



## South Tyneside Council

### Neighbourhood Services

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## Mill Dam Conservation Area

### Character Appraisal

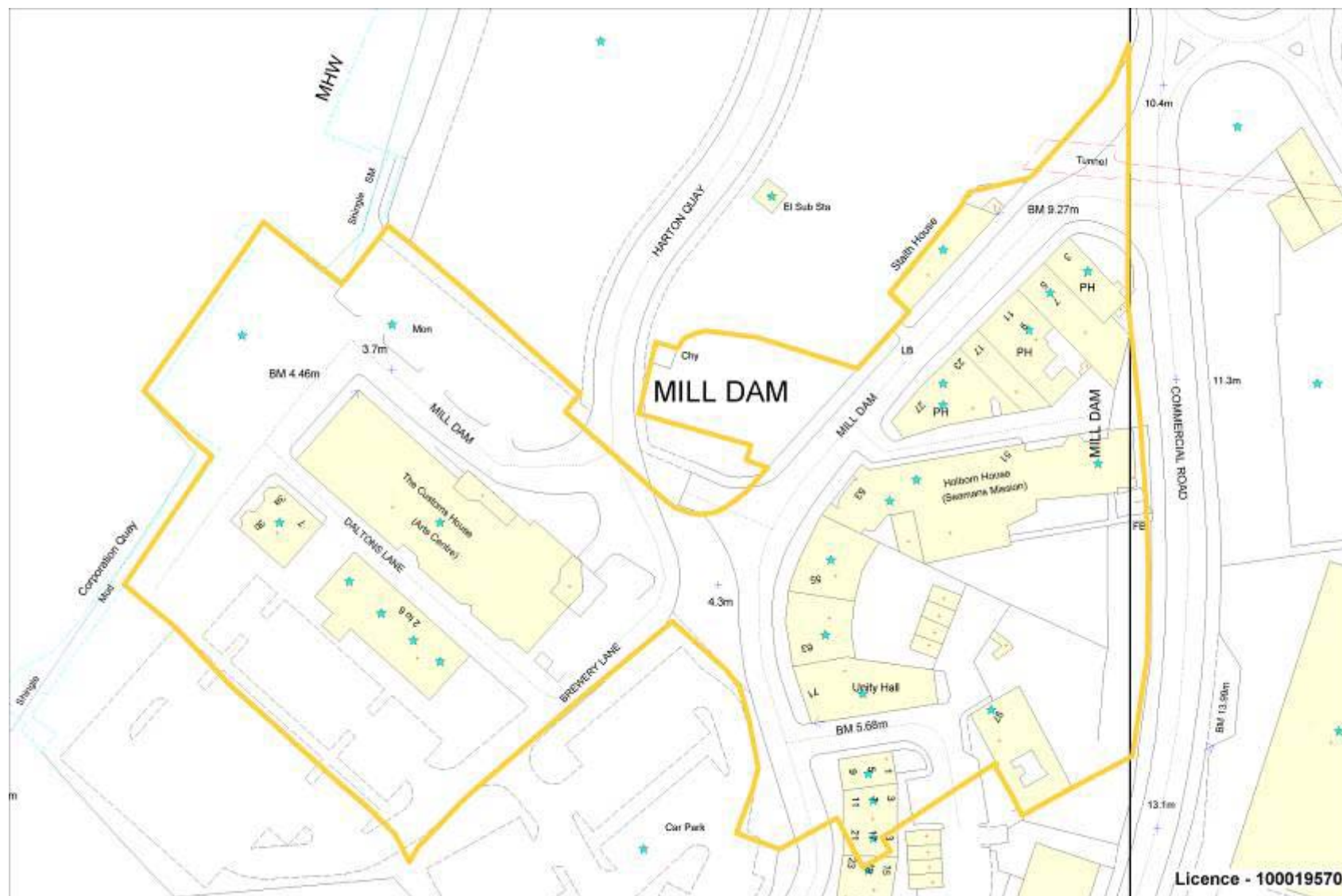
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Map 1: Mill Dam Conservation Area – Boundary



# Mill Dam Conservation Area

## I Introduction

Conservation Areas were first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and are defined as being:

*“areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”*

Local authorities have a duty in exercising planning powers to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. They depend on much more than the quality of individual buildings, and take into account features such as building layout, open spaces, boundaries, thoroughfares, the mix of uses, materials and street furniture. It is also common for a number of Listed Buildings to be included.

The approach to character appraisals has altered in recent years. It is now recognised that planning policy, development control, enhancement proposals and conservation area management can be best achieved when there is a clear and sound understanding of the conservation area’s special interest. *PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment* urges local authorities to prepare detailed appraisals and states:

*“the more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions, as well as for the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of an area”.*

The value of the appraisal is two-fold. First, its publication will improve the understanding of the value of the built heritage, providing property owners and potential developers, with clearer guidance on planning matters and the types of development which are likely to be encouraged. Secondly, it will enable South Tyneside Council to improve its strategies, policies and approach towards the conservation and development opportunities and priorities within the conservation area. The appraisal will form a sound basis for establishing effective conservation area policies; support the effective determination of planning and listed building applications; and form relevant evidence in planning appeals.

Guidance used to complete this appraisal includes *PPG15* (DoE & DNH, Sept 1994), *Conservation Area Management* (English Historic Towns Forum, June 1998), *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals* (English Heritage, 2005) and *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas* (English Heritage, 2005).

## 2 Mill Dam Conservation Area

Designated in 1981, Mill Dam Conservation Area, South Shields, is around 2 hectares of remnant riverside heritage, an irregular shape with a pinch point in the middle at a focal junction which links the separate parts together historically and visually. Partly because of subsequent clearance, the boundary now appears tightly drawn around two building groups and their immediate setting, whilst other nearby spaces remain just beyond the existing boundary.



The conservation area contains some very impressive buildings, evocative of the area's once pivotal commercial role in the town's history. Today it is vibrant, well-used, and retains the faint character of a place where people and goods were transported by

boat and rail (plaques and monuments interpret the past). However, it is also an area where dramatic change has taken place in the second half of the twentieth century, slowed and reversed in recent decades. At present it has a somewhat disjointed feel, with two main building groups, boundary walls and remnant industrial heritage isolated by an over-supply of open space and expanses of car-parks within and just beyond the boundary.

There is a certain confidence to the area following large scale investment in recent decades but it is perhaps now best described as being in 'positive suspension' awaiting further consolidation and regeneration which might knit the area back together further. There is nonetheless plenty here of special local interest and overall a character worthy of preservation and enhancement.

The scope of the appraisal is determined by the need to identify those elements which best demonstrate what is 'special' about the place. As its past is not always obvious on the ground, the history of the area forms a large part of this appraisal.

## 3 Location

Mill Dam Conservation Area is on the south bank of the Tyne approximately 1.5km from the river mouth. The west boundary abuts a 500m wide, meandering stretch of the river, which flows

north at this point. Opposite is a similar mix of docks and regenerated landscape in North Tyneside. A long, clear horizon, open skies and long distance views across the water and open spaces either side help define the experience of the area. It can also have a rather exposed microclimate.



For planning purposes, Mill Dam is adjacent to the town centre and, physically, the two are separated by a busy road network and a five-road roundabout at the junction of Coronation Street and Mill Dam road, just outside the north east corner. Beyond this is the most obvious pedestrian route to and from the area, an attractively landscaped path towards St Hilda’s Church and the busy primary shopping area.

In the east, the setting of the area is characterised by considerable changes in level and new high-density residential blocks defining the eastern boundary. In the west, the isolated building group

around Dalton’s Lane stand somewhat monolithically against an expanse of water and open land. To the south west, the boundary is defined by a previous development pattern, now removed leaving a meaningless boundary on the ground through car parks and along the river’s edge. Beyond to the west is scrub landscaping, levelled former industrial land and a disused dock. A similar situation to the north leaves the boundary unconnected to surviving features, with newly levelled grass, unmade parking and recent river-facing housing beyond.



