



The Ipswich Society

The Ipswich Maritime Trail

Exploring the historic Ipswich Wet Dock and
surrounding area in short walks



The Borough coat of arms rendered in three dimensions, Custom House

A fully revised edition of the original 1982 Maritime Ipswich publication
by The Ipswich Society

See the back cover for information about how this booklet is laid out and about
the Maritime Ipswich 1982 plaques which you can spot along the way.

Curson Plain



1. The Wolsey statue

The statue of Thomas Wolsey by David Annand (2011) occupies prime position on Curson Plain. The location is named after Wolsey's contemporary, Lord Robert Curson (c1460-1534/5), whose grand house stood between Silent Street and Rose Lane with an impressive portico projecting out into the street. Wolsey is depicted seated and facing south towards the Church of St Peter, which he commandeered as the chapel of his ill-fated College, teaching from a book with his cat at his side.

2. Curson Lodge

The ancient building with the carved corner post is Curson Lodge, once used as lodgings for visitors and servants to Curson House. These included Katherine of Aragon, King Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey himself. Curson Lodge was often referred to as

'Wolsey's birthplace'. However, more recent research puts Wolsey's probable birthplace as the Black Horse public house, but he grew up in his father's butcher's shop, on the site of today's suitably-named Cardinal House office block, opposite the Lodge.

Thomas Wolsey, a prodigiously talented (and conceited) man, found favour with Henry VIII who appointed him Lord Chancellor, probably the most important position in the kingdom; as well as this he was Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and Archbishop of York, giving him enormous power. Wolsey had only recently set up a College close to this site, intended to provide students to his own Cardinal College (later Christ Church College) in Oxford. On Wolsey's fall from grace with Henry VIII in 1529 the College was dismantled, leaving only the Wolsey Gate (location 6) in College Street.



3. The Sailors Rest

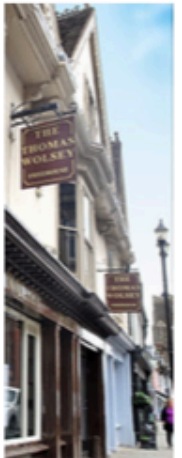


The Sailors Rest (at right), late 1960s

The Sailors Rest, on the corner of Cutler Street and St Peters Street is today a beauty salon. In the late 1960s it was threatened with demolition, its survival a notable success of The Ipswich Society's campaigning. An older timber-framed building was encased in brickwork during the reign of William and Mary, circa 1700. It is Listed Grade I. The neighbouring modern building, replacing a car showroom, has been designed to blend with The Sailors Rest. *The Maritime Trail Plaque is mounted to the right of the door.*

4. St Peters Street

The length of St Peters Street between Rose Lane and the Church of St Peter is an example of a town centre street which has been widened to accommodate an increase in traffic. From 1903 electric trams were introduced in Ipswich and roads became busier. The Tudor buildings on the west side were demolished, replaced by early twentieth century shops and offices. The Sailors Rest survived because of its front garden. On the east side of the street the Tudor buildings remain and are all, from the former Rose Inn down to Oxborrow's Hotel (now the offices of Seven Ltd), Listed Grade II.



5. The Church of St Peter

St Peter is a medieval church but what you see today is architect George Gilbert Scott's reconstruction of the 1870s. The magnificent tower dominates the adjacent roundabout. For most of the twentieth century the church was hidden amidst industrial buildings. Today it stands proud and offers the community an exhibition and concert venue; it is open to visitors, Tuesday to Friday over the summer.

Inside there is a superb and unusual Tournai limestone font and the town's magnificent Millennium Wall Hangings. A stone coffin is on display which was found under the vestry. The angel gates protecting the south door are a work of art.

Opposite the south door a run-down merchant's house – today abandoned amongst the dereliction of redevelopment and squeezed by the traffic – was built by Benet Aldred in 1590; the date is on the bressumer (carved, load-bearing) beam. This house, having survived heavy industry and rumbling lorries, awaits a new role in the 21st century.



