

Research Report

Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War



LOTTERY FUNDED



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During the Maritime Archaeology Trust's Heritage Lottery funded Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War project, scores of volunteers undertook online research into vessels that were lost off the south coast of England during the First World War.

Their findings were used to populate the project database and contributed to Site Reports. Both are publicly available via the Forgotten Wrecks website.

This Research Report was undertaken by one of our volunteers and represents many hours of hard and diligent work. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our amazing volunteers.

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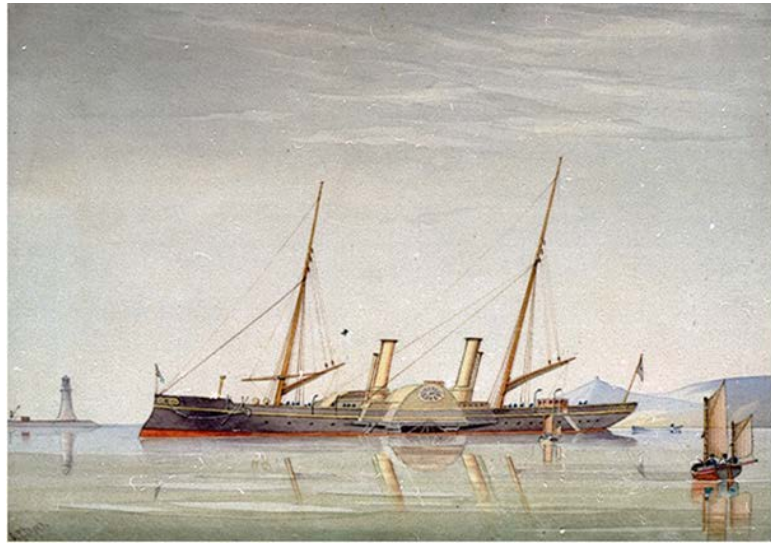
Resource II

History:

1865 – 1905 – HMS *Helicon*, “Fast Paddle Despatch” steam Paddle Ship, renamed HMS *Enchantress* when used as Royal Navy Admiralty Yacht.

1905 – 1915 – *Enchantress*, privately owned by Royal Motor Yacht Club used as Floating Clubhouse.

1915 – HMS *Resource II*, renamed when requisitioned by Royal Navy as Motor Boat Depot Ship and lost to a fire.



HMS Helicon

Watercolour Painting by George Pechell Mends

© National Maritime Museum Collections

<http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/101001.html>

MAT volunteer Roger Burns describes the varied history and ownership of this paddle steamer which incorporated an experimental bow design and included a subsequent offer as a hospital ship at the outbreak of the First World War but was used as a Depot Ship just a few miles from MAT’s offices.

In addition to the above painting, reference is made to two other paintings not accessible on-line in collections: The National Maritime Museum describes “HMS *Helicon* moored in a river, starboard beam” without further detail and The Royal Collection Trust describes an oil on canvas board by Girolamo Gianni (1837-95) of HMS *Helicon* entering Valletta Harbour, 1882 flying the flag of Vice Admiral Sir G Phipps Hornby, quoting a provenance “*Probably the former property of HRH Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh*”. (Royal Museums Greenwich) (The Royal Collection Trust)

Laid down in April 1861, launched on 31 January 1865 and named by the eldest daughter of Rear-Admiral Superintendent George Elliot, the Admiral Superintendent of the yard, HMS *Helicon* was built by the Portsmouth Naval Dockyard as a wooden paddle steamer of 1,000 tons displacement, conceived by the Admiralty as the last of four in a new class termed “Fast Paddle Despatch Boats”. At that time, it was considered to be probably the last wooden vessel to be launched from Portsmouth Naval Dockyard. It was 220 ft. (c.67m) long with 28 ft. 2 ins. (c.8.6m) beam, depth of hold 14 ft. 6 ins (c.4.4m) and a draught of 9 ft. 6 ins (c.2.89m) forward and 10 ft. 6 ins. (c.3.2m) aft. It was powered by 2 oscillating steam engines totalling 256hp provided by Messrs Ravenhill, Salkeld & Co. driving 2 feathering float paddle wheels, 20 ft. 6 ins. (c.6.25m) in diameter. (*Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* of 1 February 1865) (A feathering float paddle wheel is a design which enables the paddle floats to enter and leave the water at right angles, thereby maximising the thrust developed by the paddle wheel, also being quieter with less splash compared to a fixed design, illustrated at <http://nautarch.tamu.edu/PROJECTS/denbigh/WHEEL.HTM>).

