

IPSWICH MARITIME Matters

The Magazine for members and friends of Ipswich Maritime Trust
Issue 48 Spring 2025
www.ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk



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Find out who's on board
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SHEFARERS UNITE - IN HAMBURG
Shefarers Cathy Shelbourne (far left) and Claudia Myatt (far right) met up with Secret Agency artists Esther Pilkington and Sibylle Peters last December.

From the Editor

IMT was very pleased to support the Shefarers project set up in 2023 by the SPILL Festival in Ipswich, which we reported upon in previous issues of *Ipswich Maritime Matters* (number 45: Summer 2023 and number 46: Spring 2024).

SPILL commissioned two artists from the Secret Agency based in Hamburg, who took up residence on *Victor(ia)* and brought together local women and girls already working, or interested, in the maritime world.

The network created in Ipswich is now part of an international Shefarers movement, and continues to resonate around the world - one of our members is currently on a year's assignment on South Georgia!

Two other members, Belinda Joslin and Heike Lowenstein, were invited to give presentations at the Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival in the USA - and Belinda will be joining us on Wednesday 2nd April for a talk on Women in Boatbuilding, her participation in the Festival, supporting young women in boatbuilding - and much more. Don't miss it!

Details of all our events this year are on the back cover.

Cathy Shelbourne

News

Vice-Admiral Robert FitzRoy, meteorologist and first weather forecaster. Born 1805 in Suffolk



CELEBRATING MARITIME ANNIVERSARIES

100 years of the Shipping Forecast

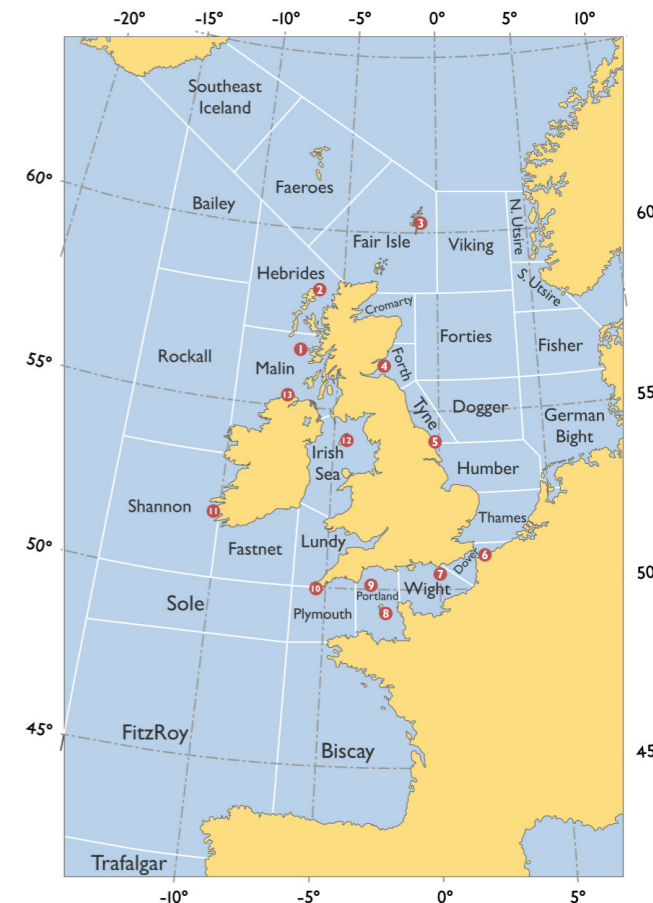
On Monday 1st January 2025 the BBC celebrated one hundred years of broadcasting the Shipping Forecast with a wonderful selection of programmes, many of which can be found here: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4Xd1HYns0IKBdl27DDGnWpG/the-shipping-forecast-centenary

Exactly one hundred years earlier, on 1 January 1924, the very first clipped British tones were heard delivering a weather bulletin called Weather Shipping.

In the UK, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) is responsible for the provision of maritime safety information to ships at sea, which includes the broadcast of warnings and forecasts. The iconic Shipping Forecast is a BBC Radio broadcast produced by the Met Office on behalf of the MCA. Although the Shipping Forecast officially came into existence in 1924, it was in October 1925 when it was first broadcast via the BBC.

The history of the forecast goes back to 1861, when Vice-Admiral Robert FitzRoy developed a telegraphic messaging system to issue weather warnings to ships, following the loss of the steam clipper *Royal Charter*. The vessel sank in a violent storm off the coast of Anglesey, with the loss of more than 450 lives, prompting FitzRoy's desire to prevent it happening again.

He was the main influence in the early development of the Met



Office, which was then primarily intended to improve safety at sea.

Robert Fitzroy was born on 5th July 1805 at Ampton Hall, Ampton, Suffolk, and after an illustrious career in the Royal Navy (including temporary captain of *HMS Beagle*), in early May 1831 he stood as Tory candidate for Ipswich in the general election (but was defeated). He later became second Governor of New Zealand, from 1843-45.

For more of this fascinating man, and his creation of accurate daily weather predictions, which he called 'forecasts', come along to the IMT meeting on Wednesday 3rd December when our speaker, Andy Beharrel, will give another of his excellent talks, this one entitled Shipping Forecasts.



Dunkirk Little Ships: 85th anniversary

Between 26th May and 4th June 1940, during World War II, Allied soldiers were evacuated from the beaches and harbour of Dunkirk, in northern France.

Approximately 850 private boats and 20 warships participated in Operation Dynamo, although not all were documented or known. More than 200 ships were lost at Dunkirk.

Between 21st May - 26th May 2025, a commemorative cruise will start from Ramsgate Heritage Harbour, to honour those 'Little Ships'. Over 50 of the original vessels are expected to take part.

For more information, see the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships at www.adls.org.uk and the Ramsgate Society at www.ramsgate-society.org.uk/heritage-harbour/

Watch IMT's videos about the Dunkirk's little ships, including interviews with members of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships, and the owner of *Glala*, a Dunkirk veteran. <https://vimeo.com/user113090161>

Ipswich's very own Little Ship

Glala, owned and being restored by Andrew Robson (in photo below) and Kathy Norris, is one of the Little Ships that went from Suffolk to evacuate soldiers from Dunkirk.

On board *Glala*, on 28th May 1940, was Midshipman Peter Magnus – grandfather of Emma Lightfoot, IMT member, and owner of the *Orwell Lady*.

(See *Ipswich Maritime Matters*, Spring 2024, page 9, for the full story).



Winning writers

And the winners were: Nic Whittam, Lucy Aikman and Anya Page, seen in the photo with Mai Black on the left, and Ben Good on the right, at the presentation of framed certificates and entries, on Wednesday 6th November 2024.

Congratulations to the winners of the Suffolk Writers Group's Maritime Competition. Organiser Mai Black gave entrants the choice of writing about one of three evocative black and white photos from IMT's huge Image Archive, www.ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk/image-archive – each including, unusually, an animal.

Many thanks to the judges who were Ben Good, IMT chairman; and Julia Jones, author and publisher at www.golden-duck.co.uk

They enjoyed reading the range of responses to the photos, and were impressed by the choice of words and stories created.

Mai visited the IMT's exhibition in the Old Custom House during Heritage Open Day last September.

"When walking alongside the quay, I'm always struck by the beauty of the Ipswich Custom House. What a treat to attend the Open Day and also be greeted by the wonderful photos from Ipswich's maritime history. "I'm always on the

lookout for inspiring photos to use with my creative writing groups and as I stared into these faces from Ipswich's past, I was immediately curious as to what stories they might tell.

"Members of Suffolk Writers Group quickly rose to the challenge, and we were soon inundated with a wealth of brilliant stories and poems. Thank you so much to everyone at Ipswich Maritime Trust for helping to organise the subsequent writing competition and choosing our wonderful winners."

For more information about forthcoming writing courses, see <https://suffolkwritersgroup.com/writingcourses/>

The winning entries are on pages 12-13.



From the Chairman



IMT and *Victor*: an update

In the last newsletter, we said that we were considering making an offer for the sailing barge *Victor*, now that she has been put on the market. This is for two reasons. First, she is an icon of our town's maritime heritage and it would be a terrible shame to see her sail away for ever down the Orwell. Second, she features prominently in IMT's plans as a platform for heritage and cultural events and for school trips.

Your responses to that article expressed enthusiasm and urged caution in equal measure. So we have endeavoured to proceed with correspondingly equal measures of enthusiasm and caution!

Since then we have agreed with both the '*Victor* team' (that is, Wes, as skipper and general manager, and the vessel's actual owner who lives overseas), and a potential key donor, to take a two-phased approach.

This year, 2025, is the first phase, during which we will not own the *Victor* but take increasing levels of control over its operations. We will use this summer's sailing season as a proof-of-concept phase to learn properly the financial and operational details of operating a barge, alongside the practicalities of using her both as a

commercial vessel, (as she is today for charter groups and public cruises), and as a platform for school visits and heritage events. We will also be analysing the results of the detailed structural survey which is planned for next month.

At the end of 2025, we will thereby aim to have become as well-informed as possible about the implications of owning a barge, and, if all is well, will proceed with her purchase, so that by the start of the 2026 season, she will be wholly owned by IMT. That, at least, is the plan...

