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Mean high waters and extreme sea levels at Liverpool since 1768: the work of William Hutchinson 1716-1801

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William Hutchinson was a former privateer captain during the Seven Years War with France who became Dockmaster at Liverpool in 1759. His measurements of the heights and times of high water spanned 1764-1793 (the 1764-1767 data are now lost) and provided the first extended set of UK tidal information (other than those in the 17th century also at Liverpool by Jeremiah Horrocks which are also lost). The data have been used in studies of changes in mean high water (a proxy for mean sea level) and extreme sea levels at Liverpool over the past two and a half centuries, some of the longest records in Europe. Hutchinson also compiled a complete set of meteorological measurements including air pressures, and his data set was (arguably) the first in which the 'inverse barometer effect' was identified (the Swede Nils Gissler sometimes gets the credit as does, incorrectly, James Clark Ross). This poster gives an idea of recent use of Hutchinson's data. Hutchinson's extensive data sets themselves will be included in a special CD in 2008 as part of Liverpool's European Capital of Culture celebrations.