

A list of historic vessels afloat in British waters.

These are owned by museums, local authorities, association trusts and similar organisations in the British Isles. They are accessible to visitors at least occasionally. The earliest vessels listed are TRINCOMALEE, built in 1817 and UNICORN 1824, both still 'afloat' in enclosed wet berths; the most recent include fishing trawlers built in the 1960s. List compiled in June 2020 and believed to be up to date except for current Covid19 pandemic restrictions. This list begins at the north of Scotland and proceeds clockwise around Scotland, England and Wales, then up the west coast to Scotland.

This list does not cover the island of Ireland.

Shetland Islands

SWAN (LK243): 1900. Smack-rigged Fifie ketch built in Lerwick for longline and driftnet fishing.

Access: sails regularly for commercial cruises, trips, sail training.

The Swan Trust, PO Box 2, Shetland, ZE1 0WW.

<https://www.swantrust.com/>

Wick Heritage Centre

ISABELLA FORTUNA: 1890. 45 foot Fifie longline and driftnet fishing boat.

Access: in Wick harbour during summer months. Attends maritime festivals.

The Wick Society, 18-27 Bank Row, Wick, Caithness KW1 5EY, Scotland

<https://www.wickheritage.org/>

Dundee:

RRS DISCOVERY: 1901. Barque-rigged with auxiliary steam. Used by Captain Scott for the 1901-4 Antarctic Expedition.

Access: Discovery Point, Dundee. Visitors charged for access.

<https://www.rrsdiscovery.co.uk/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/39/rrs-discovery>

HMS UNICORN: 1824. Seppings-designed wooden frigate, always in reserve.

Access: Victoria Dock, Dundee DD1 3BP, Scotland. Admission fee.

<https://www.frigateunicorn.org/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/498/hms-unicorn>

Scottish Fisheries Museum

REAPER (FR958): 1902. Fife herring drifter, for longline and net fishing.

WHITE WING (ME113): 1917. Sailing Baldie. Restored and seaworthy.

Access: berthed in Anstruther harbour near museum. Free access.

The Museum has about 21 vessels in its collection.

Scottish Fisheries Museum Trust Ltd, St Ayles, Harbourhead, Anstruther, Fife KY10 3AB, Scotland

<https://www.scotfishmuseum.org/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/172/reaper>

Edinburgh

BRITANNIA: 1953. The former Royal Yacht, decommissioned 1997.

Access: Ocean Terminal, Ocean Drive, Leith, Edinburgh EH6 6JJ

<https://www.royalyachtbritannia.co.uk/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/1919/royal-yacht-britannia>

FINGAL: 1963. Steam tender, Northern Lighthouse Board.

Access: Now a floating hotel, associated with BRITANNIA, at Alexandra Dock, Leith, Edinburgh EH6 7DX

<https://www.fingal.co.uk/>

<https://www.fingal.co.uk/>

EXPLORER: 1955. Fisheries research trawler.

Access: SS Explorer, Edinburgh Dock, Port of Leith, Edinburgh EH6 7DN or SS Explorer Preservation Society, Custom House, 67 Commercial Street, Leith, Edinburgh EH6 7DN. Currently afloat but under restoration.

<https://ssexplorer.org/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/26/ss-explorer>

Hartlepool

'HMS' TRINCOMALEE: 1817. Built of teak in Bombay as a 46 gun *Leda* class frigate, recommissioned as a 26 gun 'sixth rate' in 1845-1847.

Access: Hartlepool Historic Quay, Jackson Dock, Hartlepool TS24 0XZ

<https://www.nmrn.org.uk/our-museums/national-museum-royal-navy-hartlepool>

<http://www.thisishartlepool.co.uk/attractions/trincomalee.asp>

PSS WINGFIELD CASTLE: 1934. Humber ferry paddle steamer.

Access: The Museum of Hartlepool, Jackson's Dock, Maritime Avenue Hartlepool. TS24 0XZ

<http://www.thisishartlepool.co.uk/attractions/wingfieldcastle.asp>

Bridlington Sailing Coble Preservation Society

THE THREE BROTHERS: 1912 sailing coble fishing boat.