Coming back to this summer, then, we aim to retain a similar number of charter trips/public cruises as usual, (about 80-100 in a season), as these provide the income to cover her costs, but will in addition work into her schedule some school trips and quayside public events. In addition, given that this is happening mainly because Wes is coming up to retirement, we have identified a new skipper, Lyndon March, who will work closely with Wes and progressively take over his duties. [Lyndon's profile is on page 7]. In this way we are aiming for a controlled handover, learning as much as possible along the way

from Wes, who will remain fully active throughout 2025, and will likely also be on hand for advice in 2026 and beyond.

So we are proceeding cautiously, but, assuming things are looking promising, we will launch in the summer a fundraising campaign to help fund her purchase and future costs. *Victor* herself can of course play a useful role in that campaign as an events venue.

Undoubtedly, there's a lot to work out, and various potential Pooch-traps ahead of us, but it's also potentially very exciting. I am reminded of our experience last September during the Heritage Open Day, when we had a pop-up museum in the Old Custom House and, just across the pavement, *Victor*, on the quay and open for all-comers. We had over 350 visitors that day, (making us Ipswich's 4th most popular attraction), many of them young families not really participating in the Heritage Open Day, but just excited to board the old boat. As one young mother said to me: "We've got three kids and can't afford the tickets for a cruise, so this is our best chance to get onboard!"

I hope that owning *Victor* will allow IMT to offer chances to many more kids who would otherwise miss out.

Ben Good

See pages 16 and 17 for 2025's Heritage Open Days

Victor is available for public cruises or private charter. Please visit www.sbvictor.co.uk

Sam learns the ropes - and finds a future



At IMT, we think Ipswich's maritime heritage can be a source of opportunity for the next generation. And if our mission is to make that happen, then *Victor* crewmember **Sam Murkowski**, 20, is a good example of what we mean.

Sam's story is not uncommon. After an underwhelming academic career, he escaped school as soon as possible and with few prospects. Sam might put it a little differently: he didn't so much leave school as school left him, progressively. It felt like he was sailing single-handed with unreliable charts, facing the headwinds and shoals of unkind classmates, indifferent teachers and boring books. Navigating that lot was extremely hard, and it was perhaps unsurprising that he didn't end up in quite the best place.

But then his neighbour on Gainsborough, a big man with an unusual job, hired his dad, an electrician, to do some work in the galley of a certain old boat. Sam went along, and started spending more and more time onboard, with Wes,

(yes, it was he), happy to mentor him as he became more and more useful on deck.

"Wes has been an amazing teacher," says Sam. "Tough but fair."

"I have had to kick him up the a**e from time to time," says Wes, more pithily.

For the last three years. Sam has crewed on *Victor* for almost every trip. He still needs Wes' direction, but now the commands can be broader: the overall plan for the next manoeuvre rather than the details of every step. He has started to build up his qualifications, too, having completed his VHF and first aid training. In time he would like to become a fully fledged First Mate. That will require more training, and many hours on other barges, under the command of skippers who may or may not have the same paternalistic streak as a certain Captain Westwood.

That's a little way in the future, but Sam is on his way, thanks to his experience with Wes and on *Victor*.

"I'll know when I'm ready," Sam says with a smile.

Ben Good

Introducing *Victor's* new skipper

When we first started talking to *Victor's* owner about taking her over, we agreed that IMT is the perfect new owner for her. Except that we have neither the money nor the skills....

In a way it is the latter deficit which was the bigger concern: lots of people have money, but very few have barge skills. So it was very welcome when Wes suggested we meet a young man with extensive experience of barges. **Lyndon March** has his Barge Skipper's ticket, and has been sailing on barges for nearly 20 years - not bad for a 31 year old - but is not only a sailor. He is also a shipwright and has relevant business management experience.

His CV includes spells at Topsail Charters, in a business development role as well as helping

with sailing and maintenance of that organisation's then four sailing barges; as operations manager at the Heritage Marine Foundation; relief skipper/mate for sb *Edith May* and Pioneer Sailing Trust; and a year at Woodbridge Boat Yard. Currently, he is busy as a freelance shipwright, with project experience on both the east and south coasts.

Finding a barge skipper with so much experience is one thing; finding one who is both experienced and not at the wrong end of his career is even better. With IMT looking for ways to appeal to the next generation, having someone of Lyndon's vintage is a distinct asset!

Lyndon remembers first getting hooked on barges aged 13, when talking to the barge skipper Rebecca Polden on Maldon Quay. "I often

wonder what 13 year old me found so compelling about the cumbersome and complicated bulks that are sailing barges," he says. But he kept at it, crewing on barges regularly despite the inconveniences of school and university, and by the time he collected his degree he was already signed on as a mate at Topsail.

The opportunity to take over from Wes as master of *Victor* is a huge opportunity for Lyndon, who is well-known in the barge community. "The barge world hasn't changed much in recent decades. That is part of its charm but also part of its greatest weakness," he says. "It needs an injection of youth, vision and clarity."

"I am very happy with IMT's plans to use *Victor* to open young eyes to the possibilities of maritime heritage

and nautical matters in general. At several points in my career, I have been involved in introducing young people to our sector and in their training. It's obvious that this is where our future lies."

"I am also very happy that she will remain in Ipswich. Although she spent much of her working life elsewhere, she really belongs here. She is the only surviving vessel by Horace Shrubshall, an Ipswich yard known for its fast craft. And she has spent the last 15 years in the Wet Dock as a centrepiece of Ipswich's maritime story."

Lyndon lives with his young family in Maldon but has worked all over the south of England, so is not fazed by the prospect of many trips up the A12. His partner's family are also heavily involved in the heritage vessels world. Taking all this into account, we are more than happy to overlook his Essex roots and welcome him to Ipswich.

It's an exciting future for *Victor* and we're pleased he's aboard!

Ben Good

PHOTO OF LYNDON MARCH BY SANDY MILLER



3,500 rivets and counting

Things are looking up for the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company. They have recently agreed to move to new premises in Woodbridge which will offer a permanent solution – much needed as their stay in the Longshed was coming to an end. And now the team are even starting to think about how to organise the ship's launch. That won't happen until 2026, but, says Sean McMillan, chair of the Trustees: "The launch of an early Anglo-Saxon ship will be an event of national, even international, significance, and we need to get it right. So we must plan well in advance."

The Company was formed in 2016 to build a faithful reconstruction of the 27-metre ship that King Raedwald was buried with, in about 624 AD. The discovery of the burial site in 1939 was the subject of the 2021 film, *The Dig*; and it was the accurate surveying of the ghostly imprint of the ship's timbers,

punctuated by over 3,500 rivets, that formed the basis of the lofting plans for the current build phase.

Extraordinary as the original Sutton Hoo archaeology work was, what is now going on in the Longshed, on Woodbridge waterfront, is in many ways no less extraordinary. For one thing, the build is using only the tools, materials and techniques that Anglo-Saxon boatbuilders would have used. For another, quite a lot is not known about the original boat. For example, there is no archaeological evidence about the original design of any steering gear, or what the oars were like. It is not even known for sure whether she would have sailed, although the team – perhaps unsurprisingly given Sean's background as a founder of Spirit Yachts – are keen to give it a try, and sails are being made using original wool-based materials.

That experimentation is largely the point: it

is only by doing that we can fill in the gaps in the archaeological evidence, and fully appreciate how boats like this were built, and navigated, 1,400 years ago. Although the project is overseen by a small team of professionals, the vast majority of the work is done by volunteers, over 150 of them. Not all of them are on the tools, but those that are have been trained and are encountering a fascinating array of technical challenges.

Another challenge is that England these days has fewer oak trees! Overall, the boat will require the equivalent of about 12 mature oak trees, although in practice more will have to be felled to meet the requirement. A current example is the search for the 6-metre long, 1.2-metre diameter, straight grained trunks that are necessary for the number 4 and 5 strakes, the widest planks on the ship. But here again Sean is optimistic: following a recent publicity campaign the team has received over 260 replies from people who think they may have a suitable oak tree.

Uncertainties around the project's tenure in the Longshed have been a pressing issue for the project for a while, and so the news about securing new premises in Woodbridge – Robertsons Boatyard, which is both very close

by and offers a number of operational benefits – is very good for the project. For Ipswich folk, that might be mixed with a twinge of disappointment, as there are those that had hoped the ship might find a new home here, not least because the Orwell is probably better suited to sea trials than the Deben. But in reality it's hard to argue that staying in Woodbridge, close to its impressive base of volunteers and close to Sutton Hoo itself is not a good outcome for the project.