The *Orkney Herald, and Weekly Advertiser and Gazette for the Orkney & Zetland Islands* of 03 January 1865 remarked that neither the *Psyche* (Despatch Vessel) nor the *Enchantress* (Admiralty Yacht), sister paddle ships of *Helicon*, had realised their expected speeds under steam due to resistance caused by a wave raised at their bows and tendency to press their cutwaters downwards into the sea when at full power. Accordingly, although *Helicon* had the same overall design, it was constructed with a

modified bow which was the result of an intervention of Mr E. J. Reed in one of his first official acts on becoming the Chief Constructor of the Navy, advising the Admiralty during *Helicon's* construction to reconstruct the hull forward from its midship section and this was acted on as of December 1863. As launched, *Helicon's* forward section had a prolonged or projecting bow below the water-line. This design was not unique, designated variously as "U-shaped", "ram", "swan's breast", "cleaver", and is mentioned by Fineham at page 4 of his *History of Naval Architecture* regarding "An ancient Trireme, according to Bafius" and had been successfully adopted by the steamer *Kilmun* built in 1835 and a little later by HMS *Flying Fish*, screw despatch vessel with an in-service modified bow – a similar design was also being featured simultaneously by M. Du Puy de Lôme, Chief Constructor of the Imperial French Navy. (*Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* of 08 April 1865 and *Evening Mail* of 11 August 1865).

HMS *Salamis*, the other but unmodified vessel of *Helicon's* class but similar in all other respects including the engine, was assiduously prepared including weight carried and trialled in early April 1865 over a measured mile in Stoke's Bay in reasonable sea conditions, giving data for subsequent comparison with *Helicon* who during the months since launch was being fitted out with its engine and other appurtenances. On 13 July 1865, *Helicon* went to sea for its trial but returned to harbour due to unfavourable weather with a force 4 wind. The trial eventually was held on 10 August 1865, *Helicon* making six runs over the measured mile, realising a mean of 14.5 knots at full speed and a mean of 12.465 knots at half power, regarded as very satisfactory as reported by the *Morning Post* of 10 August 1865. A fully detailed and comprehensive account is given in the *Evening Mail* of 11 August 1865 which noted that the sea and wind direction during *Salamis's* trial were similar. The newspaper continues with the result that *Helicon* had made nearly a knot extra compared with *Salamis* and that Mr Reed, who was on board, had stated that the advantage would be more marked "at sea among waves" in real life conditions. Commander Morgan Singer was appointed to the command of HMS *Helicon* and was under immediate orders to prepare for commissioning and deep-water trials alongside HMS *Salamis* (*Naval & Military Gazette and Weekly Chronicle of the United Service* of 16 September 1865). A few days later, *Helicon* was docked to have its hull scraped clean, *Salamis's* was already clean, and following delays due to bad weather, the trial commenced on 12 October and concluded on 16 October 1865. There was little difference after making allowance for the older coal in the *Salamis*, so the trial was repeated each ship with coal from the same batch. The outcome was similar in that *Helicon* was about 1 knot faster at full speed, but the *Army and Navy Gazette* of 04 November 1865 reported that the superiority becomes more and more apparent as the roughness of the sea increases.

