

## Celebrating Ipswich and Bideford added to UK Heritage Harbour list

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*Credit: Ipswich Maritime Trust Archive*



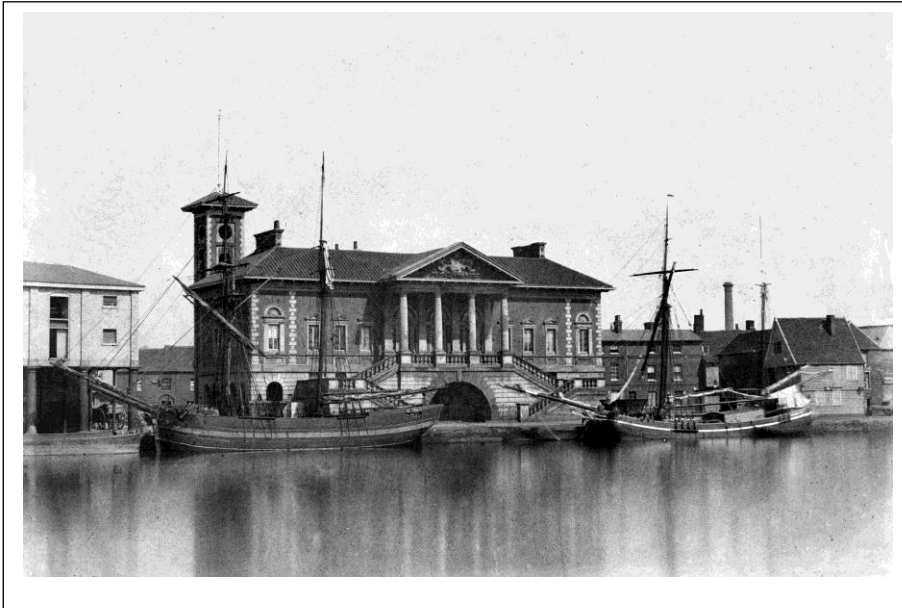
*Credit: Ipswich Maritime Trust Archive*

### **CELEBRATING 12 HERITAGE HARBOURS - IPSWICH AND BIDEFORD ADDED TO UK LIST**

Today Ipswich and Bideford gain the status of Heritage Harbours, joining 10 other locations in a new initiative in which community led organisations come together to save surviving features of some of the UK's most historic harbours. The project is supported by National Historic Ships UK, Historic England and Maritime Heritage Trust.

The aim is to maintain a viable "home base" for the UK's operational heritage boats and ships, safeguarding key features such as working quaysides, historic warehouses and stores, slipways and promoting local skills and enterprise to sustain a lively harbourside for wider community benefit.

**Ipswich** (Suffolk) harbour has a history dating back to Anglo Saxon times, was a Head Port of the Hanseatic League and is now England's lead port for agricultural exports. The Wet Dock was the largest of its kind in the country when constructed in 1842, complemented in 1845 by its fine classical Customs House, today with the sailing barge *Victor* berthed alongside. The Heritage Harbour project, led by Ipswich Maritime Trust with local partners, aims to develop the Inner Harbour area, to attract more vessels, provide engaging heritage displays, use the Trust's unique photographic archive of 2000 plus historic images, create a youth maritime experience and skills programme, and a programme of public events.



*Credit Ipswich Maritime Trust Archive*

**Bideford** (Devon) has played a leading role in maritime history as a centre of shipbuilding, trade, exploration and emigration. Working and heritage vessels are moored at the quays including the restored steamship *Freshspring* and the MS *Oldenburg*, the passenger ferry to Lundy. The aim of the Bideford and River Torridge Heritage Harbour is to create a partnership of local groups from Appledore to Bideford and on to Torrington linking projects on both sides of the River Torridge, surveying heritage, providing better access and encouraging more heritage vessels to use the port.

Examples of existing Heritage Harbour projects include:

**Shardlow** (Derbyshire), one of 3 Heritage Inland Ports in the scheme, at a key junction in the 18th century canal system, has a unique concentration of 18th century port buildings. However several canal side warehouses and an original merchant house have been left to deteriorate by owners and are severely at risk. To help raise awareness Shardlow organises an annual Canal side Festival and the community has recently restored a slipway. The organising group is looking to obtain charitable status this year to further develop community based projects.