Much of the area’s topography is manmade and manipulated. The river’s edge is piled and has timber jetties, whilst the east end has a



high retaining wall to Commercial Road. Rising land and buildings generally restrict views out to the east but in all other directions views are expansive, with the striking modern engineering of the Shields' Ferry terminal catching the eye beyond.

#### 4 General Character & Development Pattern Origins

The area has a strong but disrupted urban character with two distinct groups of substantial eclectic buildings not obviously related to each other, other than both groups face the river. The road pattern is historic in principle but roads have been remodelled



so as not to connect with each other, creating car-parks, turning heads and a severed junction at the pinch point in the middle.

Only one side of the street has a traditional back-of-pavement street frontage to hint at the past intensity of the area. But the scale and significance of the buildings, the continuous high brick wall along Mill Dam road, and the remnant chimney is impressive, demonstrating the area's past status, authority and prosperity.



Staith House, a low building with bricked-up openings, sits against the west face of the wall down Mill Dam road (the boundary extends out to include it), whilst the lost footprint of another building south of this explains the way the boundary juts out to include the truncated brick and stone chimney dated 1865 to the west.

The area splits into two character zones – east and west. The east zone has a more built up urban feel with an interesting mix of

building types, uses and activities. It retains a more structured, traditional urban form with strong containment to the east, changes in gradient and changing views. The west, riverside zone has a



more exposed feel with impressive buildings isolated in a more disjointed scene of expansive hard surfaces and, beyond the boundary, grass.

## 5 Development History

The post Roman period of South Shields' history shows no conclusive evidence of a settlement at Mill Dam (it was focussed at Arbeia further east), although there is conjecture that the river estuary once had more than one branch, one thought to have broken through near Mill Dam on its way to the sea. Mill Dam derives its name from a mill that stood here in the thirteenth century belonging to the Prior & Convent of Durham, whose tenants were bound to grind their corn there. Much of the area's

land was not reclaimed from the river until the 1760s, thus allowing the present day South Shields to take shape through expansion and coalescence of outlying villages. Due to this ancient past, Mill Dam is one of 19 areas of potential archaeological interest in South Tyneside.

There is good historic map coverage from 1862 and an excellent selection of early photographs (at the South Shields Central Library, and all previously interpreted) from around 1910, some possibly earlier. The maps clearly show the evolution behind today's plan form, making the surviving development pattern much more understandable and, in turn, more significant.

### 5.1 1st Edition OS Map, c.1862

The basic road form is clear but the two routes which today diverge at the central pinch-point were then through roads which crossed, creating a significant junction in a densely built-up area of irregularly shaped buildings. As today, there were two main building groups in the area, but the riverside group comprised the Subscription Brewery complex, a large crane, landing stage and dock. Very different to today's open character was the massive Swinburne Glassworks which sat on what is now open grass to the north of the area, only the truncated chimney base of which remains today.



### 5.2 2nd Edition OS Map, c.1898

The most significant change from 1862 was the replacement of the riverside brewery with the impressive Customs House (1863) and the adjacent River Tyne Police & Port Sanitary Authority buildings (1886), both still standing today. The Customs House in particular was of huge civic significance as it symbolised both South Shields' independence from Newcastle as a customs port (in 1848, following years of acrimony), and also its separation from the customs house in North Shields in 1863. The Corporation bought what is now Corporation Quay from the North Eastern Railway for the building, which was designed by borough architect Thomas M Clemence. It opened in 1864 and was extended in 1873 by L H Morton for Board of Trade offices. Further east, outside the boundary, the town expanded around collieries and along grids of terraced housing which eventually replaced the clay pits that supplied the bricks. Railway sidings and a goods station were just to the east of what is now the boundary.

### 5.3 1910 Photograph

At Mill Dam Quay, a coaster vessel is berthed besides what is thought to be the boundary between Mill Dam or Corporation Quay and the newly built Middle Docks to the west (note the large shed behind). The brick building, thought to be a sail loft or part

of the former Brewery site, has gone. This also demonstrates that during the heavily industrial years of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the river bank was not generally accessible – it was dangerous, private and divided by fences and walls right to the water's edge.



### 5.4 Photo (undated)

The landing stage shown here was one of several ferry stations on the 1898 map indicating the importance of the river to local transport. Adverts, refreshments and shelter indicate the intensity of use of the area. It also shows how land rose quite sharply east and south after the flat riverside activity area.

### 5.5 1921 Map

The major change here is the replacement of the glassworks with a looped array of railway lines, Harton Low Staithes, which delivered coal down to the water's edge. A short tunnel gave access under the road network, the line of which still cuts across the extreme north eastern tip of the current conservation area. Also just outside the area, a new large graving dock had been excavated. Inside the conservation area, the two basic character zones are already apparent.

### 5.6 1930 Photographs

1930 would be a very significant year for Mill Dam. Demolition began around the central pinch-point which had been, and would continue to be used as a photographic focal point – a constant image of local identity. The road in the foreground of the photo is now subsumed into the Customs House car park, but the remaining



road layout does remain.

The detailing seen today on the long red brick boundary

wall on Mill Dam road matches that of the now demolished building in this photo with the



hipped, glazed roof, apparently part of the Harton Low Railway Staithes. The shallow panels and dentil cornice details are visually interesting and characterise this historical past of this part of the

area. They would also feature prominently in press photos of what would become a significant incident in the area's social history in this year. In the aftermath of the 1926



General Strike, a riot was sparked in part by job scarcity and tensions over the presence of Yemeni sailors in the town, sailors who had been there for over 40 years having been encouraged to work and settle there. The riot at Mill Dam in 1930 left people hurt and 20 Yemenis deported.



The photograph taken from the roof of the Seaman’s Mission clearly shows how strongly defined this focal point of Mill Dam was, where men would regularly gather to be taken on for work. It shows tidy cobbled streets, a police box, shipping and other businesses in the walled yards around (wholesale merchants, an anchor stockman, docks, engineering works), and a tight arrangement of low hipped pitched slate roofs.

### 5.7 1938 Map and Photographs

Incremental demolitions were taking place in the central area east of the Customs House and on the continuation of Commercial Road, the major through road feeding riverside locations (what’s

left now called Mill Dam road). The former glassworks chimney remained at full height, and the staithes’ conveyor belts and shoots created dramatic shapes at the river’s edge, whilst the tall brick walls and stepped gables seen here still feature on the north east boundary of the area today. Mill Dam road was still busy but it had been realigned to an easier gradient, involving some



demolitions and starting the process of severing the road network in the area which would be left today.

5.8 1939 Photographs



The central gas lamp still defines the continued significance of the central focal point as Mill Dam's distinctive space. A second image records the difference in scale, quality and appearance of the traditional working buildings and the high status administrative buildings – the ground floor of the Health Authority building was almost as tall as both storeys of the sail loft building next door (now gone, although most of its footprint and roadway are within the boundary).

The final 1939 image shows the area at a quiet time with the hard built edge of the east zone overlooking much altered areas of demolished buildings and cleared spaces, very different from the dense area of previous decades.

5.9 1950-51 Map and Photograph



Post war, land to the south of the area was largely derelict and the area looks depressed. Unity Hall's frontage had been altered. The small dock at Mill Dam had gone. Clearance

between East Holborn and former Commercial Road is shown in its entirety, repeated elsewhere outside the area in central South Shields.



### 5.10 1966 Photograph

Again a photo of the central pinch-point, this image records a much modernised scene with cobbles lost beneath concrete or tarmac, un-maintained modern lampposts, roughcast render over brick commercial buildings and modern cladding to the once slated roof of a building at Harton Low Staithes. The focal elaborate street lamp had also gone.