The Benet Aldred house

6. The Wolsey Gate

Alongside the church is College Street where to the left the brick-built Water Gate, the access to Cardinal Wolsey's short-lived College from the river, still stands. This is the only surviving part of the College. In the early sixteenth century the river was much closer to the gate, the line of the quay having been progressively extended over the centuries.



The Wolsey Gate photographed c.1852

7. Foundry Lane

We can assume that Foundry Lane was the main road into Ipswich from the south. Wherstead Road becomes Great Whip Street, which still exists, and then a ford to cross the river into Foundry Lane. The line continues north across the modern gyratory into Turret Lane, St Stephens Lane and Tower Street passing St Stephen, St Lawrence and St Mary Tower churches. Was this a Roman Road? There is no hard evidence but the ford was in use in Anglo-Saxon times (from around AD600), eventually supplemented by a wooden bridge (Stoke Bridge) in AD930.

This is the original fording point of the River Orwell; it can reasonably be claimed that this point is the nucleus of the Anglo-Saxon settlement, England's first Anglo-Saxon town, Gippeswyk, and the crucible of the English language.

The lane's name 'Foundry' was used from the early nineteenth century following the opening of the engineering works of E.R. & F. Turner in 1837. This was one of many engineering companies for which Ipswich became famous.

8. Edward Fison Ltd. lettering

This ghost sign is on the east wall of the red brick building on the opposite side of New Cut. In its early years it was used as an infantry barracks, but in 1849 it became one of many buildings in the town to be converted into maltings. The lettering on the brickwork at the east end of the premises suggests that, as a maltings, it was owned and operated by Edward Fison Ltd: one of the first British companies to produce malted barley for brewers and bakers. James Fison (d. 1931) joined Edward Packard to manufacture fertiliser in Ipswich; the company went on to become a leading British multinational pharmaceutical, scientific and horticultural chemical company. (See location 21)



The Wet Dock Island

From Foundry Lane, with the northern quays on your left, follow the narrow isthmus between the Wet Dock and the river; pass a car park and the artistically abandoned buoys, a beautiful stainless steel sundial and the quayside office of Ipswich Haven Marina.

The vista which opens up of the northern quays is one that is, on first sight, surprising for this part of Suffolk. The striking singularity of the tower blocks, both finished and unfinished is difficult to comprehend for a county town. This commanding viewpoint is not just of the mighty northern quays but of the muscular Genesis projects to the south of the New Cut, on Stoke Quay, now filling the skyline.

9. The Last Anchor

The Last Anchor bar and restaurant is on the route, directly opposite the Old Custom House which reveals itself to be an even more handsome and solid structure, neatly slotted in between the new developments and the Home Warehouse with its spectacularly glazed frontage. Look carefully at the carved sea horses in the pediment of the Customs House (as shown on the front cover), sometimes referred to as Neptune's Horses.

At End Quay, the corner of the walk, what is perceptible is a softer, greener Ipswich: the town is in a bowl surrounded by trees on the higher ground. This is more county town, the spaces between the new developments from the Mill via the four star hotel, past the elegant flats, the University building, the James Hehir building to the Orwell Quay development is punctuated with greenery, towers and old church roofs. At Eagle Wharf timber is still unloaded by ship every fortnight, continuing an old Ipswich trade.

10. The Public Warehouse

It was constructed in 1881 by William Whitford & Co. Royal Ironworks, Commercial Road, London at a cost of £1,106 – today, a remarkable survivor.



Public Warehouse and original lock approach c.1885



Continue round the Island quayside, passing the iron-framed former Public Warehouse under its curved roof. The indent in the quay at this point is the site of the original lock gates, dating to 1842, which opened into New Cut.

The world famous Spirit Yachts is here – slender and graceful craft can often be seen alongside. Embedded in the quayside are the remnants of the dock tramway, a light railway which at one time served the entire port including Cliff Quay, downstream of today's lock gates.