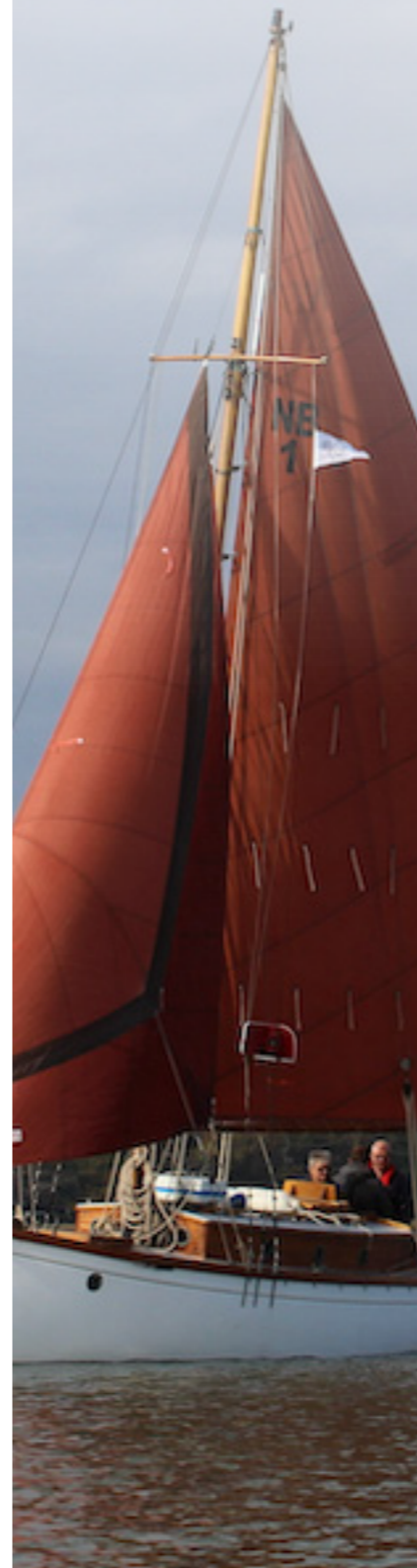
Meanwhile, back to the launch planning. Matters to consider include crowd management (it's going to be popular!); whether to launch on logs or modern rollers (authenticity versus practicality – a recurring issue); and the appropriate naming ceremony (and indeed the name itself – mindful perhaps of the McBoatface episode, the project plans to leave this to the academics). Watch this space.

Ben Good

Left: The 27-metre vessel under construction, in the Longshed on Woodbridge's waterfront.
Above: All the tools used on the job, including this clamp, have been specially made to original Anglo-Saxon designs.



News



Nancy Blackett ... in bits



Nancy Blackett – Arthur Ransome's 'best little boat' and the original of the *Goblin* in his *We Didn't Mean to Go the Sea* – is undergoing some heavy restoration work for the second winter lay-up in succession at King's Boatyard in Pin Mill.

The discovery of rot in the port-side cockpit coaming at the end of the 2023 season led to the replacement of not just the coaming but the entire side of the coachroof, with a single continuous piece of Brazilian mahogany, plus additional work on the roof itself, which had been leaking on the unfortunate occupants of the saloon bunk for some time.

This also led to discovery of rot in the deck cross-beam abaft the mast aperture, and – perhaps inevitably – similar problems in the starboard coaming and coachroof.

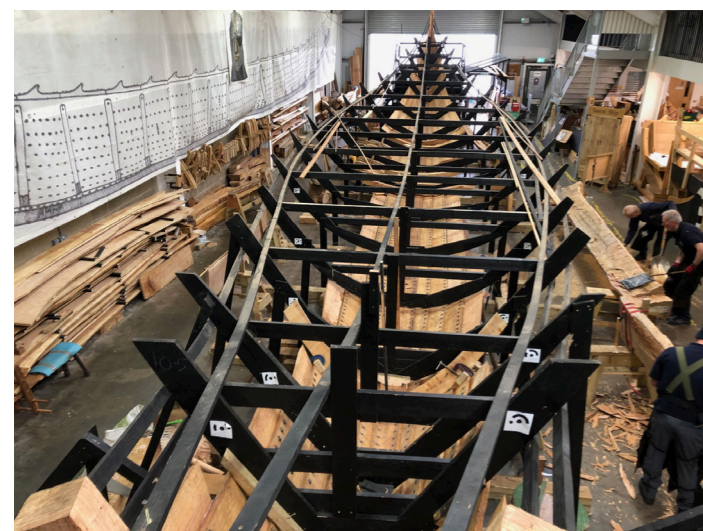
Fixing these, and associated work, were held over to this winter, and we thought it wise to call in our surveyor James Pratt

to carry out a preliminary examination, ahead of his next scheduled survey. Among other things this showed up some rot in the stem and has indicated the need for a more through inspection in the near future.

This is in fact the first major programme of restoration since Levington resident Mike Rines virtually rebuilt Nancy after he discovered her a near-wreck in Scarborough in the late 1980s (James himself, as a newly-qualified boatbuilder was involved).

Peter Willis

The Nancy Blackett Trust was set up, with around 400 individual donations, in 1997, to buy and maintain Nancy and make her available for sailing on her home waters of the Orwell and Deben, and elsewhere – including several North-Sea passages to Holland, and a recent return to Scarborough. Costs are covered mainly by membership subscriptions and the occasional donation and legacy. New members, particularly sailors, are welcome. See www.nancyblackett.org/join for more details.



Heritage

Did you know that engraved on the America's Cup is the name of a yacht built in Ipswich?

DES PAWSON MBE reveals the story of the yacht from the shipyard behind his former house in Ipswich



Made in Ipswich, immortalised by the America's Cup

Few Ipswich people will be aware that engraved on The America's Cup is the name of a yacht built in Ipswich. The yacht in question is the *Volante*, built at Halifax Shipyard near Bourne Bridge in 1851 by Thomas Harvey Junior, the son of Thomas Harvey of Wivenhoe.

Commissioned by JL Craigie

She was built for John Livingston Craigie (1814-1864), a highly regarded Surgeon Dentist of Finsbury Square, London. JL Craigie was a member of the Royal Thames Yacht Club, as well as a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. It would appear that *Volante* replaced an earlier yacht he owned, the *Diana*, who in 1850, while racing, went ashore on the Leigh Flat, where she remained for 20 minutes. She was towed off by a steamer, but lost her chance of the race. This may have been why Mr Craigie commissioned *Volante*.

The America's Cup

Volante, a square sterned cutter rigged yacht of 44.25 gross registered tons, took part, with others, on 22nd July 1851, in the challenge race round the Isle of Wight against the yacht *America*. As *America* won the prize, it is today known as The America's Cup. At the start of the race *Volante* was one of the local favourites, indeed after just an hour she led the fleet, passing Noman's Buoy with *America* two minutes behind. Sadly a couple of hours later one of the other yachts, *Freak*, fouled *Volante* and she carried away her jib boom. By then *America* had managed to get through the rest of the fleet, and was just able to keep ahead, finishing first, followed by *Aurora* a short while behind. It is not certain if *Volante* retired or crossed the finish after the time keeper had retired. Nevertheless her name was engraved on The America's Cup, as part of the fleet that took part in this historic race. Something for Ipswich to be proud of.

Contraband

John Craigie raced *Volante* extensively around the UK in 1851, as well as in 1852 when, on what appears to be on her way to laying up at Wivenhoe (the owner not being on board), *Volante* was stopped and contraband found. Various members of the crew were fined sums varying from 10/- to £2 and in the case of two of them, perhaps the captain and mate, £100 or imprisonment.

Victory for *Volante*

In 1853 *Volante* won a race held that year at the Royal St George's Yacht Club's regatta in what was then Kingstown and is now Dún Laoghaire. The inscription engraved on the trophy (right, middle) reads *Royal St George's Yacht Club Regatta July 1853 / Won by the Volante J. L. Craigie*.

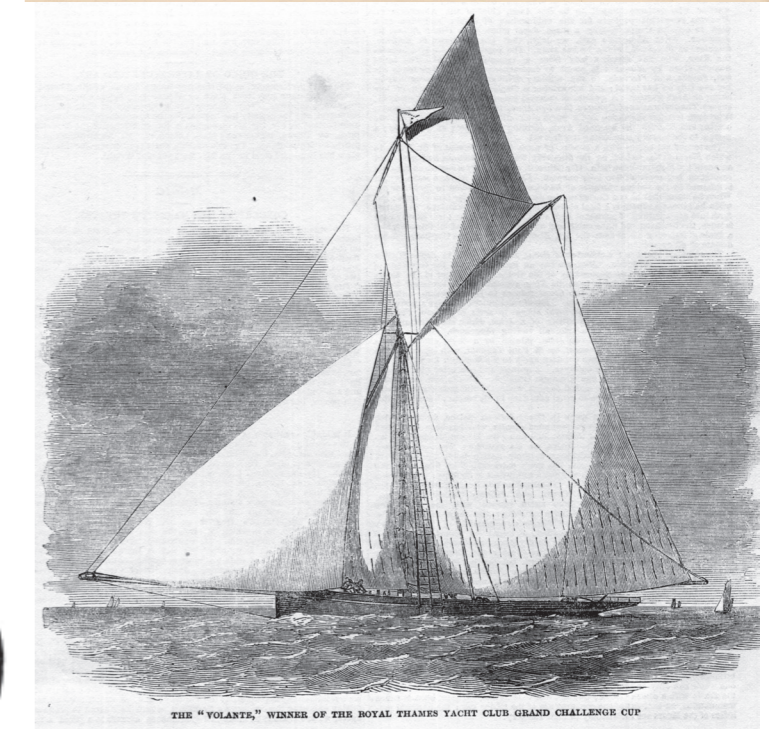
Sold in 1854

Volante was sold in early in 1854 to Henry William Birch, a solicitor in Marylebone who was also a member of the Royal Thames Yacht Club. He continued to race her, and in 1858 had her hauled out at Spencer's Yard, East Cowes, to be newly coppered, overhauled and refitted. Her rig was changed to a yawl in 1873, perhaps when she was sold to Charles Maw of London, who continued to race her and owned her, certainly until 1888. Around 1896 she was sold, probably to France.

