



The Story of Southampton Docks

Mike Roussel

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Southampton has a long maritime history that can be traced from the invasion of Britain by the Romans in AD70, but the construction of the docks really began from an Act of Parliament in 1803 that made it possible to develop quays and warehouses.

The Story of Southampton Docks traces the history and development of the docks over the last two centuries. It looks at dock management and the construction of both Old and New Docks during the period when the docks were known as 'railway docks', managed by London & South Western Railway and later the Southern Railway. It was a time when the docks became famous as the 'Gateway to the World' and the period known as the 'Golden Age of Ocean Travel.' With the outbreak of the Second World War the docks came under the control of the War Department, a time when the docks were heavily bombed. From 1945 the dock management was faced with competition for trade from abroad, the need to reconstruct the docks after the wartime bombing and labour disputes.

The book also covers the problems that faced both management and docks labour force. It highlights when the ports were privatised and the introduction of Associated British Ports to manage Southampton Docks. The huge reduction of the dock labour force through redundancies, and retraining of the remaining workforce compelled the docks to be more competitive in the world market.

21st century trade is increasing in Southampton Docks, with larger container ships and car carriers visiting, but the biggest change is the development of the cruise industry.

Interviews from management, union, 'dockies' and other involved sources give interesting, enlightening and often humorous first-hand accounts of life in and around the docks during this time.

The book contains 250 photographs and illustration, including many published for the first time.

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