

The FUNNEL

FRIENDS OF WAVERLEY NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2023



Waverley arrives at Llandudno Pier back in June with a capacity crowd after offering her first cruise from the “Queen of Welsh Resorts” in 5 years.

A season with all the right ingredients - so far!

2023 is shaping up to be a year to remember - for all the right reasons. Excellent loadings, sell out cruises in a matter of hours, increased revenue, decreased fuel costs, new ports and piers, and tens of thousands of happy passengers.

We are now well into the second half of the sailing season having smashed 2022's total in terms of passenger journeys and income. So far only one sailing has been lost due to weather when a strong easterly wind caused the cruise from Swansea to Ilfracombe and Lundy Island to be cancelled.

Given the high passenger figures I have dug into historic passenger traffic books in search of the year to beat, and that looks to be 2003 which was strong on the basis of the Heritage rebuild being completed.

One notable highlight was Waverley's visit to Tenby in South West Wales where thousands lined the streets, beach and surrounding hillside to see the lady make her entrance. The local authority stepped in to assist in directing passengers and a notice to mariners was issued to create a channel for the paddler to make her approach. The weather was perfect and for 30 minutes on a Saturday afternoon in mid-June it was as if a celebrity was in town.

Crowds have gathered in all four countries of the UK with Warrenpoint, Llandudno, Yarmouth, and Ayr seeing record numbers gathering to board the World's last seagoing paddle steamer.

Of course until “finished with engines” is rung for the last time I draw caution, there is after all still many days to come and many more pounds to be earned. If the weather permits the vast majority of sailings to take place then 2023 will go down as a record year.

Appeal Success

The 2023 season was made possible thanks to the tremendous support we received for the Dry Dock 2023 Appeal. Launching a public appeal in mid-January with inflation at around 10% in the midst of a cost of living crisis could easily have been seen as risky but we were in a difficult position with insufficient funds to commission the ship for a new season.

Early on during last winter's refit it became apparent that the dry dock scope was going to involve some major works including some large sections of steel work in both paddleboxes and replacement of a spring beam. Fuel prices in 2022 had resulted in a several hundred thousand pound overspend. The outcome was a gap of £250,000 to fund the dry docking and start up costs.

“Within one week over £30,000 had been donated.”

With an appeal target set at £180,000 we sent out the call for help and the reaction was instant. Within one week over £30,000 had been donated. In setting the appeal target we had estimated a further £35,000 would come through Gift Aid with other funds from known legacies and of course Friends of Waverley with their much valued regular monthly donations.

By late March we were at the target with just enough funds in place to afford the start-up costs. Dry docking, as it so often does, identified extra works but thanks to tugs being provided by Clyde Marine Services at no charge the dry dock budget did not run too far over.

Four Counties in Four Days

The Oban and Inner Hebrides sailings proved very popular this season with record numbers from Kyle of Lochalsh thanks to a new marketing initiative which saw 34,000 homes receiving a Waverley brochure through a “door drop campaign”.

On the evening of Monday 29th May Waverley slipped astern into Oban Bay to start of what must be a record - four countries visited in four days. After an overnight passage she was berthed in Warrenpoint the following afternoon. That same evening I found myself on local TV news reporting her first passenger sailing from the Northern Ireland port.



Waverley's evening cruise from Warrenpoint sold out within 48 hours of being released.



Captain Dominic McCall (left) and Waverley Excursions Chairman, Scott Johnson (right), stand with the Warrenpoint Port Management team after receiving two plaques to commemorate Waverley's first passenger sailing from the port.

For the second consecutive evening Waverley steamed overnight to another country and duly arrived in Ilfracombe on the evening of Wednesday 31st May. This allowed for a trial berthing on the high water berth, known locally as the Stone Bench. In re-establishing Waverley with some ports and piers we have undertaken trial berthings without passengers to give the crew and shore rope handlers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with how she berths.

Finally it was on the afternoon of Thursday 1st June when Waverley berthed at Penarth in South Wales. For anyone watching that afternoon they must have wondered why a paddle steamer was circling so many times off the pier. By doing so it allowed for Captain McCall to carry out sufficient “trips” for his Penarth Pilotage Exemption which was duly awarded.

“Sold Out”

Before Waverley arrived on the Bristol Channel over 14,000 tickets had been sold such was the level of anticipation of her return to the area after an absence of five years. Her first cruise on the Channel remains the highest gross revenue in a day so far this season at just short of £70,000. That first cruise also saw Waverley's first sailing from Portishead in over 20 years. It was fantastic to see so many people looking on for what was the first of fourteen sold out sailings on the Bristol Channel.

Logistically the Channel is the most challenging area to operate. Of the eleven ports / piers used this season only one can be used at any state of the tide. Arranging fuel and stores takes some novel approaches and water needs to be taken at any opportunity even if it involves running many hoses.



Waverley pictured having just berthed at Tenby Harbour in South West Wales back in mid-June. Thousands looked on as Waverley made her approach to the small harbour. The tidal window is very narrow with about 45 minutes over high water, but only on certain tides.