THE GRATITUDE and GANSEY LASS: recently built sailing cobles.

Access: Harbour Office, Gummers Wharf, Bridlington, YO15 3AN.

All three boats are normally in Bridlington harbour and sail regularly in the bay.

<http://www.bridlingtonharbour.com/bridlington-sailing-coble-preservation-society/>

Kingston upon Hull

SPURN LIGHTSHIP (LV12): 1927. Light-vessel, stationed at River Humber estuary.

Access: in Hull Marina, but being relocated.

<https://maritimehull.co.uk/projects/spurn-lightship>

ARCTIC CORSAIR: 1960. Sidewinder deep-water trawler.

Access: Temporarily afloat at Alexandra Dock; may be moved to a dry berth.

<https://maritimehull.co.uk/whats-happening/news/arctic-corsair-to-move-for-first-time-in-two-decades>

<https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/history-hull-arctic-corsair-60-3897918>

Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre

ROSS TIGER: 1957. Sidewinder 'middle-water' fishing trawler.

Access: via the Heritage Centre at Alexandra Dock, Grimsby, DN31 1UZ

<https://www.fishingheritage.com/ross-tiger/>

Norfolk Wherry Trust

ALBION: 1898. Gaff-rigged Norfolk trading wherry.

Access: Forsythe Wherry Yard, Horsefen Road, Ludham, Norfolk NR29 5QG

There are occasional Open Days at various locations and cruises. Can be chartered.

<https://www.wherryalbion.com/>

Museum of the Broads

FALCON: 1895. Victorian steam pleasure launch.

Access: The Poor's Staithe, Stalham, Norfolk NR12 9DA. Daily trips.

<https://www.museumofthebroads.org.uk/>

The Lydia Eva and Mincarlo Charitable Trust Ltd.

LYDIA EVA (YH89): 1930. Steam engined herring drifter.

MINCARLO (LT412): 1962. Sidewinder fishing trawler.

Access: Both ships are normally berthed at Great Yarmouth or Lowestoft.

<https://www.lydiaevamincarlo.com>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/43/lydia-eva>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/1786/mincarlo>

Lowestoft

EXCELSIOR: 1921. Ketch-rigged Lowestoft fishing smack.

Access: Heritage Quay in Lowestoft, she is used for sail training or charter.

<http://www.theexcelsiortrust.co.uk/>

MTB102.

Motor Torpedo Boat, 1937. Prototype built by Vosper. Saw action at Dunkirk and throughout WW2.

Access: usually based at Lowestoft, this historic small warship appears at many events.

<http://www.mtb102.com/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/486/mtb-102>

Cambria Trust

CAMBRIA: 1906. 91 ft. Everard spritsail river and coastal sailing barge.

Access: Based at Pinmill, River Orwell, Suffolk. Cambria can be chartered for sail training, etc. She sometimes appears at maritime events on the River Thames, or in Essex.

<http://cambriatrust.org.uk/>

Harwich

LV18 Lightvessel: 1958. Trinity House vessel at various locations. Later used for a 'pirate' radio transmitter.

Access: The Quay, Harwich CO12 3HH. Open to public in summer.

<http://www.lv18.org/>

Pioneer Sailing Trust

PIONEER: 1864. 70 ft. Essex sailing smack.

Access: Based at Harkers Yard, Shipyard Estate, Brightlingsea, CO7 0AR.

<http://www.pioneerck18.org/index.html>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/1903/pioneer>

Maldon

BRENT: 1945. Admiralty TID 159 steam tugboat, used by Port of London Authority.

Access: Steam Tug Brent Trust, 12 The Hythe, Maldon, Essex CN9 5HN
<http://www.steamtugbrent.org/>

CENTAUR: 1895. Thames spritsail wooden coasting barge.

PUDGE: 1922. Thames wooden sailing barge with auxiliary engine.

Access: Thames Sailing Barge Trust. Usually at Hythe Quay, Malden.

<https://www.bargetrust.org/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/page/shipshape/thames-sailing-barge-trust>

London

HMS BELFAST: 1938. WW2 light cruiser (Imperial War Museum).

