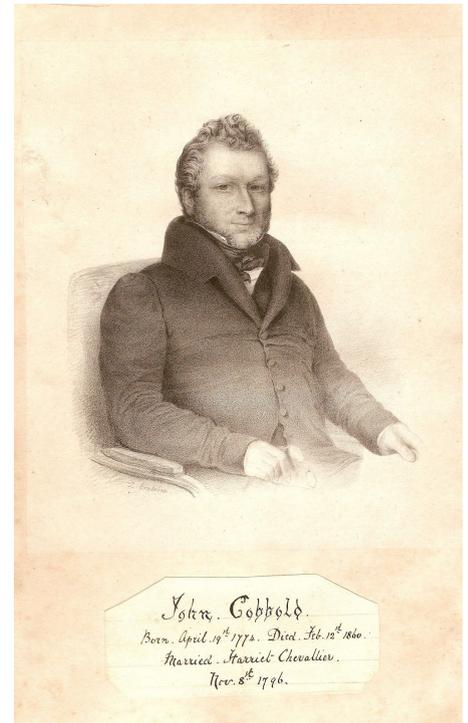


Patron: Lord Cobbold DL
Ivry, Lady Freyberg

COBBOLD SHIPS

February 2021

We have known for a long while that the Cobbold family was involved in ships and shipping largely from the Bi-centenary Souvenir of the Cliff Brewery issued in 1923 which listed 18 vessels but also because the Trust has over 50 original Bills of Exchange which confirm a number of destinations some as far away as mainland China. Clarke's History of Ipswich published in 1836 describes the Cliff Brewery as 'A large pile of building erected for the purpose of a brewery and malting offices with granaries and warehouses and a commodious wharf for the shipping of corn directly off the premises.' 'A strip of land on the Ooze, [presumably he meant the Orwell – Ed.] extending from the Gas works to the Cliff has lately been purchased by John Cobbold jun., of the Corporation for £300 with a landing place or right of boatway to be preserved for the burgesses and inhabitants of Ipswich.' Thus, John Wilkinson Cobbold (1774-1860) #77 on the web family tree and his successors had their own wharf and their own shipbuilding yard from which to trade.



This slender knowledge was sufficient to prompt the Trust into commissioning an investigation into the ships built, owned or operated by the family, via the very lively Ipswich Maritime Trust who gave the task to their Vice Chairman Des Pawson.

Although he says that there are other areas for investigation his excellent report found no less than 55 ships with connections, many of which were owned or part owned by members of the family. It was normal in the 19th century for ships to be owned in 64ths as in the case of the Agnes built in Woodbridge in 1823 for John Cobbold 32/64s and Henry Aldrich (born 1785) #11464 a merchant in Ipswich also 32/64s which ended a hazardous life being lost off the coast of Jutland. We can only find two ships the Adela and the Cliff which are confirmed to have been built in the Cobbold boatyard but there are others where it is likely. We find that a William James Curtis had a boatyard on Cliff Quay so perhaps he acquired it from the family.

The move into and booming interest in shipping came from John Wilkinson Cobbold (along with his investment in banking) as he is shown to have had stakes in 45 of the ships identified, mostly being passed, on his death in 1860, to his son, John Chevallier Cobbold (1797-1882) #114 and thence to five of his grandchildren, Arthur Thomas (1815-1895) #138, Walter Temple (1801-1898) #118, Alfred (1813-1882) #136, Felix Thornley (1841-1909) #201 and John Patteson (1831-1875) #186. Alfred's share in at least one ship was passed on to his own son Francis Alfred (1852-1915) #209. Some readers will know that John Wilkinson had a half-brother, Robert Knipe Cobbold

(1792-1859) #100, the eldest son of 'Big' John's second marriage. Robert also had shares in a number of these ships and it is by no means the only example of commercial collaboration between the two sides of the family.

Our first picture shows John Cobbold (1774-1860) who effectively started the family interest in shipping and our second picture shows a builder's model of the full rigged merchant ship Adela built for John Chevallier Cobbold in the Cobbold yard, armed for the China trade. A number of such ships were specially built in Ipswich for the Chinese trade. It is said that the model was built in Woodbridge at a cost of £90. The model was carried around the town by the Ipswich Shipwrecked Seamen's Society once a year on the 30th June. After fundraising the members met for lunch at the White Elm Inn, St. Clement's before attending a church service. The model belongs to the Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service and is currently on display at Old Custom House on the Ipswich Waterfront.

There is a wonderful story about the life and adventures of the John Cobbold which we will tell another time. Something to look forward to!