Thursday 15th June was planned as a filler cruise on the timetable owing to the tides that day. The morning being a cruise to Clevedon where Penarth passengers could join the coach to Bishops Lydeard Station to catch the West Somerset Railway to Minehead. Meanwhile Waverley was to offer a cruise round the Holm Islands. An afternoon cruise to Minehead non-landing was included to pick up those on the railway. Some senior discounts were offered to help ensure enough passengers were aboard. In the end the special offer did more than that with the ship carrying over 1,800 across the day. On the morning arrival at Clevedon over 900 passengers were transferred, the queue on the pier stretched to the seafront.

The climax of the Bristol Channel sailings was Tenby and Milford Haven. Tenby hasn't featured on the timetable since early 90s so we expected some attention, but not quite to the level that was received. Over 600 boarded for the evening cruise to Milford. The sailing could easily have been sold twice over such was the level of interest. Milford proved a hit with over 1,200 sailing from the port across the afternoon and evening cruises offered. Thankfully the weather allowed sailings which are susceptible to cancelling to take place in ideal conditions.

Was the Bristol Channel successful? - no it was exceptional. Average daily earnings of £43,000 with



Some passengers dress for the occasion! Relief Master, James Harris, 2nd Officer Abdo Sbello and Chief Purser Andrew Comrie (left to right) welcome an Ilfracombe resident aboard dressed as Britannia.

over 1,000 passengers a day provided much needed early season income. The strength of support for pleasure steamer sailings is clearly evident.

Liverpool and Llandudno proved to be as popular as ever with both sailings "sold out".

Paddle Work

As the Bristol Channel season ended it became apparent that urgent work was required on the paddle wheels. Within the feathering mechanism which allows each float to “feather” (or move) and enter the water at the best possible angle for maximum force there are bronze and plastic bushes over pins. While in dry dock thirty-seven plastic bushes were renewed. Unfortunately it became apparent that the plastic material used this time is not suited and as such many bushes are wearing prematurely.

Each evening a paddle check is carried out to ensure no bolts are loose and nothing untoward is amiss with the wheels. On a weekly basis a full paddle inspection is carried out to check all components. On arrival in Liverpool a full inspection revealed that several parts were badly worn and needed urgent attention. The decision was taken to bring in overnight labour to replace the worst of the bushes rather than cancel a sailing. Putting this into context over £10,000 was spent across two evenings to ensure that both Liverpool sailings went ahead. On return to the Clyde similar overnight working was undertaken when required to keep the paddles in good operating condition. This coming winter further replacement of paddle bushes will take place with a tried and well tested type of plastic.

Running repairs this season have well exceeded the budget, but so far no sailing has been lost due to technical issues. A real credit to the engineering team ashore and those afloat.

The Winter Ahead

It seems no time at all since we were recruiting crew and getting Waverley ready to sail yet there are now just under 5 weeks to go until it’s “finished with engines” for 2023.

Thoughts turn to the winter refit and what work is required. Those of us deeply involved in operating Waverley know that even with a strong season and good loadings there will always be a demand on the limited funds we have. The fabric and equipment on the ship needs maintained, repaired and even renewed if the ship is to remain in service.

We can foresee several investment projects on the horizon, some will need to be tackled sooner rather than later. This winter we must address the upper deck over the aft deck shelter as leaks are still apparent. We know that crew cabins and showers need a refresh given that Waverley isn’t as comfortable as more modern vessels. Further steel work is needed within the paddleboxes and looking to 2025 there is new legislation which must be taken into account for the ship to comply. All of this is possible if the human and financial resources are available.

I hope you have been aboard this season and seen for yourself the enjoyment that so many gain from sailing on Waverley. I appreciate your ongoing support as a Friends of Waverley in helping us to keep the paddles turning and Waverley alive.

Paul Semple, General Manager



Waverley receives celebrity treatment as she backs away from Knightstone Harbour at Weston-Super-Mare after completing another “sold out” cruise to Ilfracombe in early June.

DRY DOCK 2023

Thanks to the fantastic support shown by thousands of supporters Waverley was able to be dry docked ahead of the 2023 season. This year's dry docking cost over £260,000 with some major steel works in both paddleboxes and a new starboard spring beam fitted.

Waverley moved down river on Thursday 16th March and entered the Garvel Dry Dock. By the following morning the dock was empty with staging built around both paddleboxes and the stern to give raised access. This year saw the 5 year survey on the rudder and rudder stock.

The key task in dry dock was to replace the starboard spring beam. This is a 26 foot long section of greenheart timber which has some give when berthing against piers. Inevitably it will fracture over time and need replacing. Past experience has shown that the brackets which support the beam need attention when exposed and this was the case on this docking, in fact the brackets were replaced. All in the replacement of the spring beam and associated steel work cost £77,000,

A large section of shell plating was replaced in the aft port paddlebox with this work extending internally to part of the paddle drum. With the paddleboxes being constructed of thinner steel than the hull we are now finding a need to replace sections each year given they were installed 23 years ago in the first phase of the Heritage Rebuild.

