

PADDLE STEAMER

KINGSWEAR CASTLE

CENTENARY REBUILD APPEAL



Britain's last steam powered river paddle steamer

SINCE her return to Devon in 2013, one of the most familiar and best-loved features of the River Dart has been *P.S.Kingswear Castle*, Britain's very last river paddle steamer. Whether making a harbour cruise through the bustling Dartmouth Harbour or winding her way through the wooded upper reaches of the River Dart towards Totnes she makes an entrancing sight, her passage interrupted only by the steady beat of her paddle wheels and occasional blast of her steam whistle. She is the last of a long line of steamers which have served the river communities since the 1850s and would be instantly recognisable to any Victorian tourist.

Kingswear Castle is fast-approaching her 100th birthday and the Charitable Trust which owns her now needs your help to ensure that she is able to sail on well into her second century.

This booklet sets out to explain why she is of such national and local importance, and why she deserves your generous support.



Kingswear Castle, new in 1924

HISTORY

KINGSWEAR Castle was built in 1924 by Messrs Philip & Son Ltd., on the banks of the River Dart at their historic Noss Shipyard. Fitted with a compound steam engine dating from 1904 and taken from her predecessor of the same name, she was to be the last of a long line of unique paddle steamers designed to operate on the river. She joined the fleet of the River Dart Steamboat Co and spent the next

41 years maintaining their traditional service between Dartmouth and Totnes, plus a brief period serving as a tender to the US Navy during the run-up to D Day. By the 1960s diesel powered screw vessels were replacing steam and one-by-one the Dart paddle steamers were withdrawn, leaving *Kingswear Castle* as the sole survivor. In 1965 she too was withdrawn and laid up in Old Mill Creek to await her fate, probably in the hands of a scrap yard.



Further details of the ship's history can be found on our website
www.kingswearcastle.org

PRESERVATION

TWO years later, in June 1967, the steamer was purchased for £600 by Paddle Steam Navigation on behalf of the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society whose stated aim was to save at least one British paddler. *Kingswear Castle* was towed first to the Isle of Wight and then to the River Medway in Kent where, over the next decade, she was slowly restored to operational condition by a dedicated band of volunteers. With the help of various sponsors, she was brought to a state where she was able to re-enter full passenger service on 16th May 1985.

Under the skilful hand of her captain and manager John Megoran, the ship spent the next 27 years operating public cruises on the Medway and Thames from her base at The Historic Dockyard, Chatham. Her operation was a success, she paid her way and any surplus of income over expenditure was ploughed back to maintain the fabric of the ship, with external support only required for major projects. Amongst others these included fitting a new, like-for-like boiler in 2001, funded largely by the Heritage



Kingswear Castle, at Dartmouth 1930s





Lottery Fund. The Medway operation was undoubtedly one of Britain's most successful long-term operational preservation projects.

RETURN TO THE DART

DESPITE the success of the Medway operation, it was always felt that *Kingswear Castle's* true home was back on the river of her birth, the Dart. In 2010 the Dart Steam Railway & Riverboat Company approached the Trust to explore possibilities and in 2012 a formal agreement was reached for the ship to join their fleet on long term charter. It was clear that the company had the workshop facilities and steam engineering skills to maintain the ship to a very high standard, and there was a compelling logic in returning her to the river for which she was designed and affording her the comfort and security of once again becoming a member of a fleet.

Thus, *Kingswear Castle* bade a sad farewell to the Medway and after a long coastal tow arrived in Dartmouth on 18th December 2012, to be greeted by a flotilla of local boats and fleet-mates, and large crowds of onlookers. After a thorough refit and crew training she entered service as part of the Dart fleet on Good Friday 2013.



... and 90 years later





OWNERSHIP & OPERATION

KINGSWEAR Castle is owned by a charitable company, the Paddle Steamer Kingswear Castle Trust Ltd (Registered No.299931) with the majority of shares in the Trust being held by the charitable Paddle Steamer Preservation Society (Registered No.298328). She was placed on an initial 15 year charter to the Dart Steam Railway & Riverboat Company and that agreement has recently been renewed and extended, ensuring that the ship will remain in service on the river for many years to come.