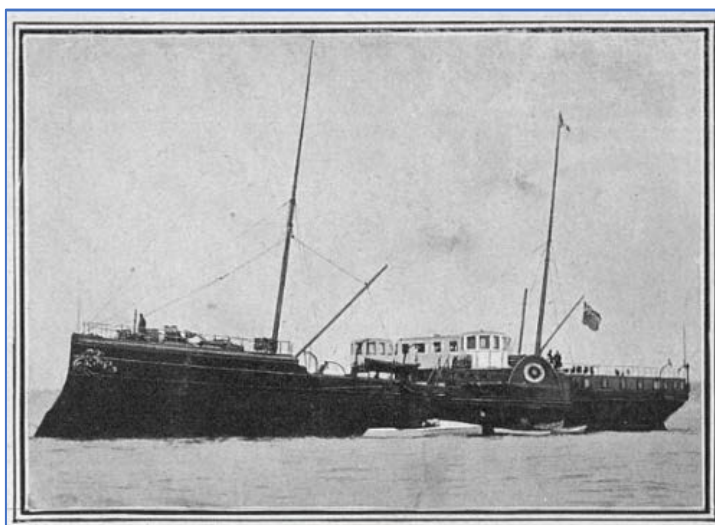
With an armament of 2 guns, calibre unknown, *Helicon* was deployed as a tender to the Channel Squadron. On 1 July 1866, *Helicon* brought His Royal Highness Prince Christian from Hamburg to Dover. *Lloyd's List*, as reported in many issues, has *Helicon* at Queenstown in April 1867, Lisbon in December 1867 and December 1868, Porto Santo in July 1869, Lisbon in May 1870, Le Havre in October 1870 and February 1871. After a short hiatus, *Helicon* re-joined the Channel Squadron at Bearhaven in Bantry Bay, having departed Plymouth on 30 April 1871, arriving at Queenstown on 8 May 1871 and back to Plymouth in August 1871, thence to the Mediterranean Fleet, arriving at Gibraltar on 5 December 1871. Whilst there, the *Hannibal*, a 3-masted schooner broke away from its moorings damaging the steam yacht *Imogene* which was made safe by warping alongside *Helicon*. *Lloyd's List* has *Helicon* between late 1871 and into the 1880's, at Mediterranean ports including Malta (frequently), Naples, Sicily, Carthage, to Suakin with the Commander-in-Chief which was the time of the siege of Khartoum, with forays back to Plymouth and to the Crimea. Further ports included Suez, Alexandria, Limassol, and the *Preston Herald* of 22 October 1887 reported that *Helicon* now at Chatham will become the Admiralty Yacht as the existing *Enchantress* serving this purpose was laid up at Portsmouth with a view to being overhauled but was found to be so rotten as being beyond repair.

During its deployment in the Mediterranean, there were two events involving HMS *Helicon*: Firstly, in September 1880, Turkey had not handed Dulcigno over to Montenegro as agreed at the Berlin

Conference. So, Britain, Austria, Russia, France and Italy set up a combined naval demonstration at Ragusa on the Adriatic. The senior officer in command of the combined fleet was Vice-Admiral Sir Frederick Beauchamp Seymour who flew his flag aboard the *Alexandra*. HMS *Temeraire*, HMS *Condor* and HMS *Helicon* made up the British contingent. This display of strength persuaded Turkey to hand over Dulcigno on 26 November (Blue Jackets). Secondly, *Helicon* was the despatch boat in the fleet which bombarded Alexandria in July 1882 (Wikipedia).

The *Hampshire Telegraph* of 7 January 1888 reported that the Admiralty was apparently in two minds about deploying *Helicon* as the Admiralty Yacht because £15,000 (approx. £1.875m in 2018) was spent on it at Malta shortly before for new boilers and new decks and had six months' stores on board ready for the China station. Additionally, it would cost another £1,000 (approx. £125,000 in 2018) to prepare it for Admiralty Yacht duties and its bottom may be no better than that of *Enchantress*. However, the *Western Morning News* of 29 March 1888 carried the announcement that *Enchantress* would be decommissioned on 31 March and that *Helicon* would immediately take its place, not only taking over the duties but also the name of *Enchantress* – and the *Hampshire Telegraph* of 07 April 1888 confirmed that the crew of the old *Enchantress* transferred to the new *Enchantress* at Portsmouth. Queen Victoria embarked on Yacht Victoria at Flushing in Holland and crossed to Port Victoria, Isle of Grain, with *Enchantress* as part of the escort fleet (*Cork Constitution* of 2 May 1890). There is little reported in the ensuing years and by August 1904, yet another *Enchantress* had assumed Admiralty Yacht duties. The *Army and Navy Gazette* of 17 December 1904 carried a notice that “our” *Enchantress*, along with several other Admiralty ships would be sold at Portsmouth.

