

Heysham Peninsula

Sunderland Point

(For greater detail on Sunderland Point see the detailed account by Hugh Cunliffe¹.)

It was also a centre for the slave trade, shipping slaves up the river to Lancaster.

Perhaps the most picturesque way to reach Sunderland Point is from Lancaster via the Golden Ball referred to nowadays as 'Snatchems'. The Inn was notorious for the press gangs, which were known for their kidnapping of men to crew the local ships. Perhaps some of them were needed for the ships at Sunderland Point.



Golden Ball Inn, Snatchems

The tide washes twice a day through the channels on the road to the Point, so it pays to take care and watch the tides. The settlement can be cut off for hours at the periods of spring (highest) tides, and the tide comes in fast.

Sunderland Point was a great area for shipping in its heyday. Ships were built at Overton and there was a great deal of trade between the Point and West Virginia. Apart from tobacco, rum and sugar, there were also unusual woods, mahogany etc. The company of Waring and Gillow made fine furniture from the wood and it was exported back to America.

At its peak Sunderland Point was said to rival Bristol as a port, and it was only when Glasson Dock was opened in 1787 that the north side of the river fell into decline.

It is a great place for painters; there are some very attractive houses and boats. On warm afternoons there is usually an artist with his easel, sometimes inviting visitors to watch.

There are always the wildfowl and gulls, and the wading birds which wait for the tide. At certain times of the year there are rarities to be seen.



Sunderland Point in 1908, Second Terrace, with Cotton Tree (Black Poplar)
Sketch by Rod Hargreaves (1999) from the original painting 'A Lancashire Village'
by William Page Atkinson Wells (1872-1923)

Sambo's Grave

One cannot leave Sunderland Point without visiting Sambo's Grave close to the Middleton shore, which is recorded as the last resting place of a negro slave who died soon after his arrival from the West Indies. His story is told in the memorial over his grave, dated 1796:

Full sixty year the angry winter's wave
Has thundering dashed this bleak and barren shore
Since Sambo's head laid in this lonely grave
Lies still, ne'er will hear their turmoil more.

Full many a sand-bird chirps upon the sod,
Any many a moonlight elfin round him trips;
Full many a summer's sunbeam warms the clod,
And many a teeming cloud upon him drips;

But still he sleeps, till the awakening sounds
Of the archangel's Trumpet new life impart;
Then the great Judge his approbation finds
Not on man's colour, but his worth of heart.

Reference

1. Hugh Cunliffe : *The Story of Sunderland Point* : pub. by author 1984 (New edition 1999). Printed by Trelawney Press Ltd, Morecambe