STEAMSHIP
FRESHSPRING
SOCIETY

FRESHSPRING NEWS

Autumn 2014

Preserving the past to inspire knowledge for the future

Chairman's Report

The Trustees are pleased to be able to send you the Autumn Newsletter, which we hope you will enjoy reading. The high quality of the Spring version was very successful and has been invaluable in promoting the Trust. We aim to expand the range of articles in the newsletter to maintain general interest in the area of maritime heritage, and I am delighted that we are able to include the excellent article on PS *Lincoln Castle* in this issue.

The summer has been very active for volunteers and there have been regular working parties on the ship making good progress in keeping the weather out and creating a ship shape standard on board. As you will be aware, last winter's storms were very tough on *Freshspring* and we had a real concern that should the ship be in the same berth this winter, damage could be caused. Fortunately we have been able to move her into a very protected pill on the same site. This has bought us time to find a long term berth for the ship.

Unfortunately, after a great deal of work, we have still not found a secure berth with public access. Bristol was looking very promising but local authorities are nervous about older vessels. However, we are still in serious discussions with the city so all is not lost. Trustees continue to secure a long term base and funds have been indicated from The Arts Council to support renovation when the ship is in a public location. Applications to HLF are also linked to secure public berthing so it is vital that we find a friendly port in order to progress the project. The Trustees would like to see the ship remain in the Bristol Channel area, which is where we are concentrating energy.

Several events have been attended by volunteers, including stands at a boat show at Southampton, the Great Dorset Steam Fair and Tall Ship's Greenwich. It is essential that the Trust raises its profile in general terms as this helps with membership and ensuring SS *Freshspring*, which is a unique survivor, is properly recognised. I attended Tall Ship's Greenwich by invitation from National Maritime Development Group (NMDG) with a stand at "Then and Now Restoration Zone", an exhibition and theatre promoting marine conservation, traditional maritime heritage skill sets and how modern technology, design, construction and engineering supports maritime heritage restoration projects. This was an excellent platform for the Trust as it was a high profile event with almost 1,000,000 people visiting. In particular, NMDG arranged a networking evening which our Patron Lord Attlee attended. His presence was a huge boost to the Trust at the event as it ensured that we met people who are likely to be very helpful in the future in a range of ways. The Trust has also been invited to provide a guest speaker at The National Forum of Engineering Centres, National Conference. This is a tremendous opportunity as it is attended by heads of engineering at colleges and universities across the country. It fits well with the Trust's objectives to inspire young people to become engineers of the future.

John Puddy tells spectators at the 'Playpen' at the Great Dorset Steam Fair all about SS Freshspring, *while commentator and National Traction Engine Trust President, Andrew Semple, looks on.* **Brian Gooding**

Chairman John Puddy on the stand at the Great Dorset Steam Fair.

The Society stand at Tall Ships Greewich.

Due to activities of volunteers and Trustees, the Steamship Freshspring Society is becoming very well known across the country and membership continues to grow. Progressively it is recognised that SS *Freshspring* is a very unique survivor and saving her is of paramount national importance.

You might have noticed that the enclosed new leaflet has three new logos, Nautilus Maritime, National Maritime Development

Group (NMDG), and Jobs in Maritime. Nautilus is the international union for seafarers and is a very large and influential organisation, which works to maintain standards at sea and to encourage young people to take up seafaring careers. NMDG, whose aims are to promote seafaring to all people, particularly the young, and to link school education, higher education and employers to ensure people are aware of the excellent careers that exist at sea. Similarly Jobs in Maritime focus on the very wide aspect of maritime careers, from catering to hairdressing. We are delighted to have these three very prominent sponsors supporting the project as the aims of the Trust along with preserving *Freshspring* are to inspire young people to go to sea as engineers or the many other opportunities that exist. There is a huge shortage of seafarers in this country, primarily because this high quality area of training and employment is not promoted in the way it should be. Within Trust objectives we are active in raising the awareness of opportunities that exist and hope to help many young people engage in rewarding careers at sea.

The Trust has a very long way to go with the restoration project but recognition is increasing and SS *Freshspring* deserves a prominent place in maritime history. Only a few years ago, she was due to be scrapped and with your ongoing support, this will never happen. The Trust has a very active Patron, Lord Attlee, who is providing opportunities and advice and the active Trustees have focussed on creating networks and contacts to facilitate mutual benefit and to become as effective as possible in promoting maritime employment to young people.

As activities increase, so does the need for volunteers both on the ship and in an administration role working from home or promoting membership and attending events. Please let us know if you and/or your friends would like to help, even an hour a week is very valuable. We would also be delighted to receive articles from you for the newsletter to broaden interest in maritime heritage.

