

The Story of Cliff Quay Brewery

March 2021

As told by the Ipswich Maritime Trust last year.

“Over the last 60 years the brewery that ran nearly every pub in Ipswich was Tolly Cobbold, conveniently locating a brewery on the banks of the River Orwell at Cliff Quay. The current brewery building (built in 1896), now stands empty after closing in 2002, on its site was the hugely popular Brewery Tap pub, housed in the Victorian brewery offices and possibly in the eighteenth-century brothel. It now faces regeneration, becoming an area of intense use by other inhabitants of the waterfront as possible residential housing, restaurants or potential use by the university.



Cliff Quay Brewery

Cliff Quay Brewery was built in 1746 when Thomas Cobbold moved his operations to Ipswich from Harwich. The early eighteenth-century operations of Cobbold’s business and the reason he moved towns have been a debating point for local historians over the last century and due to limited documentation on either side, the actual reason for the move is still up for debate. The traditional viewpoint is that Thomas moved operations from Harwich to Ipswich due to issues with the water supply, forcing them to ship water to Harwich from springs in and around Ipswich. This viewpoint has become entrenched and lost in Suffolk folklore, though there is little to no evidence for this reason. A more tenable view is that the ability to be closer to the water spring in what is now Holywell’s Park (a Cobbold

estate) made it cost effective and closer to the emerging markets for Cobbold beers and ales. Whichever view you agree with nonetheless the business flourished in Ipswich following the move to Cliff Quay building on the Cobbold's existing Malthouse.



Cliff Brewery c 1746

The success of the brewery and the importance of the Cobbold family in every aspect of Victorian Ipswich society and business, including banking, shipbuilding and the railways, pushed the growth of the town. The Cobbold's were a driving force in the creation of a railway that established a line from Ipswich to Colchester and London. The railway helped expand the breweries markets inland and helped the port of Ipswich develop and grow, helping the town thrive. The result of this was seen in the popularity and demand for Cobbold pubs in Ipswich, with around 300 pubs in Suffolk, many in Ipswich surrounding the docks and serving its workers. During the 1890s, Cliff Quay Brewery became the site you see today, a modern tower brewery bringing Ipswich and the Cobbold's into the 20th Century. The Cobbold name is synonymous with Ipswich and the development of the town owes largely to their businesses and philanthropy.

For more information on the Cobbold's then visit the Cobbold Family History Trust website ."

It is clear from correspondence held in the Suffolk Record Office that her contribution was much appreciated, evidenced by her being termed 'a kind friend of science' by James Sowerby who named her fossil bivalve shell from Holywells *Nucula cobboldiae* in volume 2 of *Mineral Conchology* in 1817. It was placed in the genus *nucula* because of the tooth and socket arrangement of its hingeline. Later palaeontologists placed these *nuculas* with a zig-zag pattern on the surface of the shell in a new genus, *Acila*. Although Elizabeth's shell is now placed in a different genus it retains James Sowerby's name *cobboldiae* and it is the same shell. James Sowerby died in 1822 but his son, **James de Carle Sowerby** continued his father's publication in which he lamented Palaeontology's loss when Elizabeth died in 1824.