

## Walk 1 - Liverpool Waterfront, returning via the City Centre

The **Echo Arena** is in a place that means any walking tour will involve an extra distance, but if the weather is good there is no better place to be than on Liverpool's amazing waterfront. When you leave the Arena head north -with the river on your left - and stay as close to the river as you can. I suggest keeping the **Albert Dock** complex on your right. This is because, if you go through the dock, you will certainly be distracted. Keep on going until you have the old **pump house** on your right, and the pedestrian bridge over the dock gates in front of you. Once in a blue moon these gates open to let a ship or boat in or out of the dock, but that is unlikely to happen, so go across and thread your way through various obstacles until you reach **Mann Island**, a bus turning circle just before the imposing buildings known as the **Three Graces**. The area in front of you is known as the Pier Head, and if you stand in front of the Three Graces, they are, from right to left, the **Port of Liverpool Building**, the **Cunard Building** and the **Liver Building**. The **Liver Building** used to be the headquarters of an insurance company, very important in a port city, and it has twin towers that are topped with birds that are not quite like any living species: the Liver Birds. One looks out to sea and the other looks inland, and there are so many explanations of this that you may as well invent your own. Anyone who has visited Piazza Farnese in Rome will notice the similarity between the French Embassy there and the Cunard Building (and the American Embassy in Rome). If you have a few minutes it is worth walking between the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool building to see some remarkable statues made of black basalt on the sides of the **Mersey Tunnel Building** - most visitors to the city never see these, but they are superb.

Back at the waterfront you may occasionally here the strains of a 1960s pop song, *Ferry Cross the Mersey*, blaring out on the public address system on a ferryboat. These tie up once an hour between cruises on the river, at a landing stage that is tiny in comparison with the one that was there in the days when Gerry and the Pacemakers first sang their song. Curiously, there is an unbroken tradition that fares on the ferries (and on the tunnels under the river today) have always been collected on the other side of the river, because the original ferry service was a rowing boat provided by the monks of **Birkenhead Priory**, very near the Cammell Laird shipbuilding and ship repairing site just across the river. A little further along you may be lucky enough to see a cruise ship, as there is now a rather basic cruise terminal in the very place where liners sailing to Canada, the United States and Australia used to be berthed. It was always a treat to be on the other side of the river and see three of what we then thought were huge ships tied up waiting to take our schoolfriends away to a better life far away, never to be seen again. Between the ferry terminal and the cruise berth you may well see a hydrofoil from the Isle of Man, and just near this is a **memorial to Chinese sailors** who volunteered to serve with the British in the First World War, and then ignominiously deported as illegal immigrants - a shameful episode in our history.

Here, near the vehicle bridge leading to the Isle of Man ferry berth, you should turn inland, with the **Crowne Plaza Hotel** on your left, and eventually cross the major road ahead of you, and go ahead into Chapel Street. This is named after the chapel, or church, of **Our Lady and Saint Nicholas**, now **the parish church of Liverpool**. This building replaced the original church which, in those days, was on the old waterfront, and was for that reason called "**Saint Mary del Quay**". The Nicholas in question is **Saint Nicholas of Bari**, alias Santa Claus. Bari is a port in the Puglia region of Italy, so both there and here Nicholas is a patron of sailors, but the most appealing tradition linked to this saint is that he rescued three girls from ignominy by offering their father a dowry for each of them: the golden balls outside a pawnbroker's shop represent these three bags of gold. Saint Nicholas is the patron saint not only of sailors and pawnbrokers but also of children, travellers and coopers, amongst others. You will find a statue of him inside the church.

Other things in the church and its garden are: a statue of **Our Lady in the prow of a ship** in the chapel on the right at the front, by Catholic sculptor **Arthur Dooley**; a fascinating wooden **Grail Boat** carved by **Greg Tricker**, depicting Joseph of Arimathea, Saint Mary Magdalene and others on their fabled journey to England, with Joseph holding the chalice (the Grail) in the bow; a remarkable memorial in the garden to those who suffered a pounding by the Luftwaffe in the '**May Blitz**' in 1940 - **Tom Murphy** captures the fear experienced by many Liverpool families. Inside the church two things are worth seeing for very different reasons. There is a cross over in the chapel on the left,

made of burnt timbers rescued from the blaze at **Saint Peter's church**, which is commemorated by a metal plaque on the ground in **Church Street**. Last but certainly not least is the **Rood Cross**, which hangs from the ceiling over the sanctuary, and depicts Jesus crucified, his mother Mary and Saint John the Evangelist. Look closely, particularly at the faces. They are not European, but Chinese, a sign of the city's maritime and trade links with most countries around the world, which have sometimes brought migrants. Most of the Chinese who came to Liverpool were Christian, so the question nobody has answered me is "who paid for this Rood Cross?" I always imagine it was either a Chinese merchant, or perhaps Chinese Anglicans who wanted to contribute to the decoration of the parish church. Who knows? Today, this is the only Anglican church where there is a regular celebration of **Roman Catholic Mass - at 1.05 pm every Friday**. It is an arrangement that began when the nearest Catholic church was demolished decades ago.

