



Suffolk  
Chamber of  
Commerce

## **Chamber 140:**

*Honouring 140 years of Suffolk business,  
shaping tomorrow and celebrating diversity*

**Education Pack**



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## Chamber 140 overview

**The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce is excited to present the C140 project, an ambitious initiative commemorating 140 years of fostering business growth within the county.**

The C140 project aims to showcase the rich history and vibrant evolution of the Suffolk business community over the past century and a half, spotlighting the historical journey of the Chamber and its esteemed membership.

Through a blend of in-person and online activities, including our touring exhibition and dedicated website, the C140 project hopes to more broadly engage the community and foster a deeper understanding of Suffolk's business heritage.

C140 seeks to reflect on the past and guide the Chamber's path into the future, emphasising resilience, growth, and adaptability within the Suffolk business landscape.

The C140 Project focuses on four key themes:

- **Diversity**, through the project's dedicated *Celebrating Diversity* initiative,
- **Trade and Infrastructure**,
- **History and Heritage**,
- **The Future**.

Around these themes, we have compiled a vast collection of stories and archival content documenting the achievements and milestones of Suffolk businesses over the last 140 years.

This insightful content is available on our immersive project website, with stories that range from the arrival of the Last Maharajah in Suffolk in the 19th century to the construction of the Orwell Bridge in the late 20th century and include modern-day stories about business sustainability and the future.

Using this wealth of material, we have developed this educational pack as a resource for young people in Suffolk and beyond. It aims to inspire a deeper appreciation of our county's rich heritage, showcase the importance and impact of business networks, and celebrate Suffolk's fantastic commitment to diversity, innovation and dynamism.

Enclosed, you will find a series of engaging content and tools designed for young learners to explore Suffolk's business landscape and the evolution of our local economy over the last 140 years.

## Digital Resources

### Information Video

Find out more about the C140 initiative in the video below, developed by our project team:



<https://youtu.be/3rYi5JLbTFk> 1

### Animation Timeline

Watch the evolution of Suffolk business in our animation timeline video, highlighting the developments of Suffolk businesses and the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce over the last 140 years:



<https://youtu.be/kf4fgCNU3s> 1

### Our digital project timeline

Visit our dedicated project website – <https://c140.suffolkchamber.co.uk> – to join the journey of the last 140 years of the Suffolk Chamber, exploring the evolution of the Suffolk economy and uncovering stories of diversity and innovation in this time.

The website's blog page – <https://c140.suffolkchamber.co.uk/blog> – also contains a host of fantastic interviews with local business leaders which reveal a wealth of innovation, talent, and diversity in Suffolk.

## So, what is a Chamber of Commerce?

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***“Chambers of Commerce serve as a collective voice for the business community, representing their interests to government bodies and other stakeholders.”***

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The earliest reference to a Chamber of Commerce comes from Marseilles, France. At the end of the sixteenth century, the first “chambre de commerce” was established by traders in the town to reinvigorate trade following the gruelling impact of war on the local business community.

More chambers quickly established across Europe to regulate and promote trade in cities. These medieval European trading guilds were associations of merchants, artisans, and traders in cities. They played a vital role in regulating trade, setting standards, and providing a platform for members to discuss and resolve business-related matters.



Marseilles in the sixteenth century

By the late eighteenth century, Chambers began to emerge in the English-speaking world – in the United States, the UK, and in Ireland. Many formed in response to disruptions posed to traditional trade and markets caused by global conflicts, such as the American Wars of Independence (1775-83) and the French Revolution (1789-99).

The first Chamber in Great Britain opened in Jersey in 1768. Others followed in major British cities – in Glasgow (1783), Edinburgh (1785), Birmingham (1813), and Manchester (1820).

These cities lay at the heart of the industrial revolution. Alongside trade disruptions, rapidly advancing technologies and a huge increase in manufacturing necessitated new and more efficient systems to safeguard and promote business interests. Traditional, outdated bureaucratic systems were no longer effective for the rapidly growing and changing needs of the emerging business class.

It was within this dynamic, often challenging, and transformative economic era that modern Chambers of Commerce began to take shape. From there, they evolved into vital institutions for the regulation, support, and advancement of commerce.

## The Founding of the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce

On 9th May 1884, a group of influential business leaders came together and founded the first Chamber of Commerce in Suffolk. It quickly became a dedicated group to support local businesses and address common challenges. The Ipswich Dock Commission, the port authority at the time, led this effort. Today, their role is handled by Chamber patron, Associated British Ports.

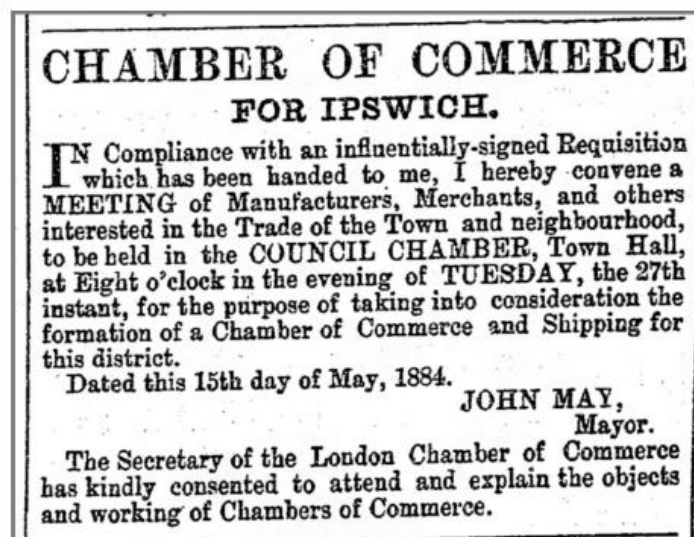
Back then, businesses faced many problems such as outdated administrative systems and fragmented dealings with railway companies and postal services. The founding Chamber members realised that by joining forces, they could solve these issues more effectively than by working alone.