Visiting Dutch sailing vessels on the eastern quays

11. The Lock

The Prince Phillip Lock is at the southern end of the enclosed dock adjacent to the two enormous, blue, redundant Babcock cranes (1930s) that stand as sentinels to a bygone era, stately and useless except as fascinating mammoth monuments to the bustling activity that was once so much part of the dock.

The lock is a complicated and restricted area; with a locally-made Ransomes & Rapier swing bridge as well as the recently installed replacement lock gates. There is also, at the end of the New Cut, the Ipswich Flood Defence scheme: the new multi-million pound project to protect Ipswich against rising sea levels.

Looking north, back up the Wet Dock the expanse of water becomes very apparent and it is impressive. When it was created in 1842 it was described as: 'the biggest enclosed dock in the kingdom'. There is a great deal of space for manoeuvring craft and a great deal of open water for people to enjoy. Retrace your steps to the northern quays.

As you approach the Custom House, look out for the excellent Window Museum run by Ipswich Maritime Trust.



Northern quays 1

12. The Old Bull Inn

In busy Key Street the Old Bull Inn is a timber-framed Tudor building with an early nineteenth century front. When it was a working inn, the coach entrance led to a great stable-yard with workshops for blacksmith and wheelwright. A World War I Zeppelin delivered a bomb that destroyed the roof and the house next door, killing a man within. The Bull finally closed in September 1961 and is now residential with small businesses using the yard premises.



The Maritime Trail plaque is on the east face, overlooking Slade Street.

13. The Historic Ipswich Wet Dock

The remarkable Wet Dock was opened in 1842. Henry Palmer was appointed by the newly created Dock Commission in 1837 to cut off a section of the existing river by excavating the New Cut to carry the tidal River Orwell from just below Stoke Bridge to a point downstream of the quays. Both ends of the by-passed section of the dock were closed off and an entrance lock was built where the Harbour Master's office still stands on the 'Island', close to the Public Warehouse.



The Wet Dock in c. 1845

14. The Old Custom House

On the Waterfront is the Custom House, remarkably original, and now occupied by Associated British Ports. The striking concave sandstone entrance at quay level leads to the central door, once the entrance to a bonded warehouse. The building was designed by J.M. Clark and opened in 1845. The Custom House and its predecessor were built on reclaimed land, the original shoreline being much nearer to the Old Bull Inn.

The Maritime Trail plaque is fixed to the dock frontage, to the west of the central door; other oval plaques can be seen nearby.



The Custom House

15. Waterfront House (Paul's Home Warehouse)

Alongside the Custom House is R.&W. Paul's Home Warehouse, today with a glass frontage over the quay. Paul's had a number of large maltings and grain silos around the dock and produced malted barley, mainly for the brewing industry. R.&W. Paul became one of the wealthiest businesses in Ipswich: a family of generous philanthropists.

16. Henry Palmer's warehouse (Bistro on the Quay)

Next along the quay, with red brick with white brick trimmings and prominent gables, these buildings were used for timber storage. They are also known as Christies Warehouses, named after a later occupant. Wherry Lane is on the far right.

The plaque is towards the western end of the facade.





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Detail from Edward Caley's 1837 depiction of the northern quays showing the old timber structures as they were before the building of the Wet Dock (opened in 1842). The original Custom House with its arcade is to the left and the tower of St Clement Church is visible to the right. Image courtesy Suffolk Record Office.

Northern quays 2

17. Isaac Lord maltings

The variety of buildings that make up the Isaac Lord complex are probably the finest example of a merchant's trading business in this country. From his own house in Fore Street (see location 25) he ran a retail shop on the ground floor through to the quayside warehouses in which goods were stored prior to export, or on arrival from elsewhere; these buildings are Listed Grade I and Grade II*.