The best thing now is to leave the church through its garden, via a narrow street called **Covent Garden**, to turn left into **Water Street**. If you walk up the street you will come to the **Town Hall**, the elegant building which juts out into the street. Walk into **Castle Street** on your right and turn around. You may recognise the Town Hall from various films and television advertisements. This whole area is full of really impressive architecture. Continue half way along Castle Street and look ahead at the monument to **Queen Victoria**, but turn left half way along into **Cook Street**, a grim and grey place. At the next junction turn right into North John Street and, after a few yards, turn left into **Matthew Street**. You are now in the **Cavern Quarter**, a site dedicated to everything to do with the Beatles. You don't have to linger if you don't want. At the end of the street you can find your way over to the right into a street called **Whitechapel**. Across the road, by the taxi rank, is the **Blessed Sacrament Shrine**, run by the Blessed Sacrament Fathers. This is a new site; the original shrine was simply a converted cinema, but not any old cinema - it used to show 'saucy' films and there were long queues of men lurking outside before the films started. What a change! Carry on up Whitechapel, ignoring the bus station on the right and go to **Saint John's Lane**. Across the road is a garden behind Saint George's Hall. In here you will find a statue commemorating **Monsignor James Nugent**, beloved in Liverpool for all the work he did for the poor, especially for children. Even today the charitable arm of the Archdiocese of Liverpool is named after him. Back across the road is a pub named "**Doctor Duncan's**", named in memory of Liverpool's first Medical Officer of Health, at a time when poverty and disease grew into an enormous problem, chiefly because of the influx of Irish people during the Famine. The fact that many of those poor souls were condemned to live in an area known as "**the Piggeries**" tells a harrowing story. Monsignor Nugent and Doctor Duncan remain as heroes, but also evidence of a shocking story whose end was much more recent than many think.

Walk up Saint John's Lane. At the top you may wish to have a good look at **Saint George's Hall**. Across the road is the refurbished **Lime Street station**, the most interesting part of which is the old hotel the railway built around the original station and which is now mainly given over to student accommodation. If you can tear yourself away, keep the station on your left and walk along Renshaw Street. After about 300 metres you will find the **Adelphi Hotel** on the left and the former **Lewis's** department store on the corner opposite. In the song "In my Liverpool Home" we point out that we "meet under a statue exceedingly bare", which was placed above the main entrance of Lewis's. If you're getting tired, cross over here and go past **Central Station** into Hanover Street to Liverpool One bus station, then back across the river to the Arena.

If you still have some energy, carry on a further 150 metres along **Renshaw Street**, which you should by now have crossed, and take the side street off to the right after the Lewis's building. This will bring you into a really colourful street called Bold Street. If you turn left, you will discover Matta's, a gem of a delicatessen, and across the street the **Pauline Sisters' bookshop**, as well as an unhealthy number of cafés and restaurants. At the top of Bold Street, turn right and cross Duke Street to reach the **Chinese Arch**. By this time, the street signs have become bilingual: English and Cantonese. This is the entrance to China Town, but it is not what it once was. However, you will never go hungry around here.

If you backtrack a few paces, you will find you are at the top of **Seel Street**. It is worth walking down here for many reasons, but two in particular. You will see a building that looks like a church, because it was! It was **Saint Peter's** church, staffed for years by Benedictines, and later used by Polish

Catholics, but now it is a club and restaurant called ***Alma de Cuba***. If you are sensitive about such things, don't go in, because the main painting is still there, surmounted by "TU ES PETRUS" (you are Peter), and the goings on at the table where the altar should be are not what you would expect in a church. Memorial plaques to priests who served the poor are on the walls of a room to the right of the former sanctuary. When you recover, next door you will find the ***Missionaries of Charity*** (Mother Teresa's sisters), who offer care to some of Liverpool's poorest and unwanted rejects. They have an army of volunteers to help them, and I'm sure they will be around when you pass by. Be warned! If you call in you may get a job.

Not too far now! At the bottom of Seel Street you should turn left into Hanover Street. Just off to the left in School Lane you will find the ***Friends' Meeting House***, the home to Liverpool's Quaker community and the location of the ecumenical officer for Merseyside and Region. Head down Hanover Street, through the Liverpool One bus station and across the river. In front of you is the Albert Dock complex and the Arena is over to the left.

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