Liverpool, Wallasey and Lisbon (Portugal) and the only Hong Kong trams running outside China. There are also local buses, cars and motorbikes and a model railway layout, alongside other



transport related objects. The museum is undergoing refurbishment in early 2018, please check the website for opening times and when you go, enjoy the ride!