### 5.11 1973 Map and Photograph

Further clearance had taken place immediately behind the former River Police & Port Sanitary Authority building. Major infrastructural change was evident beyond the area, partially redeveloping the goods station and St Hilda's colliery to the east.



By this time, the former glassworks chimney had been lowered in height and large open yards and grass were in place behind the sidings brick wall. The last remaining East Holborn buildings in the current conservation area stood in the Middle Dock Engineering Company area, behind a wall which is still a local feature but is beyond the boundary.

### 5.12 1980s and 1990s

The conservation area was designated in March 1981 and, in the following few years, buildings behind the former River Police & Port Sanitary Authority building were converted by the Council into 11 workshops (Dalton's Lane Workshops) as part of the Riverside Industrial Improvement Area. Listed in 1978 and standing empty for many years, the Customs House was sold in 1981 to the Arts & Live Music Association for restoration and conversion to an arts centre. In 1986, restoration commenced together with Tyne & Wear County Council and North East Civic Trust.



In 1987, Tyne & Wear Development Corporation (TWDC) became the local planning authority for the area along with many other parts of the riverside in the borough. They acquired the

Customs House and Dalton Lane Workshops, repairing them and extending them to the rear, and re-opening them in 1994. They now providing offices, rehearsal space, storage, a studio and community room for the Customs House.

After the 1987 map, land to the rear of the Unity Hall below the large retaining wall was redeveloped for housing. A new access road – Harton Quay – was laid out from the roundabout to the north, through the grassed former sidings. This is a very generous route compared to tightness of the area’s previous layout.

## 6 Spatial Qualities

There area has several large spaces which afford distinctive mid and long range views.

### 6.1 Mill Dam Road

This enclosed and channelled linear space has a strong sense of local identity from the buildings and boundary wall which line it, but the expectation that this raises is lost on arrival at the central hub where the car-park behind the Customs House is prominent. The falling gradient allows long distance views of the Tyne and expansive skylines, despite the ground level containment. Boxy buildings and cranes are visible beyond the open car park.



The modern ground surfaces are offset by a variety of lively, decorative and coloured buildings on the landward side, with the consistent red brick of the wall on the other.

### 6.2 Continuation of Mill Dam Road to Riverside Court

The views this space affords are also controlled, here by modern buildings and a modern high brick wall.

This too has a sense of channelled anticipation,



also let down by the openness of the arrival at the foot of the street. The backdrop of the view is the overlapping, layered buildings, and its focus is the squat chimney stump punching through a horizontal band of brick and grass. The river is not visible from much of this space, but the varied shapes of development on the riverbank opposite are.

### 6.3 The South Car-Parks



These are wide open spaces which the boundary of the conservation area crosses – it is not wholly clear on the ground where.



These spaces have few traditional surfaces and little sense of local identity, but background planting does slightly soften the scene. Overall, however, they are a weak, exposed setting to the buildings. The view



east is contained by the very strong urban edge of buildings lining Mill Dam road, all regular and domestic in layout apart from the halls, more institutional in the scale of their footprint. From this

space, the riverside buildings appear severed from their original context with plain gable walls suggesting the removal of previous buildings.

### 6.4 River's Edge and Jetty

The river's edge provides key views out of the conservation area, capturing the bend of the riverbank and also the dramatic Shields



Ferry terminal just to the north, significant and enduring features of the area's context. Outside the area, the timber staithes are evocative of the lost coal industry, once so thriving here and crucial to the wealth which created the area's industrial and maritime heritage. The expanse of grass behind adds to the sense of disengagement the conservation area has from the town centre fringes to the north.

The focal apron to the front of the area's two grand riverfront buildings is stifled by more cars. The surfaces are attractively



cobbled but the arrangement and division of routes seems unnecessarily fussy in places. Prominent Corporation Quay (on the Local List) juts into the river but does not feel like a space in which to linger, with little activity and spectacle at the river to enjoy. A black mooring bollard is some evidence of the quay's industrial past but this space falls short of a strong sense of place or significance.

### 6.5 *The Central Hub and North Car-Parks*

Historically and visually, this is the most important space in the conservation area, being the joining point of all the routes, spaces and character zones in the area. It was central to the area's principal activities and identity. Strong boundary treatments, natural surface materials and sensitively sited monuments and



plaques to Merchant Seaman are very powerful, positive features of this space. The close proximity of parked cars to the statue is however unfortunate. It is also unfortunate for there to be no reference to the symbolic double lamp standard in the middle of the central hub, where so many workers once gathered. This part lacks clear definition to the south across the car parks and there is little understanding of the space's historic significance.



## 7 East Zone

### 7.1 Land Uses



This is primarily a commercial and residential area, but the historic nature of the commercial and

industrial use is still very evident in the nature of the buildings and boundary walls. Earlier uses of the surviving buildings included a Post Office, a shipping office, and seamen's mission.

As today, pubs would also have featured strongly. Residential (a mix of types and tenures) is now more evident



further south in this zone, much being converted from earlier commercial uses, but with some purpose-built new build.

### 7.2 Key Unlisted Buildings

#### 7.2.1 Staith House and Wall

Staith House was built to house the washing and locker facilities for Harton Low Staithes' engine drivers and coal-handlers. Currently blocked windows deaden its appearance but it is



evocative of a past commercial robustness, and its embellished red brick façade illustrates the wealth of its original owner. It is vacant and in poor repair, and should be sensitively re-used and re-connected to the present day townscape. The long adjoining boundary wall with similar detailing was reconfigured in the 1980s and provides a very strong local feature within this zone.

### 7.2.2 The Waterfront PH



The impressive scale of the Waterfront PH dominates the first range of buildings along Mill Dam road, each storey progressively taller than the next giving it impressive proportions. Its well-detailed, dark blue painted shopfront is a very distinctive feature, retaining its essential verticality following apparently recent

alterations. The building's brickwork, shaped gables and heavy entablature decorations over the upper level windows (including paired columns and Venetian windows in the front gables) are interesting and high quality. It looks clear across to the river. The clock is an important local historic feature (and, apparently, there was also once a clocking-in machine inside the building).

### 7.2.3 Chimney Stump

This industrial remnant (on the Local List) from the once extensive Swinburne Glassworks is shown on the 1862 OS Map, predating Harton Low Staithes. It is in fair condition with varying local red

brick laid with lime rich mortar in Flemish bond. The rendered section below its distinctive stone cornice is in poor repair.

### 7.2.4 Mission to Seafarers & Flying Angel PH

The mission is historically important as well as architecturally interesting. Its grand institutional appearance demonstrates status and prosperity, and it reveals an historic need for maritime welfare at Mill Dam. The building has



an ordered Classical composition with a lively mix of channel-jointed ashlar sandstone, pinkish brickwork with ashlar detailing, and a slate mansard roof. The copper domed turrets are particularly striking and the large stained glass window indicates the presence of the former chapel within. Side elevations are also high quality including a prominent double-height arched entrance as dominant



statement of the building's status. The later rear extension in its cobbled yard is neat and subservient, but an apparently later doorway in the south elevation has affected its otherwise balanced main façade. The Mission / Flying Angel PH shows signs of possible water ingress.

### 7.2.5 Former Chandlers Buildings, Nos.53-67 Mill Dam

This interesting group of buildings have historical association to the area as well as a strong visual presence. Nos.53-67 Mill Dam road are a neat three-storey, late Victorian curved terrace designed to face the central hub of the area. They retain prominent upper levels in white faience panels (glazed terracotta), illustrating high quality and good at



repelling industrial stains. Some of this is in very poor condition requiring repair to prevent loss of this important feature. Decorative eaves and string courses have also deteriorated. Upper level vertically proportioned windows survive, as does an authentic mix of ground level windows and shopfronts, some with metal grilles in the stallrisers. Unity to the group comes from the common colour scheme and the largely unbroken sweep of the slate roof and brick chimneys. A change to residential use has led to some loss of authenticity, notably to the number and character of doorways.