The underwater hull was washed and antifouling paint touched up as necessary, the hull survey revealed no defects. All black and upper cream sections of the hull were given a full coat of paint. This year also saw the funnels being painted.

One of the Dining Saloon window frames was replaced as this was known to be badly cracked. The wooden frames are bespoke to Waverley and were



Step 1 was to remove the belting to gain access to the old spring beam.



With the old beam removed the steel work within the support brackets could be addressed.



Once steel work was completed the new spring beam was fitted.



With the beam in place new belting was then installed before new steel facing bar was attached.



The rudder lowered down to the dock floor for full inspection of the rudder and rudder stock which was last replaced in 2018.



The new shell plating on the port paddlebox.

installed in the mid-90s with an expected lifetime of 20 years so they have lasted well. Fortunately Waverley supporter, Tony Horn from Worthing, who built the windows when new was able to assist again in producing one new and one further spare window frame.

While in dry dock the starboard Bridge wing was removed to allow access to replace timbers underneath. Owing to the time taken for paddle wheel works Waverley was moved from the dry dock into the adjacent James Watt Dock for approximately three weeks before making her way back to Glasgow. Sea trials were then completed in early May after the full crew had been engaged.

Dry Dock Costs 2023

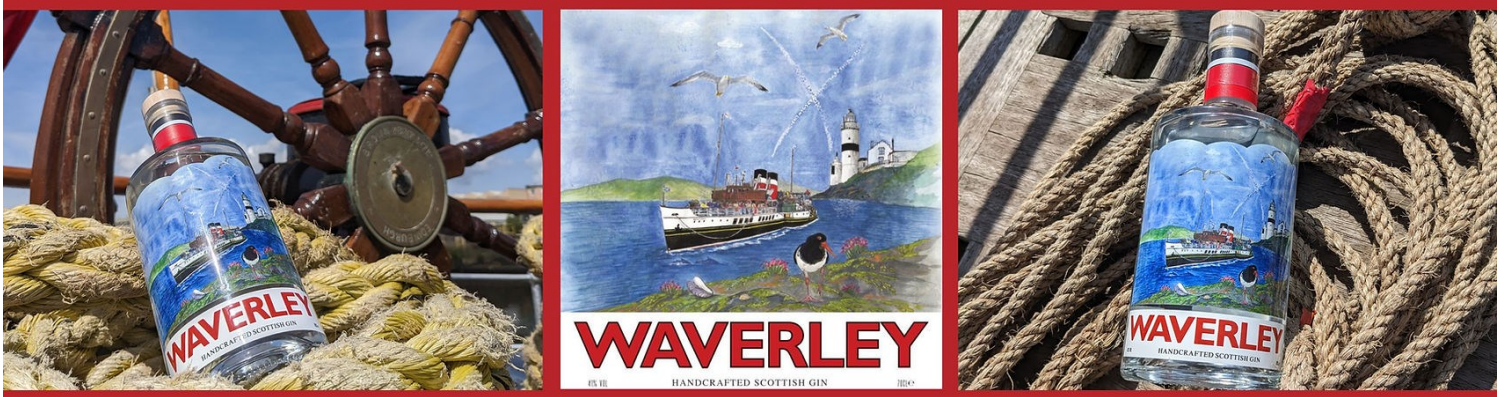
- ◆ Bridge Wing Removal & Repair - £11,000
- ◆ Dining Saloon Window Replacement - £3,000
- ◆ Dock Rental & Services - £40,000
- ◆ Fuel Flow Meters Fitted - £2,000
- ◆ Hull Cleaning & Painting - £27,000
- ◆ Hull Survey - £2,000
- ◆ New Paddle Wheel Radius Rods - £4,000
- ◆ Paddle Wheel Works - £40,000
- ◆ Port Paddlebox Steel Works - £29,000
- ◆ Rudder Removal & Survey - £15,000
- ◆ Starboard Spring Beam Replacement - £77,000



Waverley's port paddle wheel viewed from the dock floor during the 2023 dry docking.

WAVERLEY GIN SUCCESS

Waverley Gin was launched by the Isle of Cumbrae Distillers Ltd on the opening day of the 2023 season. Having proved such a hit a second batch was soon required.



Waverley's Assistant General Manager, Lucy Morley, is always on the lookout for new items to sell in Waverley's Shop and therefore approached the Isle of Cumbrae Distillers to produce a Waverley Gin.

The Isle of Cumbrae Distillers started up just three years ago but has already produced two international award-winning gins. Their signature gin, Nostalgin, won gold at the Gin Masters and Croc Rock won silver. Given Waverley's long association with Millport and the Cumbrae they seemed the perfect distillers to produce a Waverley gin.

The all female distilling team report, "we were excited to partner with Waverley Excursions to produce Waverley Gin, and thrilled to help raise important funds for its ongoing maintenance. Waverley means a lot to us and to Millport. She has sailed from its harbour and later from Keppel pier for many years; hearing the sound of her paddles as she makes her way towards the island means summer is here. Long may she sail!"