They recognised a fundamental truth: strength lies in numbers, and confronting challenges collectively far outweighs individual efforts.

Their foresight created the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce —a testament to the enduring principle that unity yields strength.

***“It was in every way desirable in matters of that kind that traders should act collectively, and not individually.”***

*– The Ipswich Journal, 9th May, 1884*



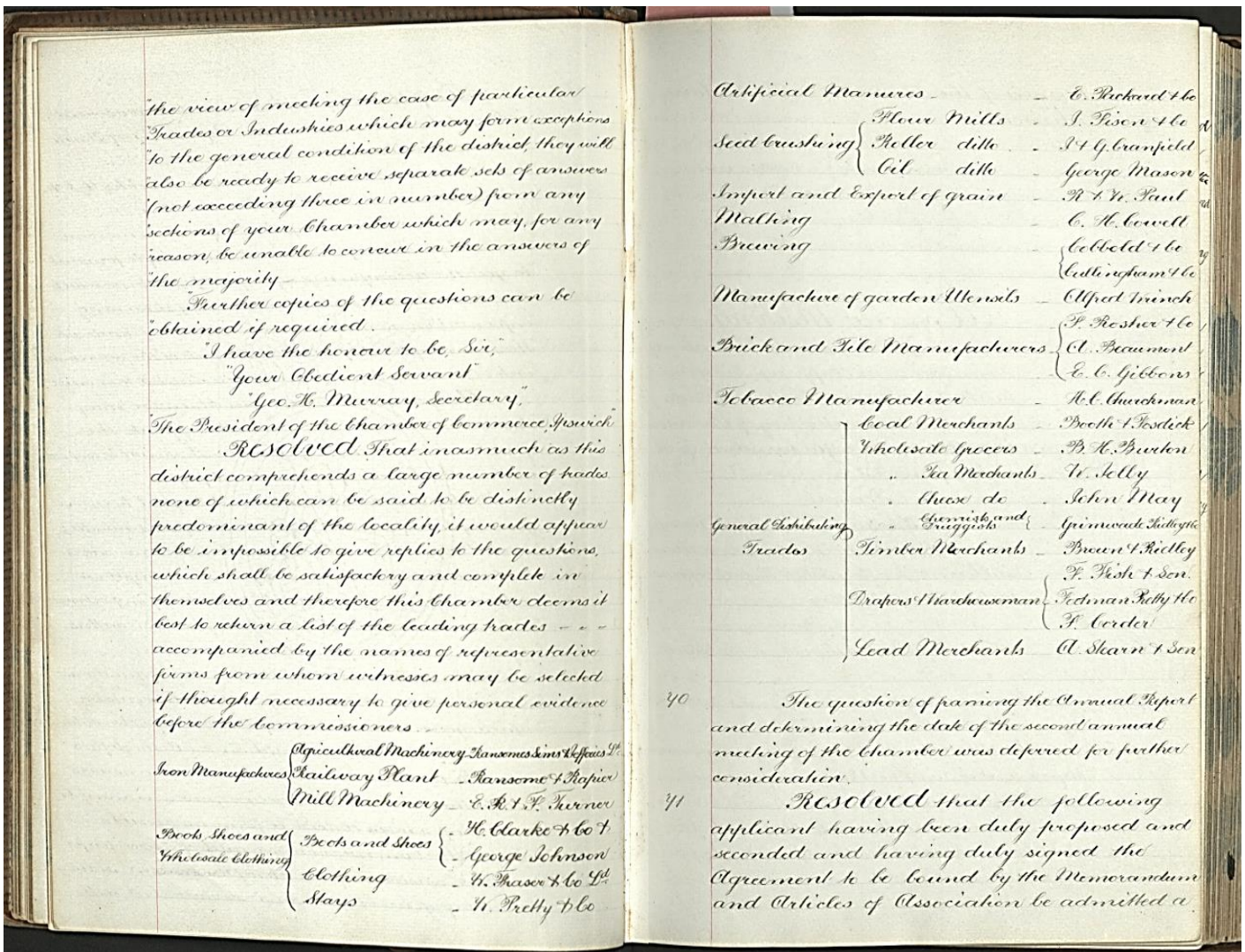
*Credit: The Ipswich Journal*

***“Chambers of Commerce would take a much more enlarged view of these matters than private individuals could...”***

*– The Ipswich Journal, 9th May, 1884*

Early Chamber records have revealed our earliest members – some of whom remain amongst our membership today, a testament to the strength of our 140 years!

Delve into our early records and see if you recognise any of these Suffolk businesses...



A list of our earliest members, found in the first minute book of the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce.  
Credit: Suffolk Chamber of Commerce

### Why is the Suffolk Chamber so vital?

The Suffolk Chamber is more than an organisation; it is a driving force behind Suffolk's business success and the prosperity of our shared business community.

The Chamber provides a platform for collaboration, innovation, and collective strength.

In unity, there is strength, and as a member, businesses are not just participants – they are key players in this shared success story, shaping business prosperity in Suffolk.



## Celebrating Diversity

### Celebrating Diversity timeline

**1863**

The Maharajah Duleep Singh arrives in Suffolk

**1886**

Ellen Chaloner becomes the first woman horse trainer at Newmarket Racecourses

**1898**

Archaeologist Nina Layard leads the first excavations at Blackfriars monastery in Ipswich

**1904**

William Pretty & Sons operate onsite creche for female workers

**1908**

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson becomes the first female mayor in Britain

