

## A Brief Tour of the Wet Dock Illustrated by images from the IMT Image Archive

Most of the earliest known photographs to survive are of scenes in London and Paris, or in the homes of their inventors, and so it is remarkable that those taken in and around the then new Wet Dock in Ipswich are among the rarest images ever taken. This is thanks in large part to the work of the local artist and pioneering photographer, Robert Burrows.

Robert Burrows was born in the town in 1810. He worked as a silversmith in the family business in Fore Street, but was also an artist, painting views along the banks of the Orwell and Gipping. The advent of photography inspired him to take up this new technology, and he soon became known for producing the first photographs of Ipswich and its people. It is remarkable that these very early images have survived. The exact dates on which the images were taken are not known, but most are believed to have been made between 1850 and 1858, using a 'wet paper negative' process. This is a self-portrait of him, taken in his Fore St. studio. The bulb pump used to open the camera shutter can be seen under his foot and the carpet!



A brigantine coming alongside the Common Quay in front of the Custom House - just visible through the iron columns of Palmer's warehouse, now forming part of the unfinished 'Regatta' development. Near the bows of the vessel is a building with large white lettering across the frontage, The British Flag, one of a number of public houses along the quay that catered largely for dockworkers and visiting seamen. Most of the buildings have long since been replaced, in some cases a number of times, with the exception of the Isaac Lord's group of warehouses and maltings, now 'Isaacs'.

A late 19<sup>th</sup> century scene looking west towards Stoke Mill on the left (beside Stoke Bridge), now demolished, and Burtons and Cranfields Mills on the right, now Danceeast. The dock tramway encircled the whole dock linking back to the main railway line to the west of Ipswich Station via the 'lower' and 'upper' shunting yards.





The IMT Archive contains most of the known colour images of the dock in the 1950s. The photographer stood in front of what is now the UCS Cafeteria. Prominent buildings from right to left in the left hand photo are Meux's Brewery, Whitmore's Sailmakers (now the site of the recent Salthouse Hotel extension), Wm. Paul's 'Home' warehouse (now Ashton Graham Solicitors offices), Albion Mills (now converted into flats), and Cranfields Mill (now the Mill development, and the Dancehouse). The majority of the dock's shipping trade at this time was by Thames Sailing barges.



Two earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century scenes from the same location, but with some larger sailing ships. The mixture of rail and horse drawn transport distinguished the local from the regional origin and destinations of the cargoes. The horse-drawn cart on which the man is standing proudly states 'George Whitson, Carter, Ipswich'.

A Burrows image from around 1860 in front of the ivy-clad Custom House, showing Paul's 'Home' warehouse, now converted into the offices of Ashton Graham solicitors. A schoolboy is clearly fascinated by the new technology of the camera.



A scene taken in 1894 from Orwell Quay looking north to the site of the current UCS. The gas lamp on the extreme right edge of the image marks the corner of Coprolite St. on the wall of Ransomes Foundry. Notices on the wall of the public house behind the right-hand barge name local sail and rope makers. The stone pod of the crane can still be seen today in front of 'Coffeelink' café.



The barges would have been trading iron and steel, or foundry sand directly into the adjacent Ransomes Foundry, for forging parts for their ploughs and a huge array of agricultural machinery and steam engines, and later, battery driven electric vehicles and trams pioneered in Ipswich in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



A scene at Stoke Bridge taken around 1900 (the bridge shown was designed by local engineer Robert Ransome). St. Peter's Dock was located on the tidal New Cut in front of of what is now Danceeast, and was a regular meeting place for dockers, sailors, businessmen, and local boys hoping to get a slice of the action.

**Stuart Grimwade, Director IMT  
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