

The Kingsbridge Estuary Passenger Steamers





The Kingsbridge Estuary Passenger Steamers

Based on a slide presentation given by
Roger Barrett in 2021

Focusing on:

- The history and technical details of the Estuary steamers and the Kingsbridge-Plymouth Packet Steamers
- Competition and co-ordination with road and rail services
- Competition between the steamship operators
- The impact on steamer traffic of changes in the local economy e.g. shipbuilding and tourism



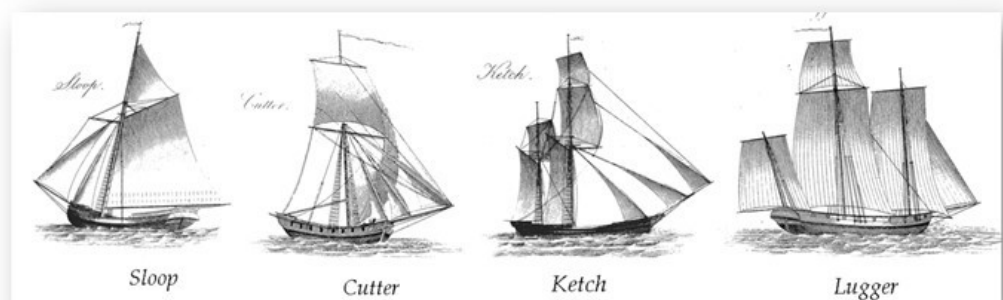
Local trades & communications before 1893

Before the steamers:

A thriving coastal trade exporting corn, barley, malt, cider and slates..

..and importing coal, limestone and general goods

'Market boats' plied between Kingsbridge and Salcombe



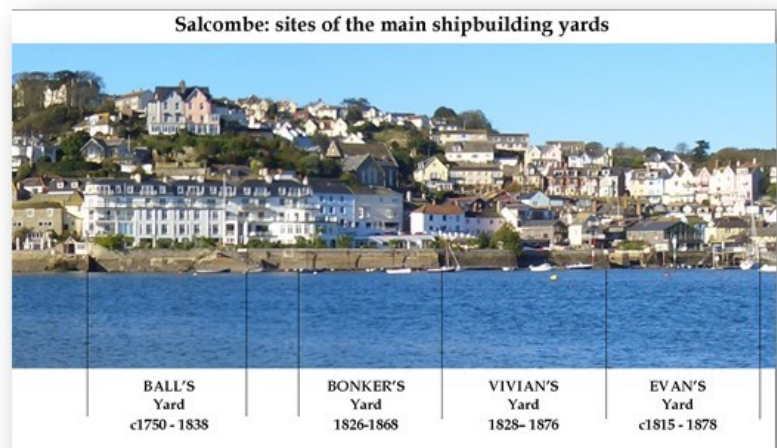


The famous Salcombe Fruit Schooners



Date's Shipwright's Yard, Kingsbridge

Wooden Shipbuilding in the Estuary



Salcombe Shipyards

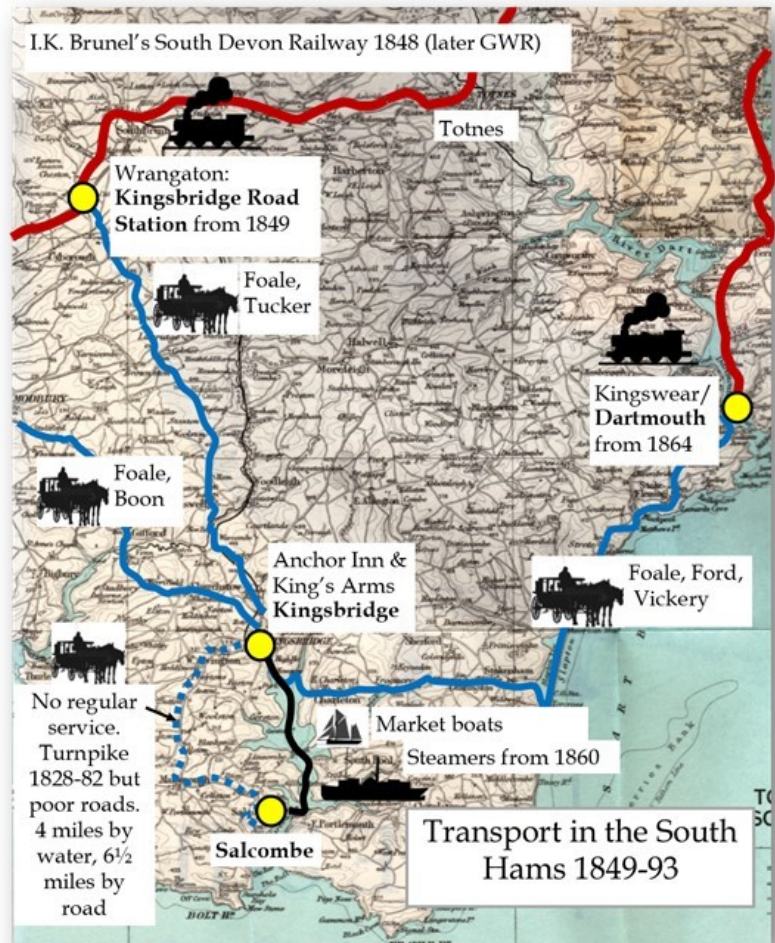
William Date & Sons (1842-1912)



82 wooden sailing vessels + 4 wooden paddle steamers:
Kingsbridge Packet 1857, *Queen* 1860, *Reindeer* 1875, *Express* 1885

Salcombe's road and rail connections 1849-1893

From 1860, tides
permitting, the
Kingsbridge estuary
steamers co-ordinated
with the times of the
coaches to & from the
Kingsbridge Road station
at Wrangaton on the
GWR main line





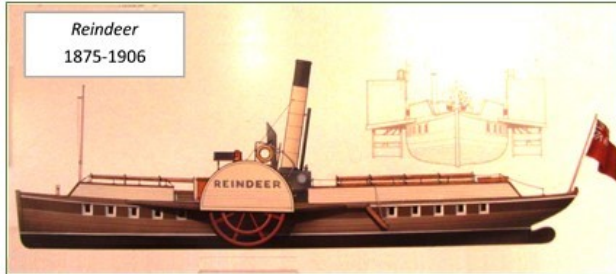
The Estuary Steamers
from
1860 to the 1890s

The Estuary Passenger Steamers

1. Kingsbridge Steam Packet Co.

Queen 1860-1875

Reindeer 1875-1895 - let from 1885 to:



