

THE ONCE-UBIQUITOUS PADDLE STEAMER

John Hannavy

Not much more than half a century ago, excursion paddle steamers were still a common sight plying the lakes, lochs, rivers and coastal resorts of Britain. Most people were sufficiently familiar with them to have at least a basic understanding of how they worked! Children of all ages marvelled at the polished brass on the engines — often visible through glass panels — and the crew members working away below.

By the 1950s, with the increase in motoring holidays, the popularity of the excursion steamer trip was already waning, and by the 1960s few were making any money. And then suddenly, just like steam trains, they had almost all gone — victims of the growing popularity of the motor car, cheap flights and more sophisticated holiday expectations — and we had barely noticed. There are currently seven of them left, and at the time of writing two of those are still sailing. They are the 1947-built Waverley and the Dartmouth-built excursion steamer *Kingswear Castle* which has recently returned to work on the River Dart after many years sailing on the Medway.

Many of the finest Edwardian excursion steamers were featured in the millions of postcards produced for the tourist market. A number of those cards — beautifully tinted and printed at a very high quality — form the basis of many of the illustrations in this book. The finest often came from print works in Saxony, Bavaria and Belgium in the years before the First World War.

This book does not set out to be a comprehensive history of the paddle steamer. Rather it offers a series of snapshots of the fascinating story and enduring charm of paddlers over the last two hundred years, profusely illustrated by nostalgic historic images and the author's own superb photography. It also offers a look at those few precious survivors of the age of the excursion steamer, the ferry and the paddle tug, and the efforts of those whose passion is to keep them alive and steaming.

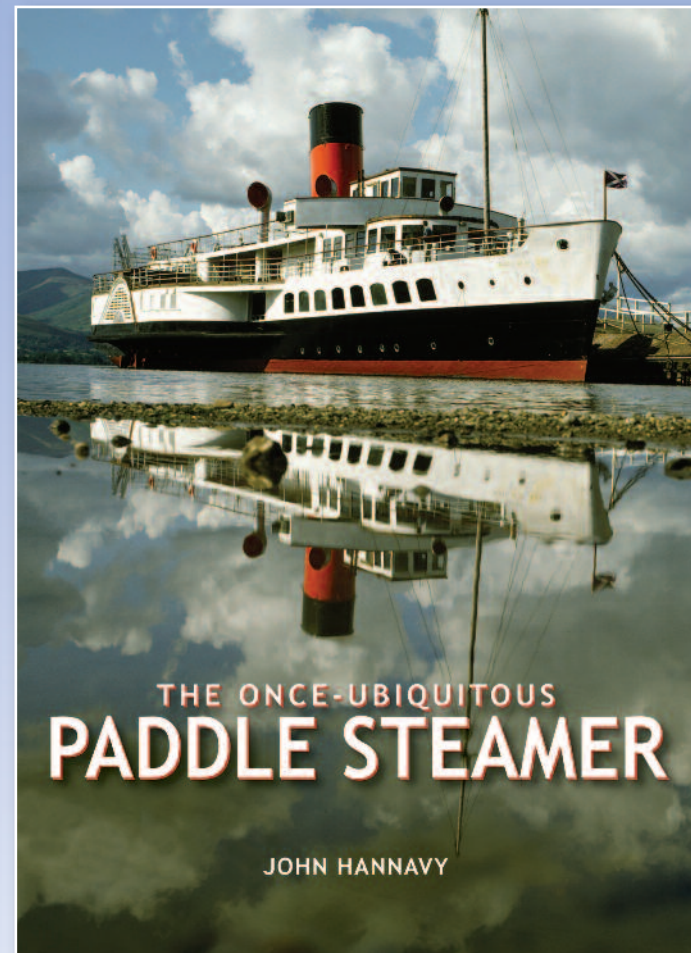
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Hannavy is a writer, photographer, photographic historian and incurable steam enthusiast. Until retirement he was Professor in Photography and Photographic History at the University of Bolton.

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www.halsgrove.com e-mail: sales@halsgrove.com

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The locally-built 94grt PS Kingswear Castle approaching Dartmouth pontoon in late March 2013 on one of her first sailings after her return to Devon.



PS Tattershall Castle still has her triple expansion diagonal reciprocating engines in situ.



Left: PS Koh-i-noor is seen here heavily laden off Clacton c.1896.



Above: An animated view of Cardiff Pier Head around 1920,

Left: Raising steam pressure on PS Monarch's new boiler for the first time, June 2013.

Below: PS Maid of the Loch undergoing restoration at Balloch Pier in the late 1990s.



Example of a double-page spread.