

Student task

Place the following events in chronological order, i.e. from the earliest to the latest.

This will help you understand the reasons why the dockland area has undergone change and why it has undergone recent regeneration.

Difficulties were encountered during the 1860s as ships had increased in size and were now too large to travel fully laden up the canal. To cope with this, a new entrance and dock were opened in 1874 at Sharpness. There was a continued growth in imports as smaller vessels were able to travel up the canal and cargoes from larger ships could be transhipped at Sharpness and then brought up the canal in barges.

Additional warehouses were built around the Main Basin to cope with the greater than expected trade and an engine house was constructed to increase the canal's water supply by pumping it from the River Severn. Bakers Quay was built alongside the canal to increase the quay space and this was mainly laid out for timber storage yards. These were vital as the timber loading ports inconveniently iced-up during the winter. Several of the yards had high fences and were locked under customs supervision so foreign timber was able to be stored without import duties having to be paid. Some of the ships that brought timber from North America were owned by locals and, frequently, carried emigrants on the return journey.

The 1920s saw new traffic due to the increased demand for petroleum products to supply the growing number of road vehicles. This trade became more and more important and a fleet of tanker barges were used to bring petroleum from Avonmouth.

Once the canal had been opened, local merchants were soon taking advantage of the new facilities. Importing through Gloucester avoided Bristol, where port charges were high. It also meant that cargo could be transferred directly to narrow canal boats, which could then supply the expanding, industrial towns of the Midlands.

The position of Gloucester so far inland was extremely beneficial and traffic was soon much greater than anticipated. Imports included corn from Ireland and continental Europe, timber from the Baltic and North America, as well as wines and spirits from Portugal and France. The main export was salt, which was transported down the canal from Worcestershire.

After 1947, the decline in commercial traffic was partly replaced by an increase in pleasure craft, with the docks becoming a popular place for moorings. The old warehouses and other industrial buildings have seen many changes. They have proved to be an ideal location for filming historical dramas, e.g. many scenes for the popular TV series, *The Onedin Line*, were filmed in front of Biddle Warehouse and scenes for the latest *Alice in Wonderland* sequel, *'Through the Looking Glass'*, were shot by Llanthony Bridge. New uses have been found for the warehouses in recent times and the docks are now proving to be an attractive leisure and residential area.

There were also attempts to connect the railway to the docks during the 1840s. The Midland railway constructed a standard gauge line from their station, sited at the south end of Bakers Quay, with a branch serving the east side of the main docks area. The Great Western Railway operated a broad gauge branch from South Wales to serve a new quay on the west side of the canal. The lines competed with the river and canal route to carry goods into the Midlands.

By the early 20th century, the docks were being used by both steamers and sailing vessels, with regular services to continental ports. The continued increase in the size of merchant ships, particularly steamers, meant that more goods were arriving in Gloucester by barges from Sharpness or other ports within the Bristol Channel. Warehouses in Gloucester were needed less and less as the majority of the corn was sent straight on to the Midlands.

In the 1840s, it was recognised that further developments were needed as the docks became very crowded at peak times and vessels had to wait their turn for a berth. There was a national movement towards reduced import duties too, especially after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, and the Canal Company expected there to be a massive increase in foreign imports. Victoria Dock, constructed to the east of the Main Basin with a narrow cut linking the two, opened in 1849. Additional corn warehouses and new timber yards were built.

In 1947, the Canal Company was nationalised and the new management encouraged more sea-going ships to travel up to Gloucester. The docks remained busy with barge traffic until well into the 1960s. However, the construction of underground pipelines and a depot at Quedgeley caused a rapid decline in petroleum traffic. Barge traffic faced fierce competition from road transport as well. By 1980, the only remaining commercial vessels coming to the quays south of Llanthony Bridge were the coasters.

Imports grew dramatically during the 1850s and 1860s, largely due to the improved facilities. Corn was imported from northern Europe and around the Black Sea and new warehouses and three flour mills were built. New timber yards and saw mills were constructed alongside the canal south of Gloucester as more and more timber was being imported from the Baltic, North America and the Arctic coast of Russia. Other imports included wines and spirits, oranges and lemons and bones and guano for fertiliser. Salt was the only main, regular export since most vessels went elsewhere to source their return cargo.

The Main Basin at Gloucester was built as the terminus of the ship canal, with an entrance from the Severn estuary at Sharpness. As work was nearing completion, concern was expressed about the size of the basin in relation to the amount of expected trade. Hence, an additional Barge Arm was constructed to ensure that the Main Basin was left free for sea-going ships. The Canal Company also erected a warehouse at the north end of the basin. The formal opening of the canal took place on 26th April 1827. A large crowd gathered to observe the first two vessels enter the basin, accompanied by a firing of guns and the ringing of church bells.