2. Nicholas March & Co.

3 small launches 1884-1898

Reindeer 1885-1906 - owned from 1895
+ the 3 'Castles' 1898-1927 →

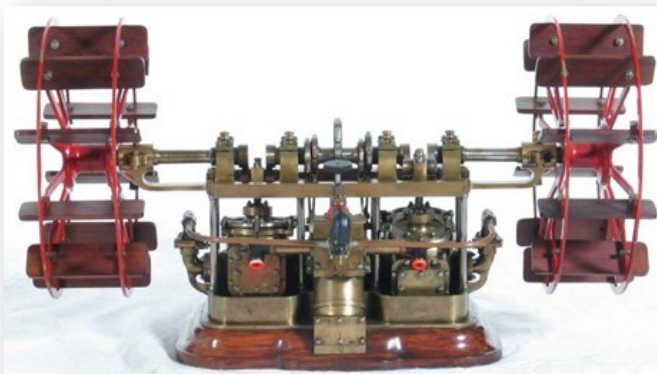
3. Great Western Railway

2 'Castles' 1927-32



Queen 1860-75 Kingsbridge Steam Packet Co.

- Wooden paddle steamer
- Built by Date, Kingsbridge (for only £250)
- 19 tons gross, 59 feet long,
- 2x 10hp condensing oscillating engines (£420)
- 'Met coaches and vans twice a day'



KINGSBRIDGE AND SALCOMBE.

THE COMMODIOUS STEAMER
QUEEN

Will run between the above places during the month of
NOVEMBER, 1874,
As under (circumstances permitting—with liberty to tow), calling
at Portlemouth and Halwell Point.

| | FROM SALCOMBE. | | FROM KINGSBRIDGE | | |
|--------------|----------------|-------|------------------|--------|-------------|
| | a.m. | p.m. | a.m. | p.m. | |
| 2 Monday | 8 0 | 11 30 | 3 30 | n9 30 | 2 0 p4 30 |
| 3 Tuesday | 8 0 | 11 30 | 3 30 | n10 0 | 2 0 n4 30 |
| 4 Wednesday | | 10 30 | 3 30 | | 2 0 4 30 |
| 5 Thursday | | 11 0 | 3 30 | | 2 0 4 30 |
| 6 Friday | | 11 30 | 3 30 | | 2 0 4 30 |
| 7 Saturday | | 11 30 | 1 30 | | p12 30 4 30 |
| 9 Monday | 8 0 | | 1 30 | n9 30 | 4 15 |
| 10 Tuesday | 8 0 | | 2 0 | n9 30 | 4 15 |
| 11 Wednesday | 8 0 | | 2 30 | n10 0 | n4 15 |
| 12 Thursday | 8 0 | | 2 30 | n10 15 | n4 15 |
| 13 Friday | 8 0 | 11 0 | 3 15 | 9 30 | p12 0 p4 15 |
| 14 Saturday | 8 0 | 11 30 | | 9 30 | p4 15 |
| 16 Monday | 8 0 | 11 15 | 3 0 | 9 30 | n1 0 p4 0 |
| 17 Tuesday | 8 0 | 11 0 | 3 0 | 9 30 | 1 0 p4 0 |
| 18 Wednesday | 8 0 | 11 30 | | n9 30 | n4 0 |
| 19 Thursday | 9 0 | | 1 30 | 10 30 | n4 0 |
| 20 Friday | | 10 30 | 3 0 | | 1 0 4 0 |
| 21 Saturday | | 11 0 | 1 0 | | n12 0 4 0 |
| 23 Monday | 7 45 | | 1 0 | p8 45 | 4 0 |
| 24 Tuesday | | | Clean | ing. | |
| 25 Wednesday | | | 1 0 | n10 15 | n4 0 |
| 26 Thursday | 8 0 | 11 0 | 1 0 | 10 15 | 12 0 p4 0 |
| 27 Friday | 8 0 | 11 0 | 1 0 | 9 30 | 12 0 p4 0 |
| 28 Saturday | | | 1 0 | 10 15 | n4 0 |
| 30 Monday | | | | | |

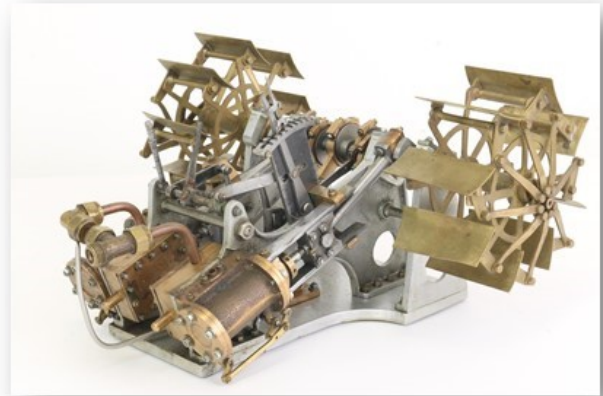
n Indicates that the Boat will start from the New Quay.
p Indicates that the Boat will start from Highhouse Point.
Best Cabin, 6d.; Return, 9d. Second Cabin, 4d.; Return, 6d. Children under
Ten years of age, Half-price.

Monthly Tickets, dated from the 1st of each month, 6s. and 7s. 6d.
• The Boat will whistle twice; the first time at 15 minutes, and the second at
5 minutes before starting. Railway Time (as shown by a Chronometer, the window
of Mr. Bennett, chronometer and watchmaker, Kingsbridge) is kept on.
For further information, application should be made to CAPT. MAY, on board
the Boat.

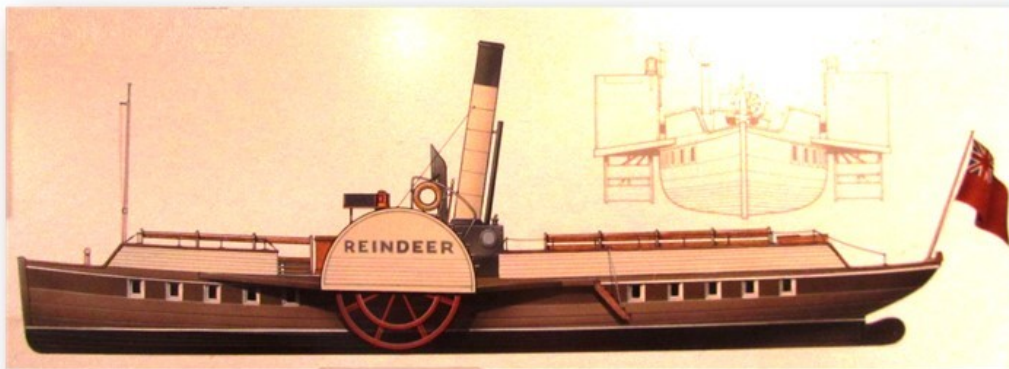
CHARLES FOX, PRINTER, KINGSBRIDGE.

