

The Paddle Steamer, Worthing Belle

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Built in 1885 by Barclay, Curle and Co. Clydeholm (no 292) for the North British Steam Packet Company for their Holyloch and Gareloch services from Craigendoran. Measuring 65 metres in length and 5 metres in width and was 193 tonnes gross and powered by a single cylinder steam engine.

In 1901 she was purchased by Mr J Lee of Shoreham and renamed Worthing Belle. She was employed on short sea trips Channel from Brighton West Pier westwards to Worthing, Littlehampton and Bognor Regis, and from Eastbourne and Hastings in the East. In 1909 she passed into the hands of Mr William Reid who continued to run the ship on the same schedule but with the addition of the occasional cross channel trips to Boulogne. In those days there were no restriction on open foredeck vessels making channel crossings.

In 1913 probably due to increased competition from new vessels he sold the ship to the Turkish administration de Navires a Vapeur Ottomane for services as a ferry on the Bosphorus and the steamer was renamed Touzla. She served as a gunboat in the Sea of Marmara during the 1914-18 war and was reported sunk on 30th August 1915 by gunfire from ships of the combined Allied fleets during the Dardenelles Campaign. She could not have been badly damaged however, as she was beached and salvaged to resume her ferrying after the war until she was finally scrapped in 1926.

Throughout her service in the Channel she was commanded by Captain J Trenance and became the last privately owned paddle steamer to complete the ever growing Campbell White Funnel Fleet. In March 1923 when Campbell reopened the Sussex station Captain Alec Campbell, the then Managing Director appointed Mr William Reid, a fellow Scot, as their managing agent in Brighton – a position he held until his retirement in 1936 at the age of 78! During that time, the hey-day of paddle pleasure steamers, he had charge of such well known White Funnel ships as the Brighton Belle (ex Lady Evelyn), Devolia, Waverley (ex Barry), Ravenswood, Glen Gower and Brighton Queen (II) (ex Lady Moyra)