That was the last we currently know of this illustrious Ipswich-built yacht. I feel that, given time, much more may be found about the career and crew of this Ipswich Yacht *VOLANTE*.

Renovation project?

NB This prize-winning *Volante* should not be confused with another Harvey-built *Volante* which for many years lay as a houseboat at the Orwell Yacht Club, for which there are hopes of restoring.



TROPHIES: Far left: the original Cup awarded to the yacht *America*; left, the 1853 trophy for *Volante*, and below, an America's Cup replica in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2013.



The Suffolk Writers' Group set their members the challenge of responding to photos in the IMT Image Archive.

Here are the winning entries.



IMT Image Archive David Kindred Collection

Suspicion by Nic Whittam

You said the camera fell in love
the shutter gave a crack.
I'll add your name onto the list.
I'll add it at the back

Hatches battened ready to leave,
but now we wait for you.
He's pleased that you are interested
the dog sits nicely too.

"This is for the future",
An opening I mistrust.
I see your eye's dilated,
stumbled mumbblings of lust.

My world resides across the sea,
my family are at home.
We have dreams and hearts desires
your camera leaves alone.

The economy of freight
and those who are involved
are not for you to gawp at,
our problems unresolved.

Are you noticing his scarring
and his mended clothing too.
These shoes are nearly soleless
and my trousers are not new.

We have little of our own
and yet you try to take
our dignity and story
but your interest it is fake.

You don't know our names,
you don't know our craft.
Your snapshot is just that,
an empty photograph.

Frobisher and Jellicoe by ANYA PAGE

Frobisher and Jellicoe had been afloat so long they felt unsteady ashore. They earned their sea legs when they were whelps.

When his brother's wife complained there were too many mouths to feed, the boy found a ship, its crew unexpectedly short of a sailor, still roistering ashore. He never looked back when Swift cast off in the bleak hour before dawn. His name was Frobisher, but the crew called him Boy, long after his soft hands had grown calloused, and his stringy arms became brawny from hauling. Frobisher grew strong on the wild and wintry sea, brine in his blood.

The stray was wharf side, scavenging, not expecting to find kindness. Frobisher gathered him into the knitted folds of his jersey, stowed him until land was just a scar on the horizon. The Captain had reservations about an extra mouth to feed, but the thump of the dog's tail and his enthusiasm were hard to resist. His name was Jellicoe, but the crew called him Dog, long after he showed how to keep the rations safe from rats and learned to predict imminent storms. Jellicoe kept the crew safe.

Frobisher and Jellicoe, shipmates, survivors, two of a kind.

IMT Image Archive DK T270e



Forever on the Waves by Lucy Aikman

"Who's this?" I stare down through the cracked glass of the frame at the faded image.

"That's private," Grandad barks, his weathered hand pulling it from me. He snaps his 'odds and ends' drawer shut. I huff and turn away but sneak a look behind me, at him reaching to the top of the wardrobe.

Later, after tea, when Grandad's busy with his pipe, I drag Grandma's dressing table stool over and climb up, groping in the dust. I wrap the treasure in my cardigan hiding it beneath the bed in the little room where I'm staying.

That night, under the blankets, by the light of my torch, I take it in. A little girl, definitely not my Dad, nestled between Grandad and Grandma. Who is she?

I toss and turn tangled in the sheets, waking hot to gulls keening, glad I'm safe in bed, not out there lost on the waves.

I know who she is. I understand. Why Grandad never takes me down to the water when I visit because,

"The sea is not a place for little girls." Why Grandma squeezes me tighter than my brothers, whispering,

"Little girls are a gift to be cherished."



IMT Image Archive DK T270e

IMT at Heritage Open Day

A celebration of Ipswich's maritime heritage

Saturday
7th September
2024

Getting hitched in Ipswich



Tying the knot suggests a happy union. Telling someone to 'get knotted' indicates a less than joyous outcome.

The knotting workshops on board *sb Victor*, during last September's Heritage Open Days, had visitors queuing up for an experience somewhere in between!

"There's such a simple pleasure in working with rope and crafting

a knot into something useful," reflects Jon Cobbold, IMT trustee and one of the crew on *Victor*. "Just as our forebears would have done, on long voyages, or whiling away time in port, we encouraged visitors to get knotting! Meanwhile, we were drawing attention to our maritime heritage - not just the words and phrases that have passed into everyday use, but the traditions and trade upon which our ports and harbours have flourished over the centuries."

Many of the visitors were enjoying the opportunity to explore a barge built in Ipswich over a hundred years ago and



Jon Cobbold (right) demonstrates the Crown Sennit knot to Andrew Halligan and his nephew Isaac.

still trading. And while local resident Andrew Halligan was pleased his nephew Isaac was so enthralled, for him the old photos in the exhibition in the Old Custom House were a real highlight. "To see some of the earliest photos in the world, of Ipswich, and to have the maritime artefacts explained to us, was fascinating."

The day began with a book signing; the final edition (sequel) of *Band of Brothers*, the definitive directory of bargemen associated with the port of Ipswich. Author Barry Girling was joined by Chalky Cooper (see photo, right), whose first appearance in the book (on page 14) shows him at the age of 15 at the helm of Marjorie ... in 1958. Another photo, (on page 120 in the early 1980s, by this time in colour), has him at the wheel of *Ardwina*, the last sailing barge laid down in Ipswich.

The deputy mayor, Councillor Lynne Mortimer, unveiled a



new heritage information board outside the Old Custom House, sponsored by Hudsons Signs, and supported by All About Ipswich and ABP.

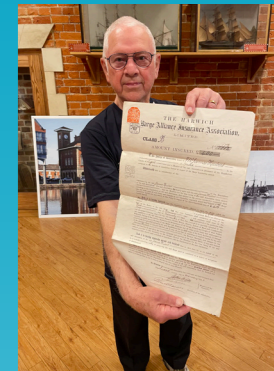
This ceremony was followed by an afternoon of glorious sea shanties wafting over the water, from The Orwellermen and the Shefarers of Pin Mill, on board *Victor*, and the Shotley Wailers stationed on the steps of the Old Custom House.

Many thanks to the IMT team who contributed considerable time and energy in dressing *Victor*, setting out the exhibits in the OCH, and chatting with the crowds. Particular thanks to Richard Hughes from The Orwellermen, Jane Chevovs from the Shefarers of Pin Mill and friends, and the Shotley Wailers; to ABP for the use of the OCH; to Wes and his crew on *Victor*; and to Frances McGready for the wonderful cup cakes, and her neighbour for the very large flag!

THE DAY IN NUMBERS

- 353 recorded visitors
- 100 cup cakes
- 40 bacon butties
- Dozens of maritime artefacts and models
- 10 copies of *Band of Brothers* signed and sold
- 3 venues (*Victor*, Old Custom House; Window Museum)
- 3 shanty groups (Shefarers of Pin Mill and friends; The Orwellermen; Shotley Wailers)
- 2 knotting workshops
- 2 quizzes
- 1 painting competition
- 1 super-size Union Jack
- 1 Deputy Mayor (Councillor Lynne Mortimer)

PHOTOS clockwise from top right: Councillor Lynne Mortimer unveils the new information board; Cathy Shelbourne takes a break; Frances McGready baked the cakes; Phil Hubert with an insurance document for his ancestor; Chalky Cooper (left) and Barry Girling with his *Band of Brothers* book; Skipper David Westwood; Orwellermen and Shefarers; and the Shotley Wailers.



HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2025

We will be celebrating Heritage Open Days this year on **Saturday 13th September and Sunday 14th September. Do please put the dates in your diary now!**

The theme of this year's Heritage Open Days nationwide is Architecture. We will be highlighting not just the historic buildings around Ipswich's Heritage Harbour, but also the people behind the places and vessels: the naval architects, yacht designers, and boat builders.

Suffolk has some extraordinary links with England's maritime past, and IMT will be delving into these associations, along with other members of the Heritage Harbour network.

On the next page we introduce naval architect Thomas Slade, buried in Ipswich, designer of many of Admiral Lord Nelson's ships. Below we examine Nelson's own links with Ipswich.

And in our next issue, we'll be following up the Journey of Words new AR (augmented reality) trail around Ipswich, available through the walking app Go Jauntly, with particular reference to Ipswich Schoolboy Edward Ardizzone and his maritime connections.

Freedom of Ipswich

Admiral Lord Nelson, possibly Norfolk's most famous son, and England's greatest naval hero, also had some interesting connections to Suffolk.

He was awarded the Freedom of Ipswich following his victory at the Battle of the Nile in 1799, and was made High Steward of Ipswich in 1800, a position which is held for life. Unfortunately, in Nelson's case, this was only until 1805.

Nelson visited Ipswich (with his mistress Emma, Lady Hamilton, and her husband Sir William) but did not stay at Roundwood House, the property purchased by his wife Fanny.

Roundwood House was demolished in the 1960s, and St John's primary school built in its place. A collection of bricks from the house, with a plaque, can be seen in the school. And many of the names of the roads nearby have a Nelson connection: Victory, Trafalgar, Roundwood, as well as Hamilton House, and the old Trafalgar pub on Spring Road.