Access: on the Thames, off Tooley Street, London SE1 2JH

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/hms-belfast/about>

PORTWEY: 1927. Twin screw coal-burning steam tug.

Access: South Quay of the West India Docks, London.

<http://www.stportwey.co.uk/>

The Wellington Trust

HQS WELLINGTON: 1934. Royal Navy 1256 ton sloop.

Access: On the Thames, at Temple Stairs, Victoria Embankment, WC2R 2PN

Now the headquarters of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners.

Occasional open days.

<http://www.thewellingtontrust.com>

TATTERSHALL CASTLE: 1934. Paddle-wheel ferry, served as a ferry across the River Humber. Now moored on the Thames as a restaurant and bar.

Access: Victoria Embankment, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HR

<https://www.thetattershallcastle.co.uk>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/72/tattershall-castle>

CLIFTON CASTLE: 1926. Diesel excursion boat on River Thames.

Access: Colliers Launches. Can be chartered for events & river excursions between central London and Hampton Court.

<https://www.colliers-thames-boat-hire.co.uk/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/250/clifton-castle>

Chatham

'HMS' GANNET: 1878. Composite sail & steam naval sloop.

'HMS' CAVALIER: 1944. Fast CA class WW2 destroyer.

Access: Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TZ.

CAVALIER is preserved as the National Destroyer Memorial.

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/431/hms-cavalier>

<https://thedockyard.co.uk/explore/three-historic-warships/hms-gannet/>

<https://thedockyard.co.uk/explore/three-historic-warships/hms-cavalier/>

TID 164: 1945. Admiralty tug, chartered to Port of London etc.

Access: TID 164 Preservation Trust, Anchor Wharf, Chatham Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TZ

<https://www.tid164preservationtrust.co.uk/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/70/tid-164>

KENT: 1948. Single screw diesel tug: ship handling in Medway.

Access: South Eastern Tug Society. Currently moored in Chatham Maritime Marina, St Marys Island.

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/1937/kent>

<http://www.simplonpc.co.uk/SETS.html>

MEDWAY QUEEN: 1924. Excursion paddle steamer; RN minesweeper during WW2, taking part in Dunkirk evacuation.

Access: Medway Queen Preservation Society, Pier Approach Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 1RX.

<https://www.medwayqueen.co.uk>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/46/medway-queen>

Jersey

Jersey Maritime Museum and Occupation Tapestry.

A number of historic boats are afloat in the marina.

Access: New North Quay, St Helier, Jersey JE2 3ND

<https://www.jerseyheritage.org/places-to-visit/maritime-museum>

Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

'HMS' WARRIOR: 1860, iron-hulled armoured steam & sail battleship.

Access: National Museum of the Royal Navy, Visitor Centre, Victory Gate, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth PO1 3LJ

<https://www.historicdockyard.co.uk/site-attractions/attractions/hms-warrior-1860>

VIC 56: 1945. Admiralty victualling inshore craft until 1975.

HSL 102: 1936, high speed launch used by RAF for rescue at sea.

Access: Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust, 19 College Road, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth PO1 3LJ. Part of the extensive collection, VIC56 attends maritime events.

<https://www.vic56.co.uk/>

<https://www.pnbpropertytrust.org>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/77/vic-56>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/525/hsl-102>

<http://www.bmpt.org.uk/>

Southampton

SHEILDHALL: 1955. Cargo steamship, once a 'sludge carrier'.

Access: The Solent Steam Packet Company Ltd, S.S. Shieldhall, Berth 110, Southampton Docks, Hampshire SO15 0HH. Based in the Solent, carries paying passengers on local cruises. Can be chartered.

<https://www.ss-shieldhall.co.uk/>

Cowes, Isle of Wight

The Classic Boat Museum owns a large collection, some of which are sailed from time to time.

Check with: Classic Boat Centre Trust, 36 Castle Road, Cowes, PO31 7QZ

<https://www.classicboatmuseum.com/>

Dartmouth

KINGSWEAR CASTLE: 1924. Coal-fired paddle steamer for excursions.

