

100% COTTON

Merseyside Maritime Museum 24 Sept 2005 – 4 June 2006

The incredible story of cotton and its impact on the history of Liverpool and the world is told in a unique and extensive exhibition called *100% Cotton* at the Merseyside Maritime Museum from 24 September 2005 to 4 June 2006.

About 60% of the world's cotton – the original cash crop and once associated with slavery - is traded under Liverpool rules and this figure reflects the historic importance of the plant to the city's economic and social history.

Supported by the International Cotton Association Ltd (formerly the Liverpool Cotton Association), this family-friendly exhibition takes the visitor from the earliest days of cotton cultivation up to the present day. *100% Cotton* is also supported by other companies and organisations linked to the cotton industry.

It is a story involving many leading personalities and countless numbers of people from many nations. This diversity has helped shape the worldwide cotton economies that we know today.

Alison Clague, exhibition curator, says: "The exhibition looks at all aspects of cotton from its history and cultivation to trading and manufacturing. This is a fascinating story which takes the visitor through many cultures around the world – and Liverpool is the key."

100% Cotton is divided up into four main sections – **cultivation, trading, manufacture** and **made of cotton**. Entering the exhibition, visitors see models of cotton plants, interactives and projected images and sounds of cotton fields.

Cultivation: a large map shows where cotton is grown and the different ways it is cultivated around the world. Both preserved herbarium specimens and live growing plants are in this section. A computer game called *Cotton Pickin' Bugs* challenges visitors to "kill" as many bugs as they can!

Screens show cotton being grown in many different regions. Text panels focus on cultivating plants, cotton pests, cotton picking and what happens after harvesting. There are moving accounts of the slave era.

More ...

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A laboratory area has microscopes so visitors can study cotton fibres and creatures such as boll-weevils. Large images and panels illustrate varying cotton fibres and there is a section on genetically-modified (GM) crops.

Trading: A model of a cotton ship helps underline the maritime links with cotton while a hand-cart shows how the crop was once transported. The original trading ring from the former Liverpool Cotton Exchange was once the centre of world trading.

An audio visual display shows a merchant talking to a cotton broker in a format resembling a painting on the wall of one of Liverpool's mansions. Archive footage shows the Liverpool Cotton Exchange as part of a display illustrating trading through the ages.

A children's area features a small play house based on a merchant's residence with small costumes resembling 19th century merchant and servant clothing. A board game, inspired by the Futures market, features cotton crops being destroyed by pests. Another exhibit is a plank from a ship used to transport cotton.

Manufacture: archive films show working cotton mills and there is an interactive display about weaving. Audio points tell personal stories. Exhibits include printed cotton samples and models showing spinning and weaving.

There are different examples of how cotton is used around the world – a Peruvian head-dress, an Amazonian club, a Hausa robe from West Africa and other examples of fabrics and textiles. Panels look at spinning and weaving, links between Liverpool and Manchester, cotton towns, conditions in the mills and the decline of Lancashire's cotton industry.

Made of cotton: this features costumes made from cotton from the 18th century to the present day. Modern T-shirts are displayed on a wall and there is another display showing a futon sofa bed and other cotton-linked items.

There are also T-shirts and denim jackets signed by celebrities, supplied by *Jeans for Genes*, the annual appeal which urges people to wear their jeans for the day instead of what they wear normally and make a donation to charity.

Learning activities in the exhibition include a children's trail using insect characters. The exhibition is linked to the International Cotton Advisory Committee 64th Plenary Meeting being held in Liverpool from 25 – 29 September 2005, which promises to attract more than 500 delegates to the city.

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Principle exhibition supporters: Plexus Cotton Ltd, Liverpool Cotton Research Corporation, Cargill Cotton, Wakefield Inspection Services Ltd, Weil Brothers & Stern Ltd, Cotton Industry War Memorial Trust.

Notes for editors

Merseyside Maritime Museum Albert Dock, Liverpool

Admission FREE

Open 10am-5pm every day

Information 0151 478 4499

Website merseysidemaritimemuseum.org.uk

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