**1916**

The Suffolk Chamber supports the training of female clerical staff during WW1

**1924**

Mrs Ethel Norton becomes the first woman to join the Suffolk Chamber

**1930**

Ras Prince Monolulu sells tips at Newmarket racecourses

**1933**

Ernst Freud flees Nazi Germany and builds in Suffolk

**1938**

Devora Peake establishes first orchard near Boxford

**1938**

The Herring Lassies of Lowestoft go on strike

**1939**

Edith Pretty oversees excavations at Sutton Hoo

**1939**

Women's Land Army reforms in Suffolk

**1948**

HMS Windrush docks in Tilbury

**1952**

Arrival of Suffolk's first working Sikh family

**1961**

Chamber in Bury St Edmunds appoint first female president

**1977**

Ipswich Suffolk Council for Racial Equality forms

**1989**

Rafi's Spicebox opens in Sudbury

**1992**

Challenger Shipping forms to support export to the Caribbean

**1993**

Chamber appoints first female president in Ipswich

**1998**

Bangladeshi Support Centre forms in Ipswich

**2006**

The Chamber appoints its first president of colour

**2010**

Anglo Chinese Cultural Exchange forms

**2010**

Suffolk Business Women becomes part of the Suffolk Chamber

## Suffolk Voices: inspiring stories from our community

### The Maharajah Duleep Singh

The Maharajah Duleep Singh was born in Lahore (now in Pakistan) in September 1838. At five, he became the last Maharajah of the Sikh Empire after his father's death. The British East India Company took advantage of the unstable situation in Punjab, and after two Anglo-Sikh wars, seized control.

At ten, Duleep Singh surrendered his lands and the prized Koh-i-Noor diamond, which was later incorporated into the British crown jewels. The diamond was displayed at the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace, in London, in 1851.

At fifteen, he was deposed and exiled to Britain, where he was introduced to the British court. Queen Victoria quickly took an interest in Duleep Singh, and later became godmother to several of his children.

In 1863, Duleep Singh bought a 17,000-acre estate at Elveden in Suffolk. He restored the estate, its church, cottages, and school, and ran a game reserve. He redesigned the interior to resemble the Indian palaces of his childhood.

Known for his generosity, he sent luxury items, such as rabbits, as Christmas gifts to his employees.

Duleep Singh had five surviving children. His daughters, Princess Catherine and Princess Sophia, who both spent their early years in Suffolk, went on to become prominent campaigners for women's suffrage.

#### Food for thought...

1. *What does Duleep Singh's early experiences tell us about the power dynamics between Britain and India during the nineteenth century?*
2. *How can Duleep Singh's story encourage us to think about the importance of understanding and respecting diverse backgrounds in our own communities?*

#### Find out more...

Learn more about the Maharajah Duleep Singh in Peter Bance's fantastic history – *Sovereign, Squire & Rebel: Maharajah Duleep Singh and the Heirs of a Lost Kingdom*.



*A chromolithograph of Maharajah Duleep Singh.  
Maclure & Macdonald after Mayall,  
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

## Ras Prince Monolulu

Ras Prince Monolulu was born Peter Carl Mackay in October 1881, in St Croix, then part of the Danish West Indies.

He claimed to be a prince of the Falasha tribe from Abyssinia, kidnapped and forced to work on a British ship, arriving in Britain in 1902. However, records indicate his family in St Croix were horse breeders and racers, and he likely moved to Britain for work.

Following his arrival in London, Monolulu quickly made a name for himself as a race tipster – someone who advises racegoers which horse they think will win in exchange for money. He travelled to racecourses across the country, including Newmarket in Suffolk.

He rose to prominence after the 1920 Derby, when he picked out the horse *Spion Kop*, at the odds of 100-6, who went on to win. From this bet, he personally made a vast sum - £8,000 – equivalent to around £400,000 today.

Distinguished by his flamboyant robes and ostrich-feathered headdress, Monolulu became instantly recognisable and well-loved in the racing community. His signature catchphrase, “I’ve got a horse”, became a well-known part of his larger-than-life persona.

Monolulu made history as one of the first Black people to appear on British television – his first appearance came on the same day as the launch of the BBC’s Television Service, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1936. His engaging persona and distinctive style made him a popular feature on newsreels at the time.

In the 1939 newsreel “London Carries On,” he is seen encouraging Londoners to wear gas masks, using the catchy phrase, “I gotta gas mask protector!”. He even made a few cameos in racing films of the 1950s.

### Food for thought...

1. *Ras Prince Monolulu claimed to be a prince of the Falasha tribe of Abyssinia, despite records showing a different background. Why do you think he might have constructed this narrative about his identity?*
2. *Consider the challenges Monolulu might have faced as a Black man arriving in London in 1902. How do you think his flamboyant persona and catchphrase helped him navigate these challenges?*

### Find out more...

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about Ras Prince Monolulu, and to listen to Stephen K Amos’ BBC Radio 4 feature, *The Prince Monolulu Quandary*.



Ras Prince Monolulu  
© Alamy

## Elizabeth Garrett Anderson

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was born in London in 1836, one of twelve children. Her father, Newson Garrett, was from Leiston, Suffolk and in 1841, he moved the family to Aldeburgh where he later built the famous Snape Maltings in 1846.

Elizabeth joined the emerging women's movement in the 1850s as part of the Langham Place Group with her lifelong friend Emily Davies, founder of Girton College, Cambridge.

Her younger sister, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, became a prominent suffragist, leading the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies from 1897.



Elizabeth Garrett Anderson  
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In 1859, Elizabeth was inspired to pursue a medical career after she met Elizabeth Blackwell – the first female doctor in the United States. She began as a surgery nurse at Middlesex Hospital in 1860 but was refused entry to its medical school due to her sex. After facing significant opposition from her male peers and rejected by other medical schools – including Oxford and Cambridge – Elizabeth found a loophole when applying to the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries in 1862, who could not legally exclude her from obtaining a medical licence.

In 1865, following private study, Elizabeth obtained a licence to practice medicine, becoming the first woman in Britain to qualify as a doctor.

Unable to secure a hospital post, she opened her own practice. In 1874, she co-founded the London School of Medicine for Women with fellow female doctor, Sophia Jex-Blake; it was the first British medical school to train women doctors. She lectured there for the rest of her career and served as dean from 1883 to 1902.

In 1908, Elizabeth was elected Mayor of Aldeburgh, becoming the first woman mayor in Britain. She frequently gave speeches on suffrage for women.