Reindeer 1875-1902

- Wooden paddle steamer
- Built by Date, Kingsbridge
- 44 tons gross, 71 feet long
- Engines: 2 x diagonal? 20hp
- Licensed to carry 250 passengers
- Owned 1875-1895 by Kingsbridge Steam Packet Co.
- Hired by Nicholas March from 1885 and acquired by him in 1895



2 cylinder diagonal engine



A 'rather clumsy hybrid appearance'

Reindeer timetable July 1878

Will run as under (circumstances permitting – with liberty to tow) calling at Portlemouth and Halwell Point

Three sailings daily

'n' indicates that the boat will start from New Quay

'p' indicates that the boat starts from Highhouse Point

7 Excursions to South Sands in July

Best cabin 6p, return 9p, Second cabin 4d, return 6d. Children u10 half-price

The boat will whistle twice; the first time at 15 minutes and the second time at 5 minutes before starting.

THE KINGSBIDGE AND SOUTH HAMS MONTHLY MAGAZINE (1878)

Kingsbridge and Salcombe.
THE NEW AND COMMODIOUS SALOON STEAMER.
"REINDEER,"
Will run between the above places during the month of
JULY 1878
as under (circumstances permitting—with liberty to tow), calling at Portlemouth and Halwell Point.

| | FROM SALCOMBE. | | | FROM KINGSBIDGE. | | |
|--------------|----------------|-------|-------|------------------|------|-------|
| | a.m. | p.m. | pass. | a.m. | p.m. | pass. |
| 1 Monday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 2 Tuesday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 3 Wednesday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 4 Thursday | 9 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 9 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 5 Friday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 6 Saturday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 7 Monday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 8 Tuesday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 9 Wednesday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 10 Thursday | 9 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 9 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 11 Friday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 12 Saturday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 13 Monday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 14 Tuesday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 15 Wednesday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 16 Thursday | 9 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 9 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 17 Friday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 18 Saturday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 19 Monday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 20 Tuesday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 21 Wednesday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 22 Thursday | 9 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 9 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 23 Friday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 24 Saturday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 25 Monday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 26 Tuesday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 27 Wednesday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 28 Thursday | 9 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 9 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 29 Friday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 30 Saturday | 7 45 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 15 | 11 0 | 7 0 |
| 31 Monday | 8 0 | 10 30 | 7 0 | 8 30 | 11 0 | 7 0 |

EXCURSIONS TO SOUTH SANDS
Wednesday, 3rd, at 8.30 a.m. and 5 p.m., returning at 6.30 p.m.
Thursday, 4th, at 8.45 p.m., returning at 6.30 p.m.
Monday, 8th, at 8.30 p.m., returning at 6.30 p.m.
Thursday, 18th, at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., returning at 7 p.m.
Friday, 19th, at 9.30 a.m., returning at 6.30 p.m.
Monday, 22nd, at 9.30 a.m., and 1.15 p.m., returning at 6.30 p.m.
Monday, 29th, at 2.30 p.m., returning at 6.30 p.m.

Passenger fares will start from New Quay. p Indicates that the boat will start from Highhouse Point.
BEST CABIN, 6d.; RETURN, 9d. SECOND CABIN, 4d.; RETURN, 6d. CHILDREN, u10 half-price.
Passenger packets, dated from the 1st of each month, 3d. and 7d. fares.
The boat will whistle twice; the first time at 15 minutes, and the second time at 5 minutes before starting.

Towing

'The steamers exercised a 'liberty to tow' becalmed or tidebound trading vessels on the estuary...often at the expense of the timetable.'

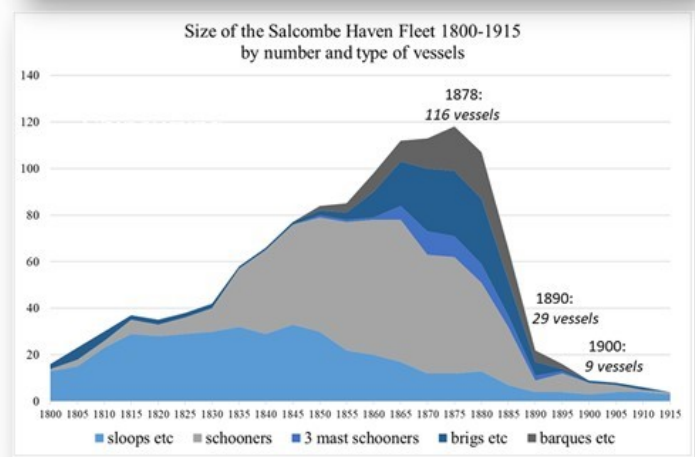
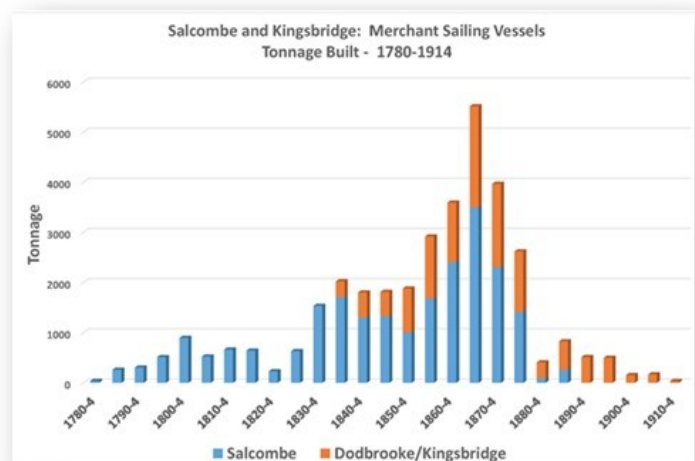


Kingsbridge Gazette, 30 August 1879

'On Saturday, the *Reindeer* was detained by towing the *Netherton* out to sea. She left three quarters of an hour late and Captain May had to pay 15 shillings for a special conveyance for a young lady to Kingsbridge Road Station to meet the train as the boat on Saturday did not arrive in time for the midday coach.'

Hard Times in the 1880s:

After the collapse of the local shipping industry in the 1880s Salcombe fell on hard times and the local steamer services struggled to survive



One firm that weathered the storm was
Nicholas March & Co.