Bronwyn Jenkins-Deas from Isle of Cumbrae Distillers having delivered the first batch of Waverley Gin to Lucy Morley.

Local Bute resident, Ruth Slater, was commissioned to produce the art work for the bottles. Ruth is a contemporary artist who creates truly unique art in various media; her art captures the personality, the very essence of her subject, in this case, Waverley, the world's last oceangoing paddle steamer. In the label, Waverley is sailing past the Cloch Lighthouse, with a gorgeous oyster catcher watching as she passes. The Waverley Gin label is heat pressed onto the glass and creates a permanent label and a wonderful keepsake...long after the gin is gone!

Each 70cl bottle is priced at £42 and available on board Waverley at the Souvenir Shop or by purchasing directly online from the **Isle of Cumbrae Distillers**.

Waverley Gin is described as a contemporary style, London dry gin with botanicals featuring pineapple, mango and elderberry, brought together with fresh orange.



Bute resident and artist, Ruth Slater, produced the art work for the Waverley Gin bottles.

MEET BOOKING OFFICE MANAGER AILSA COMRIE

Chief Purser Andrew Comrie will likely be known to most Friends of Waverley but his elder sister plays a key role in our office team as Booking Office Manager. Ailsa joined the shore team ahead of the 2022 season but her association with the ship goes much further back.

What attracted you to the role of Booking Office Manager for Waverley?

The main attraction was Waverley herself – as a child many of our family holidays took place on the West Coast of Scotland, primarily Rothesay, the Isle of Arran and the Isle of Mull. Initially when I was younger I was incredibly jealous of my friends who would go to far more exotic places in Spain or to Disneyland for their Summer holidays, but over the years my love and appreciation for going “Doon the Watter” has grown.

When I first learned of Waverley’s boiler troubles back in 2019 I felt horrified at the idea of losing her. After the reboiling was complete I was visiting Rothesay and recall feeling unexpectedly emotional at hearing Waverley’s paddles coming closer, I remember feeling a distinct lump in my throat.

Although I missed the heyday of Clyde steamers, my father has instilled in me a deep appreciation of this incredibly special part of our heritage. I am writing this piece while steaming back to Llandudno after a wonderful sail round the North Anglesey coastline. I’m an avid birdwatcher, so being able to see black guillemot, razorbill and even the occasional puffin from onboard my favourite ship off the North Anglesey coast is different from any other job.

I’m proud to work for Waverley as someone who has grown up with such fond memories of her. It’s been a lovely way to share the passion that my whole family has for Waverley, my brother has been Purser since 2021 and being able to work alongside him has been a privilege.



Ailsa Comrie at her desk in Waverley’s Glasgow office.

What does the job of Booking Office Manager involve, what are your main responsibilities?

My primary responsibility is to sell tickets and manage the booking system. To date this year we have handled and processed over 30,000 bookings. The Bristol Channel sailings this year certainly felt like a fantastic achievement given most sailings sold out in advance.

My other duties include handling all manner of telephone and email queries, monitoring passenger numbers to ensure no sailing is overbooked, liaising with tour operators and groups.

I am responsible for making sure online shop orders are processed and PSPS members who order Annual Sailing Passes or Go Anywhere Vouchers receive them.

Occasionally we do receive complaints, or feedback as we prefer to title them, they have to be handled sensitively in the hope we can resolve any issues and turn around a situation.

Charter enquires are common and it takes time to work through an initial enquiry to see if it is possible and if the potential charterer has a realistic expectation on cost and what Waverley can offer.

Comrie family holidays to the Clyde coast often featured Waverley as seen in this photograph on Rothesay pier in the early 2000s.





Ailsa's brother Andrew appears to have been a keen Purser since a very young age.

What aspects of the job do you enjoy?

I enjoy the interaction with customers on the phone. Many of those who call the office have never been aboard and don't really know much about Waverley. I am often their first point of contact with the Company and feel it's important to be as helpful and straightforward as I can, but also be personable.

Having that first contact friendly and inviting is important as many are looking for a new experience. Booking is the first part of the journey for new customers. It is equally rewarding when regulars call in, as it's always nice to catch up with people and hear their stories of recent sailings. I like that the role enables me to talk with Waverley's passengers who come from many different walks of life.

It is rewarding to see Waverley arrive at a crowded pier on a fully booked sailing knowing we have handled all the bookings and any resulting enquires.

What's the strangest customer enquiry that you have had?

My favourite odd enquiries relate to passengers wanting to take interesting pets onboard – I used to work in a pet shop and particularly like birds and reptiles, so the image of someone bringing an iguana or a parrot onboard is highly amusing to me.

This season we have been trialling dog friendly cruises on shorter sailings, and seeing all the different breeds of dogs onboard has been so much fun. The trial looks to have been a great success.

What's your favourite Waverley sailing?

My favourite sailing is probably the one I've been on the most which is from Rothesay to Tighnabruaich – I just love sailing through the Kyles and seeing just how close we get to each of the little islands and there's always a nice array of wildlife in the area.