This harmonious relationship between a charitable trust and a commercial company represents an innovative approach to operational preservation from which both partners derive mutual benefits. For its part, the Dart Company has the use of a unique, historic and visually stunning traditional Dart paddle steamer to place at the centre of its integrated steam railway and river boat operation. The Dart Company itself is widely recognised as an important and successful heritage organisation, winning various accolades including the Heritage Rail Association Award for an Outstanding Visitor Attraction in 2021.

The Trust has the reassurance of seeing its unique ship once again steaming on the river of her birth as part of a major Devon tourist attraction, bringing much life and colour to the Dart for local residents and visitors to enjoy.

The Dart Company takes the commercial risk of operating *Kingswear Castle*, is responsible for her crewing, deployment and annual maintenance and, with its own shipyard, steam engineering expertise and commercial experience is in an ideal position to maintain the ship to a high standard, provide properly trained, skilled crew and market her widely to the general public.



In return the Trust is responsible for ensuring sufficient funding is available for major capital expenditure on repairs and renewals which, for a vintage paddle steamer, is significantly higher than for a modern vessel.

This is an inspired and symbiotic relationship which we believe gives *Kingswear Castle* the very best chance of surviving for another hundred years.

A SHIP OF 'PRE-EMINENT NATIONAL IMPORTANCE'

KINGSWEAR Castle is one of just 200 vessels defined as members of Britain's National Historic Fleet by National Historic Ships UK, a Government-funded but independent organisation which gives objective advice on all matters relating to historic vessels in the UK. The Historic Fleet includes vessels of "pre-eminent national and regional importance, spanning the spectrum of UK maritime history and meeting a higher priority for long-term conservation." *Kingswear Castle* was awarded the status of South Western Regional Flagship for 2019. This judgement is based on a number of factors including:

- She is Britain's very last operational coal fired river paddle steamer.
- A trip on board allows passengers to step back in time on board a paddle steamer designed in the Victorian era, hear the rhythmic beat of paddles, watch the steam engine, smell the hot steam, hear the scrape of the coal shovel in her boiler room or the





sound of her steam whistle commanding attention as she makes her way gently through the unspoilt scenery of the River Dart.

- She is the ultimate refinement of a design unique to the River Dart and the Salcombe Estuary, which began in the 1850s and gradually developed to suit local conditions and trade. It is characterised by a lightly-built hull, low freeboard, open well decks fore and aft and a broad main deck extending over long sponsons.
- In terms of social and economic history, she provides a direct link to the similar steamers which from the 1850s provided a 'market boat' service between Dartmouth and Totnes stopping at the riverside villages en route to collect passengers and produce; as well as to the development of the thriving tourist trade on the river from the 1880s onwards.
- Having been built locally at Philips & Son's Shipyard, she provides a direct and tangible link to the river's shipbuilding heritage.
- She is fitted with a 1904 compound diagonal steam engine by Cox of Falmouth which was taken from her predecessor of the same name, whose hull can still be seen on the river bank at Fleet Mill just below Totnes.
- The operation and maintenance of that engine requires unique skills and provides a training ground for a new generation of engineering apprentices who will be essential if Britain's maritime steam heritage is to survive into the future.
- As a paddle steamer she requires completely different ship-handling techniques to a screw-driven vessel. She is one of only two vessels left in the UK where these skills can be learned, practiced and passed on to future generations.
- She is visually striking and her presence on the river attracts much attention and draws large numbers of tourists, to the benefit of the local economy.
- She is one of the very last steamships in regular operation in the UK, carrying on a legacy which can be traced back to 1812.
- She would be of immense importance to Britain's maritime heritage wherever she was based, but back in her correct historical context and operating the services for which she was designed, her importance is increased many-fold.