John Puddy

Ship's Whistle

Trustees were invited to view the *Medway Queen* during the Spring and very much enjoyed spending time on board the ship and in their comprehensive workshops. As a team, we need to learn all we can about the issues facing ship preservation and this visit was both educational and informative. During the visit, we were presented with the steam siren from another *Fresh* class ship. No one is quite sure how the siren came into possession of the *Medway Queen* group but it was felt by MQPS Trustees that it would be more appropriate for it to be lodged with Steamship Freshspring Society. A short formal handover ceremony was performed by John Kempton, the MQPS Deputy Chairman. The siren is on permanent loan to us and is an extremely valuable artefact. It has already been used to good effect at meetings and events. The sirens on *Fresh* class ship's were the usual Navy type as fitted to practically all Naval vessels and made the well known "whoop, whoop" sound.

During April 1897, the Vice-Admiral in command of the Channel Squadron, Lord Walter Kerr, drew the attention of the authorities to the inadequacy of some of the steam whistles and sirens of Her Majesty's ships, and more especially to the faulty nature of the drain pipes attached to those whistles; and in accordance with the representations made by the Admiral, the following order was issued – "In ships fitted, with a siren and a whistle, the whistle is to be removed and an additional siren fitted in lieu. In ships fitted with a sirenette and a whistle, the whistle is to be removed and an additional sirenette fitted in lieu". I presume that the word "sirenette" is the diminutive.

Until relatively recently, the Navy relied on sirens to convey messages using morse code in bad visibility, so a standard reliable sounding device was very important to prevent collision and for communication. One of the great difficulties was getting the sirens to answer properly with condensation of steam in the steam pipes, and before a proper sound was emitted, the water created by such condensation had to be blown clear. Interestingly, the valve feeding steam to a siren was initially opened slowly to prevent a possible slug of water in the steam pipe from bursting the rotating mechanism. Engineers soon developed a bleed system which fed a small flow of steam into sirens keeping them above condensation temperature. This provided the ability for sirens and steam whistles to answer promptly to ensure that there was no misunderstanding as to longs or shorts, but also that all sirens fitted to Her Majesty's ships should be within reasonable limits of the same tone, because that would partially enable the commander of a squadron to judge the distance of the various ships composing his squadron. The drain pipes cleared condensation safely away.

We very much look forward to hearing the siren in action on board SS *Freshspring* in due course.

From our Patron, Earl Attlee

Normally I am involved in classic military and commercial vehicles. I am currently rebuilding my Mk.II Antar tractor unit. At present, no two parts of the chassis are bolted together! Just to keep myself busy, I am also putting the REME Museum's Conqueror ARV back into operation! Next year I hope to be able to transport the Conqueror to shows using my Scammell Contractor and the big girder trailer.

Earlier this year I was reading the *Nautilus Telegraph* newspaper when I read about the SS *Freshspring*. She is a steam-powered RFA water tanker from the Late 1940s but her design is essentially pre-war. Her machinery is complete and in reasonably good order. However, her stem and stern are suffering from serious corrosion and will have to be largely rebuilt. The trust has an excellent range of trustees and I have agreed to be the Patron. I was particularly attracted to The Steamship Freshspring Society because of its aims to inspire and support young people to become engineers and seafarers of the future. The intention is to bring the *Freshspring* back into operation and in class via a period as a static exhibit in Bristol or some other suitable location.

Clearly this will be challenging project but I am convinced that it is a viable one. I have my own engineering projects to complete and will not be doing so much of the hands on work. I will be supporting the project by judicious use of influence.

From the Secretary

It's been a busy few months both on and off board *Freshspring* since our last newsletter with our change of berth at Newnham, visiting shows (more about which will be covered in this newsletter) and administration behind the scenes.

To ensure that our finances are managed well, we have purchased some accounting software and with assistance from Judy Richards, I have been entering all the previous accounting information. This new software should make claiming for Gift Aid (an extra 25% from the Government from eligible donations) and possible VAT returns much easier to process in the future.

As we go to press, a new website is being designed for us, which should be live in the next few weeks. The website will be better designed, allowing improved ease of reading from different devices, such as tablets and smart phones, and will future-proof us as it needs to expand over the forthcoming years.

On the subject of matters online, I'd like to remind you that we have a page on Facebook, www.facebook.com/SSFreshspringSociety, where you see the latest news and pictures from onboard.

Membership

There's an old saying, "If you want something done, ask a busy person," but when John asked me if I would take over looking after the membership of the Society, I have to admit I had some misgivings as my life is certainly busy!

