



On-line Image Archive

www.ipswichmaritimetrust.org

IMT Occasional Series of Papers – No. 3
Revised and Updated December 2025
Stuart Grimwade

This edition is designed to provide an introduction to the Archive as deposited in the Hold in December 2025. The Archive will be available for public viewing once accessioning by Suffolk Archives is completed.

December 2025

An Introduction to the Ipswich Maritime Trust Image Archive

The Image Archive project began in 2000 with my 'discovery' of Robert Burrows' albums in Suffolk Archives while researching historic images of Christchurch Park for the Borough Council's Heritage Lottery bid for the restoration of the park. The tiny faded images in these albums not only included very early and unique images of the Park, but also of the brand new Wet Dock soon after its completion in 1842. Although a few of these images have in the past appeared in various publications, digital scanning and enhancement techniques enabled me to bring them back to life for us all to enjoy. Burrows himself was an artist as well as a pioneering photographer. His father was a silversmith and he was brought up in their Fore Street premises. This no doubt gave him access to the chemicals necessary for the new and complicated process of recreating an image on wax paper. His self-portrait is seen here taken in his Fore Street studio in a very early photograph, probably requiring a long exposure which perhaps explains the bulge of a rubber tube under the carpet beneath his right foot enabling him to operate the shutter!



An exhibition of the enlarged Burrows images of the Wet Dock was mounted by the Trust in the Old Custom House, with the financial support of the Ipswich Institute, and this, in turn helped to bring other historic images to the attention of the Trust. Leonard Woolf had spent a life-time gathering a huge collection of mostly Edwardian and later postcards of the dock and river, all having once been through the post as the emails of their day, and Leonard generously made all of these available to me, together with many other historic photographs. So began my work of scanning and enhancing them for inclusion in the Archive. This task took many years to complete and there are no doubt many others just waiting to be discovered.

From these beginnings, and as public interest in the Archive grew, more and more people offered their old images of the dock for digital scanning and enhancement. Some were faded and torn, but were recoverable thanks to the then newly published digital wonders offered by 'Photoshop', while others were in remarkably good condition. A few of the more recent images from the 1950s and 1960s were taken as colour slides, and these too were scanned and restored as necessary.

I am extremely grateful to the well-known Ipswich photographer David Kindred who had similarly gathered large collections of historic images for his various publications of local Ipswich scenes, and he kindly offered relevant copies for inclusion, as have many individuals. Perhaps the most remarkable of these is a collection of large format original negatives made by local Ipswich chemist and pioneer photographer John Wiggin. This collection, now extremely fragile and still in the ownership of the same family, was skillfully copied by David. The negatives, all dating from the late 1840s and early 1850s, have recently been identified by the Fox-Talbot National Museum of Photography as of major significance in the history of world photography, since their survival is unique.

It was the happy coincidence of the construction of the new Wet Dock and the invention of the reproduceable photographic image by Fox-Talbot that inspired pioneer local photographers to record the scene in this exciting new medium in the late 1840s. It is remarkable that these first images have survived as their unique legacy of some of the earliest photographs ever taken. This is something for us all to celebrate, and we should be proud to have such important images of the dock from the very earliest days of photography.

I am still receiving newly discovered images from various sources around the world, and there are no doubt many more 'out there' waiting to be rescued, and which, with their donors consent, could also be included into the Archive.

In approaching that task I set myself two key 'rules'. Firstly only to ask to borrow the original printed images rather than to retain them, and secondly to enhance the scans I made of them only so far as was necessary to restore them as nearly as possible back to the appearance I imagined the photographer had originally created. In some cases this meant some hours of work on a single particularly damaged image, but it was always a worthwhile and enjoyable task. In this way they can be relied upon to be accurate and in no other way altered; a problem for the future world of fake images in which it will no longer be possible to claim that 'the camera never lies', indeed we shall have to get used to accepting that it almost always will.

The only exception to this enhancement was the many postcards of the Leonard Woolf Collection which had originally been printed using crude techniques and which therefore meant they were incapable of being sharpened. Maybe one day this will prove possible. The original postcards themselves are now deposited in the safe keeping of the Hold, while my scans of them are duplicated in this Image Archive.