### Food for thought...

1. *Elizabeth became the first woman in Britain to qualify as a physician and surgeon in 1865. What challenges do you think she faced in achieving this milestone in a male-dominated field?*
2. *Reflect on the societal attitudes towards women in leadership roles during Elizabeth's time. How might her election as mayor have challenged and changed these attitudes?*

**Explore history firsthand!** Suffolk Archives has an amazing display of Elizabeth's letters at the Hold in Ipswich. You can also request to see these letters up close at the archives using the reference HA436. Don't miss out on this chance to dive into the past!

## Herring Lassies

From the mid-1800s, hundreds of fisherwomen, known as the Herring Lassies, flocked to the port towns of East Anglia to gut, pickle and packing herring fish. Most travelled from Scotland as they followed the herring migration down Britain's east coast.

Girls as young as twelve joined in, working in teams of up to three. Two would gut the fish while the third packed, reaching speeds of up to sixty herring per minute!

But it wasn't all smooth sailing – fish scales would often fly off and land in their eyes, creating a painful and dangerous hazard. The quickest fix? Licking the scales out with their tongues! Some women became so skilled at this that they were designated as the group's de-scaler.

The workday started at dawn and stretched late into the night, with tough working conditions. Landlords who housed fisher girls for the season would cover all the walls and furniture with paper to protect against the fish oil, and up to three women shared a small single room.

Before the First World War, most of East Anglia's herring catch was exported to Russia and Germany. After the war, the collapse of these markets hit the herring industry hard. By 1936, the number of fishing girls had roughly halved to only 2,000 women.

In 1936 and 1938, the Scots Herring Lassies led strikes in East Anglia, including in Lowestoft, protesting low pay, harsh working conditions, and the overall decline of the fishing industry. Records of the industry's struggle at this time have been preserved in the Suffolk Chamber's extensive archive.

### Food for thought...

1. *How did the migration of Herring Lassies from Scotland contribute to diversity within East Anglian fishing communities? What impact might this diversity have had on local cultures and economies?*
2. *In what ways have the Herring Lassies contributions been recognised or overlooked in historical narratives? How might their stories contribute to discussions about gender and labour in maritime history?*

**Visit Suffolk Archives to find out more about the Herring Girls** and view their fantastic collection of photographs using reference 1300/72/18!



*Scottish fisher girls in Lowestoft packing herring.*

*Credit: Suffolk Archives*

## Trade & Infrastructure

### Trade & Infrastructure timeline

**1831**

The harbour at Lowestoft is built

**1842**

The Ipswich Wet Dock opens

**1859**

The East Suffolk Railway Line opens

**1877**

The Felixstowe Railway & Pier Company opens its first station

**1886**

The first small dock at Felixstowe is built

**1946**

A series of letters is received by the Chamber, to reinvigorate international trade after WW2

**1946**

The Chamber launches a newsletter in Bury St Edmunds to support tourism and trade

**1962**

Containerised shipping is introduced at Felixstowe, which became the UK's first purpose-built container handling facility

**1965**

The East Suffolk Line campaign launches to preserve railway links in Suffolk

**1966**

The Suffolk Chamber campaign to open a bridge over the River Orwell

**1970s**

Developments on the A14 creates better links between Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich with the creation of a dual carriageway system

**1973**

Britain joins to European Economic Community

**1982**

The Orwell Bridge opens

**1987**

Suffolk Chamber founds Suffolk International Trade Group

**1987**

ABP invests in the Port of Lowestoft

**1997**

ABP invests in the Port of Ipswich

**2013**

Suffolk Chamber launches successful No Toll Tax campaign

**2023**

Suffolk Chamber launches campaign for 5G infrastructure development in Suffolk

## Suffolk's development stories

### Dock & rail development in the nineteenth century

As industrial technology advanced over the nineteenth century, so too did vital infrastructure necessary for the movement of goods on a national and international scale. Railways and docks expanded, including those right here in Suffolk.

Lowestoft at the start of the nineteenth century was a quiet fishing village, until the Norwich and Lowestoft Navigation Company built its harbour in 1831.

This development fuelled the growth of the local fishing industry, by allowing larger boats to fish on a larger scale. With the need for more boats, associated engineering and shipping firms like Richards, Brooke Marine, and Small & Co. developed in the region.

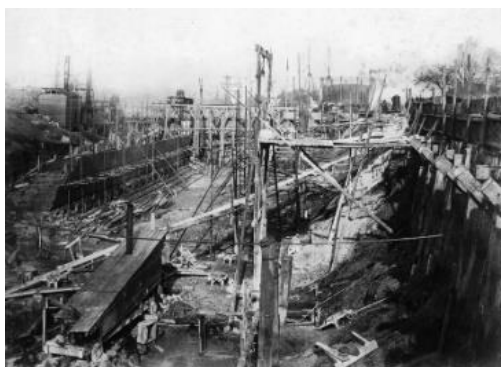
It was these shipbuilding firms that would go on to develop Lowestoft's first Chamber of Commerce in 1923, ensuring the town's vital industries received the support they needed to thrive.

In Ipswich, change came in 1842, when Britain's first wet dock opened in the town. This innovative feat of engineering enabled the tidal movement of the River Orwell to be stopped around the docks, meaning goods could continuously be transported by the river.

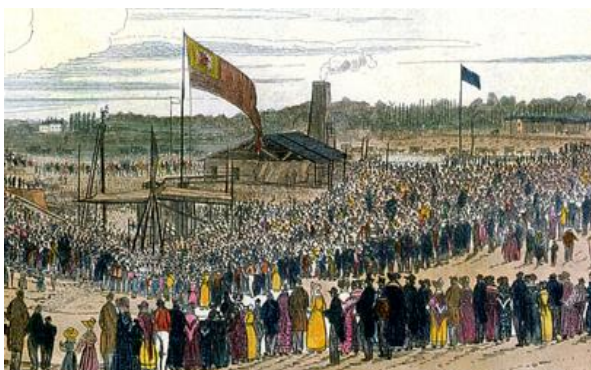
The ability to constantly load and unload ships supported Ipswich as a thriving trading hub. Factories sprang up, including Chamber member Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies, turning the town into a crucial player in the region's economy.