This sale of *Enchantress* was not completed until July 1905 when it realised £2,575 (approx. £300,000 in 2018) according to the *Daily Telegraph & Courier (London)* of 17 July 1905. The *Globe* of 17 November 1905 confirmed that the Motor Yacht Club had acquired the charter of *Enchantress* to be used by them as a floating club-house on Southampton Water, described as being eminently suitable as it was already fitted with a large number of state-rooms and ample saloon accommodation. The Mercantile Navy List (MNL) records that the managing owner was, from 17 October 1905, Mansfield S. Cumming whose address was given as HMS *Argo* at Netley. *Argo* was originally HMS *Espiegle*, a composite screw sloop from 1880, serving on the Australia station then the China station from March 1885, assisted during the Chilean revolt in 1891, and fitted out as a boom defence vessel in 1899 stationed at Southampton, being renamed *Argo* in 1902 (Military Wikia).

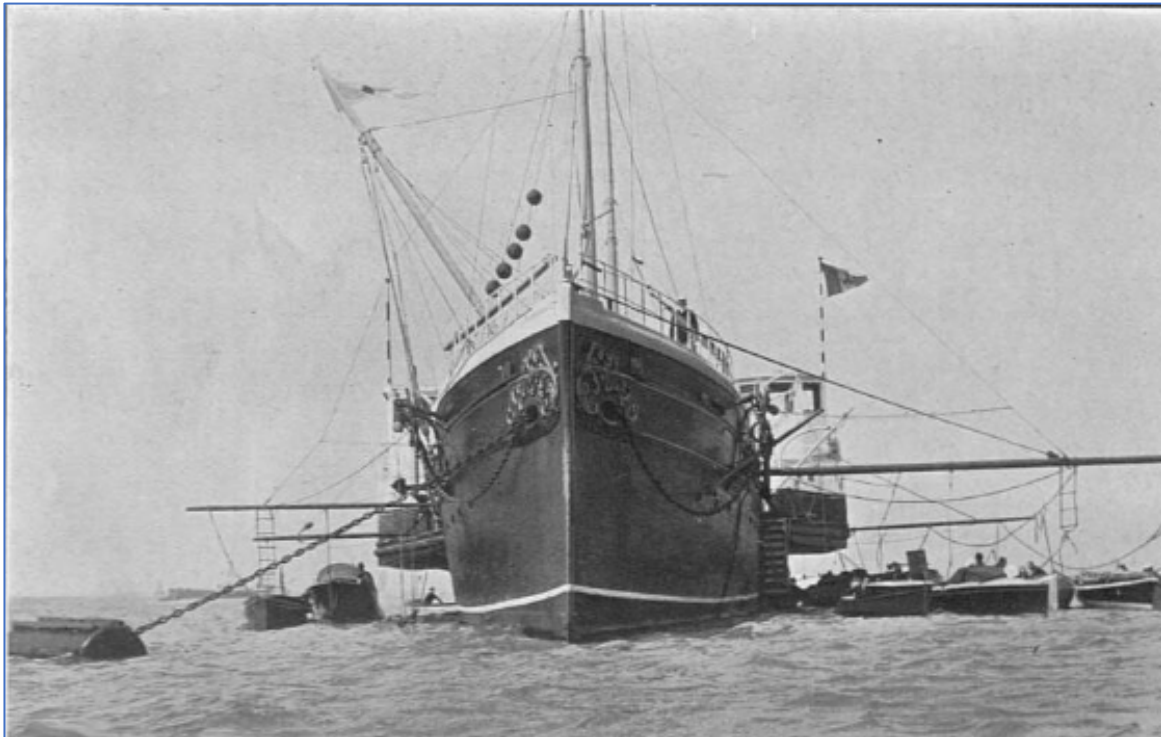


The *Globe* of 29 November 1905 mentions that *Enchantress's* engines and boilers had been removed and that the accommodation would be extended, that it would be provided with a workshop and the paddle boxes fitted out as repair docks, and that the vessel would be moored in Southampton Water in the summer months as the Club's floating headquarters, as an alternative to a shore-based location. The *Northern Daily Telegraph* of 12 May 1906 reported that conversion was complete, and, moored half a mile

