

Mersey Tunnels

In 1922 Sir Archibald Salvidge proposed a report to Liverpool City Council to enquire into the possibility of either a tunnel or bridge to improve traffic facilities across the Mersey.

The option of a bridge was strongly rejected due to the threat of an outbreak of war and fears it could be an easy target for enemy bombers. It was reported that a double-deck road tunnel would cost less to construct and offer considerable economy in maintenance.

On 8 August 1925 a Private Bill authorised the project, and the setting up of the Mersey Tunnel Joint Committee. On 16 December 1925 HRH the Princess Royal switched on the power to the pneumatic drills and work began.



Working from both sides of the river, when the two work forces met there was a divergence of less than one inch. Working conditions were grim as 1,200,000 tons of rock and gravel were excavated. This was replaced with 82,000 tons of cast iron and 270,000 tons of concrete.

The Queensway tunnel was opened by King George V on 18 July 1934. The tunnel cost £8 million to construct and at

the time was the biggest single municipal enterprise undertaken in Britain.



The Grand Opening in 1934

The main tunnel is 44 feet in diameter, and carries four lanes of traffic for just over two miles between Liverpool and Birkenhead, with a branch tunnel exit at Liverpool Docks. There was originally another tunnel opening at Birkenhead Docks, but that has been closed now for some time.

In light of the post-war boom in motoring and local industry in the 1950s, a second crossing became essential. Once again, a bridge or tunnel was considered and the same argument was used to justify the second tunnel. In January 1966 work commenced on the tunnel and it was opened by Queen Elizabeth II in June 1971. The new

tunnel differed from the Queensway and was a twin tube tunnel, each containing two one-way lanes, and is slightly shorter than the Queensway at just under two miles in length.