*A herring catch at the Lowestoft fish market.  
Credit: Suffolk Archives*



*Wet Dock Gate Construction.  
Credit: Ipswich Maritime Trust*



*A sketch of the laying of the foundation stone of the Ipswich Wet Dock in 1839.  
Credit: Ipswich Maritime Trust*

In 1886, Felixstowe opened its first small dock, built by the Felixstowe Railway and Dock Company, using labour and new innovative steam-powered technology. This small dock quickly grew into a major trading hub, connecting Suffolk to the world.

**The original dock could accommodate vessels up to thirty metres long – today, the port can accommodate the largest vessel in the world, which is four hundred metres long!**



*A photograph of workmen digging the Felixstowe dock basin.  
Credit: Hutchinsons Ports UK*

### **Food for thought...**

These developments show how essential infrastructure made way for the industrial bustle and innovation that transformed Suffolk economically.

The growth of port links in Suffolk brought jobs, wealth, and new opportunities to the region. They also highlight the importance of infrastructure, technology, and commerce in shaping our world and our local communities – something that remains vital for economic growth today.

Next time you visit Ipswich, Lowestoft, or Felixstowe, take a moment to uncover the rich history that surrounds you. Imagine the bustling ports, thriving industrial factories, and vibrant communities that once filled these coastal towns.

As you explore, think about the challenges and achievements of those who lived here in the past. Their stories, woven into the fabric of these towns, are waiting to be discovered.

So, let your imagination set sail and connect with the fascinating history of your community!



## The Railway Revolution in Suffolk

As was the story for much of Britain at the time, Suffolk in the 1840s experienced a railway boom. Ipswich opened its first station in 1846, followed by Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds in 1847. Felixstowe joined with a port station in 1877, and a town station in 1898.

Lowestoft's railway station boosted the local fishing industry, enabling fresh catches to reach markets in Suffolk and London within a day. In Felixstowe, the port station, connecting to Ipswich and Trimley, fuelled trading connections and growth. The later town station and new promenade and pier in the early 1900s boosted tourism in the area, attracting seaside visitors to the town.

Bury St Edmunds connected to Ipswich by rail in 1847 and to Cambridge in 1854. The railways were crucial for both passenger travel and industrial freight. The Great Eastern Railway Company's takeover in 1862 further streamlined services and underscored the importance of the railway to local economies.

Early Chamber of Commerce policies focused on improving railway services for passengers, freight, and tourism. These developments were instrumental in transforming Suffolk's towns into bustling centres of industry and commerce.

## Food for thought...

Next time you travel by train, consider how the railways revolutionised Suffolk in the nineteenth century and continue to shape its future.

1. How did the arrival of railway stations in the 1840s transform daily life for people in Suffolk?  
*Think about how new travel opportunities and connections changed the way people lived and worked.*
2. In what ways did the railways drive the economic growth of towns like Lowestoft, Felixstowe, and Bury St Edmunds?  
*Reflect on how the railways boosted trade, industry, and commerce in these areas.*
3. What other infrastructure developments have significantly impacted your local area?  
*Consider how improvements in transportation, communication, and industry have influenced the community.*

**Explore these questions and imagine how railways and other infrastructure have shaped your world!**

## The Orwell Bridge: Connecting Ipswich & Beyond

The Orwell Bridge, a well-known landmark in Ipswich, stretches across the River Orwell, carrying the A14 dual carriageway.

Opened in December 1982, the bridge was designed to relieve traffic congestion in Ipswich and has become a vital route for local drivers and larger transport vehicles heading to the ports of Felixstowe and Ipswich.

The idea for the Orwell Bridge emerged in 1965 at a Suffolk Chamber of Commerce meeting. The head of the transport committee, Mr. H.C. Chandler, inspired by the view of the River Orwell during the meeting, teamed up with staff from the Ipswich Dock Commission to push for a bridge. They aimed to tackle Ipswich's growing traffic problems without disrupting the docks or building a potentially problematic tunnel further downstream.

By 1966, the Chamber had issued a report supporting the proposal. The concept received large support, and construction began in 1979.

The finished bridge was a marvel of engineering: with a 190-metre main span, it was the longest pre-stressed concrete span in use at the time. It was built using a balanced cantilever technique, with sections cast weekly from October 1979 to December 1982 by Stevin Construction B.V. and designed by Sir William Halcrow & Partners.

The Orwell Bridge is more than just a bridge; it's a symbol of innovation and collaboration in Suffolk. It has eased traffic flow in Ipswich and beyond, boosting local transportation and supporting economic growth by linking key areas to major national ports and roads.



*Construction of the Orwell Bridge in the early 1980s.  
Credit: The Ipswich Society*

### Food for thought...

1. How has the Orwell Bridge helped boost the local economy?  
*Think about how the bridge connects Ipswich to major ports and roads. How might this impact businesses, jobs, and the local economy?*
2. Why is community support important for big projects like the Orwell Bridge?  
*How do you think organisations like the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce helped make the bridge a reality? Why is it important for people and organisations to come together for big projects?*

## History & Heritage

### History & Heritage timeline

**1712**

The first commercially used steam-powered device is invented

**1760**

The Industrial Revolution begins in earnest

**1765**

The American War of Independence begins, disrupting global trade routes

**1789**

The French Revolution begins, disrupting global trade routes

**1807**

The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act is passed, ending the slave trade in the British Empire

**1867**

The Second Reform Act extends the vote to more working-class men

**1884**

The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce first forms in Ipswich

**1914**

The First World War begins, with industries mobilised on mass scale to support the war

**1918**

The Spanish Flu pandemic begins, affecting 50 million people worldwide

**1928**

The Representation of the People Act grants equal voting rights to women

**1933**

The Nazis come to power in Germany, and many people begin to flee the country

**1939**

World War Two begins, and industry and women are once again mobilised to support the war effort

**1962**

Ipswich Town Football Club win the First Division Football League for the first time in their history

**1974**

Strikes and a crisis in the Middle East trigger an energy crisis in Britain, with the Three-Day week introduced

**1979**

De-industrialisation begins, heavily affecting areas such as Ipswich and Lowestoft

**1993**

The World Wide Web is released into the public domain

**2008**

The global financial crisis hits, causing significant economic downturns worldwide

**2020**

The UK officially leaves the EU, following the Brexit referendum of 2016

**2020**

COVID-19 pandemic begins

## Historic Suffolk: stories of crisis & resilience

### Spanish Flu

In 1918, a deadly pandemic – the Spanish Flu – emerged.