Last year I was able to go aboard when Waverley was on the Thames for my first cruise on her 'down south'. I did an evening cruise from Tower Pier to Gravesend – sailing under a floodlit Tower Bridge was such a sight to behold, and seeing the banks of the river Thames from Waverley was such an interesting perspective.

What makes Waverley special?

For me, I always have been a people watcher, and I love seeing peoples' reactions when they see her. Tourists in London looked utterly fascinated and bemused by her when she paddled up to Tower Pier last year. It's always nice to see kids waving and how much attention she gets from passers-by wherever she goes.

Over the past 18 months I've come into contact with so many different people who help keep Waverley going, including volunteers, PSPS members and previous employees from years gone by. Their tales of Waverley both before and during preservation have been captivating and the sense of pride everyone involved has is really special. It can't be overstated how remarkable the support and assistance people give us is, and I doubt we'll ever be able to thank them enough!

Waverley offers us all a chance to see things through a nostalgic lens, and especially after 2020 I think there's a comfort and joy that this brings which I hope we can continue for many years to come.



Ailsa aged 5 with her father Allan who has been a loyal supporter for many years.

2023 OBAN & INNER HEBRIDES IN PICTURES

Waverley's annual visit north is much anticipated by many Friends of Waverley. This year saw record numbers stepping aboard to enjoy some of the best scenery on offer from the decks of Waverley.



Waverley passes Kerrera as she departs Oban for her popular Sunday afternoon cruise to Corryvreckan.



Waverley rests at the pier at Inverie in Loch Nevis on Bank Holiday Monday.



Waverley passes Eilean Donan Castle as she enters Loch Duich.



Waverley captured by Skye High Drones as she passes under the Skye Bridge heading for Loch Carron.



Waverley passes Lismore Light as she crosses from Oban to Craignure.

CREWING WAVERLEY

Each spring a group of people come together from different backgrounds and countries with different experiences to form a team that will work together in a unique vessel. Paul Semple gives Friends of Waverley an exclusive insight into crewing Waverley.

How many crew are required to operate Waverley?

Waverley has a minimum manning of just 10 crew but that is only for moving the vessel without any passengers aboard. In normal passenger service she requires a minimum of 19 crew. This is structured around the emergency Muster List approved by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

In passenger service we try to crew her to 26 in the following positions:

- ◆ Master
- ◆ Chief Officer
- ◆ 2nd Officer
- ◆ Bosun
- ◆ Able Seaman x 5
- ◆ Chief Engineer
- ◆ 2nd Engineer
- ◆ Donkeyman
- ◆ Fireman x 2
- ◆ Chief Purser
- ◆ Chief Steward
- ◆ 2nd Steward
- ◆ Chief Cook
- ◆ 2nd Cook
- ◆ Pantryman
- ◆ Steward x 5
- ◆ Shopkeeper

Are all crew seasonal?

The vast majority are but we are now in the more fortunate position of having a permanent Master and Chief Officer. The ambition is also to have a permanent Chief Engineer and Second Engineer to help bring greater stability to the engine room rather than all being seasonal crew.

Some crew are happy to work most of the season with some leave but others will only be able to fill in or do short term work on Waverley. Crew changes can happen daily which is not our preference but given we can't offer permanent employment it is inevitable we will see a higher level of crew turnover than other ships.



The familiar faces of Waverley's Deck Officers and ABs on day one of the 2023 season.

Do all crew need to hold certain certificates to work on the ship?

Given Waverley is classed as a seagoing vessel all crew must hold a valid medical certificate known as an ENGI. This is generally reissued every two years by undertaking a basic medical with an MCA approved doctor.

Beyond a seafarers medical all crew must hold certificates for the five basic safety courses, known as the STCWs (Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping). The basic courses included fire fighting, survival techniques, security, basic safety and first aid.

The basic courses take 5 days to complete and costs just under £1,000. If someone is known to us and wants to work on Waverley we have met this cost on a commitment of a minimum 3 months working on board the ship. Training providers are found across the UK although we tend to use Stream Marine Training located next to Glasgow Airport for crew local to Glasgow.

Many positions on board the ship require more than the minimum STCWs so officers and some ratings hold several additional certificates including more advanced First Aid, advanced fire fighting or navigational qualifications.

Many of the STCWs need to be revalidated every five years. As an employer we will generally meet this cost when a crew member has served more than one season on the ship and returns.



The Shop Keeper is generally covered by a volunteer while all other crew members are in paid employment.

How does Waverley recruit crew?

Until Brexit most of the ratings on board were contracted through an agency which sourced Polish and Latvian seafarers. Post Brexit the number of seafarers from Europe able to work in the UK has fallen. Waverley Excursions now carries out all crew recruitment although we will turn to agencies if there are gaps which we can't fill. Approaching an agency does incur cost so sourcing our own crew is more beneficial. To help recruit crew we added a webpage to the website where we can post jobs ahead of the season. We use a variety of methods to advertise crew positions including the Waverley website and social media channels. Word of mouth can be the best method and we are slowly building a pool of crew we can call on to fill any gaps.