Nicholas March senior (1796-1876)

- 1841 started a 'market boat' service between KB & Salcombe (*March Hare, Hero and Oxo*)

Nicholas March junior (1834-1912)

- 1884 *Lively*
- 1885 hired *Reindeer*
- 1893 *Dart*
- 1895 bought *Reindeer*
- 1898 *Salcombe Castle*
- 1906 *Ilton Castle*

Nicholas Southwood (1866-1952)
 (son-in-law & partner of N. Murch)

- 1906 skipper of *Ilton Castle*
- 1912 inherited the business
- 1914 acquired *Kenwith Castle*
- 1927 sold out to the GWR
- Became Salcombe Harbourmaster



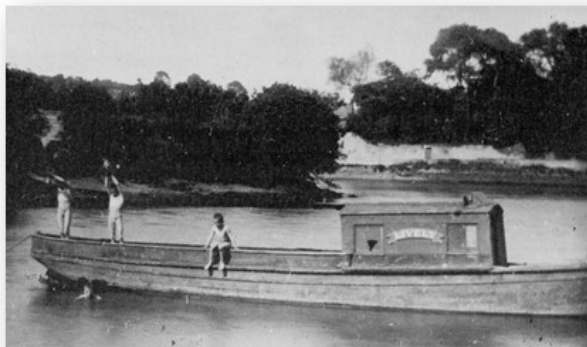
Nicholas March Junior



Nicholas Southwood

Nicholas March's steam launches

The screw launches provided a winter service and a 'back-up' for *Reindeer* after 1885



Lively 1884-90

40ft. Long, only 8 passengers in the cabin

Dart 1893-98

Built in Abingdon, 10 years on the Dart
 before coming to Kingsbridge

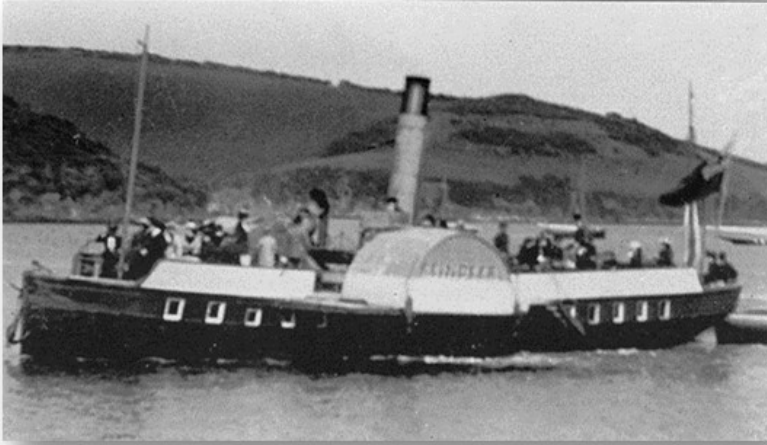


Nautilus 1891

Destroyed in a fire after one month



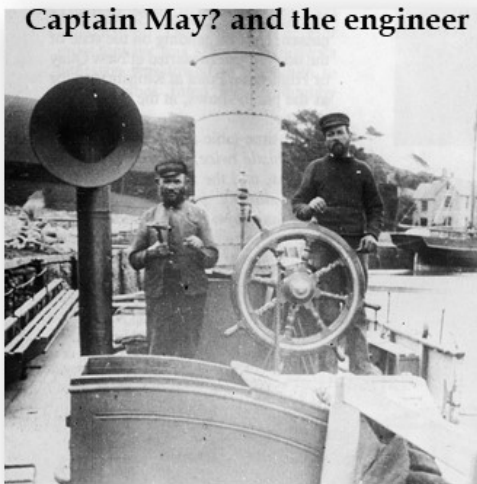
Reindeer from 1885



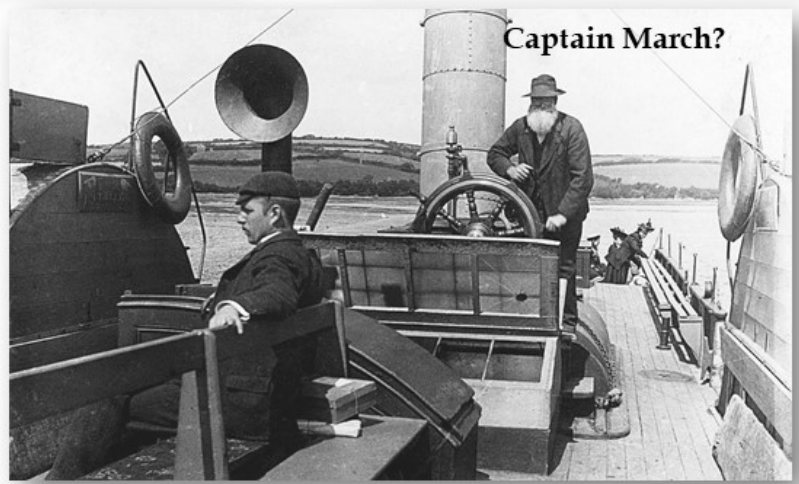
The engineer and his dog



Captain May? and the engineer



Captain March?



Captain March on Navigating the Estuary

"I suppose Captain March," said a passenger one day, "you know all the rocks and shallows in the Estuary by this time."

"No, Madam," said he, "but I know all the deep water and that is enough for me."

Reindeer from 1885

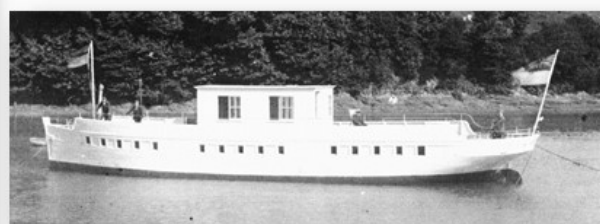
The longest serving ferry in the estuary



Reindeer and the topsail schooner *Edward* of Guernsey



Taken out of use in 1902, *Reindeer*'s registry closed in 1906.



She ended her days as a houseboat owned by a Mr Manning at Ditch End, Portsmouth and eventually rotted away

Salcombe's Rise as a Yachting and Tourist Centre from the 1890s



Salcombe's fortunes improved in the 1890s as the town became popular with yachtsman and holidaymakers.