Apparently, the Lord Nelson pub in Fore Street changed its name after Nelson rode through the town. A bust of Nelson, and other

STILL TIME TO OWN A PIECE OF HISTORY
This document, giving the grant of freedom of Ipswich to Admiral Lord Nelson in 1799, was auctioned in London last November, guide price £3-5k. Sadly, no one bought it.



ephemera of the era, are kept in a locked display case in the pub.

The Town Hall has a portrait of Nelson (a copy of one commissioned by Norwich City Council) and various items purporting to have come from the timbers of the *Victory*, Nelson's ship at the Battle of Trafalgar, on which he died on 21st October 1805.

Sometime Surveyor to the Navy

At the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, almost a quarter of Nelson's fleet, bearing nearly a third of the fleet's guns, was designed by Sir Thomas Slade, who is buried in Ipswich.

Thomas Slade was born in 1703 or 1704 to a well-established family of Ipswich and Harwich shipbuilders and probably began his apprenticeship at Deptford Yard, on the River Thames, in 1718.

He became the naval overseer to the building of fourth-rate *Harwich* in Harwich, in 1742, and two years later surveyed Sandwich Harbour and helped the planning of improvements to Sheerness, following which he was appointed assistant master shipwright at Woolwich. When Thomas' uncle, Benjamin, was ordered by Admiral Anson, First

Lord of the Admiralty, to examine the lines of some French prizes, he commissioned Thomas to make plans of them. As a result Thomas became the protégé of Anson, and was moved

in turn from Plymouth, where he had replaced his deceased uncle, to Woolwich, Chatham and finally to Deptford in 1753, from where he continued to advise Anson.

In 1747 Thomas Slade married Hannah Moore of Ipswich (died 1763) and they had one son, Thomas Moore Slade.

When, in 1755, the incumbent surveyor of the navy, Sir Thomas Allin, was taken ill, the Admiralty appointed Thomas Slade joint surveyor, with William Bately.

By this time Thomas Slade was already designing ships and his early designs included the first British-designed 74s, which were a new type that became the staple of the British fleet until after the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815. Slade started designing smaller ships in 1756 and developed the true frigate, which still comprised two decks, but with an unarmed lower deck, and with guns on the upper-deck of a larger size than those on previous ships of this rating.

In 1756 Slade began work on the design of his only first rate, which was to become HMS *Victory*. *Victory* was not

launched until 1765 but, whilst having exceptionally good sailing qualities, she did not see service during Slade's life. Slade was a prolific ship designer, for which he was knighted in 1768, but he died in Bath in 1771. His designs continued to be used until well after his death, *Victory* being his greatest memorial as she is still preserved today, at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, but his designs of many 74, 64, 32 and 28 guns were also very successful.

Sir Thomas Slade's body was brought back to Ipswich and buried in St Clement's churchyard, where a plaque commemorating Thomas and Hannah is displayed today - and a model of the *Victory* can be seen inside the church.

Peter Turner
Editor: *The Kedge Anchor*
(Magazine of the 1805 Club)

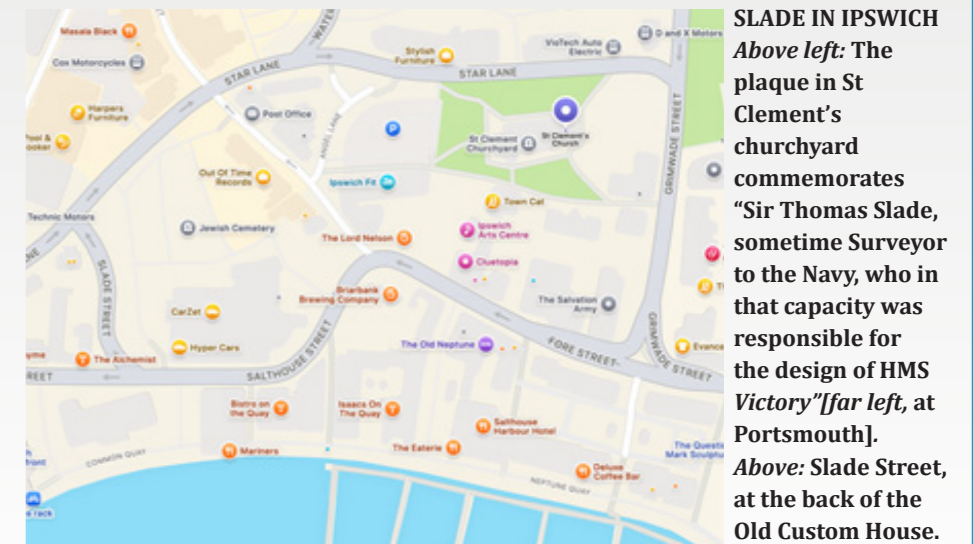


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PHOTOS: CATHY SHELBOURNE



From the Archives

A true story from the Image Archive, by IMT'S Image Archivist **STUART GRIMWADE**

We *Did* Mean To Go To Sea

Having been an avid reader of Arthur Ransome's books as a schoolboy, it was my hope that it might be possible to do more than continue sailing about in old dinghies at Woolverstone and Pin Mill, something I'd nevertheless loved doing from a very early age. My chance came quite unexpectedly one evening in Pin Mill Sailing Club at the end of my first term at university. At the bar that night was Roddy Rodwell, recently widowed and retired from his London job. He told me that before WWII he had been a barge skipper. so had decided to buy a barge and that he was now planning to live on it at Pin Mill. His plan was to convert the barge to be his new home, re-rig her, and enjoy sailing her around the Thames estuary. He needed a volunteer to help him do that – was I interested?

With the prospect of at least four years of free holiday time to come I jumped at the chance, and so began an apprenticeship like no other.

By the early summer of 1966, *Millie* was re-rigged, tarred and painted and fitted with what proved to be a rather inappropriate second-hand bus engine, while her newly created state rooms were proudly



furnished from Roddy's old London home complete with sofas, 'standard' lamp, and cooker.

Going to sea to explore Roddy's old haunts, the 'swatchways', anchorages and pubs of the Thames estuary, was my reward, and he was most generous in teaching me something of his huge knowledge of these waters and how to handle a barge safely in them. He seemed not to need any form of navigation aid, claiming 'I know where I am just by the feel and look of the water'. An old bargeman's tale? Who knows, but I had total faith in him, and it says something about his skill that the standard lamp never needed tying down as it never once fell over.

IMT Collection and Archive

The IMT's amazing image archive is available online. Either browse the entire digital collection on www.ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk/image-archive, or, if for specific advice or help, please contact image-archive@ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk.

Our collection of maritime artefacts has been photographed by our volunteers, and catalogued on eHive, a web-based cataloguing system. This can be viewed at ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk/collection-and-archive/ If you can help with looking after these collections, or would like to submit photos or objects relating to Ipswich's maritime heritage, please contact us at info@ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk

Talk back

IMT talks and events in Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025



SELF PORTRAIT OF ANTHONY CULLEN AT PIN MILL

Maritime Photography with Anthony Cullen Wednesday 2nd October 2024

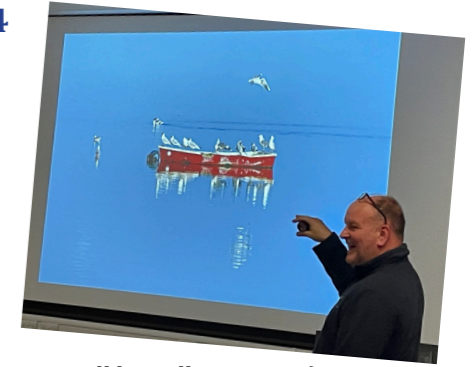
It takes an artist's eye and a technologist's brain to capture the beauty of the Orwell. That seemed to be the message of Anthony Cullen's talk on how to take pictures of boats and waterscapes, and it reminded me of the writer CP Snow.

In 1959, Snow delivered his famous polemic, *Two Cultures*, decrying what he saw as the damaging schism that existed in British intellectual life, between science and the arts. Today, though, we are in a world where science has so much to say about the most pressing issues of our time - think pandemics, climate change, cyber warfare - that as a society we have had to up our game. Thus, my children tell me, (as they probably would about anything from the '50s), this notion of polarisation is rather dated.

Certainly, the evidence of Anthony's talk would suggest that this is the case. Photography is an obvious place to bring science and art together, and so it was in the juxtaposition of what he said with what he showed us.

What he said was an informative, occasionally technical, discourse on some principles of picture composition, on f stops and aperture settings, on ASA and DIN numbers, on burning and dodging. We learnt about making rippled water look glassy (use the right filter, a tight aperture and a long exposure), and the best way to capture the spray around a boat (fast shutter speed, illuminate the droplets with sunshine from behind, if you can).

He explained how about leading lines in picture composition, and the appeal of an image split one third: two thirds by a strong horizontal or vertical line, (but not when a perfect reflection in the surface of the water is the point of the picture). He talked about the planning he does for certain shots, so that he can be ready for the best combination of wind, tide and sunlight. (There's an app, apparently, which will let you choose on a map the side of a building that you want to photograph, and it'll tell you the time when the angle of the



sun will best illuminate it).

He gave us his view of the etiquette of drones, (let common sense and common decency prevail!), and reassured those of us unlikely to rush out and buy expensive gear, that often the best camera to use is the one we all have in our pocket.