Teaching notes

A very quick chronology can be achieved by using the dates. This suggestion will assist weaker students. These are in bold below:

The Main Basin at Gloucester was built as the terminus of the ship canal, with an entrance from the estuary of the River Severn at Sharpness. As work was nearing completion, concern was expressed about the size of the basin and the expected trade. Consequently, an additional area of docks was dug to leave the main basin free for ocean-going ships. The formal opening of the canal took place on 26th April **1827**. A large crowd gathered to observe the first two vessels enter the docks, accompanied by a firing of guns and the ringing of church bells.

Once the canal had been opened, local merchants were soon taking advantage of the new facilities. Importing through Gloucester avoided Bristol, where port charges were high. It also meant that cargo could be transferred directly to narrow canal boats, which could then supply the expanding, industrial towns of the Midlands.

The position of Gloucester so far inland was extremely beneficial and traffic was soon much greater than anticipated. Imports included corn from Ireland and continental Europe, timber from the Baltic and North America, as well as wines and spirits from Portugal and France. The main export was salt, which was transported down the canal from Worcestershire.

Additional warehouses were built around the Main Basin to cope with the greater than expected trade and an engine house was constructed to increase the canal's water supply by pumping it from the River Severn. Bakers Quay was built alongside the canal to increase the quay space and this was mainly laid out for timber storage yards. These were vital as the timber loading ports inconveniently iced-up during the winter. Several of the yards had high fences and were locked under customs supervision so foreign timber was able to be stored without import duties having to be paid. Some of the ships that brought timber from North America were owned by locals and, frequently, carried emigrants on the return journey.

In the **1840s**, it was recognised that further developments were needed as the docks became very crowded at peak times and vessels had to wait their turn for a berth. There was a national movement towards reduced import duties too, especially after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, and the Canal Company expected there to be a massive increase in foreign imports. Victoria Dock, constructed to the east of the Main Basin with a narrow cut linking the two, opened in 1849. Additional corn warehouses and new timber yards were built.

There were also attempts to connect the railway to the docks during the **1840s**. The Midland railway constructed a standard gauge line from their station, sited at the south end of Bakers Quay, with a branch serving the east side of the main docks area. The Great Western Railway operated a broad gauge branch from South Wales to serve a new quay on the west side of the canal. The lines competed with the river and canal route to carry goods into the Midlands.

Imports grew dramatically during the **1850s and 1860s**, largely due to the improved facilities. Corn was imported from northern Europe and around the Black Sea and new warehouses and three flour mills were built. New timber yards and saw mills were constructed alongside the canal south of Gloucester as more and more timber was being imported from the Baltic, North America and the Arctic coast of Russia. Other imports included wines and spirits, oranges and lemons and bones and guano for fertiliser. Salt was the only main, regular export since most vessels went elsewhere to source their return cargo.

Difficulties were encountered during the **1860s** as ships had increased in size and were now too large to travel fully laden up the canal. To cope with this, a new entrance and dock were opened in 1874 at Sharpness. There was a continued growth in imports as smaller vessels were able to travel up the canal and cargoes from larger ships could be transhipped at Sharpness and then brought up the canal in barges.

By the **early 20th century**, the docks were being used by both steamers and sailing vessels, with regular services to continental ports. The continued increase in the size of merchant ships, particularly steamers, meant that more goods were arriving in Gloucester by barges from Sharpness or other ports within the Bristol Channel. Warehouses in Gloucester were needed less and less as the majority of the corn was sent straight on to the Midlands.

The **1920s** saw new traffic due to the increased demand for petroleum products to supply the growing number of road vehicles. This trade became more and more important and a fleet of tanker barges were used to bring petroleum from Avonmouth.

In **1947**, the Canal Company was nationalised and the new management encouraged more sea-going ships to travel up to Gloucester. The docks remained busy with barge traffic until well into the 1960s. However, the construction of underground pipelines and a depot at Quedgeley caused a rapid decline in petroleum traffic. Barge traffic faced fierce competition from road transport as well. By **1980**, the only remaining commercial vessels coming to the quays south of Llanthony Bridge were the coasters.

After **1947**, the decline in commercial traffic was partly replaced by an increase in pleasure craft, with the docks becoming a popular place for moorings. The old warehouses and other industrial buildings have seen many changes. They have proved to be an ideal location for filming historical dramas, e.g. many scenes for the popular TV series, *The Onedin Line*, were filmed in front of Biddle Warehouse and scenes for the latest *Alice in Wonderland* sequel, 'Through the Looking Glass', were shot by Llanthony Bridge. New uses have been found for the warehouses in recent times and the docks are now proving to be an attractive leisure and residential area.

Gloucester docks – an urban regeneration sequencing activity