Trading has been taking place on this site for centuries; today you can see buildings dating back to the middle of the 15th century. Of note is the Sale Room where imported goods were auctioned (today, the wedding venue), the Crossway, 17th century timber framing with early 18th century herringbone brick infill, the main warehouse running north/south from the quayside and the Malt Kiln with its distinctive flue. (Isaac Lord, a more recent occupant, bought the complex in 1900)

These buildings have been home to major trading in wool, woollen cloth, corn, (particularly barley for conversion into malt), beans and pulses (for animal feed) and coal. There is an extensive array of grinding machinery on the top floor of the Crossway, which can be seen working on special occasions. Renovations and extensions have been taking place for the past twenty years turning a once industrial complex into a popular modern entertainment facility.



The plaque is sited quite high up on the quayside wall, beneath the malting vent.



18. Salthouse Harbour Hotel

Next door to Isaac's on Neptune Quay is the tall red-brick building previously the oil mills of BOCM (British Oil and Cake Mills). This is now a four-star boutique hotel.

Modern apartments, successfully aimed at reflecting the roofscapes of the older industrial buildings spread eastwards to the open space outside the University of Suffolk.

19. University Plaza

University Campus Suffolk became the University of Suffolk in 2016. The heart of the University is the Waterfront Building, designed by architects RMJM in 2007. Six storeys descend in a sweeping curve to the height of the Tudor buildings on Fore Street, the vertical face overlooking the Wet Dock hides a vast sedum roof. The ground floor is fully glazed; above are grey and white panels with windows of varying sizes scattered intermittently across the façade.

In the middle of the plaza is the Langlands and Bell 'Question Mark' sculpture (2011) in black basalt and white marble.



20. Neptune Quay

Boats have been trading from this quayside, the outside of a natural bend in the river where water remained whatever the state of the tide, for at least 1,500 years. Ships were built here using Suffolk oak for the King's Navy, for local merchants and for seafaring explorers who set sail for distant lands seeking fortune and prosperity.

21. Coprolite Street

Coprolites are fossilised animal dung. This was the site of a very early fertiliser factory. Phosphatic nodules were quarried east of Ipswich and were used in the early chemical fertiliser industry in Suffolk. The pioneer in this field, Edward Packard (later with James Fison), built his 'Manure Factory' at the dock end of this street in 1850. It is now the site of the Neptune Marina apartment block.

Fore Street (south side)



century shop. A carved bressumer beam dated 1620 runs the length of the building. There is a similarly carved eaves board and three dormers with heavily moulded pediments. These buildings are sometimes referred to as Ropemakers' Cottages; it is not surprising that with the proximity of the dock both rope and sail-making took place locally.



Fore Street from the Neptune café to the Isaac Lord merchant's house

23. Fore Street (south side, nos. 80-92)

A few yards further west in Fore Street is the Neptune Café (nos. 90-92), a sixteenth century timber framed building that was re-fronted in the eighteenth century and had a modern shop front installed in the twentieth. The Neptune Café bears an Ipswich Society blue plaque to pioneering aviatrix Edith Maud Cook who was the first female pilot and balloonist in the country.

22. Nos. 132-138 Fore Street (including the newsagent's shop)

Immediately west of the University Plaza is a row of seventeenth century buildings with a small twentieth

24. The Old Neptune Inn (86-88 Fore St)

The Old Neptune Inn is a timber-framed building bearing the date 1639 high up on the frontage. It was originally built in 1490 as a Hall House; a wealthy wool merchant extended the property and added two floors, a cross wing and the Solar in 1639. Before the Wet Dock was enclosed there was an inlet allowing the merchant's boats to unload between his warehouses, situated behind the house. It was bought in 1947 and restored as a home by George Bodley Scott, a director of W.S. Cowell Ltd, an important printer in the town. *The Maritime Trail plaque is fixed to the right of the front door.*



Old Neptune, early 20th century

25. Isaac Lord merchant's house

At no. 80 is the timber-framed merchant's house, Tudor in age, with business premises behind it running down to the quayside (see location 17). The frontage bears the date on the upper bressumer of 1636, although parts of the house are earlier. Dendrochronology has put the date of some timbers used in the construction as early as 1430.

The Maritime Trail plaque is sited to the upper left of the cart entrance.