CENTENARY REBUILD APPEAL

THE CENTENARY REBUILD

SHIPS are normally designed for a life of 25 to 30 years. Even when they are very carefully maintained small amounts of water lying out of sight in bilges, under machinery, etc provide the ideal conditions for rust to form and start corroding the steelwork. The areas along the waterline, constantly exposed to both air and water, and the part of the hull where it joins the deck are also prone to corrosion, while traditional timber decks eventually begin to leak. Consequently, despite careful maintenance and constant upgrades to ensure the highest level of safety for passengers, as the years roll by the natural destruction of the fabric of the ship continues and worsens. As she approaches her 100th birthday *Kingswear Castle* has already sailed for four times the life span of the average modern ship and it is nearly 30 years since any significant re-plating of her hull, replacement of decks or other major works have been carried out. That is why we now need to carry out a major re-build in order to ensure that she is set up for the next 25 or 30 years of service on the River Dart.

The proposed work therefore has two key purposes:

- To carry out renewals to the hull, decks and fabric of the steamer to reverse any natural wastage which has taken place since the last major work was carried out during the 1990s.
- While attending to these works, to selectively and sympathetically upgrade the structure of *Kingswear Castle* to ensure that not only does she continue to comply with current regulations, but is “future proofed” and well equipped to do so for many years to come.

The work, which is mostly below decks and hidden from public view, includes:

- Re-plating areas of the hull, particularly under the engine and bunkers as necessary.
- Replacing some of her hull frames as required.
- Replacing the bulkheads between the watertight compartments throughout the ship.
- Cropping and replacing the sheer strake at top of the hull where it joins the deck.



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- Reinforcement or replacement of the sponson supports.
- Replacing all of the timber decks. Hidden steelwork will strengthen and improve the overall hull structure whilst retaining the traditional appearance.

The work is planned to take place over the next four years at the Old Mill Creek Shipyard. Most of the work will be carried out by the Dart Company's own staff, but outside help from other shipyards and

specialised expertise will be required for certain more complex tasks. By the spring of 2023, when *Kingswear Castle* returns to service, the section of the ship from the boiler room to the stern will have been completed, together with the hull from the engine room to the bow. Subject to funding, the forward section will be completed during the winter of 2023-24 and work begun on engine and boiler room.

THE APPEAL FOR FUNDING

TO achieve these aims the Paddle Steamer Kingswear Castle Trust, as owners of the ship, needs to raise in excess of £1 million. With surpluses from the operating revenue during the Medway years, by careful saving and with the generous support of the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society and others, the Trust has already raised half of this sum. We now need your help to raise the rest.

The Dart Company will make a major contribution by providing labour on top of its annual maintenance budget and charter fee payments.

However, we now need YOUR help!

How to contribute

Please visit our website www.kingswearcastle.org for full details of all the options open to you. These include:

- Become a Friend of the P.S.Kingswear Castle Centenary Club by giving a regular monthly donation.
- Opt to pay for a particular item such as a specific length of timber decking or area of steel plate.
- Or make a donation using the form overleaf.

CENTENARY REBUILD APPEAL

Donate to Kingswear Castle's Centenary Rebuild Appeal

Please complete your details below and post to:

Paddle Steamer Kingswear Castle Trust, Fund Raising, PO Box 9565, Weymouth, DT4 4HT

All donations received by post or via our website can opt to be recorded on our Virtual Donor Wall.

Or donate online: www.kingswearcastle.org

Name

Address

Postcode

Email

Gift aid Declaration:

Add 25p to each £1 you donate at no extra cost to you: I would like PSKC Trust to reclaim the tax on this donation from me. I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax for each tax year (6 April-5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes like VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I would also like to Gift Aid all donations I have made to the PSKC Trust in the last four years and all donations in future until I notify you otherwise.

Signature

Date

Donation amount £20 £50 £100 £250 £500

Other amount

£

Name to be recorded on the Donor Wall:

Payment by Cheque: Make payable to **Paddle Steamer Kingswear Castle Trust**

Credit/Debit Card: **Confirm amount:** £ Mastercard Visa

Card number

Expiry

CVC

Type

By BACS: CAF Bank, PSKC Trust, Sort code 40-52-40 Account Number 00007743

On Line: Visit www.kingswearcastle.org and follow the support link.

Thank you for supporting Kingswear Castle