**Exeter's** ship canal dating to 1563, later giving access for trading vessels to the heart of the city, has left a rich legacy of historic buildings including the 1608 custom House. The Heritage Harbour partnership works with Exeter Canal and Quay Trust to regenerate the area using working heritage to reflect past maritime tradition and attract new enterprise. This includes providing berths for historic and traditional vessels, developing boatbuilding and traditional skills and encouraging more boat use by visitors and local people. In 2023 a community based project to rebuild an East Coast sailing smack (The Britannia) moved to the port as did a replica Thames Sailing Barge.



*Credit Exeter Canal and Quay Trust and Appleton Event photography*

**Maldon**, a port dating to Saxon times is a key base for the fleet of Thames Sailing barges still operational, many carrying passengers and trainees. It has 5 working shipyards including the historic Cook's Yard dating to 1894 and Downs Road Boatyard which has an apprenticeship programme. The Heritage Harbour partners aim to create more opportunities for young people, bring back a traditional sail loft, attract sailmakers, and improve the facilities for barges and other heritage vessels.

The full list of Heritage Harbours is below.

### **Quotes from national partners**

**Historic England** *welcomes the inclusion of Ipswich and Bideford to the Heritage Harbours initiative. Local communities are key to the safeguarding of historic*

*harbours and working harbour facilities. Historic England are working to provide resources to help communities make the most of their maritime heritage.*

**National Historic Ships UK** *Hannah Cunliffe, Director, said “I am delighted to see the further expansion of the Heritage Harbour community with the addition of these two locations, both of which have a depth of history and long-standing maritime associations that fully warrant their inclusion in this scheme. The survival of Britain's historic vessels depends on harbours and ports such as these which provide vital infrastructure to service and maintain ships and boats into the future. NHS-UK supports the development of Heritage Harbours in line with its Shipshape Network initiative which promotes the regeneration of traditional maritime skills and connects projects across the UK.*

**The Maritime Heritage Trust** *said “We need to ensure that new waterside development is sensitive to the needs of traditional vessels so that maritime trades, workshops and slipways can continue. A lively waterfront can attract visitors, bring increased community activity with open days, events and trails and help regenerate an area in a sustainable way. This in turn can support the skills, volunteering and enterprise which bring maritime heritage to life.”*

**Ben Good, Chair of Ipswich Maritime Trust:** *"Ipswich Maritime Trust was set up to celebrate Ipswich's amazingly long and important maritime history, so we are naturally delighted to join the Heritage Harbour network to work with and learn from its other members, as we all strive to preserve the nation's maritime heritage."*

## **Notes to Editors**

1. **Regional Press Releases** are available for Ipswich and Bideford - see contacts below.

2. **Picture editors:** Over 2,000+ digitised images from the Ipswich Maritime Trust's Image Archive are available for use. They include black and white and colour photos from private collections bequeathed to IMT. Contact Cathy Shelbourne - see below.

2. **Full list of heritage harbours and Heritage Inland Port locations** around the country: Bideford, Bristol, Buckler's Hard, Chester, Exeter, Faversham and Oare Creeks, Ipswich, Maldon and Heybridge, Sandwich, Shardlow, Stourport and Wells next the Sea. For more information including pictures and links see: <https://maritimeheritage.org.uk/heritage-harbours/location-map>

3. The **aims of Heritage Harbours** are to help safeguard the harbourside, buildings, facilities and businesses that are vital to support our working maritime



heritage vessels. Supported by The Maritime Heritage Trust, National Historic Ships UK and Historic England, local communities in each location are developing outline plans to maintain and enhance the historic port area, its environmental features and the facilities such as shipyards and drydocks which vessels need to operate.

**4. The UK Heritage Harbour National Group** (individual ports and national partners) manages the scheme and has adopted criteria. Further applications for the scheme, which is not a legal designation, are welcome. More information from: [info@maritimeheritage.org.uk](mailto:info@maritimeheritage.org.uk) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1810140832395343> <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100095373729993>

5. The Heritage Harbour concept started in northern Europe as a way of providing free or low-cost mooring to historic vessels in exchange for public display. In the UK the idea has evolved to include a wider range of local community links such as encouraging heritage skills e.g., wooden boatbuilding and cultural heritage activities as well as maritime festivals and events which benefit traders and visitors.

**Contacts for further information:**

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**ENDS**