### 7.2.6 Unity Hall

This red brick building is the opposite bookend to that of the Mission / Flying Angel PH. Its strong Gothicised vertical form with asymmetrical gable and bell tower are emphasised by a high first floor tracery window. Stone moulding and quoins contribute to its authentic character which various alterations (including a narrow flat-roofed front extension with a vaulted doorway) have generally preserved. Now in residential use.



### 7.3 Positive Architectural Features

The commercial buildings to the north have strong Victorian features, some Classically influenced, and have some similarities with buildings in west zone. Architecture is high quality, well-informed and well-proportioned. Red brick facades and boundary walls are prominent, particularly the distinctive dentils and panels of Staith House. The dominance of natural Welsh slate roofs and brick chimneys are prominent in views from the riverside. Secondary gables and dormer windows of this northern group sit below the main ridge of the roof. There is some use of render.



Large upper level windows including oriels (hanging bays) notionally giving good views across the once working quays towards the river. This practical origin – a line of sight towards the river – is key to understanding their contribution to architectural character. Moulded joinery including pub and shopfronts, hooded cornices, panelled pilasters, stall risers, corbels

and vertically proportioned sliding sash windows are key to detail. Joinery is in dark colours appropriate to the period of architecture. The shopfronts to the Steamboat PH (Nos.23-27 Mill Dam, all listed Grade II) are particularly



interesting (described in the listing as “pleasantly eccentric”). The shopfront to No.23 (the former post office) has four very long, richly carved, scrolled brackets which extend some half way down the window frame, each topped by a carved grotesque male head which breaks into the cornice line. The rest has a mid-nineteenth century pub front comprising irregularly spaced Tuscan pilasters with entablature and cornice, separating 3-light windows, an entrance door and some blank panelled bays.

Maritime related features enliven the architecture including lifebelt and anchor motifs, flag poles, figurehead corbels and a clock. Some authenticity is uncertain but, in context, such details add life and place-specific character.

In the southern part of the east zone, each substantial building is more separate from the next substantial, but again slate roofs uncluttered by roof lights and brick chimneys provide consistency. The group is characterised by a mix of red brick, ashlar sandstone, and faience, terracotta, copper and metalwork details, all creating a varied, aesthetically pleasing scene. Traditional windows are in ordered patterns, appropriately recessed in reveals, and with stone heads, sills string courses and eaves decoration. Traditional and complementary colour schemes add to the positive contribution of this group. Modern buildings to south, good brick colour and appropriate building heights

#### 7.4 *Negative Architectural Features*

Demolition north-east of The Riverside PH exposed its side elevation and, following subsequent adaptation, it detracts from the host building and the quality of the area's public house architecture. Its horizontal window openings, dark brickwork, parapet eaves, dwarf boundary wall and hard standing make a negative contribution.

Nos.5-7 Mill Dam road are boarded up and vulnerable. Felt has replaced or covered what would have been a slate roof, and is a negative intrusion going against the rich, natural grain of the area's traditional architecture.



It is also marred by masonry paint, leaving no definition to the window surrounds, and exaggerated by a non-traditional colour scheme. There are many other instances of painted stone features (eg. The Steamboat PH) which deaden the architecture and harm its historic character. Reflective glazing also deadens the appearance of some buildings. Unbroken fascias, blocked openings and lost doorways harm the designed distinction between separate frontages and buildings.



Brass cowl lights are typical of late twentieth century pub alterations – a less cluttered approach to fascia lighting is often expected today. Some signage is over-prominent (eg. The Waterfront PH) where panels protrude above the traditional depth of the fascia. Erosion of stone plaques at the Mission / Flying Angel PH harm their historic contribution.

At the zone’s southern limits, modern metal garage doors are prominent and provide a blank frontage to the street, whilst the dominant unbroken roof of the nearby modern residential block could have been visually broken up.

**7.5 Public realm**



The main Mill Dam road is generally not distinctive but cobbled side and rear lanes (eg. between The

Steamboat PH and the Mission / Flying Angel PH) add positive, authentic character to the area. Some granite curbs survive and cobbles can be seen beneath eroded tarmac in places on the main roads.



Fencing on the east boundary of conservation area allows some views through. A large faded mural on the east side of Commercial Road depicting the area’s past, just outside the conservation area, probably now has some local cultural heritage merit.

**7.6 Summary**

**Special Characteristics**

- Changes in gradient, channelled views and extensive vistas.
- Attractive mix of building types, scales and uses.
- Urban edge of building frontages and boundary walls.
- Prominent isolated stunted chimney.
- Hard surfaces, some historic.

**Against The Grain**

- Non natural, low quality materials (eg. felt roof covering).
- Modern replacement windows.
- Prominent signage and clutter, eg. lighting.
- Masonry paint and other loss of architectural definition.
- Unbroken fascias across architecturally discrete units.

**Key Issues**

- Protection of varied traditional architectural features.
- Retaining definition between different historic units.
- Consider proposing listing for the Mission / Flying Angel PH, Unity Hall and Nos.53-67 Mill Dam.

**Enhancement Potential**

- Reinstatement of historically accurate public realm.
- Conservation-led repairs or reinstatement of lost features.

## 8 West Zone

### 8.1 Land Uses

This zone is based on the Borough’s major arts and entertainment venue, the Customs House, which also uses the Dalton Lane Workshops for rehearsal, educational and other incidental uses. The former River Police & Port Sanitary Authority building is now private flats.

### 8.2 Key Unlisted Buildings

#### 8.2.1 Daltons Lane Workshops

Although on the Local List, it is perhaps surprising that this group of former industrial buildings is not statutorily listed due to their age, history and character. It is the last of a series of functional manufacturing workshops, which defined the riverside during its industrial heyday, and is possibly part of the former Subscription



Brewery on this site. It is the only remaining example of vernacular artisan architecture in the area, its red pantile roof, timber jetty delivery door, functional openings



(some blocked or rearranged) and simple red brick contrasting sharply with the formal layout, ornament and status of its neighbours.

### 8.3 Positive Architectural Features

The 1863 Customs House (listed Grade II) is the dominant building in the zone, its formal Classical composition in sandstone and buff brick displaying the status and wealth typical of Victorian



institutional buildings. Ashlar detailing is elegant and high quality, particularly the Corinthian pilasters and carved coat of arms in the riverfront



pediment. It has been extended twice – the 1878 Board of Trade offices followed the same general architectural design (incorporating a Board of Trade window head inscription and other decorative stonework), and the much larger 1990s rear extension (in slightly contrasting materials and its own style) has not detracted from or dominated the main building.



The former River Police & Port Sanitary Authority building (listed Grade II) is in a combination of red brick, ashlar sandstone and buff glazed brick, and has exposed rear and east gable elevations. Its tight vertical appearance, emphasised by stacked bay windows, has a distinctly Victorian urban feel to it, somewhat at odds to the



large stretches of open space that now surround it and its neighbour. Its lively front elevation has an original panelled door with overlight, elaborate stone pediments, brackets, frieze and gable containing the River Police coat of arms. Like that of its neighbour, the shallow pitched parapet roof is not prominent.

#### 8.4 Negative Architectural Features

Some of the altered detailing of the Customs House is a little weak, notably a partially blocked in window to the 1878 extension and the canopy to the 1990s extension which does not reflect the high quality and substance of the host building. The service entrance to the rear is also visually prominent.

#### 8.5 Public Realm

Overall, there is now a more civic rather than maritime feel to the public realm. The cobbles and mooring bollards to the front and sides of the







Customs House add some maritime industrial character. The large two-level deck of Corporation Quay (on the Local List) juts



squarely out into the river from the quayside, and its black railings and bollards tend to overwhelm it as a focal space and viewing point.