You will hopefully all have seen the letter that John sent about the change of handling the Society's membership and that it would be handled by 'Steam Heritage Publishing'. It's not that the Society has off-loaded the job to a third party company; Steam Heritage is my business and it is a lot easier for me to use my office address for correspondence, rather than my home address, for I can more easily grab the odd few minutes at work rather than at home!

Among my many business hats, we produce this newsletter for the Society, as well as the house magazines for the Transport Trust and the Historic Commercial Vehicle Society, though the main business is the monthly newstrade magazine *Vintage Spirit* and the annual *Steam Heritage Guide*. This is not an advertisement for our magazines but rather a measure of what keeps me occupied for rather more time than I would like; trouble is, it's all good fun and very interesting work and I am really grateful that I can work at what is basically my hobby. The myriad disciplines I am involved with make for an interesting life and one where I am constantly learning about new subjects. I feel a bit of a Jack of all Trades and Master of None. . . .

It was my magazine connections that got me into the position that John Puddy asked me to become a trustee of the Society. (What do they say about being in the wrong place at the wrong [right?] time?) I am pleased to be part of what is developing into an organisation with a great vision and huge potential. I said the first time I saw the ship that it had to be saved and I am pleased that all our efforts are going to achieve that.

More specifically, with regard to membership, I have now taken over the records from Mark and thank him for making it easy for me. I need to spend a bit more time on catching up and will be contacting those of you are due to renew in the coming days. I hope to give you fair warning of when your subscription is due so that you don't miss any of the exciting developments. Things may appear slow, but there is a lot going on behind the scenes and your trustees are certainly busy!

Membership is growing slowly and we have lost a few who have sadly died, but we now have new leaflets, a few of which will be enclosed with this newsletter for you to hand to friends and like-minded people. We do need more members to help us increase the momentum that is perceptibly building.

I can be contacted by email at: brian@steamheritage.co.uk or by phone (daytime) on 01483 542 907, should you need me.

Brian Gooding

SS Freshspring moves to her new berth

(From N 51degrees 47 880minutes W 002 degrees 27 128 minutes
to N 51degrees 47 944 minutes W 0002 degrees 26 126 minutes)

Two reports on the move from those involved. Firstly, from Hugh Brading:

SS *Freshspring* has now been moved out of the River Severn into the nearby creek. This means she should no longer risk being damaged by the larger Severn bores, as happened earlier this year.

In order to achieve the move, it was necessary to move several vessels out of the creek. Two were dumb barges joined together and the third was *Monarch*, an old dredger. Both "spuds" – the 28ft long vertical tubes used to anchor the barges had to be renewed and fitted. This work took two of the Society's volunteers some four days to complete. (For the first time in many years, people actually slept aboard.)

On Sunday 7th September, a small work party of volunteers started preparing *Freshspring* for her move. The first job was to part the anchor chain stretching into the neighbouring field where the starboard anchor lay. Then a couple of hours were spent manually hauling the chain aboard. Several mooring warps were recovered and fenders prepared.

On Monday morning the ship was moved alongside the stone quay and the two barges moved out of the creek and moored where *Freshspring* had been. Several hours were spent in the afternoon helping Fred Larkham replace the bucket on his dredger *Riparian*. This was necessary so he could remove a mud bank at the mouth of the creek to allow SS *Freshspring* into the creek.

On Tuesday, just before high water, the old dredger *Monarch* floated out of the creek without much trouble, so it was decided to pull *Freshspring* into her new berth immediately. Again, this was achieved with minimum fuss. Once the tide had gone out and she was high and dry, a thorough inspection was made of all compartments under the waterline to see if any damage had occurred. None could be found.

First the old dredger Monarch *had to be dragged out. . . .*

. . . Fred's dredger Riparian *being used to manoeuvre the old vessel, often using the bucket of the digger on board.*

SS Freshspring *is moved away from the quayside under the watchful eye of John Richards.*

By late Tuesday evening, all craft had been securely moored up. Special attention was given to where *Freshspring* settled as a small stone weir was discovered some five feet in front of her bow; also her port bilge keel need a fender placing between it and a shore-based heavy RSJ frame. Further checks on where *Freshspring* settled were carried out after Wednesday's high tide and an addition warp was added midships on the starboard side. During Wednesday afternoon, the electricity meter was refitted onboard.

SS Freshspring *is readied for turning and pushing into the Pill.*

The bow enters the Pill.

Secondly, from Alan Freebury:

The move took place over two days, Monday 8th and Tuesday, 9th September, making use of the high tides in the morning.

Both John Austin and Hugh Brading slept on board for several nights whilst the move took place and did a considerable amount of work, both on the vessel and helping Fred. Stephen Attenborough was also in attendance, work permitting, at certain times during the move, getting dirty and his hands wet.