Although the first cases originated in Kansas, in the United States, Spanish newspapers were the first to report on the outbreak due to their lack of censorship during the war. This generated the misnomer of “Spanish Flu”.

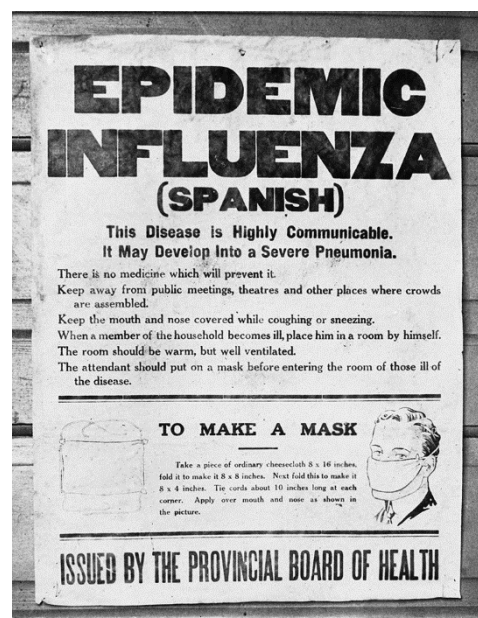
As American troops migrated to Europe towards the end of the First World War, the disease spread rapidly, with cases first reported in France, Germany and the UK, before spreading worldwide. After two years, nearly 500 million people had been infected after four successive waves of the disease. The estimated death toll varies from 17 million to 50 million – making it one of the deadliest pandemics in history.

In Suffolk, the local government took action to manage the outbreak.

The Public Health Committee, which included the Suffolk Chamber’s chairman Sydney Bland and other members, met to discuss how to manage the disease. They decided that schools in Suffolk should close, and churches were advised to ventilate their buildings between services. Cinemas were told to reduce performance lengths to no more than two hours, with intervals for ventilation, and children were not allowed to attend.



An emergency hospital in Kansas during the Spanish Flu pandemic  
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



A 1918 influenza epidemic poster  
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## COVID-19

In late 2019, a new virus emerged that would change the modern world.

First identified in Wuhan, China, the COVID-19 virus quickly spread across the world. By 2020, it had reached nearly every country, leading to widespread illness and unprecedented global disruption.

Since 2019, approximately 775 million people have been infected, with the estimated death toll ranging from 18 to 33 million people.

Over the next two years, the world faced multiple waves of COVID-19 infections. Governments implemented a range of measures to curb the spread, including lockdowns, social distancing, mask mandates, and travel restrictions. These measures significantly impacted daily life, work and education.

In Suffolk, schools switched to remote learning, and business adapted to new ways of operating, including working from home measures.

The Suffolk Chamber played a crucial role in supporting local businesses, helping them navigate government guidelines and access financial support schemes.

***Use the infographic on the following page (p. 20) to find out more about how the Suffolk Chamber supported the local business community through the pandemic.***

### Food for thought...

The C140 project launched after the COVID-19 pandemic; one of the project's aims was to capture how the Chamber and its members had adapted to the challenges of the pandemic.

As we looked back at the 1918-1920 Spanish Flu pandemic, we discovered something surprising: our archives from that time had very little information about how the pandemic affected businesses back then.

### Questions to consider:

1. Why do you think businesses in 1918 didn't record much about the Spanish Flu's impact?
2. How does this gap in records make it harder for us to understand what happened during that time?
3. Why do you think it's important to document our experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic?

### Consider what future generations might want to learn about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Do you have personal items – like photos, diary entries, videos, or letters – that capture your experiences? These could be important pieces of history!

# Coronavirus/COVID-19 policy wins



Coronavirus/COVID-19 has affected businesses of every size and sector. To help the business community throughout the pandemic, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce alongside the British Chambers of Commerce has lobbied Government to ease the burden on businesses through various support packages. The above infographic demonstrates the policy wins we have been able to achieve for the business community during this unprecedented time.

The infographic has been designed in partnership with the University of Suffolk, and second year game design student, Gergana Draganova. Producing the infographic gave Gergana the opportunity to build real-world experience and put her skills to use. Gergana added "the blossoming tree design represents the grass roots structure of the chamber network and the reopening of the UK economy following the pandemic. Designing it this way also provides a useful frame for highlighting key information".



## The East Anglian Munitions Committee

The First World War (1914 to 1918) marked a shift to industrial-scale warfare; factories and their workers became vital to the war effort.

A severe artillery shell shortage in 1915 – today known as the Shell Crisis – prompted the British government to pass the Munitions of War Act. This law aimed to increase munition production by establishing new factories, encouraging women to join the industrial workforce, and bringing private factories under government control.

In May 1915, nineteen East Anglian manufacturers met with a representative from the War Office to discuss how they could help munitions production.

They chose to work together in a cooperative to produce the necessary munitions, known as the East Anglian Munitions Committee. By June 1915, manufacturers from Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk had joined together, becoming Britain's first munitions cooperative during the war.

The committee agreed to produce 200,000 shells within six months, establishing a depot at Ransomes & Rapier in Ipswich for the complex manufacturing of shell.