The detail of the great expanse of car parking around the buildings has an overall municipal feel to it, although it has matured into a



generally aesthetically pleasing scene. Replica Victoriana features make a positive contribution, but so would something more



maritime in flavour, such as large rough timber or more robust, unfinished metal details. Mature planting creates a pleasant

scene and softens the flat expanses, but has little detailed reference to its industrial quayside past.

The central hub of the conservation area is no longer a definitive focal space and has no key feature to represent the lost decorative lamp standard to illustrate its historical importance. But the more recent Merchant Seamen statues and plaques are strongly evocative of its past and make a very positive contribution to the

area, shifting the visual focus of this zone further north and west towards the river.



of salvaged and reinstated cobbles and setts are also key to the character of the area, although much of the layout has no historic reference. A prominent free standing notice board could be better sited to enable clear views.

## 8.6 Summary

### Special Characteristics

- Isolated cluster of large buildings, and Corporation Quay.
- Major venue for public arts and culture in the Borough.
- Potentially dramatic riverside setting and wide open views.
- Customs House and River Police & Port Sanitary buildings with grand symbolic architecture important to civic pride.
- Daltons Lane workshops, attractive artisan architecture.
- Attractive surfaces but only incidental historic reference.

### Against The Grain

- Custom House: slightly weak detail, prominent service area.
- Corporation Quay's black railings tending towards clutter.
- Central hub weakened by contrived roads and no focus.
- Quantity of parked cars, particularly around monuments.

### Key Issues

- Sensitive re-connection of disparate buildings and spaces.
- Restoring balance between historic and modern open spaces.
- Protecting distinctive detailed character of each building.

### Enhancement Potential

- Greater maritime rather than municipal character.
- Updating of public realm with more site specific design.
- Better setting to monuments.
- Reinstate historic focal street lamp at focal hub of area.

## 9 Other Designations

Other heritage designations in the Mill Dam Conservation Area are set out below, including ‘local list’ entries (as set out in UDP Appendix ENV(B)). There are no Article 4 Directions and no Tree Preservation Orders. In addition, the boundary of a large development site is contiguous with the northern boundary of the conservation area.

### 9.1 Area of Potential Archaeological Importance

The western part of the conservation area is within an Area of Potential Archaeological Importance in the UDP, due to the high archaeological significance of its origins. A programme of archaeological work, involving an assessment followed by on-site evaluation and/or a watching brief, would be required for any substantial development within the extent of the area on the UDP proposals map. This would be likely to exclude certain minor development.

### 9.2 Listed Buildings

Grade	Listed Building
II	The Former Mercantile Marine Offices [The Customs House], Mill Dam
II	River Tyne River Police Offices, Mill Dam
II	23 Mill Dam (former Post Office)
II	27 Mill Dam (Steamboat PH)

### 9.3 Local List

Local List (Extract from UDP Appendix ENV(B): Other Buildings of Acknowledged Architectural Quality or Historic Significance)
The Quadrant, Mill Dam
Jetty, Mill Dam [Corporation Quay]
Chimney, former Cookson Glassworks, Harton Staithes
The Railway PH, Mill Dam
Workshops, Dalton Lane, Mill Dam

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## 10 Selected Bibliography

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*South Shields 1930*, Press release dated October 2005, provided by  
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*Borough of South Shields*, George B Hodgson, 1996 (first  
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*The Buildings of England: County Durham*, 1953, Pevsner N

*Committee Report Proposing Mill Dam as a Conservation Area*,  
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*South Tyneside Unitary Development Plan*, Adopted 1999, South  
Tyneside Council

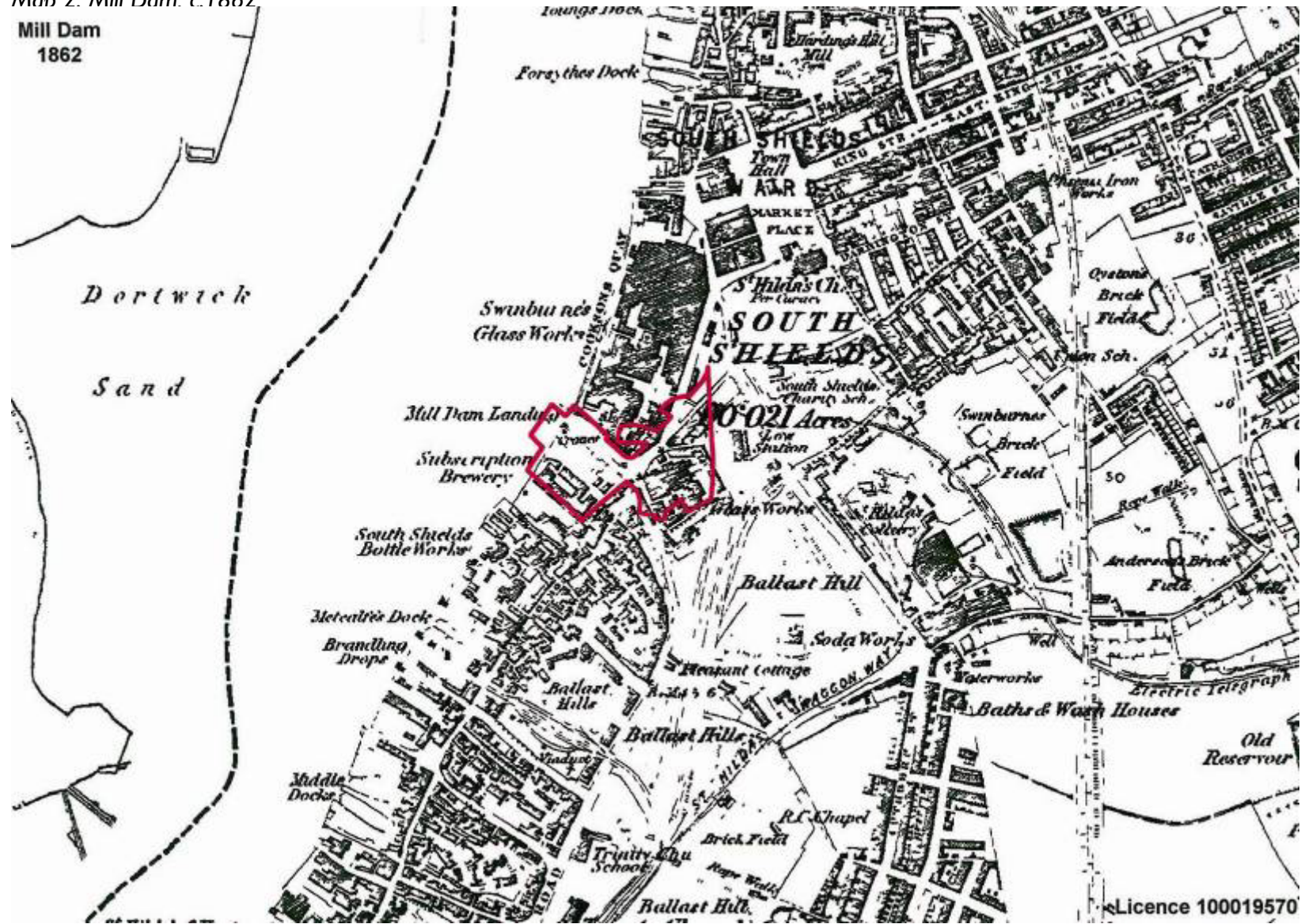
*Transforming the Riverside*, South Tyneside Council, August 2004