from Netley Hard, was to be the principal rendezvous of marine motorists for the coming season during motor-boat races and reliability trials. The *Graphic* of 19 May 1905 carried this image with the observation that the twin funnels had also been removed and highlighted the facilities which included a dining room, 19 sleeping cabins, a ladies' dressing cabin, and a card room. Communication with the

shore was maintained by a 24hp Thorneycroft cabin launch and the ship's boats. *Enchantress* was for the first time registered, as of 18 May 1906 with Official Number 119737 when it was classified as a sailing vessel of 734 tonnage but was removed from the register in 1912 for reasons unknown.

The following years saw the *Enchantress* host to a multitude of regattas, nautical trails and other events. The motor boating world was increasing in popularity and the *Morning Post* of Friday 10 August 1906 mentioned at one event there were several persons prominent in the motor boating world including Commander Mansfield Cummings, managing owner of *Enchantress*. In May 1907, the *Enchantress* was moved temporarily to Cowes for the regattas there. The *Daily Telegraph & Courier (London)* of 25 September 1909 carried an article describing how the *Enchantress* was moored in its winter quarters in a "delightfully sheltered spot" close to the shore on the nearby River Hamble and continued with the observation that the Hamble climate was extremely mild, with the curious but true fact that the winter fogs frequently affecting Southampton Water did not penetrate the Hamble. The *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* of 21 May 1910 carried these images:



The image above shows the innovative method used to moor visiting boats to the *Enchantress*.

Watching a race from the deck of the *Enchantress*.

The Referee of 9 October 1910 confirmed that the Motor Yacht Club as it had been called would henceforth be known as the Royal Motor Yacht Club at the behest of King George V and remains today as one of the premier yacht clubs in the world.

The *Portsmouth Evening News* of 03 August 1914 carried a report that the RMYC had passed a resolution "That the Royal Motor Yacht Club do place immediately at the disposal of the Admiralty with the club ship *Enchantress*, with a view to her being utilised as a hospital ship in event of war breaking out in which the British nation was involved". The article continued with the statement that the Secretary was instructed to wire the decision of the meeting to the Admiralty at the earliest possible moment and that many members came forward to offer their services together with their fast motor boats, for patrol purposes should the Admiralty be able to utilise their services. *The Bystander* of 19 August 1914 reported that the *Enchantress* is already handed over for a hospital ship. The *Hampshire Advertiser* of 19 September 1914 reported that the *Enchantress* was moved the previous day to a new permanent all-year-round location near the Hythe shore, between the Hythe pier and the beacon off the yard of Messrs May, Harden and May. Moving forward to 23 January 1915, the *Hampshire Advertiser* reported that White Brothers were extremely busy with Admiralty work including the *Enchantress*. Two days later, the *Portsmouth Evening News* stated the Admiralty had issued instructions that the name *Enchantress* should not in future be used by the Royal Motor Yacht Club, owing to confusion with HMS *Enchantress*.

Enchantress was requisitioned by the Admiralty on 1 October 1915, renamed *Resource II*, allocated Pendant No 098 and hired as a motor boat depot ship for the new RNVR-commanded Motor Launches arriving from the USA, under the command of Commander Francis Richardson RNVR. Only 6 weeks later on 12 November 1915 while fitting out in Southampton, possibly at anchor, *Resource II* caught fire and was towed clear of the dock to prevent the fire spreading to shore installations.

Resource II was gutted and sank in Southampton Water, an ignominious end to a splendid vessel (naval-history.net).

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[Dittmar4AP.htm](https://www.naval-history.net/WW1NavyBritishShips-Dittmar4AP.htm) AND <http://www.naval-history.net/WW1NavyBritishBVLsARN1510.htm>