

River Tamar Trip

On the 26th September 2023, Jackie Yvonne & I joined Devon WI for a trip on the Tamar.



We met the group on the barbican at 12.00, where we were entertained by the Town crier. – You can tell a cruise ship was in.

At 12.45 we were allowed to board the river boat, The Plymouth Venturer, and made out way to the top deck. We were unable to sit together, but I had a fabulous view sitting aft looking over the rail.

It was breezy and choppy when we departed and sailed through Plymouth sound, passing Devils Point and the Citadel, towards Royal William Yard on the Starboard side; and Drakes Island on our Port side.

The Citadel is a dramatic 17th century fortress built to defend the coastline from the Dutch, and keep watch on a recently rebellious town. The Royal

Citadel in Plymouth was built in the late 1660s to the design of Sir Bernard de Gomme. It is at the eastern end of Plymouth

Hoe overlooking Plymouth Sound, and encompasses the site of the earlier fort that had been built in the time of Sir Francis Drake.



During the Dutch Wars of 1664-67 King Charles II decided that it was necessary to realise the importance of Plymouth as a channel port. The original plan was to build a regular self-contained fort with five bastions, to the west of Drake's Fort, but this was revised to take in the earlier fort, resulting in the Citadel's irregular outline. Possibly due to Plymouth's support for the Parliamentarians in the Civil War its guns could also fire on the town. De Gomme faced some criticism over his unorthodox design: for instance when Samuel Pepys visited in 1683 he wrote that "De Gomme hath built very sillily".



Devonport is the largest naval base in Western Europe, & has been supporting the Royal Navy since 1691. The vast site covers more than 650 acres and has 15 dry docks, four miles of waterfront, 25 tidal berths and five basins. The base employs 2,500 Service personnel and civilians, supports around 400 local firms and generates around ten per cent of Plymouth's income.

Passing the chain ferry which links Plymouth to Tor Point we were soon passing Hamoaze, a large deep water area, where warships load & unload weapons as it is far from residential areas.

The name Hamoaze has Celtic origins. The word ham means settlement or town and the word oaze means end of a tidal river. The settlement referred to is believed to have been an ancient Phoenician fort built to house a garrison of men somewhere along the Hamoaze, in order to protect the transportation of tin, which the Phoenicians were exporting from the area three thousand years ago.

Then we were passing under the impressive Tamar bridge.

The bridge runs over the River Tamar from near Wearde, Saltash in the west to Riverside, Plymouth in the east. It has a central span of 335 metres (1,099 ft) and two side spans of 114 metres (374 ft). It is part of the A38, which runs across Cornwall and Devon, and lies immediately north of the Royal Albert Bridge, a significant railway bridge designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel that opened in 1859. It is an impressive piece of engineering.



We were then travelling up the picturesque part of the river. Our next landmark was Cargreen, a small settlement in southeast Cornwall, Cargreen has a yacht club and once had a thriving industry ferrying flowers across the river to Devon.^[3] The BBC TV series *The Coroner* features the now-closed *Crooked Spaniards Inn*, shown on the right, as the set for The Black Dog Inn. As of 2021, the pub remains closed although its surrounding buildings have been converted into holiday accommodation.



Bere Ferrers was on our Starboard side with the rail bridge connecting Plymouth to Calstock



Next came Weir Quay, where the Tamar estuary narrows into the tidal river. The Tamar was navigable by seagoing ships of up to 400 registered tons as far inland as here. Now it is a picturesque place with a sailing club.

At Halton Quay, is the smallest chapel I have ever seen (It is also the smallest in England). Open air services are held in the summer months at the chapel of St Indract on Halton Quay in the parish of St Dominick. In the winter months these are held in the chapel.



St Indract was the brother of St Dominica, the original dedicatee of the church at St Dominick. Legend says that they landed at Halton Quay and brought Christianity to the area in the 7th century.



Then we were passing the grounds of Pentille; the yellow stones of the castle just peeking above the trees, and soon afterwards Cotehele Quay which is home to a working watermill, Discovery Centre, tea-room and, "The Shamrock", the only fully restored Tamar sailing barge in the world.

A few bends in the river later we were approaching Callington, and a cup of tea.



We made a bee-line for Lishe Coffee Shop and their home-made cakes. They very quickly got very busy as our boat was followed by a second one full of tourists. Callington also had an artisan ice-



cream shop, and a pub. We had an hour here. Time to admire the very smelly ducks, and watch a dog swimming for sticks.

Then it was time

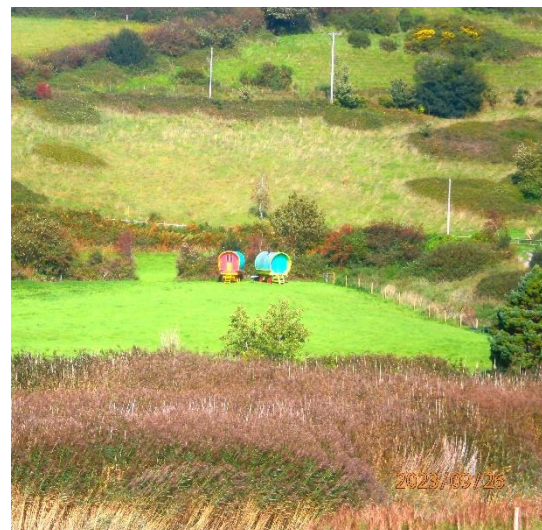
to do it all again in reverse.



Goodbye Callington

Just some of the many reed beds along the upper reaches of the Tamar.

The Tamar is Cornwall's longest river and passes through a varied landscape of woodland, rolling hills and dramatic rocky crags. After flowing past Saltash the Tamar is joined by the Lynher and forms the Hamoaze, before flowing into the sea at Plymouth Sound.



The estuary part of the Tamar is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in part recognising the diversity of bird species it supports. It is also a European Special Area of Conservation, as the low levels of salt in the estuary means that it supports unusual marine life.



Pentillie Quay





Saltash

Dock Yard



A decommissioned Submarine; in dock for another 25yrs while the reactors cool.



Torpoint chain ferry



An American Ship

Drakes Island



All too soon we were mooring up back at the Barbican. Walking back towards the Bar Code to get the bus, we decided to stop for fish & chips at the harbour. So many chips we bought them home.

It had been a good day; an experience I will do again one day.

Lesley Dempsey