The release of 600 building plots by the Earl of Devon led to a boom in housing development

The Marine Hotel (above) opened in 1889 and the York Hotel (below) soon after



1893: the Railway comes to Kingsbridge

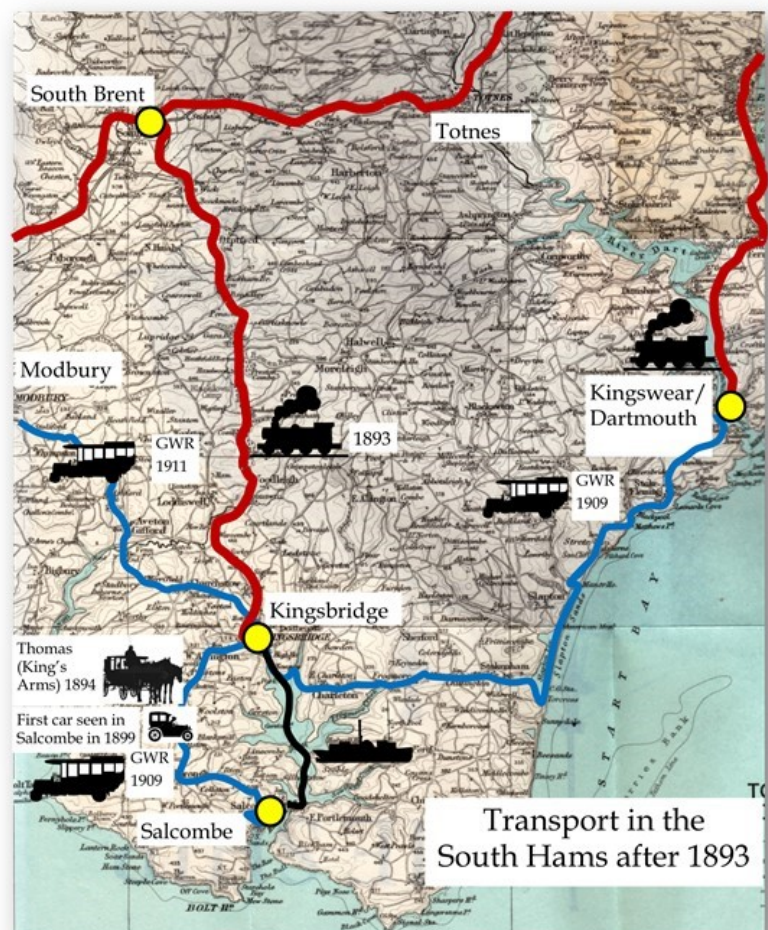


The arrival of the GWR on 19th December 1893 at Kingsbridge gave rise to a boom in local trade and steamer traffic

Salcombe's road and rail connections after 1893

Nicholas March and Co.
were appointed G.W. R.
agents.

The company prospered from the railway's summer steamer excursions and from the collection and return of luggage and goods.



Travelling by coach from Kingsbridge to Salcombe in 1894

“... I at last decided to visit Salcombe. I went to Kingsbridge by train and proceeded thence by what, for courtesy's sake, is called a 'coach'. This consisted of a rattletrap box on wheels which would be a disgrace to any place. Squeezed, jolted and cross, I and my friend arrived at the Marine Hotel.”



The Estuary
Paddle Steamers
1898-1932

The 'Castle' Paddle Steamers 1898-1932

March & Co.'s three 'Castle' steel steamers were all built to take advantage of increasing demand for ferry & excursion services in the years 1898 to 1914

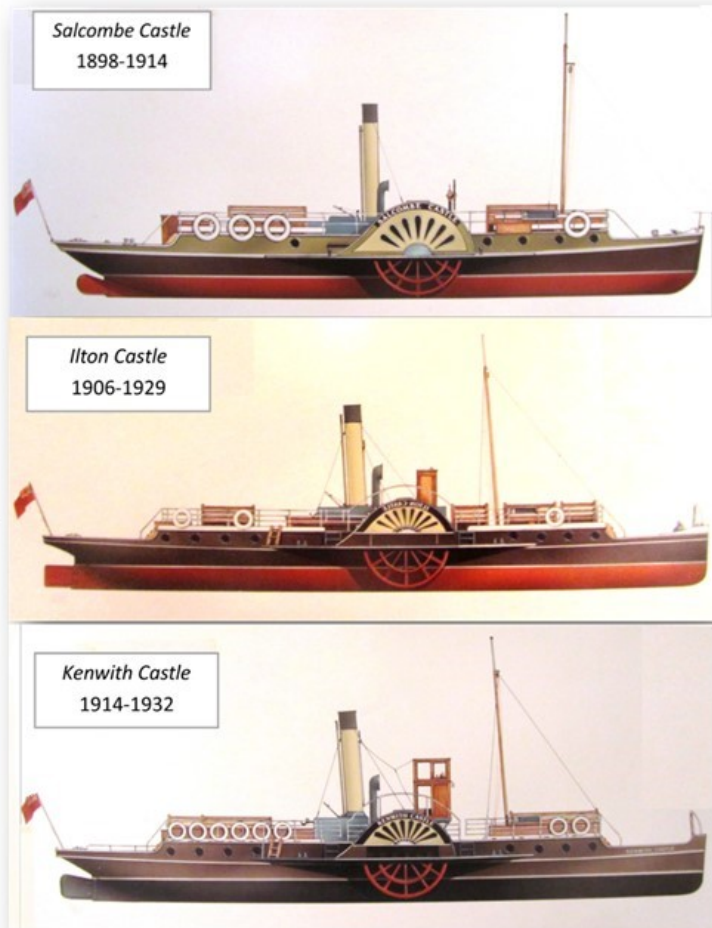
Similar in design, with a single funnel and open well decks fore and aft of their small saloons.

They were distinguishable by the shelter provided for the helmsman:

Salcombe Castle: none

Ilton Castle: chest high wheelbox

Kenwith Castle: wheelhouse



The Kingsbridge Quays



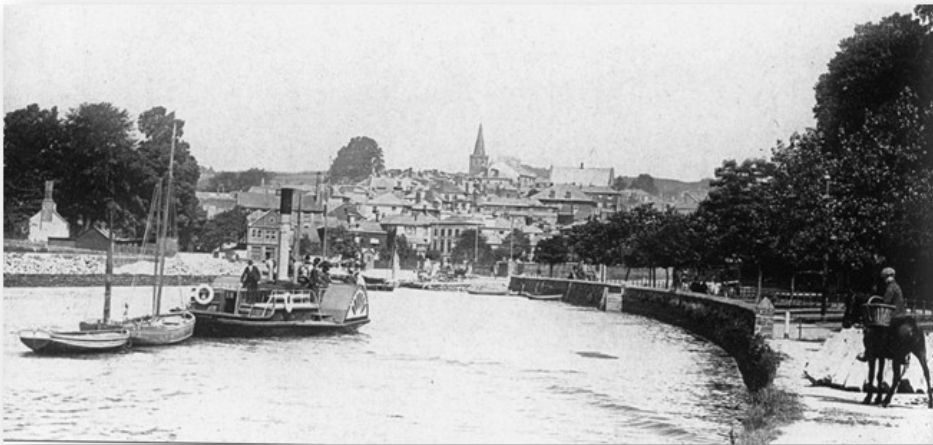
Salcombe Castle at
Town Quay
(aka Dodbrooke Quay)

Kenwith Castle at New Quay

In the early days the steamers also started, at low tide, from Highhouse Point, further downstream



From Kingsbridge....