In creating the Archive and by depositing it in the Hold, it has been my hope that this will inspire readers to add any relevant material by contacting the Trust, and also perhaps by making sure that any relevant photograph taken today is kept in a form as capable of lasting as long as those of the early photographers of 175 years ago. The best way to do this is probably still to make a good quality photo-paper print rather than to rely on the durability of that mobile phone gallery copy!

Collection content not currently in the deposited Archive

The Trust holds a more comprehensive collection of relevant image-based material not among the deposited images. This is partly due to the wishes of their donors who have expressed the wish for their availability to be restricted to 'viewing only'. However, on request, the Trust may be able to offer access to further images that are not deposited, but which it might be possible to make available for a particular educational or personal purpose with their donor's consent.

Identification of the Collections

One of the difficulties of building a library such as this is that, very often, little is known about the original photographs. In the case of the Leonard Woolf collection of postcards, for example, we may know the date when the postcard was posted, but that's all we do know. We don't know when the original image was taken, nor by whom. In most cases the exact location is easy to identify, but not necessarily any more than that. Sometimes a vessel's name can be read, but often not.

Port records held by the Trust can give us details of ships and their cargoes by date, but this cannot be used unless the exact date when the photograph was taken is known, which in virtually all cases is not.

When the Trust receives copies made from original Victorian glass plates (which greatly improved the sharpness of the image), it is often possible to identify, for example, the names of some of the businesses occupying wharveside premises long since demolished. Armed with that information, and using 19th century directories, it is sometimes possible to calculate the likely year the photograph was taken. This in turn offers scope for research into dockside companies of the day.

There is therefore still much work to be done on this aspect of the Archive, and this is one of the reasons for placing it on-line, and asking everyone to contribute any relevant information they have. The scope for further research is endless!

Although the Archive consists of images kindly loaned to the Trust for the purposes of building an educational resource, little is often known about their origin. And so the decision has been taken to group the Collections by the most appropriate name. That may therefore be the original photographer, or the donor, or the name of the person who originally collected a group of particular images. A Collection entitled 'Various Sources' has been created for those individual images not easily grouped by any other name. The Trust has always attempted to obtain consent to include each image in the Archive, and to attribute the donors name correctly, but this cannot be guaranteed.

These Collections are not by any means the entirety of the Archive, which to date includes over 2500 images, but at this stage represent all that is currently ready to upload. As more are discovered, and offered to the Trust for scanning, they can be added at any time. In due course, once more data is gathered, it should then become possible to search the images in any chosen sequence or group, to aid study.

These are the named Collections from the Archive deposited in the Hold:

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|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| ABP Archive - New Lock Construction | ABP Archive Collection - Cliff Quay & End ... | Albert Jasper Collection |
| Anthony Breen images | Austin Farrar pictures | Bernard Westren's slide collection |
| Brian Jepson Collection | David Kindred Collection | David Kindred's Titshall Brothers Collection |
| David Miller Collection | David Mullett Collection | Des Pawson Collection |
| Graham Hussey Collection | Harry Walters Collection | IDC 1902 Collection |
| Ipswich Dock Commission general collecti... | Ipswich Dock Railway Collection | John Palmer Collection |
| Leonard Woolf Collection - Selected Images | Leonard Woolf Collection Volume 1 | Leonard Woolf Collection Volume 2 |
| Mark Grimwade Collection | Michael Atkinson Images | Nick Wiggin Collection |
| Orvis Collection | PhotoEast project | Pin Mill Collection |
| Richard Pawsey Collection | Robert Burrows Collection | Russell Whipps Collection |
| Ruth Serjeant images | Selected album images | Stowmarket Navigation (River Gipping) |
| Stuart Grimwade Collection | Various Sources Collection | Will Durrant Collection |
| William Wrinch Collection | Wright and Sons Collection | |

As mentioned above, as well as the images deposited in the Hold under these named collections, the Trust's Archive contains much other image-related material that is not deposited, including some held under these same Collection names. Further information on these images, including those not held under these same Collection names, can be made available on request to the Trust.

Image Copyright

It must be emphasized that most of the images have been kindly loaned to the Trust for its charitable purposes only. For this reason, it has not always been felt appropriate to permit their downloading from the Trust's website. However, if anyone wishes to contact the Trust about their availability for other purposes, they are welcome to do so. Further information about this is given below.