Then there was what he showed us: his photographs, his art. Those pictures spoke to us - or at least to me - in a very different, non-technical way. I read somewhere about the research on the calming effect, in our stressful lives, of the company of pets, how people's blood pressure drops when they stroke their dogs. And so it is for me when I look at those pictures of Anthony's. When the day is absolutely calm, the grey, flat water stretches away and blends imperceptibly with the distant mist, and there's something hanging in the middle distance - a rowing boat, maybe, or a grebe, or a wooden post - and it's somehow hard to tell whether it's floating on the water or in the air.

When I look at that - or perhaps a shot of a group of barges barely making a wake - the cares of the world recede just a little bit. The calm is calming.

Then there's the thrill of a boat at speed, the foaming briny at its bow and streaming away from its stern. For some, the thrill is greater when it's a newfangled craft blatting on its foils across Alton Water at breakneck speed. Me, I'm just as excited when it's one of our own barges ploughing away at a sprightly six knots.

No matter: it takes artistry and technical prowess to give us all those moments, captured in time. And we are very grateful to Anthony for his mastery of both.

Ben Good

Oysterland screening with Matthew Harrison Wednesday 6th November 2024



I daresay Roman Emperor Vitellius and Matthew Harrison's gran don't have much in common, but one thing they do have is a love of Colchester oysters. We know about the former because he had them carried from Mersea Island to Rome packed in ice. We know about the latter because of the extraordinary gusto with which she slurped through a pile of them in the middle of Matthew's film, *Oyster Land*.

One of the great pleasures of our time, with its great production values and Late Period David Attenborough, is to watch faraway places brought to our screens with extreme clarity. An even greater pleasure, though, is to see our own backyard similarly brought to life. And, whilst the Colne and the Blackwater may be the wrong side of the Stour for some of us, we could nonetheless see much of our own experiences in *Oyster Land*'s depiction of mud and workboats, and cold hands and the grey melding together of estuary mud and skies.

Matthew, a recent graduate of Norwich University, spent two years with the oystermen, their boats and their waters, to create a film which has fully absorbed their culture and sense of place, a place with which he too has strong family connections. Thus, the film is much like oysters themselves - they are also uniquely of their local marine environment: as I am sure Matthew's gran would say, it's not just the tang of the sea she is savouring, it's the tang of Mersea.

The Roman poet Lucilius put it

thus: "When I but see the oyster's shell, I recognise the river, marsh or mud where it was raised." So it was with *Oyster Land*.

Oyster harvesting is - I hadn't realised - an interesting hybrid of farming and fishing. Its long history includes times when oysters were very much the food of the commoner - in 1864, 700 million of them were eaten in London alone, (quite who counted is unclear) - and Matthew's film featured one weathered fellow who is his family's seventh generation of oystermen.

But the film also took us away from the water, to see how the nobbs of Colchester celebrate the town's long oystering tradition, with their gold chains and archaic intonations. It did feel, looking at them in the town hall in their finery, rather distant from the reality of rubber boots and woolly hats out on the chilly river a few miles away. Not, I suppose, that it was Matthew's intention to call into question those proceedings. For me, though, a more authentic celebration could be seen in his grandmother's slurps and the oyster liquor running down her chin.

Ben Good



A Maritime Medley Steamboat Tavern, Ipswich Wednesday 4th December

The final event in the IMT Sea Hear season of events, the Maritime Medley was a wonderful evening of singers, shanties and maritime heritage, led by Richard Hughes of the Orwellmen, Jane Chevous of the Shefarers of Pin Mill, and Claudia Myatt and Julia Dansie from Quay Notes.

All the shanties and songs were chosen for their particular links to our maritime heritage - especially Nelson's Blood (see box), or their suitability for singing along to. Quay Notes accompanied themselves on harp and guitar, and gave us Herring Girl, Sea Fever, and Sailor Girl - a composition by Claudia highlighting the perversity of a seafaring life for women - as well as a few Celtic tunes.

The singers were joined by IMT members Cathy Shelbourne talking about Nelson's connections with Ipswich (see News on page 16), and Chalky Cooper regaling us with stories from his working days on the docks (as featured at the Heritage Open Days 2024, page 15).

Drunken Sailor is one of the few shanties that the Royal Navy sang and is probably the best known shanty. It's a 'Stamp and Go' or a marching shanty following a marching beat. It might be used for hauling sails. The sailors would hold the rope in a long line and march away, hauling the sail as they went. Obviously this only worked on large ships where there was room to march!

The Orwellmen also sang Marching Inland. Although not strictly a shanty it is a song of the



sea telling the tale of a sailor who has decided that it is time to stop sailing and march inland carrying an oar over his shoulder. It makes many historic references to the great sea heroes of Britain, and finishes with the warning "Never cast your anchor less than Ninety miles from shore, There'd always be the temptation to be off to sea no more!" Perhaps the grass is always greener on the other side and sailors secretly want to leave the hard life of the sea behind and settle down ashore!

To finish the evening, everyone sang Leave Her Johnny. This is very often sung by shanty crews at the end of an evening of song, referencing the return to port, taking your pay and enjoying the pleasures of home.

Many thanks to the staff at the Steamboat Tavern.

Cathy Shelbourne and Richard Hughes

Nelson's Blood

Legend has it that Admiral Lord Nelson's body was placed in a barrel of spirits after his death at Trafalgar in 1805, and transported thus back to England. Apparently, holes were drilled in the sides and the liquid drained, the assumption being that the sailors drank his blood during the voyage back home.

Should you want to try some Nelson's Blood yourself, the recipe includes Pusser's Rum, peach puree, cranberry juice, pineapple juice, and Angostura's bitters.

Or you can sing along to the shanty A Drop of Nelson's Blood (wouldn't do us any harm), describing what the sailors would miss while at sea for a long time. The shanty was sung while carrying out certain jobs aboard sailing ships.

The Wellermen

Ipswich's very own Orwellmen pay homage in their name to 'wellermen' - supply ships owned by the Weller brothers, merchant traders who settled in New Zealand. More famously, the folk song *Soon May the Wellerman Come*, became a viral hit on TikTok in 2021, and generated huge worldwide interest in sea shanties and maritime songs.

An Evening with the Museum Wednesday 5th February 2025

Ipswich Museum's management team have fascinating challenges before them as they navigate its multi-year, £11m refurbishment.

The building itself should go in a museum. Built in 1880, the Grade 2* listed building is somewhat unusual in having been built specifically for the purpose of being a museum. It has had no significant work on it in 40 years, and so there's a huge amount to be done to secure it structurally, and to bring it up to modern standards of visitor experience, ambience and accessibility. Amongst other things, we were told by Alison Hall,

Museums Manager, Ipswich, this entails so much scaffolding that if the poles were lain end-to-end they would go all the way to Felixstowe. And although it would be obviously more convenient to remove all the exhibition materials while the work is ongoing, that is too difficult for some items. Thus, the big beasts - the giraffe, the rhino and the gorilla - have had special cages built for them.

That brings us to another major challenge: how to do justice to the full breadth of the collection - covering anthropology, natural history, industrial history, archaeology, etc - whilst also telling a coherent story about Ipswich? And more particularly for the audience faced by Philip Wise, Heritage Manager, Colchester + Ipswich Museums, how to do justice to our maritime heritage?

The answer is that our maritime links are so fundamental to Ipswich's history that these references will crop up all over the new museum. Philip reminded us about the coins from Byzantium (Istanbul today) found at Anglo-Saxon Rendlesham, demonstrating the Anglo-Saxons' international trading activities and thus Ipswich's *raison d'être*. The so-



Alison Hall, left, with encased giraffe and rhino; and right, Philip Wise with the Marshall Islands map.



called 'Ipswich comb' is a Viking relic, reminding us of the influence of those international seafarers. Philip did, however, share the disappointing news that our 'Viking anchor' is in fact more

likely to be late medieval (personally, I thought that's still quite impressive, and he showed us a familiar drawing of the (very) Old Custom House as it looked in those times to go with it, but anyway...).

Fast forward a few centuries, and we enjoyed John Moore's surprisingly bucolic 1882 painting of Ipswich docks. In turn, Philip acknowledged the contribution of our own Des Pawson in providing a number of sail- and rope-making tools from around Dock End Yard, and of Stuart Grimwade, for the images from our collection that will also be used.

It seems, too, we will be treated to several fine ships models, including an East Indiaman whose model was used by an eminent Cobbold to raise funds for shipwrecked sailors; a fruit schooner built by Halifax and Baileys for speed not capacity; and a brig, a prize from the Crimean War and subsequently used by Ipswich merchants.

We look forward too to the old navigational equipment that will be on show. It's fun to admire the bright brass-work and fine craftsmanship of the 18th century sextant, telescope and compass. But my favourite navaid is the Marshall Islands sailing chart of a similar era, made only with sticks and cowrie shells representing ocean currents and islands respectively.

Hard as the navigational challenge is for the museum refurbishment team, finding your way around the Pacific Ocean with no more than a driftwood lattice rather takes the biscuit for me!

Ben Good

Last year's Heritage Open Days event on the Ipswich Waterfront brought together lots of people – and their memories.

BARRY GIRLING, author of books including *Ipswich Memories of a Special Town, and Band of Brothers*, pays tribute to David Miller.

Remembering David Miller



David Miller at Southwold Lifeboat Museum

Local residents who found themselves under the spell of the town whilst it was still in its heyday in the 1950s, should not be forgotten. This was an era before the old traditional ways gave way to decline during the ensuing decade.