Several Suffolk Chamber of Commerce members were part of this committee, including:

**Ransomes & Rapier**  
**Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies Ltd**  
**Robert Bobby & Co Ltd**

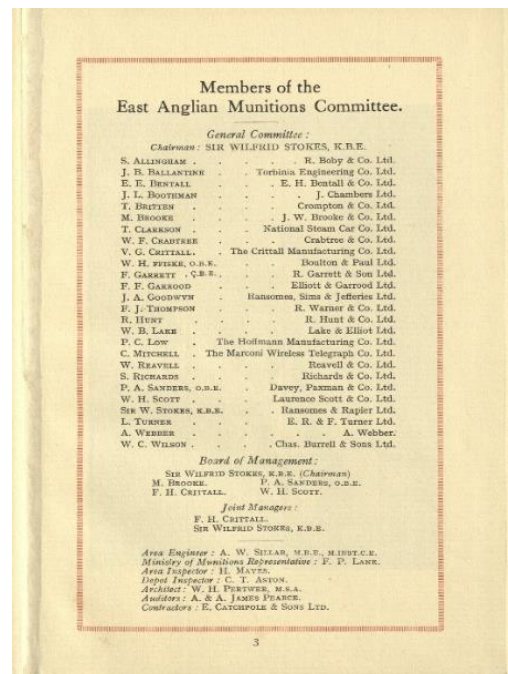
**E.R. & F. Turner Ltd**  
**S. Richards & Co Ltd**

By the end of the war, the committee had produced over 1,000,000 shells and large quantities of other munitions. Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies also built 790 airplanes, producing up to 60 each month by the end of the war.

### Did you know...

Sir Wilfred Stokes, managing director of Ransomes & Rapier, served as the Chairman of the committee. He is renowned for inventing the Stokes mortar in Ipswich, a crucial weapon used on the Western Front.

Capable of firing up to 25 shells per minute, over a range of approximately 1,000 metres, over 11,000 Stokes mortars were produced during the war, many of them in Suffolk factories.



An extract from the EAMC book.  
Credit: Suffolk Archives.



Sir Wilfred Stokes with the Stokes Mortar  
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## Women at Work in the World Wars

### Women at Work during World War I

The First World War was transformative not only for soldiers and industry, but also for the roles women played in society too. Many women entered the workforce in non-traditional roles for the first time, becoming vital to the war effort. They took on a huge variety of roles – as munitions workers in factories, transport workers, and even police officers.

By November 1918, over one million women had joined the British workforce.

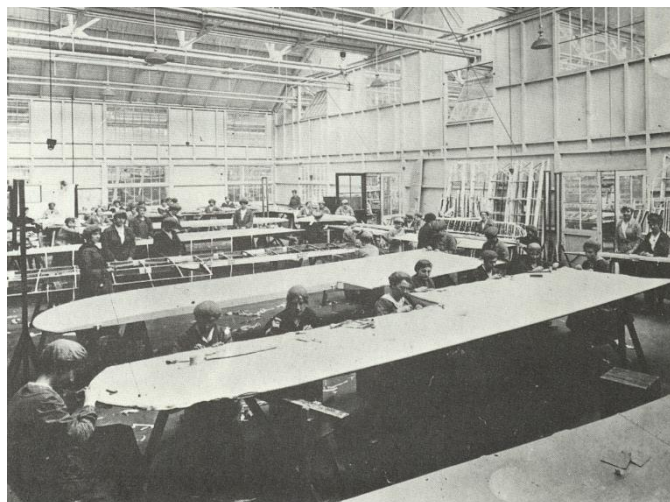
### ***Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies***

One employer of women in Suffolk during the war was Chamber member, Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies, who employed over 2,000 women at their works in Ipswich.

These incredible women manufactured shells and munitions. They also worked on building 790 planes that were manufactured for the newly established Royal Flying Corp.

Amazingly, the first plane manufactured at Ransomes in April 1917 was used to shoot down a Zeppelin which was raiding the east coast in the summer of 1917.

Olive Turney, who lived in Ipswich during the war, worked as a lorry driver for the firm and towed planes once they had been constructed. Her diary, now kept at Suffolk Archives, tells the story of her wartime experiences and her reluctance to give up her job as the war ended. Her story is a testament to the significant impact women had during the war.



*Women manufacturing the wings of the FE2b bi-plane  
Credit: Ransomes, 1789 to 1989. Suffolk Archives.*

**You can find out more about the history of Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies at the John Blatchley library at the Hold in Ipswich** – check out *Ransomes 1789-1989: 200 years of excellence: A bicentennial celebration* (reference 338.762) for more on their early history!



## Women at Work during World War II

A new wave of change came for women during the Second World War. Once again, women were called upon to support the war effort, taking on diverse and challenging roles.

In 1941, the British government introduced conscription for women. Women took on a variety of roles – mechanics, engineers, agricultural labourers, munitions workers, air raid wardens, and even fire engine drivers.

By 1943, an astonishing 90% of single women and 80% of married women were actively engaged in essential war work.



*Women's Land Army Forestry Training, Culford, Suffolk, 1943  
Richard Stone, Public domain, via  
Wikimedia Commons*

### **The Women's Land Army**

The Women's Land Army, which had first formed during WW1, was reestablished in June 1939. With much of Britain's food previously imported, it became essential to grow more food at home.

Many women stepped up to become the new rural workforce, as many male agricultural workers had left to join the forces.

By 1944, more than 80,000 "land girls" were working across the country, ensuring the nation stayed fed despite the hardships of war.



*Greene King's "bottle girls"  
Credit: Greene King Ltd*

### **Greene King's "Bottle Girls"**

Even at Greene King's brewery in Bury St Edmunds, women were on the front lines of production.

With men away fighting, women took over the firm's bottling lines, inspecting and packing bottles.

## Food for thought...

How did the shifts in gender balance in the workforce during the war challenge existing gender stereotypes and societal norms?

