

Understanding Photographs

Four photographs have been selected from the Suffolk Record Office photographic archives for you to enjoy and study more closely. These examples have been chosen because:

- They can help us to compare Lowestoft, past and present.
- They help us to observe how Suffolk people lived and worked in the past.
- They help us to appreciate their strength, courage and other qualities to do their jobs at sea.
- They represent the wealth of photographic archives held at the Suffolk Record Office of which many can be seen on-line at www.senseofplacesuffolk.co.uk

For more information about maritime Suffolk visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/RecordOffice/



Lowestoft Lifeboat *Agnes Cross* c. 1922. (LRO 1300/72/28/13)

Note: The questions underneath each photograph have been posed only to inspire investigation and discussion.

This photograph shows the celebrated Lowestoft lifeboat *Agnes Cross* that was involved in the rescue of *SS Hopelyn* in 1922. The boat is moored in Lowestoft harbour with the lifeboat crew on board. Coxswain John Swan is standing by the wheel on the far right and Albert Spurgeon is fourth from the left.

Take a closer look at

1. The design of the boat – how does the shape make the *Agnes Cross* especially seaworthy?
2. The crew's lifejackets - what material are they made from?
3. Fenders on the side of the boat – why are they very important on a lifeboat?
4. What other features on the photograph help us to apply a date to the scene?
5. Can you think of reasons why the crew of the *Agnes Cross* should be considered Sea Heroes? Where can you find out more about them?



Lowestoft Fishermen c.1900. (LRO 1300/72/19/2)

This picture portrays a Lowestoft steam drifter crew but we do not know their names or where they lived. These nine men would have crewed one of the many hundreds of steam fishing vessels that sailed in and out of Lowestoft during the early years of the twentieth century. Many Scots fishermen travelled south each autumn to join fishermen from Lowestoft and its nearby villages for the herring season. The herring industry was vital to the home market as well as a valuable export commodity.

Take a closer look at

- 1. The wide range of dress and facial hair styles amongst the crew. What can this tell you? Can you spot a clue indicating the origins of one of the men?*
- 2. Which part of the boat can be seen behind the crew?*
- 3. Can you guess the probable ages of the crew?*
- 4. Why do you think this photograph was taken? Had the crew brought in a record catch of herring perhaps? Might there be other reasons?*
- 5. Who do you think is the skipper, who is the engineer and who is the cook?*
- 6. For what reasons do you think such men might be considered "Sea Heroes"?*



*Lowestoft fishing smack LT379 I'll Try c.1910.
(LRO 1300/72/42/216)*

Here we can see fishing smack LT379 I'll Try moored in Lowestoft harbour.

Take a closer look:

- 1. The sails were the only means of power to move the smack - it had no motor. What kind of knowledge and skills did the smacksmen need?*
- 2. The smack had no modern means of communication, such as radio or satellite navigation, and many boats could be lost at sea. How did they alert others in times of distress?*
- 3. Why weren't the sails white?*
- 4. Can you see the railway rolling stock on the dockside? Why do you think it was there?*
- 5. There is a registration number painted on the bow and sail. This was to identify the boat – why was this necessary?*



*Steam Paddle Tug **May** c.1902-1923. (LRO 1300/72/42/332)*

- 1. Steam tugs pulled sailing vessels in and out of Lowestoft harbour if there was little wind. Why was this so important to the fishermen and their vessel owners?*
- 2. What type of fuel would be used to fire the boiler? What colour smoke would the funnel produce?*
- 3. The big driving paddle wheels on the side of the tug made the vessel very wide. How effective do you think these boats were and why do you think they went out of use?*
- 4. Look at the town in the background and compare this to how it looks today.*