26. The Lord Nelson

The Lord Nelson public house is a strange mixture of old and new; one can see where the roof of the timber-framed section has been raised at some time. The pub may have been renamed when Lord Nelson was appointed High Sheriff of Ipswich in 1801. The glazed

brickwork which replaced the timber frame low on the front elevation is a defence against the once frequent flooding that affected this part of town.

Fore Street (north side) & St Clement Church

27. Site of Thomas Eldred's House

The group of buildings opposite Isaac Lord's include the former homes of Suffolk's pioneering seafarers. Thomas Eldred (1561-1624) sailed with Cavendish on the second circumnavigation of the globe, 1586-88. Eldred's House has been demolished but it was next door to No. 97, a chemist's shop owned by E.J. Owles (etched in the frosted glass door). *The Maritime Trail plaque is fixed quite high up on the side wall of no. 97, just round the corner from the frontage.*

Minerva Court is a relatively new building (2004) built on the site of a house owned by Thomas Cavendish, so he and Eldred were neighbours.



doorway at no. 81 and eighteenth century sash windows throughout. No. 77 was re-fronted in brickwork in 1700, as was the fashion at that time: a Georgian front to a Tudor timber frame with a nice doorcase and sash windows.

The Maritime Trail plaque is sited to the right of the front door of 79 Grimwade Street.

29. Church of St Clement

St Clements Church Lane opposite the Captains' Houses is part of the churchyard with gravestones set into the wall. This is 'The Sailor's Church'; the tower features two anchors in the stonework. Also, a memorial to Sir Thomas Slade, responsible for the design of Nelson's flagship HMS Victory, is outside the west door. Slade, Surveyor to the Navy, was buried here though the grave is lost. The church, now redundant, is also 'the Cobbold church' because of its association with the Ipswich brewing family. This is the planned location of the Ipswich Arts Centre.

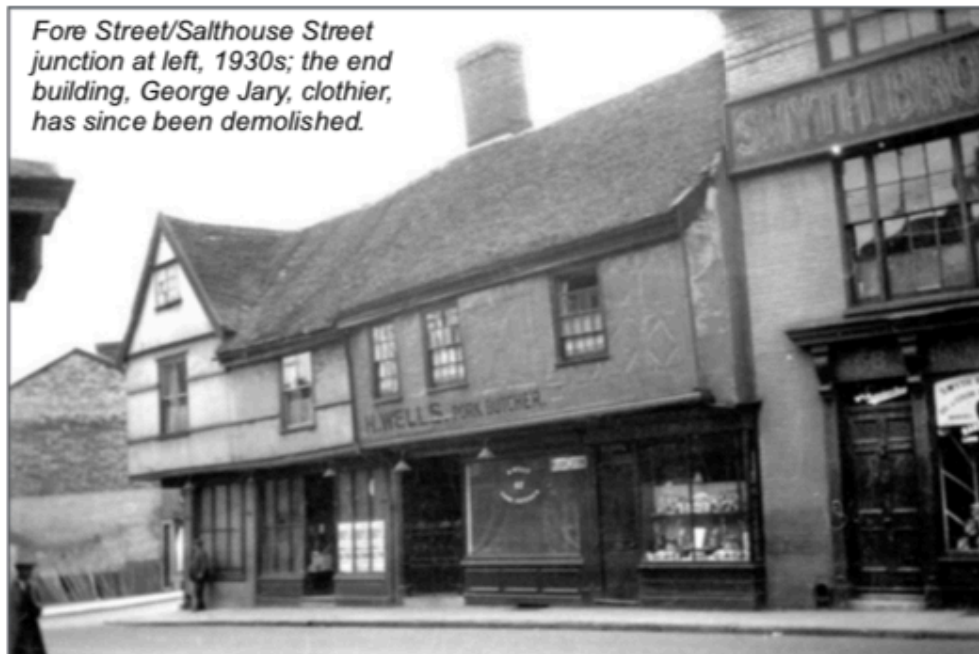


28. The Captains' Houses

A short distance into Grimwade Street, at nos. 79-83 are the Sea Captain's Houses. The date 1631 appears on the bressumer with the initials 'R.S.' standing for Captain Robert Sansom. It is reputed to be the longest known carved beam of its kind. There are inserted details of a later date including a pedimented

30. Fore Street Baths

Towards the end of the lane are Fore Street Swimming Baths, one of the earliest public baths still in use having opened in 1894 thanks to the philanthropy of Felix Thornley Cobbold, a member of the famous local brewing family.