*Do you think these changes led to a lasting impact on gender equality in the workplace?*

**You can find out more about the fantastic contributions of the Women's Land Army in Suffolk by visiting the Suffolk Archive's online exhibition from their *Soil Sisters* project:**

<https://suffolkarchives.shorthandstories.com/soil-sisters/index.html>

## “The Future”

The history of Suffolk business is rich in heritage, diversity and innovation. As we celebrate this milestone year, we also look ahead to shaping the future. Reflecting on the stories gathered through our C140 project, we must ask how we can continue fostering exceptional talent, innovation, and diversity in Suffolk.

**Through our Chamber priorities below, we hope to continue to support the prosperity of Suffolk businesses into the future:**

Business Growth and Trade • Economy & Business Resilience  
• Equality, Diversity & Inclusion • Net Zero & Environmental  
Responsibility • People & Skills • Social Value  
• Transport & Infrastructure

### **The Importance of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)**

In the business community, everyone should feel welcome and valued, no matter who they are or where they come from. This is what Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, or EDI, is all about. We are committed to ensuring that all people, regardless of their background or identity, have the same opportunities to succeed and contribute their best to business.

**Why does this matter?** When people feel included and respected, they are more likely to be creative and innovative. They bring unique perspectives that can lead to innovative solutions. This is not just good for individuals, but also for businesses and the wider Suffolk community.

### **Thinking About the Environment: Net Zero and Sustainability**

Another big focus for the future is our planet. At Suffolk Chamber, we celebrate Net Zero Heroes – with a goal to balance the amount of greenhouse gases we emit with the amount we remove from the atmosphere. Businesses are now more aware than ever of their impact on the environment. Achieving this balance requires businesses to rethink their environmental impact. That’s why at Suffolk Chamber, our Net Zero group is dedicated to finding greener energy solutions and supporting the local environment.

**Why is this important?** The decisions businesses make today about the environment will affect the world of tomorrow. Imagine a future where companies use clean energy, produce less waste, and help protect the planet’s natural resources. That’s a future we can work towards together!

## Your Role in Shaping the Future

As young people, you are the future leaders, innovators, and changemakers. The concerns and ideas you have today about equality, diversity, and sustainability can inspire real change.

Think about what kind of world you want to live in and how businesses can help create that world. Maybe you're passionate about fighting climate change, or perhaps you care deeply about making sure everyone gets a fair chance, regardless of their background.

### Questions to Reflect On:

- How can businesses better support equality, diversity and inclusion?
- What steps can companies take to become more environmentally friendly?
- How can young people like you actively contribute to these changes?

### Moving Forward Together

The future is full of possibilities, and the choices we make today can lead to a brighter, more inclusive, and sustainable world. Just as Suffolk has grown and adapted over the past 140 years, we too can we continue to innovate and improve into the future.

*Let's carry forward the legacy of unity and strength, remembering that together, we can build a future where everyone thrives!*

## Glossary

<b>British Chamber of Commerce</b>	A national organisation that coordinates and leads 52 accredited regional Chambers across the UK. It promotes trade, offers networking opportunities, and advocates for business-friendly policies.
<b>Business</b>	An organisation or activity where people work together to produce goods and/or provide services to make money.
<b>Chamber of Commerce</b>	An organisation of businesses and professionals in a specific region (e.g., Suffolk) aimed at promoting and supporting local business interests, offering networking opportunities, and representing businesses to government and other stakeholders.
<b>Collaboration</b>	Working together jointly with others, such as individuals or businesses, to achieve a shared goal.
<b>Commerce</b>	The buying and selling of goods and/or services, usually on a large scale.
<b>Diversity</b>	Recognising and valuing the differences among people, and treating their values, beliefs, cultures and lifestyles with respect.
<b>Economic Growth</b>	The increase in the production of goods and services in a country over time.
<b>Economy</b>	The process or system by which goods and services are produced, sold, and bought in a country or region.
<b>Equality</b>	Ensuring that everyone has fair and equal opportunities to succeed, regardless of their identity, background, abilities, gender or lifestyle.
<b>Heritage</b>	Refers to the cultural features of a society or place, including things of special architectural, historical, or natural significance.
<b>Inclusion</b>	The practice of fostering a culture where everyone is treated with respect and provided with equal access to opportunities and resources, particularly focusing on individuals who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.

<b>Industrial Revolution</b>	A period of global change, originating in Britain in the eighteenth century, by which the economy changed from being largely agricultural to being dominated by industry and machine manufacturing.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	The basic physical and organisational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads, power supplies) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.
<b>Innovation</b>	The practical implementation of ideas that result in the introduction of new goods or services, or improvement in existing goods or services.
<b>Lobbying</b>	A form of advocacy aimed at influencing government officials to enact policies or decisions.
<b>Migration</b>	The movement of people from one place to another. This is with the intention of settling, either permanently or temporarily, at a new location.
<b>Port</b>	A town or city with a harbour or access to water where ships can load or unload.
<b>Resilience</b>	The capacity to withstand or recover quickly from challenges.
<b>Suffragist</b>	A person advocating that the right to vote be extended to more people, especially to women.
<b>Trade</b>	The action of buying and selling goods and/or services.
<b>Wet Dock</b>	A dock in which water is maintained at a level at which a ship can float, allowing ships to remain afloat at low tides.

## The National Lottery Heritage Fund Acknowledgement

*Using money raised by National Lottery players, The National Lottery Heritage Fund supports projects that connect people and communities with the UK's heritage. The Chamber 140 project is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to honour 140 years of Suffolk business, shaping tomorrow and celebrating diversity.*

### **About the National Lottery Heritage Fund**

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. That's why as the largest funder for the UK's heritage we are dedicated to supporting projects that connect people and communities to heritage, as set out in our strategic plan, Heritage 2033.

Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past.

Over the next 10 years, we aim to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities.

Find out more at [heritagefund.org.uk](https://heritagefund.org.uk), or follow @HeritageFundUK on Twitter/X, Facebook and Instagram and use #NationalLottery #HeritageFund.







*With thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players for funding and supporting us to do something really special to commemorate our anniversary with a lasting legacy of heritage!*