Access: Paddle Steamer Kingswear Castle Trust. She operates for excursion sailings on the River Dart, Devon.

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/35/kingswear-castle>

<https://www.paddlesteamerkc.co.uk/>

<http://www.kingswearcastle.co.uk/>

National Maritime Museum Cornwall

Discovery Quay, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 3QY

This branch of the NMM holds the National Small Boat collection. Some of these vessels sail on Heritage Tours with fee-paying passengers.

<https://nmmc.co.uk/heritage-boat-tours/>

Cornish Maritime Trust

BARNABAS: 1881. 40 ft. Lug-rigged fishing boat.

SOFT WING: 1900. 24 ft. Truro river oyster dredger.

ELLEN: 1882. 17 ft. Spritsail Gorran Haven crabber.

Access: Cornish Maritime Trust Office: Tumbleweed, Quay Road, St Agnes, Cornwall TR5 0RP

<http://cornishmaritimetrust.org/>

Bideford

FRESHSPRING: 1946. Royal Fleet Auxiliary water-carrier.

Access: Steamship Freshspring, Landvisiau Walk, Bideford, Devon

EX39 2BX. Currently being restored by Steamship Freshspring Trust.

<https://www.ssfreshspring.co.uk/about-us>

<https://www.shipsnostalgia.com/showthread.php?p=3016321>

Bristol

PYRONAUT: 1934. Fire-boat, WW2 service, now takes trips.

JOHN KING: 1935. Tug boat, now takes visitors on trips.

MAYFLOWER: 1861. Steam-tug, now takes harbour tours.

Access: Mshed, Princes Wharf, Wapping Road, Bristol, BS1 4RN

<https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed/whats-at/working-exhibits/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/619/pyronaut>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/45/mayflower>

BALMORAL: 1949. Ferry, ships' tender and excursion ship.

Access: MV Balmoral Fund Ltd. Vessel is usually moored in Bristol Harbour near the M-Shed or SS Great Britain. Excursion vessel, can be hired.

<https://www.thebalmoral.org.uk/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/128/balmoral>

National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port

A large collection of inland waterways barges and river craft, many of them afloat alongside the canal docks. Visitors can take canal trips in horse-drawn boats.

Access: National Waterways Museum, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 4FW

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/national-waterways-museum>

Merseyside

EDMUND GARDNER: 1953. Pilot Cutter for the Pilotage Service in the Irish Sea until 1981.

Access: Merseyside Maritime Museum, Hartley Quay, Royal Albert Dock, Liverpool, L3 4AQ *Note: This vessel is now in a dry dock.*

<https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/edmund-gardner/pilot-ship>

KERNE: 1913. Admiralty harbour tug on River Medway until 1948.

Access: Steam Tug Kerne Preservation Society Ltd. Sometimes in Canning Dock, near Merseyside Maritime Museum, or at Ellesmere Port.

<https://www.tugkerne.co.uk/>

DANIEL ADAMSON: 1903. Twin-screw steam tug-tender; Manchester Ship Canal.

Access: Daniel Adamson Preservation Society. Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge, nr Runcorn, Cheshire WA7. Cruises on River Weaver, etc.

<https://www.thedanny.co.uk/>

Black Country Living Museum

PRESIDENT: 1909. Steam-powered canal narrowboat.

DIAMOND: 1928. Canal narrowboat.

'BESSIE' BCN14693: 1895. Canal day boat.

Access: Tipton Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 4SQ

<https://www.bclm.co.uk/>

Wooden Canal Boat Society, Ashton under Lyne

This organisation owns a large number of traditional inland waterways vessels, many of which have been restored to working condition.

Access: Office & Shop: 173 Stamford Street Central, Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside OL6 7PS

<http://www.wcbs.org.uk/>

Windermere Jetty (was Windermere Steamboat Museum)

OSPREY: 1902. Classic steam launch.

JANE: 1937. Chris Craft motorboat.

PENELOPE II: 1930. Traditional style motor launch (under renovation).

The above are three of the approximately 40 classic vessels in the collection. These are normally on the water; other boats will be on the lake from time to time.