*Mill Dam, South Shields*, undated (c1984), South Tyneside  
Council

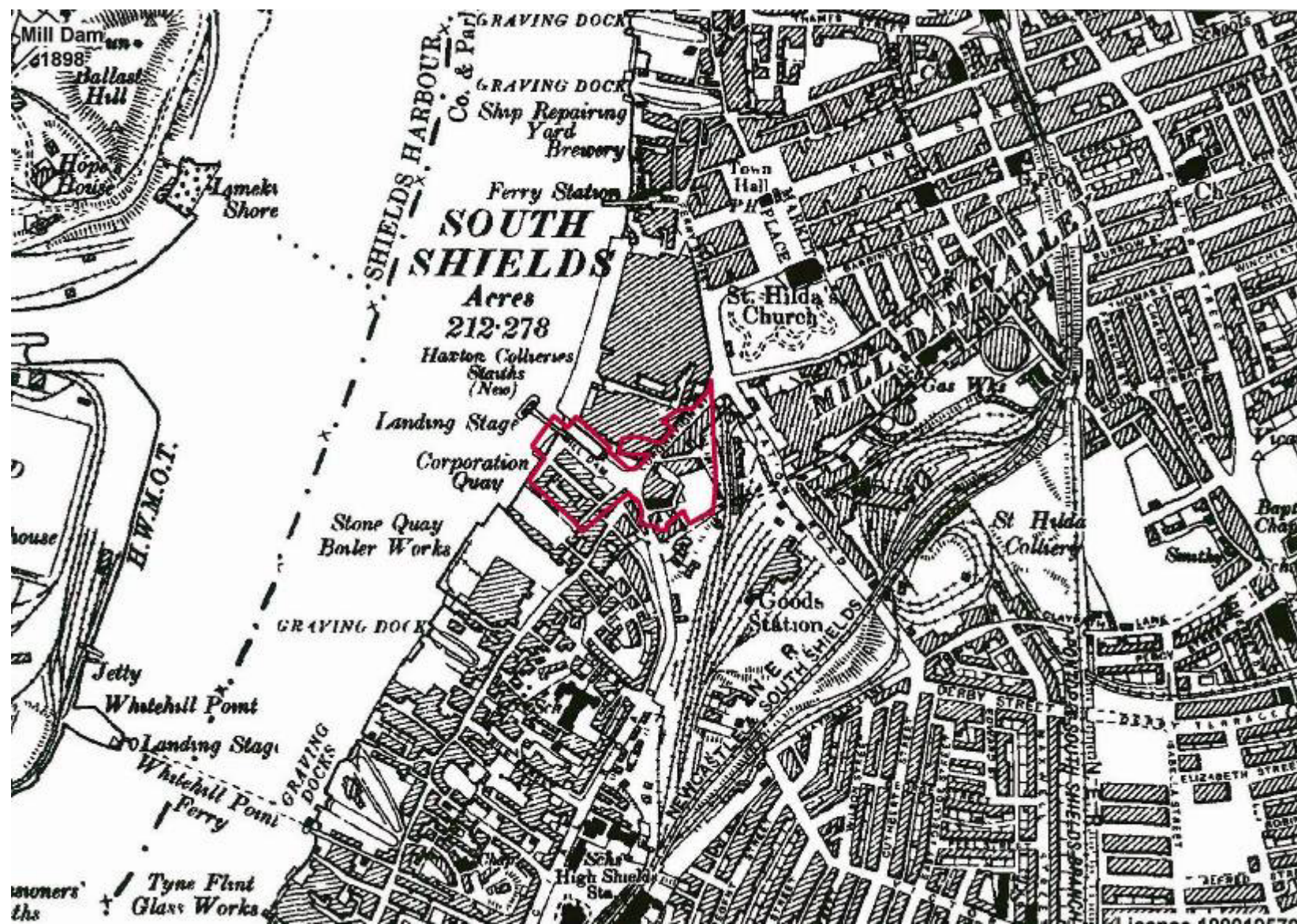
Historic photographs held at the South Tyneside Central Library  
(Local History Section), Catherine Street, South Shields.

