

## GSIA Visit to Gloucester Docks, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Following Tony Conder's very informative and interesting talk given to the society a few months ago, Tony, who was the first curator of Gloucester Waterways Museum, took a party of just over 20 members on a guided walk around Gloucester Docks.

Gathering outside the Waterways Museum for a 2pm start Tony, gave an introductory talk that covered numerous aspects of Gloucester's historic docks from its inception (*which in two years time, will celebrate its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary*), explaining how the docks was conceived and how it developed as a centre for the import and storage of grain, timber, salt and other cargoes. He then explained how cargoes were handled and transferred for local use and for export both down the canal to Sharpness and up the River Severn to Midlands ports.

Following Tony's introductory talk, the party walked over Llanthony bridge to Berry Quay on the southwestern side of the Main Dock. Here we were told about the fires which brought about the complete rebuilding of Alexandra Warehouse and the resurrection of the Great Western Warehouse as a single story building. We were also told of the equipment that over time, became available for extinguishing blazes in the docks.



We then moved on to view the graving docks and the surrounding buildings occupied by T. Nielson's Ship Repair Works, then on across the large and small graving dock lock gates to the Main Basin's western quay where we heard about the various pumping facilities used over the years to maintain the water level in the docks and canal, and latterly to also supply water to Bristol.

We then moved on to view the Dock Lock and North Warehouse, then went past the main entrance to view the adapted buildings that once housed Friday Metford & Co's flour mill. On moving back between the warehouses that separate the Main Basin from the Victoria Dock, Tony told us how the expansion of trade in the Victorian era brought about the construction of the dock. As we passed through the docks, we saw the remains of the once-complex network of railway lines and turntable sites that had allowed horses to move single wagons throughout the docks complex.

On reaching the Mariners Church we were told of the events that brought about its construction, after which, we walked to view the reconstructed short section of the Gloucester and Cheltenham Tramroad and the recreated wagons displayed on it – here, we noted that attention was again needed to repair their deteriorating wood.

At the end of the walk, participants gathered, and a vote of thanks was given to Tony by our President Dr. Ray Wilson. It had been a very interesting, informative and enjoyable walk.



**John Berry**