When tides permitted the 'Castle' steamers connected with most trains

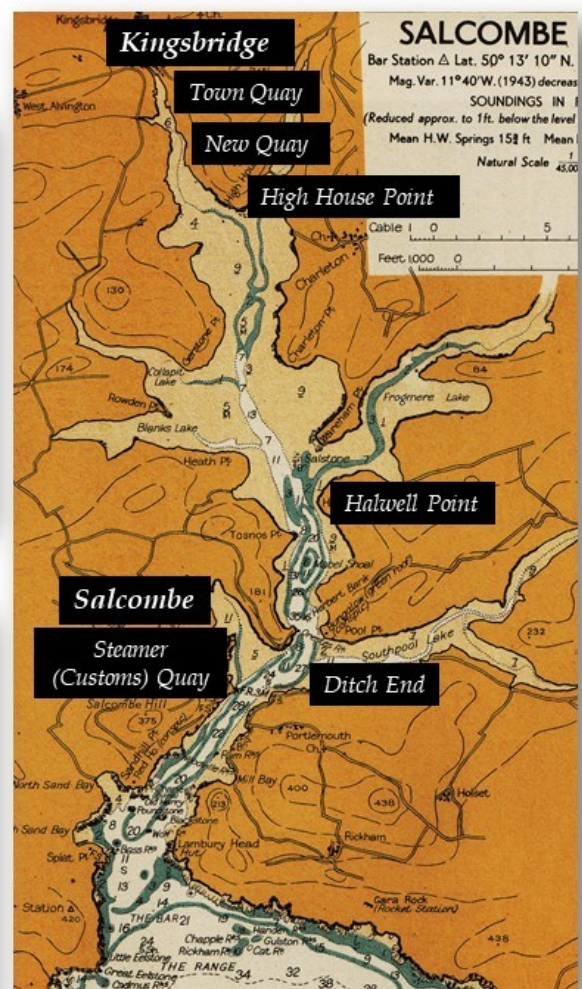
Salcombe Castle



Calling at....



Kenwith Castle at Ditch End





...to Salcombe

Ilton Castle

Customs
(or Steamer) Quay

Salcombe Castle



*Ilton Castle at Steamer's Quay,
Salcombe Castle underway*

Excursions



Reindeer



Kenwith Castle



Salcombe Castle at South Sands



Salcombe Castle at Splat Point near South Sands, where passengers were landed to walk around to Bolt Head.

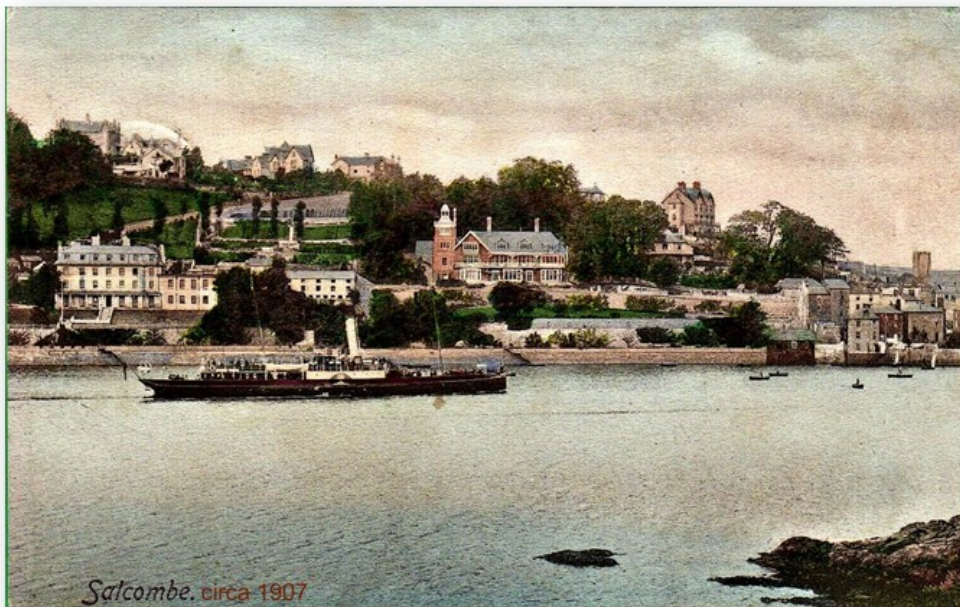
Ilton Castle passing Gullet Farm in Southpool Creek, en-route to South Pool





Excursionists in their Sunday best on *Kenwith Castle* at Steamer Quay

Visiting coastal steamers

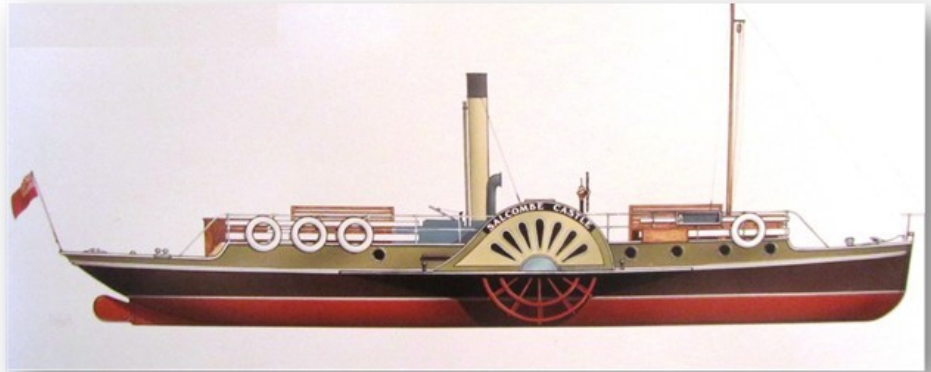


The *Duke of Devonshire* on a trip from Torquay c1907

The GWR paddlers from Plymouth *Sir Francis Drake*, *Sir Walter Raleigh* and the Exmouth paddlers *Duchess of Devonshire* and *Duke of Devonshire* regularly cruised along the coast to Salcombe where trippers could extend their excursion to Kingsbridge aboard one of March's steamers

Salcombe Castle 1898-1914 (Nicholas March & Co.)