Adding Information to the Image Archive

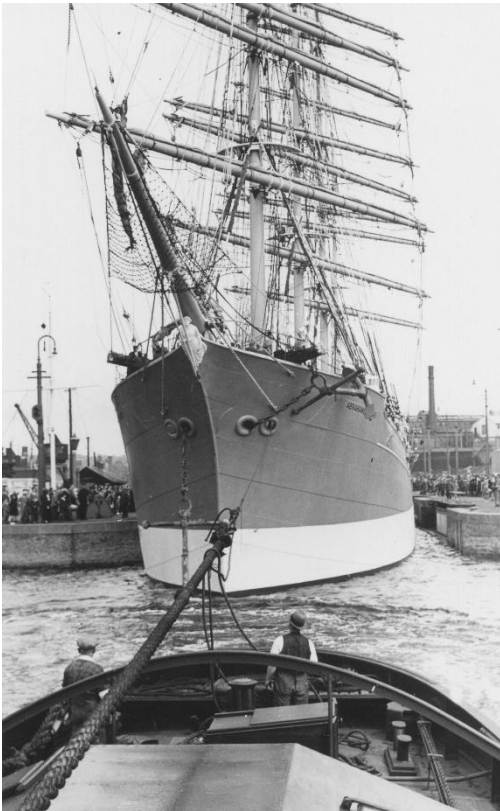
One of the main reasons for placing the Image Archive in Suffolk Archives and on-line on the IMT's website is to expand it, and so make it a more useful public resource. Since many of the better quality images contain a lot of interesting details when enlarged, they have been uploaded at a size which enables them to be enlarged on screen.

While there are still people who, through family knowledge, can recall the ships, events and places the Archived images show, the Trust welcomes any new information that could help bring these moments of history to life. Similarly anyone who has new or historic photographs that might be of interest, the Trust will be delighted to hear from them. The Trust's email contact address for this is info@ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk

When doing so, it may be useful to be aware of the names of the Quays and Wharves likely to feature in many of the images. Reproduced at the end of this leaflet is an extract from the OS Map of 1884; a time when many of the Image Archive photographers would have been busy taking their pictures. Superimposed on it are the Quay and Wharf names used by the former Ipswich Dock Commission up until the decline of the Wet Dock as a working port in the 1980s. While they don't necessarily match the 1884 OS base either in name or exact location, the labels best sum up the place-names most commonly used by dock workers towards the end of the life of the Wet Dock as a working port.

The Trust is determined that these historic quay names should be recognised and retained in preference to any modern alternatives, sometimes chosen by developers and which have no historic significance or relevance. In recent years the Trust successfully persuaded the Borough Council to reinstate at least some of the original quay names commonly used by the then publicly owned port 'Dock Commission' during the mid-20th Century when the Wet Dock was still in full commercial shipping use. These can now be seen around the Waterfront in the form of blue street plaques.

The Trust is continuing to research the history of the port's quay names in earlier centuries, and the current work is set out in their Occasional Paper No .1 updated in 2020.



The Trust began life in 1982 at a time when the Wet Dock was in serious decline with very few vessels and many redundant historic buildings. Its aim was to find ways of bringing life back to the Wet Dock, and its success in this endeavour was largely achieved when its 'Sail Ipswich' event in 1997 drew over 35,000 people to the Waterfront over a single week-end.