Fore Street/Salhouse Street junction at left, 1930s; the end building, George Jary, clothier, has since been demolished.

Fore Street curves northwards here and is crossed by Star Lane. Across from the public baths is no. 60, a timber-framed building with pargeted front, which was the shop of Herbert Wells, pork butcher. So popular were Herbert's sausages that customers queued along the street before taking their turn in the small shop.

The neighbouring frontage is a mixed range of painted and brick facades built on to much earlier timber-framed buildings. Beyond these are two elegant residences; no. 44 bears a blue plaque to the painter Cor Visser, the prototype of the Ipswich Society's blue plaque scheme.

Opposite is Fore Street Post Office, formerly the Dog and Gun public house. The more recent building on the corner of Angel Lane is a timber framed former warehouse from the other side of the street, dismantled in 1982 and re-erected 1989-90.



A pub, a friary ruin, almshouses and a church... the end

31. The Wheatsheaf

No. 24 Fore Street is an excellent example of a timber framed building, much the same age and style as the Ancient House in the Butter Market but without the decorative pargeting. It has three Ipswich windows (oriel or bay windows on the upper floors) with three gables above.

This former merchant's house has had a mixed history including providing premises for a wine merchant's, a public house (The Wheatsheaf), a motorcycle showroom and is still in use today as offices. A fine seventeenth century building.



32. Blackfriars Dominican Friary church

There were five powerful religious houses in Ipswich between the 13th and the 16th century: St Peter and St Paul close to the river crossing, Holy Trinity in Christchurch Park, the Grey Friars close to St Nicholas, White Friars where the Buttermarket Centre now stands and the Black Friars. The only ruins visible today are of the Blackfriars Church between Lower Orwell Street and Foundation Street. These are of local septaria stone.

Blackfriars was founded in 1263, in the reign of Henry III, and an extensive friary developed around the Church of St Mary; the shape and size of this former church is laid out on the ground. The standing wall with arches is part of the sacristy, a room used for the safe-keeping of the church silver.

Excavations here in the late 19th century by pioneering archaeologist, Nina Frances Layard (and later in the 1970s and 1980s) uncovered much of the plan of the entire complex. An Ipswich Society blue plaque attached to the rear of the old Unicorn Brewery commemorates her.



33. Tooley's and Smart's Almshouses.



In Foundation Street close to Blackfriars are the successor buildings of the foundation which gives the street its name. Originally built in 1550 and named after the wealthy Tudor merchant benefactors, Henry Tooley and William Smart, these decorative almshouses were rebuilt in 1846 and have since been extended and modernised. They bear

a number of lettered panels commemorating the philanthropists who have maintained the foundation. *The Maritime Trail plaque can be found south of the main gateway into the courtyard, fixed to the wall fronting Foundation Street.* Across the road on no. 32 Foundation Street is an Ipswich Society blue plaque marking the now demolished house next door, which was once the home of the painter Thomas Gainsborough.

34. St Mary-At-Quay Church (today, Suffolk Mind's Quay Place)

This Waterfront Church was founded on a legacy, bequeathed in 1448. It has an interesting history including, at one stage, being home to the congregation of the nearby St Peter which had been displaced by Henry VIII via the edict of Cardinal Wolsey (St Peter was to have become the chapel of Wolsey's new College). The quayside was much closer to St Mary-At-Quay when the church was first built, an advantage and a disadvantage – take a look inside at the leaning angle of columns, not well-supported on river mud.



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