In the early season we tend to see a higher turnover of crew since some new to Waverley will find she isn't for them. Each season brings different challenges in which positions on board are harder to fill, in 2023 we have seen a larger turnover in catering crew compared to 2022. It is pleasing though to see that some deck crew ratings are returning year-on-year.

The challenge is sourcing steam engineers as there are so few seafarers who now hold a steam certificate. Chief Cook is also one of the more difficult positions to fill.



How do living quarters on board Waverley compare to other vessels?

Waverley's crew quarters have been compared to camping at sea. There are fifteen cabins on board, all but four are twin berths. Each has a wash hand basin and some storage. Unlike modern vessels there are no ensuite facilities. The Master's cabin is on the Bridge.

The crew accommodation was last completely refurbished in 2003 and is now in need of a refresh. We must invest in the crew cabins and showers this coming winter to show crew who will return next season that improvements are being made.

Waverley will never be able to compare favourably with more modern vessels in terms of crew accommodation but we must try and ensure it is the best it can be, although it will always be lacking in space.

I deeply appreciate the sheer hard work the whole crew put in, especially given the living quarters and facilities on board.

How will the ship or Company secure steam engineers in the future?

We have been in dialogue with the MCA for some time now on establishing a steam engineer training programme which will allow us to train engineers. This is now progressing and I am hopeful we will see the benefits into next season. The aim is to have a way of endorsing "motor tickets" with a steam certificate for Waverley. This will then allow us to employ engineers who currently hold appropriate certificates to sail on diesel vessels as Chief or 2nd Engineer and therefore by gaining a Waverley endorsement they can sail on Waverley in a similar capacity.

It is fair to say that without a new route to training engineers on Waverley she will eventually (sooner rather than later) run out of steam certificated engineers. Steamship Shieldhall is in a similar position and they too are involved in developing this training programme with the MCA. I am delighted that we are building an excellent relationship with the Shieldhall team, wonderfully illustrated by the meeting of both vessels on the South Coast in recent days.

The engineering team has seen some familiar faces this season.

A PURSER'S BRISTOL CHANNEL BLOG

Waverley's Chief Purser, Andrew Comrie, was looking forward to sailing the Bristol Channel knowing it was going to be busy, but he never anticipated just how busy the ship would be with an average of over 1,000 passengers a day.

Waverley finally arrived on the Bristol Channel for the first time in 5 years on Wednesday 31st May and headed across to Ilfracombe for water and to familiarise her crew with the pier. It was a gorgeous evening and Waverley fitted in well with the pretty resort and its surroundings. She then proceeded up Channel to Barry Roads for an overnight anchorage.

The following day berthing trials were carried out at both Clevedon and Penarth before Waverley made an unusual visit to Cardiff Docks for bunkers and an overnight berth. The first passenger sailing was a cruise from Penarth to Clevedon, then the Holm Islands and the Welsh Heritage Coast. The weather was initially grey and cold, but this quickly burned away to unveil uninterrupted sunshine with a brisk easterly wind that made sailing conditions on the Channel very pleasant. On the return to Penarth and Clevedon Waverley picked up more passengers for her popular under the bridges evening cruise, resulting in huge passenger transfers, particularly at Clevedon. The evening cruise included Waverley's first visit to Portishead in over 20 years and the option to sail here one-way from Clevedon proved particularly popular. Over 1,400 were carried throughout the day, the highest number in a very long time.

Throughout the day Waverley's red ensign remained at half-mast as a show of respect to the legendary former Chief Purser Jim McFadzean who sadly passed away a few weeks before the 2023 season began and whose funeral was taking place that day.

The following day the ship sailed at full capacity from Clevedon and Penarth to Ilfracombe where bunkers were taken before a short afternoon cruise of the North Devon Coast was given which attracted strong numbers. Lundy Sunday was next and as expected this sailing proved to be very popular with a near capacity crowd on board and idyllic conditions throughout the day. Unfortunately, a delay to departure at Lundy ensured that a long day became even longer for everyone and a strong tide against Waverley in the Channel meant that Penarth was reached at 11:30pm and Clevedon at 1am. Despite the late finish passengers were very grateful and understanding and some remarked that without the delay they wouldn't have seen the beautiful rose-coloured moon that appeared as Clevedon was finally reached. After disembarking her final passengers Waverley anchored and entered Avonmouth Docks later in the morning for a well-deserved off-service day.

Tuesday 6th June was the nominated PSPS Members cruise which gave a return sailing from Portishead to Ilfracombe. It was a quieter cruise than recent days but the ship still ended up carrying well over 500. Members of the PSPS Bristol Channel branch were treated to boiler room and bridge visits and thanked for keeping the faith over the last few years. Volunteers from Motor Vessel Balmoral were also on board and had a small stall outside the Purser's Office that attracted strong interest. Waverley proudly flew both ship's pennants, a great sign of cooperation between the two ships.



Waverley backs out of Ilfracombe Harbour on Saturday 3rd June 2023, her first cruise from the Devon resort since 2018.



A classic Bristol Channel scene with Waverley well loaded as she arrives at Penarth with Flat Holm and Steep Holm in the background.