- Steel paddle steamer
- Built by Philip & Sons, Dartmouth
- 36 tons gross
- 61 feet long
- 2 x compound 15hp
- Licensed to carry 175 passengers



- Worked for 17 years on the estuary at a time when passenger and goods traffic were at a peak
- Ran 4 times daily, tides permitting.
- Fare 6d single, 10d return
- In demand for party outings/ excursions
- 1914 Requisitioned by Admiralty
- Subsequent fate unknown

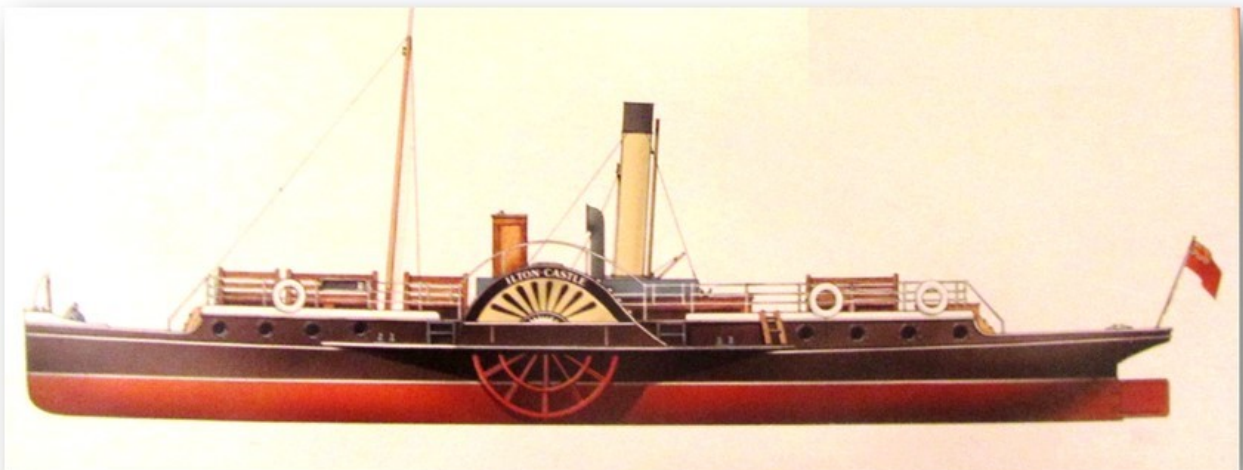


Ilton Castle

1906-29

(Nicholas March & Co.)

- Steel paddle steamer
- Built by Willoughby, Plymouth
- 53 tons gross, 80 feet long
- Larger version of *Salcombe Castle*
- 2 x compound diagonal engines



Model in Salcombe Maritime Museum



Ilton Castle after WWI

- 1927: Southwood sold March & Co. to GWR (they wanted March's lorry business –steamers bought to eliminate competition to buses)
- 1929: sold to Salcombe Sailing Club as a floating HQ. Large deckhouse added, engines removed.
- c1943: became a mooring pontoon for fuelling US Navy landing craft at Snape's Point
- c1944: sunk by a landing craft. Later raised and cut up for scrap.



In service as Salcombe Sailing Club HQ



Sunk off Snape's Point

Steamer - Bus Rivalry between 1909-27

1909: Great Western Railway introduced a Kingsbridge- Salcombe bus service. Buses unreliable and roads poor, so had little effect on ferry traffic

1920+ Buses a real threat -river traffic declined

1927 Southwood sold out to GWR (Western National from 1929)



Later replaced by AEC 3½ ton buses



Original Service used two Milnes-Daimler engines



1914: Volunteers enlisting for the front outside the GWR office in Salcombe

Kenwith Castle

1914-32

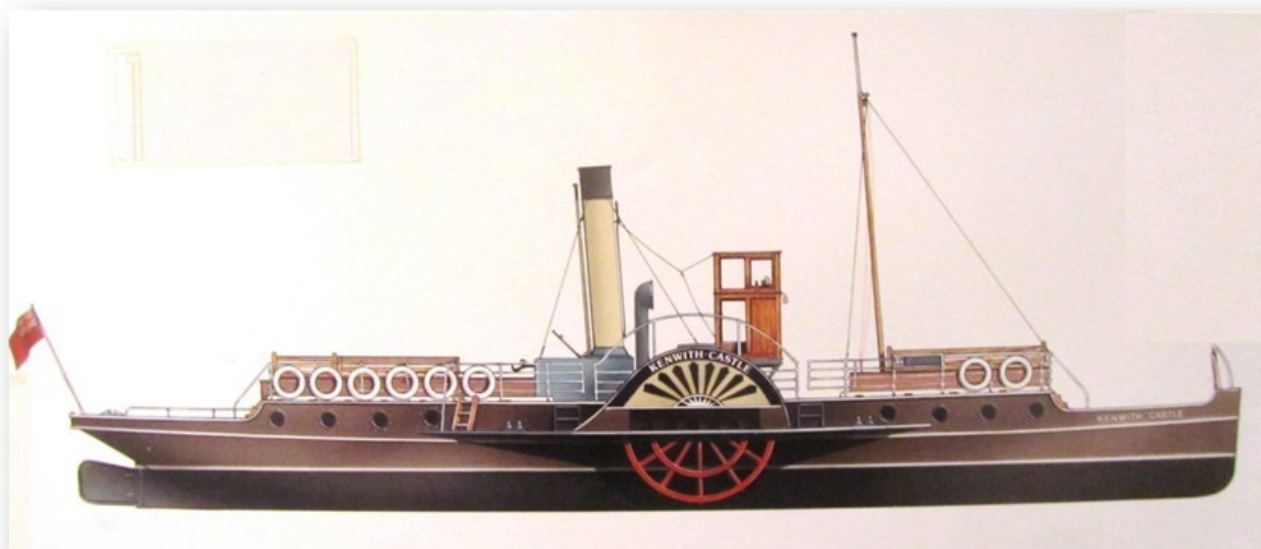
(March & Co. -N. Southwood)

- Steel paddle steamer
- Built by Willoughby, Plymouth,
- 54 tons gross, 80 feet long,
- 2 x compound diagonal engines
- Licensed to carry 271 passengers



On 27th May 1914 Southwood took delivery of a virtually identical sister to *Ilton Castle* but his hopes for a successful three steamer service were shattered by the outbreak of the Great War

- Post war: faced strong road competition & a decline in demand for towage
- 1927 sold to GWR





Kenwith Castle

[illegible]

Kingsbridge Packet

Kenwith Castle

Ilton Castle



The Kingsbridge –Plymouth Packet Boats

1. Kingsbridge Steam Packet Company

- *Kingsbridge Packet* 1857-1890
- *South Hams Trader* 1880-1884

2. Beer, Trant and Balkwill

- *Express* 1885-1894

In 1879 William Heath Prowse (1828-1919): a Kingsbridge Brewer and shareholder in the original Steam Packet Co. broke away and set up a rival and, ultimately more successful, company.

