

G1 walk Paddle Steamers

Walk along the Estuary to Date's Yard - now the Moorings and gather just inside the gate.

Sail had given way to steam and during the late 19th and early 20th centuries paddle steamers made daily trips between Kingsbridge and Salcombe firstly as goods carriers but soon they were also used for pleasure excursions in the estuary.

Larger steam packets made the journey to Plymouth several times a week until well into the 20th century transporting goods and people for shopping trips as an alternative to the crowded coaches at a single fare of 1/6d.

The first local paddle steamer was the 'Kingsbridge Packet', launched in 1857 -a 69 ton wooden paddle steamer built in the yard of William Date. Owned and operated by Hurrell Anthony Beer and Co, she ran twice a week between Kingsbridge, Salcombe, and Sutton Harbour Plymouth carrying goods.

The First World War seriously disrupted services and it never recovered afterwards with ever increasing competition from road transport.

Travel by steamer lasted for 90 years, from 1841 to 1931 by which time buses operated by the GWR had taken so much trade from the river. Under the ownership of the GWR the 'Kenwith Castle' had become uneconomic and was laid up off the estuary in 1932 and sold to Southampton operators. Ilton Castle became a house boat for Salcombe Yacht Club.

A Paddle Steamer named the 'Compton Castle' had plied its trade as a pleasure boat on the River Dart since 1914 and received a stay of execution from the breakers yard when Messrs Baume and Woods purchased her in 1964. After some restoration work had been carried out, she was moved to Squares Quay in Kingsbridge where she started her static career as a floating museum and teashop until in 1978 she was sold privately to publican, Ernest Clayton, who had her moved to Looe. During her years in Kingsbridge the "Compton Castle" appeared in various films, and on television.

Do read 250 years of Transport in Kingsbridge by Michael Day on U3A website for loads more information.

Return the same way



Paddle steamer at Bond Quay/ Newquay/Crabshell. This Quay was built pre 1840 when the head of the estuary silted up. Prior to that Dodbrooke Quay or Salt Mill Quay were used. Note the sailing ships still present.