Wednesday 7th June was Weston day and Waverley went alongside Knightstone Island Harbour for the first time in a decade. The ship was almost full after Penarth and emptied and refilled at Ilfracombe for the short afternoon cruise to Foreland Lighthouse. This meant that well over 1,000 individual passengers were carried throughout the day. Waverley must have looked magnificent as she backed away from Weston into the sunset after her remaining happy passengers were disembarked.

“passengers singing all the way home to Wales”

On Thursday 8th the easterly wind picked up at an unfortunate time and made her cross-Channel passage from Porthcawl to Ilfracombe particularly lively, though the sun shone all day. Again, this was the first time she had sailed from Porthcawl in a decade. At Ilfracombe several passengers (and the Purser!) enjoyed an excursion to the charming Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. The return journey was much smoother and very enjoyable with the sound of merry passengers singing all the way home to Wales making it feel reminiscent of the days of Campbell’s steamers.

Unfortunately, Waverley’s run of good luck came to an end as even stronger easterlies and rougher seas were predicted the following day, ruling out calls at Ilfracombe and Lundy and forcing the cancellation of the planned Swansea – Lundy sailing.

Just under 600 boarded at Penarth on Saturday 10th June and the ship was just under full capacity after

calling at Minehead for a sailing to Ilfracombe and the Exmoor Coast. The weather was warm and flat calm but with threatening skies, though significant rain never fell. Unfortunately, a miscommunication with passengers on the West Somerset Railway resulted in around 70 being left behind by coaches. The General Manager and myself worked as quickly as possible to determine exactly what had happened and then ensure passengers were returned to Penarth as soon as possible. Disappointingly, misinformation was reported by press. Thankfully bad press can’t take away the fact that Waverley was making history on the Channel with unprecedented levels of support and high passenger numbers day after day.

Sunday 11th brought another very busy day with an afternoon cruise from Penarth, Clevedon and Portishead under the Severn Bridges and then an evening Clevedon Pier Fundraising cruise round the Holms, the first taking advantage of the higher passenger capacity on Waverley’s Class IV certificate and carrying well over 750 and the second over 600.

Waverley emerged from Avonmouth at 5am on 13th June after an off-service day. She then proceeded to anchor off Penarth until midday when she came alongside to start her cruise to Porthcawl and the Gower Coast. The weather was hot and flat calm, but there was initially some doubt that the call at Porthcawl would go ahead after a light aircraft crash initiated a search and rescue operation. Fortunately, the pilot was rescued and Waverley sailed as planned with a near capacity compliment on the afternoon cruise.

The crew of a historic paddle steamer say it is proving excursion steamers are not a thing of the past.



bbc.com

Historic paddle steamer 'more popular than ever'

Andrew Comrie gave an interview on Clevedon Pier to the BBC focusing on the outstanding level of support the ship received. This was broadcast across the South West and published online.

Waverley's success on the Bristol Channel was such that the time built into the timetable at piers for passenger transfers simply wasn't enough given the very high volume of passengers. This was certainly the case on Wednesday 14th June when Waverley picked up well over 500 at Clevedon for another day that was expected to be quiet! Just under 500 were also carried on the afternoon cruise out of Ilfracombe down the North Devon Coast, though the ship was delayed leaving Ilfracombe on the return due to a late change to Waverley's bunkering schedule, Ilfracombe being one of very few places on the Channel where bunkers can be taken.

Thursday 15th June brought a rather complex timetable that offered several different options for passengers from Penarth and Clevedon, but the end result paid dividends. A short morning cruise round the Holms was given while some Penarth passengers disembarked at Clevedon to get a coach to Bishops Lydeard to join the West Somerset Railway. Following the short cruise more calls were made at Clevedon and Penarth before the ship made her way to Minehead to pick up her railway passengers. The day could only be described as Mediterranean with full capacity loads embarking and disembarking at almost every call and with queues that stretched the lengths of Clevedon and Penarth Piers and well beyond, those familiar with the history of Bristol Channel steaming remarked that they'd never seen anything like it. Throughout the day Waverley carried well over 1,800 passengers, a number that has rarely been achieved.

Friday 16th June brought the ship back to Ilfracombe for the final time this season where once again bunkers were taken as she sat alongside to allow her passengers time ashore. It was another Mediterranean day, although the weather dulled over into the night.

Another call at Minehead was made where passengers who joined at Ilfracombe were transferred to a coach and more passengers were taken up Channel to Clevedon where they would be coached home.

The following day was very special with Waverley's first visit to Tenby in over 30 years. Again, the weather was beautiful and Waverley made excellent progress from the Upper Channel following her final calls of the year at Penarth and Clevedon. Fantastic views of the Gower coast were on display and Waverley saluted an old friend as she passed Port Eynon Bay. The course was then set for Tenby, and the much-anticipated event didn't disappoint. A huge flotilla of small craft greeted us on our approach and it appeared the whole town and more had turned up to see us arrive into the beautiful Pembrokeshire town. Over 400 went off for coaches back to Penarth and Clevedon while over 600 joined for the evening cruise past Caldey Island and St Govan's Head to Milford Haven.