3. W.H.Prowse



Kings Bridge Packet 1879-1908



Kingsbridge Packet 1908-1920

Kingsbridge Packet 1857-1890

(Kingsbridge Steam Packet Company – Hurrell from 1880)

- Wooden paddle steamer – the Estuary's first
- 2x (later 3x) weekly service to Plymouth
- Built by Date, Kingsbridge,
- 69 tons gross, 78ft feet long,
- 2 x oscillating engines, 32hp
- Broken up in 1890

Western Times, 2 May 1857

'On Tuesday, the *Kingsbridge Packet* started with a full cargo for Plymouth. The owners are confident of success. But the owners of the *Pink and Dove*, [sloops] not wishing to lose their share of public patronage, have reduced their freights (charges) considerably, and the coaches to Kingsbridge Road Station have commenced running twice a day, in order to meet the trains, and their fare is also reduced.'

South Hams Trader 1880-84

(Kingsbridge Steam Packet Company)

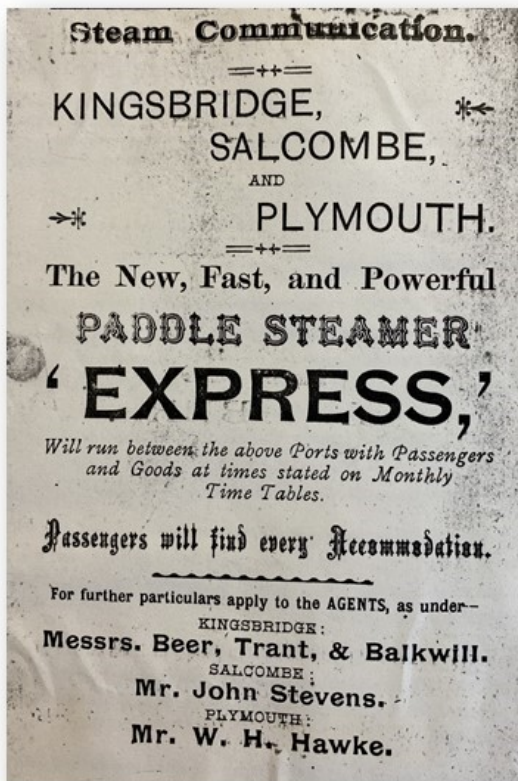
- Iron paddle steamer
- Built at South Shields,
- 65 tons gross, 71ft feet long,
- 2 x engines, 35hp
- Sold to a Nigerian company in 1881
- On the Plymouth run until 1884
- Sent to Lagos, Nigeria in 1884

Express 1885-94

- Wooden paddle steamer
- Built by Date, Kingsbridge
- 115 tons gross, 102 feet long
- 2 x diagonal engines
- Owned by Beer, Trant & Balkwill
- Managed by J.S. Hurrell
- In direct competition with W. H. Prowse's *Kings Bridge Packet*.



Express 1885-94



1893 - the threat of railway competition led to *Express* being withdrawn from service

1894 - sold to Plymouth in 1894 as an excursion steamer.

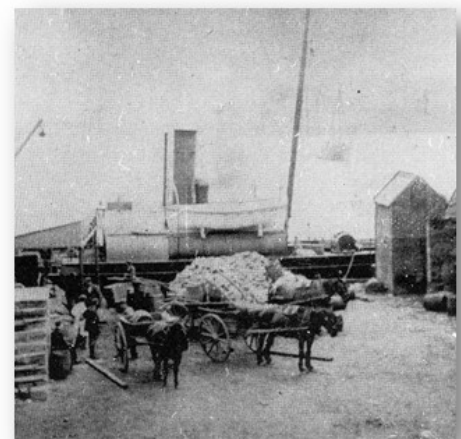
1900 - converted to a sailing schooner.

1915 - sunk by a U-boat

Kings Bridge Packet (2)

1879-1908 (W.H.Prowse)

- Iron screw steamer
- Built by Harvey of Hayle
- 110 tons gross, 102 feet long,
- 2 cylinder compound engine
- Replaced by new *Kingsbridge Packet* and sold to Venice in 1908



At King's Arms Quay, Salcombe



Kingsbridge Packet (3) 1908-1920 (W.H.Prowse)

- Steel screw steamer
- Built by Cox of Falmouth
- 128 tons gross, 103 feet long,
- 2 cylinder compound engine
- Passengers/cargo hard to get on Plymouth run after WWI – altered to a general coaster
- Sold to Southampton 1920 & Latvia 1923



THE NEW CREW STEAMER
Kingsbridge Packet,
(J. PASCOE, MASTER), WILL RUN DURING
APRIL.

| From Kingsbridge for Salcombe & Plymouth | From Plymouth for Salcombe & Kingsbridge |
|---|---|
| 3 Friday 6 0 a-m | 1 Wednes 2 0 p-m |
| 7 Tuesday 8 0 a-m | 4 Saturday 3 45 p-m |
| 9 Thursday 10 0 a-m | 11 Wednes 6 0 a-m |
| 13 Monday 2 30 p-m | 14 Saturday 9 30 a-m |
| 18 Saturday 5 30 a-m | 18 Wednes 1 0 p-m |
| 22 Wednes 7 45 a-m | 21 Saturday 3 0 p-m |
| 24 Friday 8 15 a-m | 25 Wednes 5 0 p-m |
| 27 Monday 2 0 p-m | 8 Saturday 8 30 a-m |
| | 21 Wednes 1 0 p-m |

FARES—Single 1/6. Kingsbridge to Salcombe 3





After World War II

The estuary motor ferries

Moulton (12 passengers) 1931
Mermaid (12) 1931, 1946
Ayaha (12) 1931-9

Rivermaid 1 (62) 1946-1979
Rivermaid 2 (52) 1958-?
Lady Elizabeth (113) 1979-97
Rivermaid 3 (103) 1997-2019
Lady Mary (50) 2020-present



Lady Elizabeth 1979-97



Rivermaid 1997-2019



Lady Mary 2020-

Visiting Steamers



Sir Richard Grenville 1951

Compton Castle

Sister of *Kingswear Castle*

Moored as a café at Squares Quay, Kingsbridge between 1964-78.

Sold to Looe in 1978 and Truro in 1982



Above: at Kingsbridge

Left: at Lemon Quay,
Truro

Still steaming: the last UK paddle steamers



Above: *Kingswear Castle*

Below: *Waverley*



Salcombe Maritime Museum

Open daily April 1 to October 31

10.30-12.30 & 2.30-4.30

(Group visits by appointment all year)



www.salcombemuseum.org.uk