One such was David Miller whose home in Levington Road was very conveniently placed for the great dock and all that went with it. He took it upon himself to record the shipping movements at Ipswich and more besides.

By 1966 both David and I had become members of the Society for Sprintsail Barge Research*, as it was then known. The aim of the organisation is to foster and encourage research in all its aspects and to build up a comprehensive picture of such vessels.

David thrived in such an environment. In 1968 the shipping registers held by the customs authorities at an office in Museum Street were examined. This helped to establish a list of Ipswich-built wooden sailing craft.

The town was unique in having a fleet of commercial sailing vessels still operating in the mid twentieth century, the well-known proprietors being Cranfield Brothers and R&W Paul.

The town's wealth of engineering works, maltings, mills and warehouses acted as a magnet to seaborne traffic both from the metropolis and further afield.

From my own perspective, I recall that it was easy to become captivated by the local scene which sometimes included an element of pageantry. For instance, Mr Cobbold's brewery drays, drawn by fine Suffolk horses were a familiar sight at many of the local hostelrys. Not to be outdone, Mr Ransome's



dignified electric Orwell lorry was another joy to behold as it trundled about in the vicinity of the Duke Street Works. Over Stoke, the Locomotive Depot's steam extravaganza was clearly visible from the bridge over Luther Road near the entrance to the tunnel.

In such a setting as this, the young Mr Miller, who had received a good grounding in the

Remembering David Miller, continued

Ipswich Sea Cadets, determined to discover more. He sought out the friendly skippers of the barges, whether still under sail or those which had been converted to motor. At this time all the skippers would have had experience of sail. David was successful in arranging several trips to the Thames which gave him an insight into the sailorman's life. In doing so, he became well acquainted with Cranfield's motor barges *Ethel* and especially *Gladys*.

He would no doubt have enjoyed the passage to London with skipper Sidney Waters, although it is recalled that David considered that it was a hard life.

Invariably his camera was at the ready and although he captured many urban scenes, it is his local maritime images that he is best remembered for. Following on from a long line of well-known Ipswich photographers, David's visual records of the time are of considerable value and a timely

reminder of a special way of life. I for one have benefited greatly from his photographic skills. Some examples of David Miller's work are shown here.

With thanks to Angela Miller and Don Wright.

Barry Girling

*NB Many of David's photos are held by the Society for Sailing Barge Research <https://www.sailingbargereseearch.org.uk/ssbr-archive/>

A selection of David Miller's photos, including (below) *Ethel* under the watchful eye of lock keeper James Orvis. Right, (from top), taking a bow: *Gladys*, *Kimberley*, *Ethel*, *Beric*; (middle), a stern view, from left to right: *Beric*, *Ethel*, *Kimberley* and *Gladys*; (below) Dock End with a backdrop of Ransomes & Rapier.



ALL PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE BY DAVID MILLER

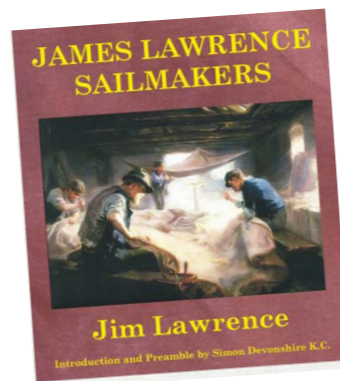
James Lawrence Sailmakers

Ipswich Maritime Trust was lucky that we had Jim Lawrence, who died last year, aged 90, come and talk to us a number of times. In 2018 Chaffcutter Books published *London Light, a Sailor's Story*, an autobiography in his own words, covering his barging life, which was just like Jim giving us his talks.

Now comes his second book, *James Lawrence Sailmakers*, covering his time as a traditional sailmaker extraordinaire. He speaks of the people and vessels that he, and later his team, made sails for.

It starts out with his time repairing barge sails in a fisherman's store in Brightlingsea, Essex, and going on to actual sailmaking, gaining knowledge from Percy (Jack) Gladwell from Whitmore's Sail Loft in Ipswich. As he grew he moved to more suitable

James Lawrence Sailmakers
by James Lawrence
www.chaffcutterbooks.co.uk/product/james-lawrence-sailmakers
£19.50



premises, a shop that once sold prams, cots and baby paraphernalia, and then, as his business grew still more, he moved to larger premises on Tower Street, Brightlingsea. Over the years he made sails for every kind of traditional and classic craft, from

winkle brigs to smacks, bawleys, barges and square rigged sail training vessels: vessels that are themselves well known, some stars of television and film.

The very existence of his loft has meant that the skills needed to make traditional sails have been preserved. Indeed, it could be said that he also enabled those traditional vessels to sail as they always did. His reputation was world-wide and over the years he had a number of people come from other parts of the world to work for him, who have gone on to set up their own lofts.

In this book, Jim speaks as if directly to all those people he worked with in the loft: the owners and characters, their ships and boats that formed his life as a sailmaker. All this with many illustrations, a great story, making a great book.

Des Pawson

Naval Seamen's Women in 19th Century Britain

This is a big book (372pp) on a huge subject (the lives of women connected to the lower deck seamen in the nineteenth century), and comes with a substantial price tag: £95 for the hardback or £19.99 for an ebook.

Author Melanie Holihead was the winner of the Institute of Historical Research's Sir Julian Corbett Prize in Modern Naval History 2012, and the 2018-19 Doctoral Prize awarded by the British Commission for Maritime History, and completed her doctorate at the University of Oxford.

In this book, she uncovers the lives of the mothers, sisters, foster-mothers of motherless children, and wives, through her research into the allotment scheme – by which men could convey portions of their pay to dependants at home – and into civil, parish and local

data. She analyses the differences between naval and civilian lives of families back home, and the impact of long-term absence, and also the changing attitudes to such women.

But for me the most interesting aspect of the book is how it highlights the absence of acknowledgement of women's roles by the Royal Navy in the nineteenth century. Why was there such little concern for these women, who had such an enormous effect on the men's morale and performance, and presence? When their wives were so impoverished by the meagre 'allotments', the sailors would invariably abandon sea service and seek work ashore.

Dr Holihead alludes to an interview with historian Bettany Hughes (*Why Were Women Written Out Of History?* 2016) in which

Naval Seamen's Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain
by Melanie Holihead
Published by Boydell and Brewer
£19.99/£95



she says "women aren't allowed to be characters in history, they have to be stereotypes." She maintains that the stereotyping of seamen's women as prostitutes – think of all

the cartoons, etchings, ballads and jokes of the time – has not only not been refuted, but ignores the individuality of women and their unsupported lives in which children had to be fed and educated, loaves baked, floors washed, relatives cared for etc.

"It is the business of the historian to plunge into the deep waters of the past and to bring up vanished lives," wrote Professor NAM Rodger, historian of the Royal Navy (and her research supervisor). Bearing in mind that the mid-nineteenth century Navy had around 38,000 men on its books (mainly alive but some dead or fictitious), most of whom would have female (and male) dependants, it is astonishing how little we know about them.

Until now!

Cathy Shelbourne



The Sea Bird
by Rozelle Raynes
Published by Golden Duck
£11.99

The Sea Bird

The author's very first boat was appropriately named *Imp*: its owner has an impish sense of humour, which irrepressibly sustains her – and the reader – through this extraordinary tale of her escapades at sea after leaving war service in the WRNS. The *Imp* was a lifeboat converted into a cabin cruiser, and Rozelle Raynes first made her acquaintance in West Mersea.

"I shall never forget the unique and indescribable thrill of standing on the Essex mud-flats gazing across the still grey water at that funny little boat, so like my childhood pictures of Noah's Ark. She nodded to me in the wash of a passing coaster and seemed to whisper, "I'm just the sort of boat you're looking for!"

But while Rozelle might have given observers the impression that she was a novice – "What do you know about navigation?" demands her hapless cousin and crew as they go aground on the Maplin Sands – actually she is as tough as nails, with an acute sense of the absurd. "As we stumbled through the glutinous black mud on to the Essex saltings, a policeman rose up from behind a windswept tussock and ordered us to follow



him. We were bundled into the back of a rural Black Maria and driven swiftly inland to the Foulness police station." And in due course, their captor plied them with fried eggs and bacon, and found a mechanic to restore the engine of the stranded *Imp*.

Nothing appears to faze her. Setting out on a single-handed voyage across the Channel she has a surprise encounter with a heifer, slices some paint off a smart Belgian motor cruiser, and with "mooring lines heaped like grubby spaghetti," advances stern first into the harbour "trying to give the impression to everyone who was watching that this was my normal method of entering harbour."

Further single handed sailing trips follow, including to Russia – for no apparent reason, although the Series Editor Julia Jones provides a clue in her perceptive Introduction, that of a marriage breakdown – before she joins the Merchant Navy as assistant purser on the Free Enterprise car ferry and finally finds happiness, and double-handed sailing, with a new husband. A very amusing read.

Cathy Shelbourne

Marine artist Claudia Myatt in her studio in Martlesham, with her foreword to *The Sea Bird*, for which she also designed the cover, from a sketch by Rozelle Raynes

Obituary

IMT member **PAUL RIDGWAY** pays tribute to **Richard Woodman**, Trinity House staff and Board member, and acclaimed author

Captain Richard Woodman, LVO MNM FNI

Born in London in March 1944, at school Richard Woodman's great love was sea scouting and he recalled leaving his last GCE examination to take the Portsmouth train to join the yawl *Nordwind*, on passage to Oslo for the 1960 Sail Training Race. Returning home he attended an Outward Bound Course at Aberdovey, a creditable performance of which saw him accepted as a midshipman in Alfred Holt of Liverpool's Glen and Blue Funnel Lines with fast cargo-liners trading to the Far East.