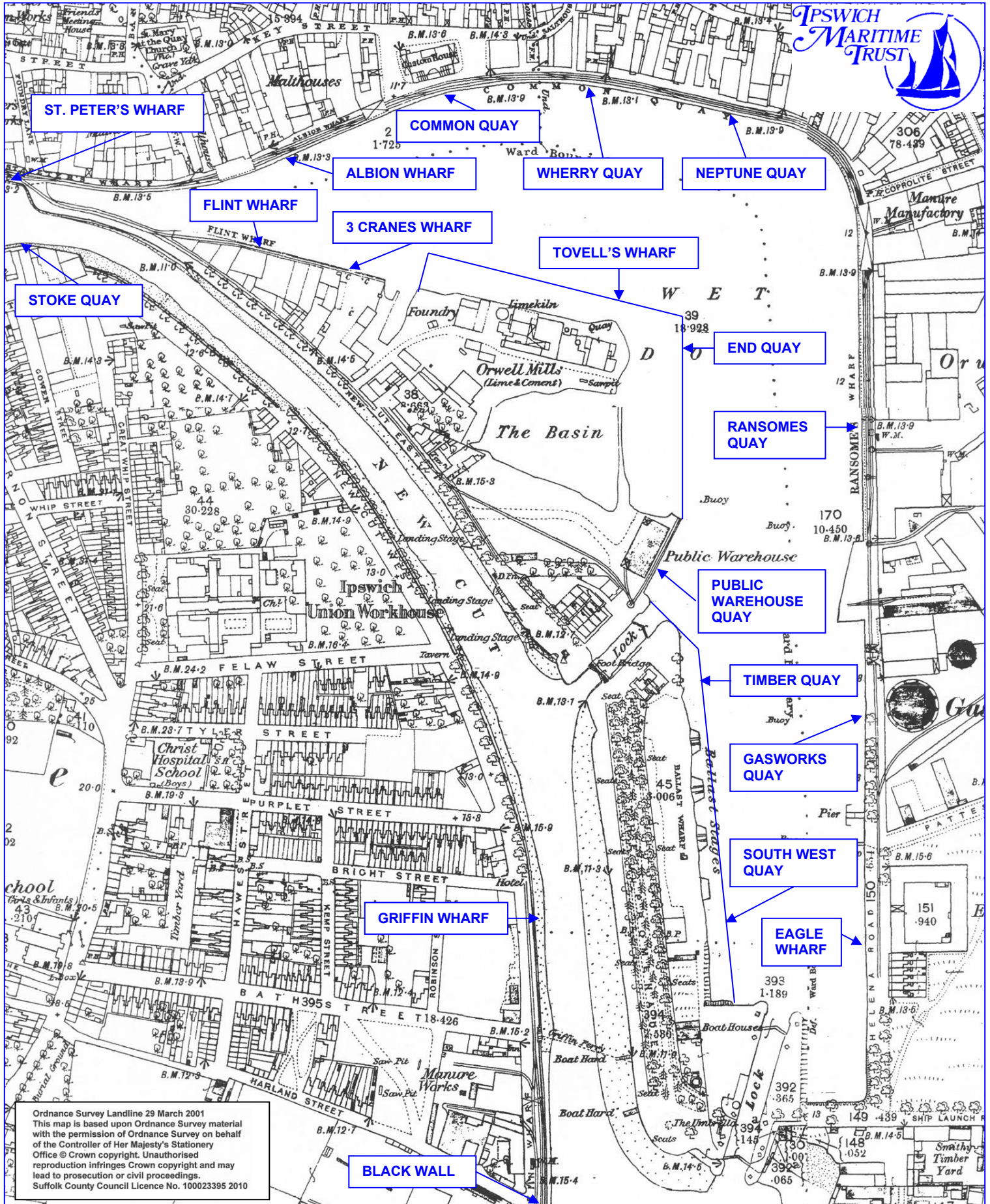
Today, the principal aim of the Trust is to bring to everyone's attention the astonishing maritime history of the Orwell and its Port, reaching back to before the 7th Century, enabling Ipswich to claim to be the oldest English town. We undertake a wide range of events which includes holding a series of winter and spring talks on a maritime related theme, together with a range of activities aimed at helping young people to gain practical maritime experience.

More details on the Trust can be found at the IMT website www.ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk

Abraham Rydberg departing Ipswich for the last time on 3rd September 1939. Photos courtesy Richard Smith



An extract from the Ordnance Survey Edition of 1884 with, in blue, the most common historic quay names used during the life of the Wet Dock as a working port.



Ordnance Survey Landline 29 March 2001
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In January 2026, the Borough Council are planning to launch the 'Ipswich Binocular Project'. Located at six key points around the town and using Augmented Reality technology these accessible and free binoculars will allow you to see Ipswich as you never have before. Watch Victorian Ipswich come to life, with electric trams, gas lights and docking ships. This map is based on the 1904 Ordnance Survey sheet of the town centre. For this project, I prepared a series of historical information sheets using photographs from this Image Archive. These sheets are available on request to IMT. I am grateful to the Historic Towns Trust for their help in producing this map.

Stuart Grimwade December 2025