Map 2: Mill Dam. c.1862

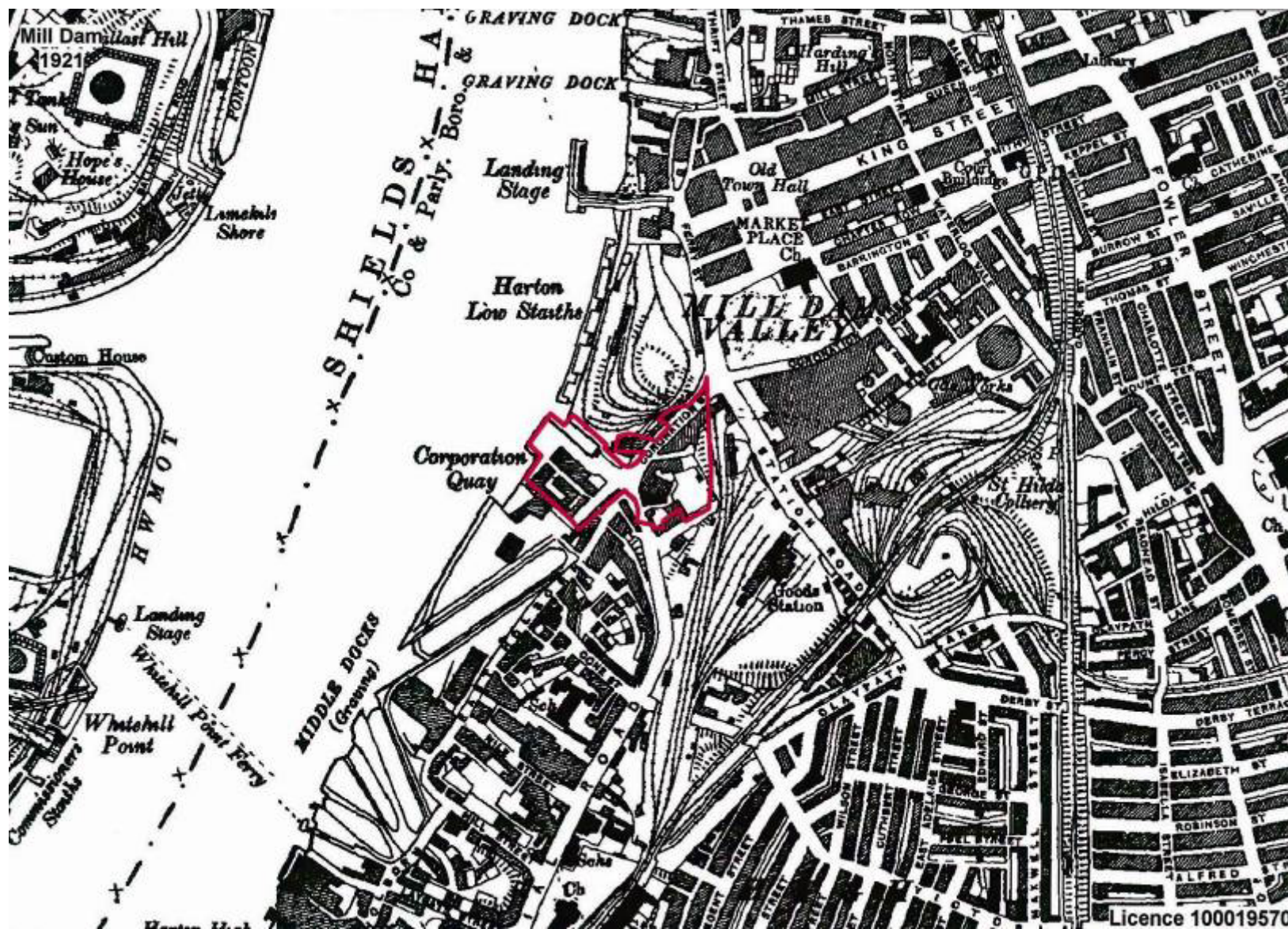
Mill Dam  
1862



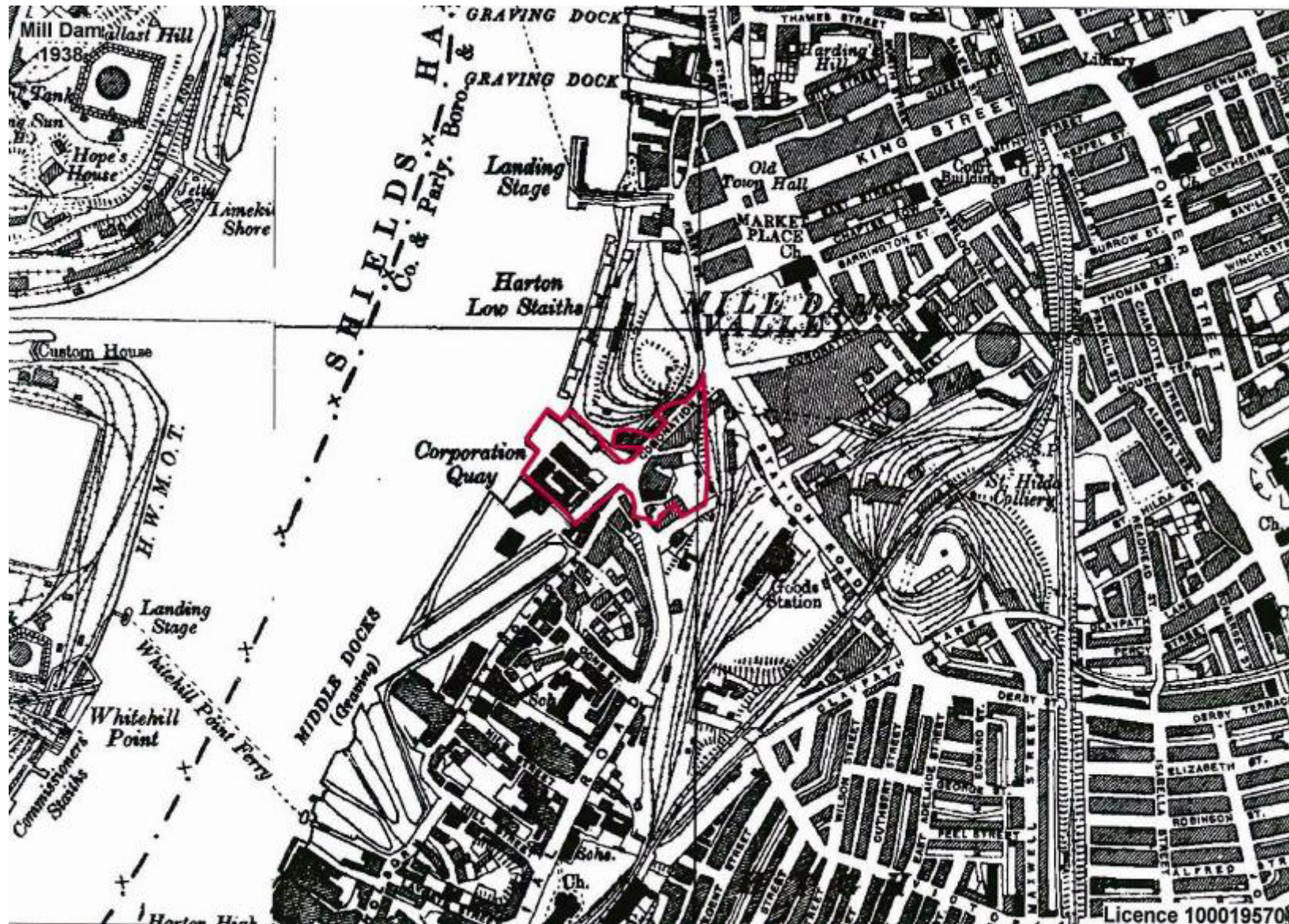
Map 3: Mill Dam, c.1898



Map 4: Mill Dam, c.1921

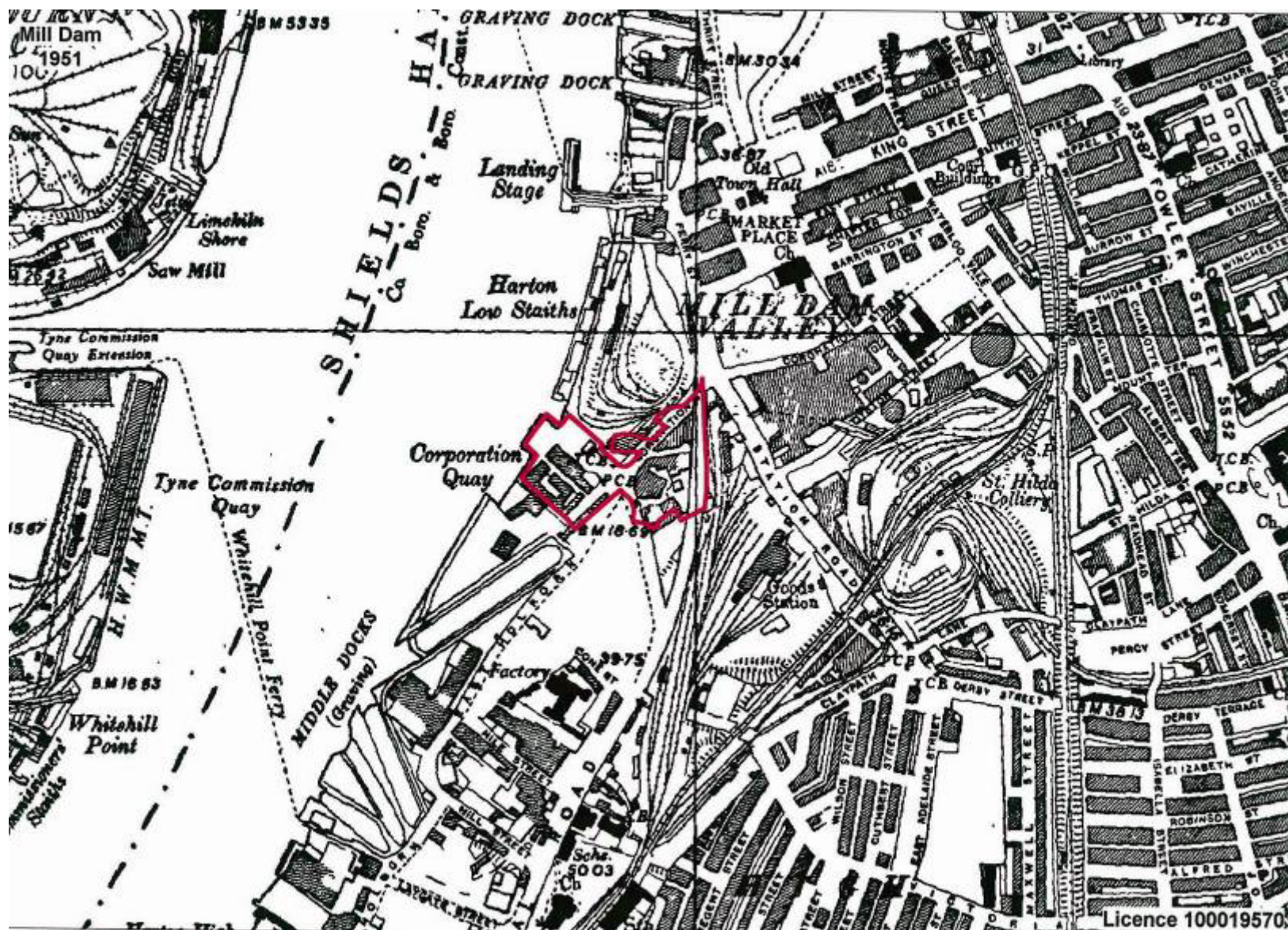


Map 5: Mill Dam, c.1938