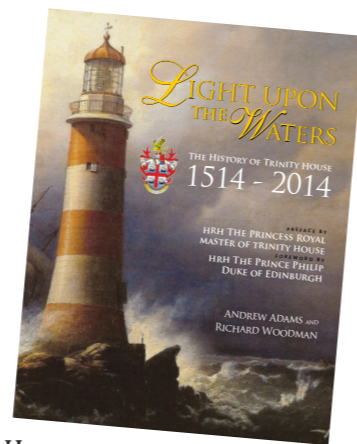
He obtained his Second Mate's Certificate in 1964 and remained with Holts for a further two years, during which he obtained a First Mate's Certificate. Attracted by the smart vessels of Trinity House he approached them only to be told there were no vacancies, so he spent a winter in the North Atlantic in an Ocean Weather Ship. After big ships this was 'a transformative experience,' with 'much left to the initiative and activity of the officer-of-the-watch.'

In 1967 a vacancy occurred in the Trinity House Service and Woodman joined THV *Alert*, based in Swansea and tender to the adjacent waters. Two years later he passed for Master in Cardiff. In 1971 he was promoted and moved to Harwich

from which port he was to spend the remainder of his career, first in THV *Ready* and, a year later, THV *Patricia*. This ship's duties were even more varied than those of the other vessels, ranging from the routine tasks of buoyage maintenance, lighthouse supply and lightvessel towing, to carrying out inspections with the Corporation's Board, and occasionally escorting the monarch when embarked in HMY *Britannia*.

In 1973 Woodman was promoted First Officer, remaining in *Patricia*, thriving on the multiplicity of tasks his ship was engaged upon. In his spare moments he had 'begun scribbling' and in 1980, the same year that he was promoted Commander and took charge of THV *Winston Churchill*, the first of his **Nathaniel Drinkwater** historical novels, was published.

During the summers of 1983/1984 he and several colleagues were seconded to command chartered deep-water trawlers acting as guardships during the sub-sea operation linking the national grids of the UK and France in Operation Channel Cable. For much of this time Woodman was Guard Commodore of three ships whose presence in the busy international shipping channel was not only vital, but proved dangerously exciting.



He subsequently commanded THVs *Stella* and a new *Patricia* (built 1982) before coming ashore in 1991 to join Trinity House operational management at Harwich. His publisher, John Murray, commissioned him to write *Arctic Convoys, 1941 - 1945*, which was published to critical acclaim in 1994. He followed this with *Malta Convoys* and *The Real Cruel Sea*, a prize-winning study of the Merchant Navy in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Several of his books won prizes, others such as *Voyage East*, an account of a Blue Funnel liner's voyage to the Far East, became a classic of the genre. He produced a five-volume history of the Merchant Navy - 'this country's greatest squandered asset,' and a magisterial history of East India Company shipping. This last he published privately as he did not 'want any editor cutting it down.'

In 2006 he was elected to the Trinity House Board, the first staff member to be so honoured.

He died on 2nd October 2024 aged 80.

News

FROM THE COMPANY OF ROYALS TO THE MUD AT PIN MILL

The story of *Mariquita*

Our thanks go to Mark Emberton for his generous gift of a sumptuous book documenting the life of yacht *Mariquita*.

She was built in 1911 by William Fife as one of the new of 19 M class big racing yachts, at a time when this was definitely a pastime for the very rich, popularised by the enthusiasm in particular of the kings Edward VII and his son George V, the 'sailor king.' The 19M were built both for speed and

hospitality - regulated class specifications included "an ice chest of not less than 25 cubic feet" - but not very many of them were built (and today *Mariquita* is the last surviving example). In a changing world, their time in the sun was quite brief. Appearances at

prestigious regattas gave way to lower key cruising, and finally she was converted into a houseboat in West Mersea. Recalls one observer: "the mast

was sawn through just above the deck... with a groan and a shudder 96 '6" of mast fell overboard."

She spent World War 2 in Woodbridge, and by the 1960s was in Pin Mill, her 40 T lead keel removed and an incongruous deck house added. And there she would have lain, slowly subsiding amongst her deliquescing peers, just another old wreck barely noticed by Butt and Oyster walkers.

But in 1991 she was rescued. She was floated off the mud and carefully moved up the river to Ipswich docks. Shotley resident Johno Brett assisted with the operation, his fishing boat acting as stern tug for the trip up the Orwell. Johno remembers seeing a lot of holes drilled through her frames for gas pipes, which was to add significantly to the work needed later. In Ipswich, she was lifted onto a lighter and thence towed to the Hamble for full restoration.

Fully restored by 1994 and back to her former glory - 125' LOa, 582 m² sail area, 79T displacement - she is now a regular on the posh yacht regatta circuit. Unfortunately, she is not available for private charter, so IMT will not be offering our members cruises on her for the foreseeable future. We can, however, let you have a look at Mark's wonderful book if you are interested.

Ben Good



Above: The hulk of *Mariquita* in Ipswich Harbour in 1991.

Below: The book set now in IMT's collection.

Legacy giving

Would you consider making provision for Ipswich Maritime Trust in your will?

When you look back over your life and your achievements, on or off the water, and the enjoyment you experienced, and what our maritime history has meant to you, how can you ensure that the next generation can benefit too?

Ipswich Maritime Trust is launching a series of initiatives for young people to get involved in maritime activities and careers. At the same time, we will continue to promote our maritime heritage, and run events for all ages. As discussed on page 6, we are also now considering making an offer to buy SB *Victor*.

Can you help us help them, by giving a legacy to Ipswich Maritime Trust?

For more information contact info@ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk We can point you towards sources of advice in making your will if you need it. If you want to discuss a non-pecuniary gift, for example of old documents or artefacts potentially of interest to IMT, we would be pleased to talk to you as well. Many thanks.



Dragon boat racing at Ipswich Waterfront

Photos © The Corporation of Trinity House, London



Ipswich Maritime Matters is written and designed by Sea Shell Communications, and published twice-yearly by Ipswich Maritime Trust.

editor@ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk

Come on board!

New members are always welcome: individual membership is £20pa, family £30pa, youth (up to 25 years) £5 single/£7.50 joint. IMT is a charity: these are minimum suggested donations. If you'd like to give more to support IMT, please do!

Your subscription includes: free access to our talks, regular e-mail updates, twice-yearly IMT Matters Magazine, plus the opportunity to get involved in our projects and campaigns.

We are always looking for volunteers - including help with our Window Museum, front of house at talks and events, chatting to the public on our stands at events, tagging photos in the Image Archive, and assisting with our schools initiatives.

To join, please contact membership@ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk or write to us at IMT Membership Secretary, Apt 610, 1 Coprolite Street, Ipswich IP3 0BN

Diary dates 2025

Please check all dates and venues before setting out!

IMT Talks take place in the Waterfront Building, University of Suffolk, at 7.30pm

Wednesday 5th March:

IMT Talk from the Maritime Heritage Foundation

Wednesday 2nd April :

Women in Boatbuilding

IMT Talk by Belinda Joslin (*far right in photo*), founder of the Community Interest Company that supports and celebrates the work of women who work hands-on in boatbuilding and related marine trades.



Friday 11th April: In the Wake of the Mayflower.

Talk by Cathy Shelbourne as part of The Hold's exhibition *Departures: Exploring Emigration from Suffolk*, until 31 May 2025.

21st-26th May: Dunkirk Little Ships 85th commemoration

See page 4.

Saturday and Sunday 13th and 14th September:

Heritage Open Days

Explore Sailing Barge *Victor*, moored up alongside the Common Quay, and discover our amazing old photos and maritime models and other artefacts, in the Old Custom House, from 10am-4pm each day.

Wednesday 1st October: IMT talk by Jane Stone, about her work as a pilot at the Harwich Haven Authority.

Wednesday 5th November: tbc

Wednesday 3rd December: The Shipping Forecast, IMT Talk presented by Andy Beharell. See page 3 for details.

NB there are no IMT meetings from May - September.

Getting out on the Orwell

Orwell Lady river trips begin at the end of March, including Suffolk Wildlife Trust on 6th April, Mothers' Day buffet lunch on 30th April, Sir Terry Waite on 18th May, and a sunrise trip at 03.45 on 21st June.

Sailing trips with Sailing Barge *Victor* start on Sunday 1st June. Picnic cruises take place every Sunday (bring your own picnic); and supper cruises run from Friday 6th June and include a two-course meal.

About the Trust

Ipswich Maritime Trust (IMT) is a charity formed in 1983 with the objective of educating and informing the public of the long maritime history of Ipswich and the River Orwell which dates back to before the 7th century.

IMT undertakes a wide range of activities, including commenting on maritime issues, running a series of talks on maritime-related themes, and outings on Sailing Barge *Victor*, curating our Window Museum on Albion Wharf, maintaining an Archive, and supporting young people in maritime projects.

We have around 300 members, and a dedicated committee. Volunteers are always welcome, to help with the Window Museum, assist with marketing, and generally furthering the aims of the Trust.