Sunday's finale of the Bristol Channel season saw two full capacity cruises sailing out of Milford Haven on Sunday, the first to St Bride's Bay, Skokholm, Skomer and Ramsey Island, and the second to St Govan's Head and round Caldey Island. The weather had deteriorated somewhat with cloudy skies and the usual swells of the seas surrounding Milford Haven were present. After offloading her final Channel passengers of the year, Waverley took bunkers and water before quietly making passage to Liverpool just before midnight. By the close of the Bristol Channel season the passengers carried figure was over 42,000. To put that into context, Waverley has carried almost half her 2022 total in less than a month. The result of the 2023 Bristol Channel and indeed the Hebridean and Northern Irish sailings season is outstanding and a real achievement. This result is all the more remarkable given that a few years ago many believed excursion steamers on the Bristol Channel were a thing of the past, but Waverley's 2023 season has proved that is most definitely not the case.

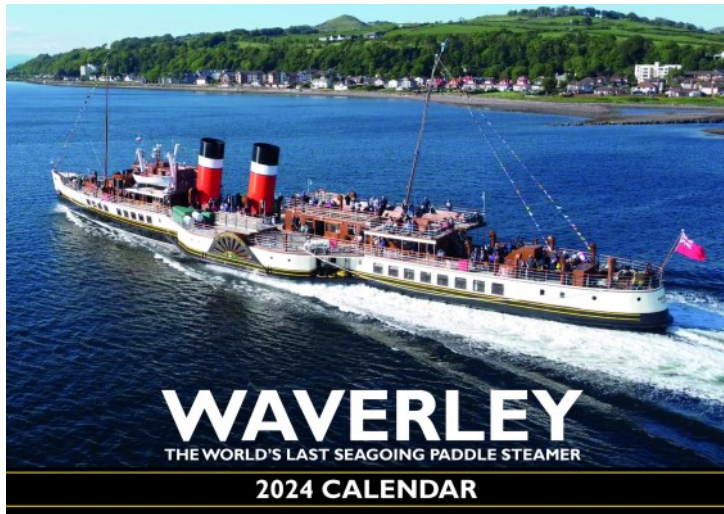
Chief Purser, Andrew Comrie



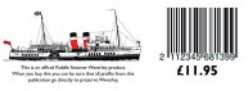
Crowds gathering in harbours and on piers became a regular feature of the 2023 Bristol Channel sailings. This image shows a busy Tenby Harbour.

WAVERLEY'S ONLINE SHOP

Waverley 2024 Calendar



Images for this Calendar have been donated by supporters who have managed to capture Waverley in all areas of the UK. If you would like to feature your photos in our 2025 Calendar, please forward your photos to info@waverleyexcursions.co.uk. Special thanks to our 2024 Photo Contributors: Allan Smith, Richard Clammer, Margaret Skee, Alan Graham, Martin Bly, David Skilton, Malcolm Lee, Dennis Hardley & Paul Rapson. info@waverleyexcursions.co.uk | 0141 243 2224 | waverleyexcursions.co.uk

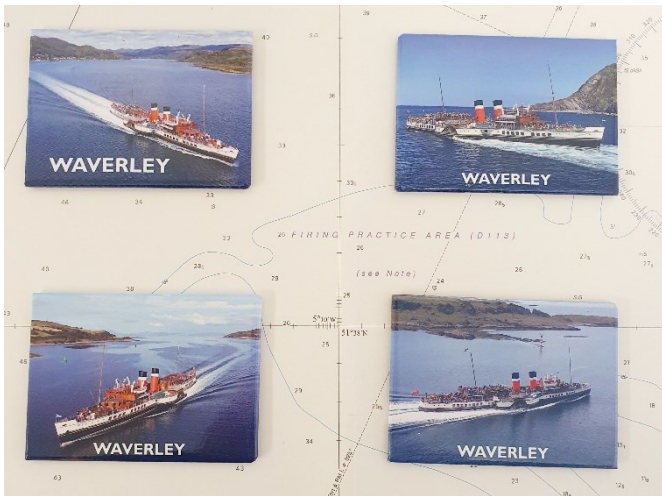


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In association with the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society.

Waverley's 2024 Calendar features stunning images of the ship in all the areas she operates around the UK.

£12.95 including P&P

Waverley Fridge Magnets



A new section of metal fridge magnets with Waverley captured in the Kyles, leaving Ilfracombe, arriving at Campbeltown and leaving Oban.

£3.50 each including P&P

Travel Mug



Waverley funnel coloured double-walled thermal mug with a capacity of 350ml. Top rack dishwasher safe & microwave safe.

£11.95 including P&P

A wide range of exclusive Waverley souvenirs and gifts can be ordered online. From November our 2024 Sailing Tickets can be ordered, making the ideal Christmas gift ticket for friends and family to enjoy a Waverley cruise next season. Visit the online shop at waverleyexcursions.co.uk/shop

**Thank you for being a Friend of Waverley.
Your continued support is valued and will help safeguard Waverley in operation.**