Access: Rayrigg Road, Windermere, Cumbria LA23 1BN

<https://windermerejetty.org/>

<https://www.visitcumbria.com/amb/windermere-steamboat-museum/>

Ullswater

LADY OF THE LAKE: 1877. Steam, later diesel, passenger vessel on Ullswater.

RAVEN: 1899. Steam, later diesel, excursion vessel on Ullswater.

WESTERN BELLE: 1935. Passenger vessel at Dartmouth.

Access: Ullswater Steamers, The Pier House, Glenridding, Cumbria CA11 0US. This company operates these, and another two more recent vessels, for commercial excursions. They can also be chartered.

<https://www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/375/lady-lake>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/376/raven>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/300/western-belle>

Scottish Maritime Museum

KYLES: 1872. Steam cargo coaster and fishing tender.

This museum has some other large vessels in its collection, including the puffer SPARTAN, the harbour tug GARNOCK and the historic steam yacht CAROLA. Some were afloat but have been brought ashore for restoration.

Access: Linthouse Building, Harbour Road, Irvine KA12 8BT

<https://www.scottishmaritimemuseum.org/irvine-museum/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/473/kyles>

Glasgow

GLENLEE: 1896. Three masted barque cargo carrier, etc.

Access: The Tall Ship at Riverside, 150 Pointhouse Place, Glasgow G3 8RS (alongside the Riverside Museum on the River Clyde)

<https://www.thetallship.com>

WAVERLEY: 1947. Paddle-steamer, built for LNER rail company, to provide sea connections.

Access: Waverley Steam Navigation Co Ltd, 36 Lancefield Quay, Glasgow G3 8HA. She operates as an excursion steamer and for charter; temporarily under restoration.

<https://www.waverleyexcursions.co.uk/>

<https://www.paddlesteamers.org/ships/waverley/>

Loch Lomond

MAID OF THE LOCH: 1953. Excursion paddle steamer on Loch Lomond.

Access: Loch Lomond Steamship Company, The Pier, Balloch G83 8QX, Scotland. Afloat but being renovated for sailing. Can be visited.

<https://www.maidoftheloch.org/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/477/maid-loch>

Loch Katrine

SIR WALTER SCOTT: 1900. A pleasure steamer on Loch Katrine.

Access: Trossachs Pier, Loch Katrine, Callander FK17 8HZ, Scotland

<https://www.lochkatrine.com/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/67/sir-walter-scott>

Crinan

VIC 32: 1943. Built for the Admiralty as a victualling craft, based on traditional Clyde Puffer.

Access: The Puffer Preservation Trust, Cathy MacLennan, Crinan Boat Yard, Crinan, Argyll PA31 8SW. VIC32 now carries paying passengers on local cruises or day trips.

<http://savethepuffer.co.uk/>

[VIC 27 "Auld Reekie" is also at Crinan for restoration]

Many vessels appear to be in limbo. The ARCTIC PENGUIN, which had been a floating maritime museum at Inveraray, has moved elsewhere. The River Tamar barge SHAMROCK has been brought ashore at Cotehele for restoration. It is uncertain whether EDMUND GARDNER will ever be afloat again. The historic and ethnic vessels of EISCA that used to be at Eyemouth, and before that at Exeter, have been dispersed. Problems at the Ramsgate Maritime Museum have left SUNDOWNER and CERVIA facing an uncertain future. VIC27 ("Auld Reekie") has moved from Inveraray to Crinan for restoration and VIC72 ("Vital Spark") is for sale at Inveraray.

Further information may be accessible at the National Historic Ships Register: <https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/> or the National Small Boat Register: <https://nmmc.co.uk/explore/databases/>

Many members of the 40+ Fishing Boat Association own historic boats but of course these are not normally open to visitors. The same goes for many members of the Steam Boat Association of Great Britain (<https://steamboatassociation.co.uk/>)- though it is worth joining this association for their quarterly journal 'Funnel'. The SBA have frequent floating rallies where visitors would be made welcome.

Please send me corrections for errors and omissions:

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My thanks to members of Marhst-L discussion list, and to the curators and others who have supplied names of vessels and related information.

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