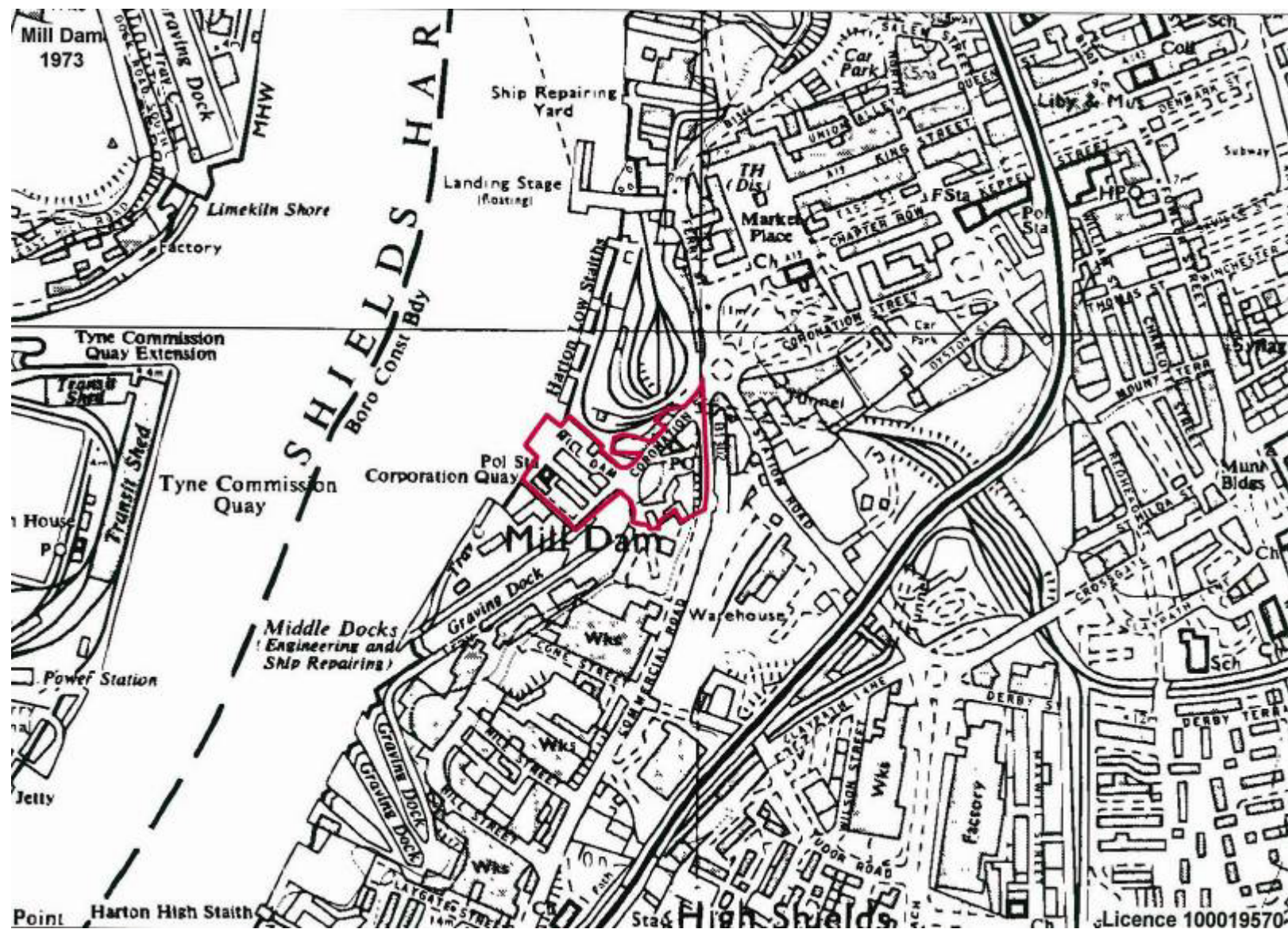




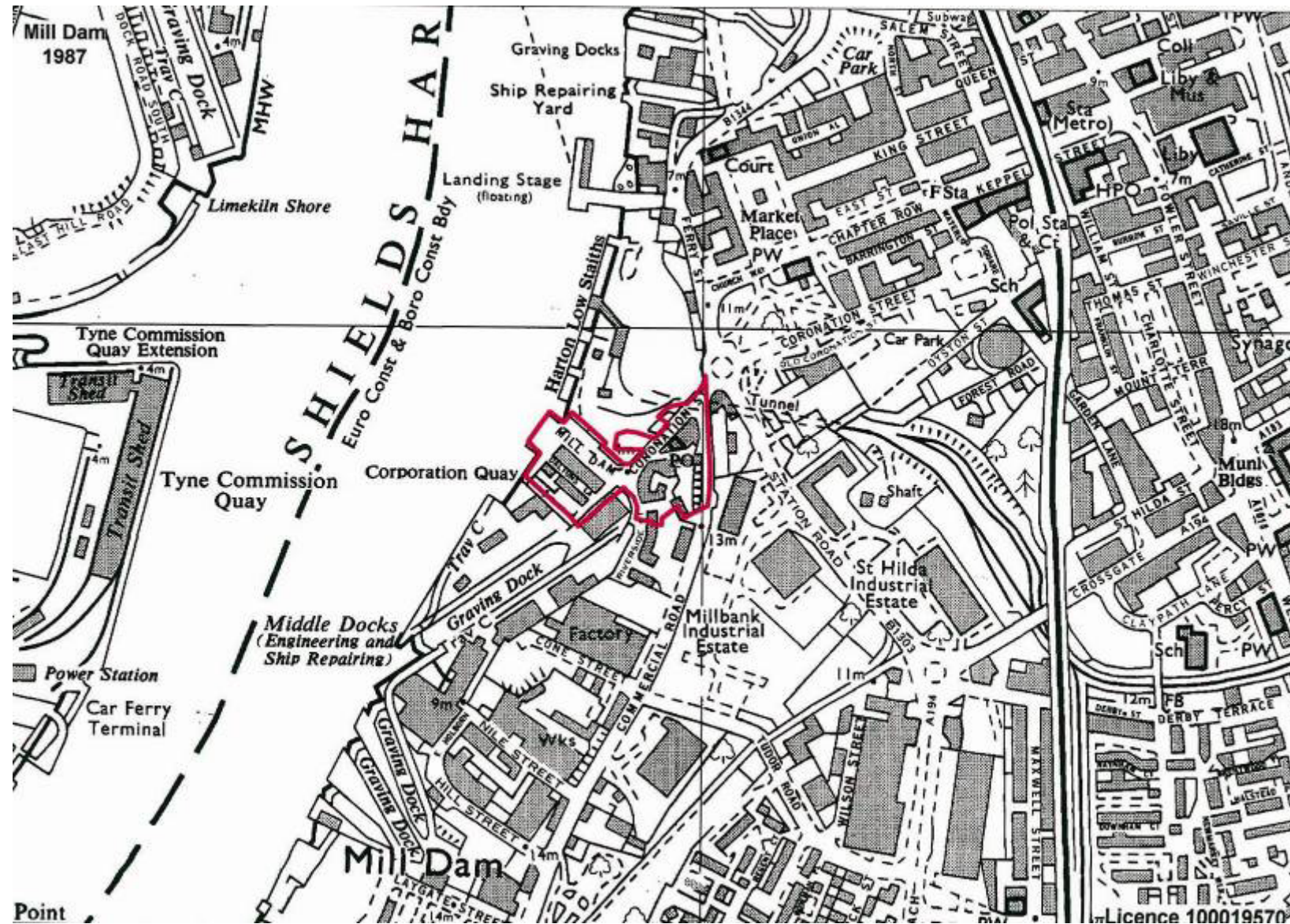
Map 6: Mill Dam, c.1951



Map 7: Mill Dam, c.1973



Map 8: Mill Dam, c.1987





## South Tyneside Council

### Neighbourhood Services

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