The Sunday was a day of preparation, freeing various mooring lines, some of which were in the field, buried in the grass and wrapped round various things such as trees and even a ship's mast! This work needed to be done so that we were in a position to take advantage of the tide the following morning, which reached its peak before 8am.

I was staying in Littledean and had to forego breakfast there in order to get down to the ship before high tide. I ended up having breakfast on board as the *Freshspring* was starting to float off the river bed, my first time on board with water under the keel. Once afloat, the tide and current were used to move the vessel up alongside Fred's wharf. The move was controlled entirely by adjusting and repositioning the mooring lines. After she had been made fast,

Freshspring *is pushed into the Pill by Fred's son Darren's boat.*

attention was turned to the two barges that needed to be moved, which were blocking the entrance to the pill. Fred dragged these out with his vessel *Riparian* and then, once again, we were able to use the current, now with the tide going out, to take me barges past the *Freshspring* and tie then up in the position that she had occupied for several years.

On the following day, high tide was a little later, so I was able to have breakfast at the hotel. On arriving at the entrance to Fred's premises, I noticed that Stephen's car was there. He had returned the previous evening after work but assured me he had not spent the night on board with John and Hugh!

This morning, a lot had to be done in a short time, the only obstacle to getting *Freshpring* into the pill being Fred's vessel *Monarch*, which he moved with *Riparian*. It was amusing to watch him paddle his vessel around using the bucket of his excavator, which was fastened to the deck near the bow. As he was preparing to do this, his son Darren arrived with his vessel, coming up river on the incoming tide. It was amazing to see the apparent ease with which he turned the vessel around in the fast flowing river and then worked against the current to tie up against *Freshspring*. As Fred manoeuvred *Monarch* out of the pill, Darren brought *Freshspring* to a position where she could be pushed into the pill, which Fred did with *Riparian*, *Monarch* taking the position that *Freshspring* had occupied overnight.

Safely in the Pill, with the bows among the vegetation.

Access was once again via a gangplank.

Freshspring was pushed into the pill as far as possible (the bow ending up only a few feet front the footbridge). Lines were attached to prevent too much movement and as the tide went out, she settled into the mud. The bed of the pill is of sufficient height that it needs a higher tide to float the ship and this should only occur around six times a year, each time being over a period of approximately three to four days.

The Humber Ferry Service Remembered

Memories of working on the PS Lincoln Castle

Martyn Ashworth

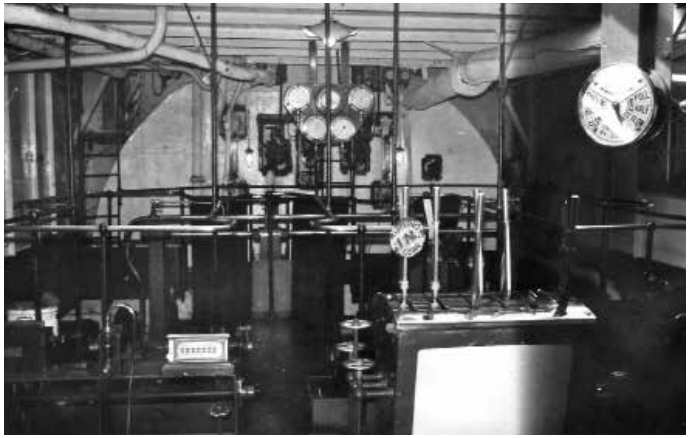
I first encountered the *Lincoln Castle* in the Summer of 1976 when I had a day out in Hull. I was on my student holidays at the time so I asked at the office if there were any Summer jobs available – unfortunately there were not as a relief man had recently been taken on but they took my details, "just in case" a vacancy came up – I did not have long to wait! My phone rang at home a few days later . . . the relief fireman had given notice as he was about to leave and go to America to join a sailing ship and was I still interested in the job? Oh, and could I start at 06.00 on Monday morning? Of course, I said yes to all of these questions and then thought . . . "How am I going to do this?"

I went to Hull, found an empty student flat to rent and booked on for duty at 06.00 that Monday morning! I was NOT going to miss this opportunity! As a steam fireman on the KWVR, I obviously knew how to fire a loco but this was different – a four flue boiler, no blower, no exhaust draught, one stoker, four large grates, two at head height and two in the middle low down – this was a very different environment to a loco but I was only 20 then and fit – you had to be, it was physically very demanding work. I joined the NUR – you had to, but I did not mind and I wore my NUR badge with pride. The Union rep was Chris Braithwaite who lived in New Holland.

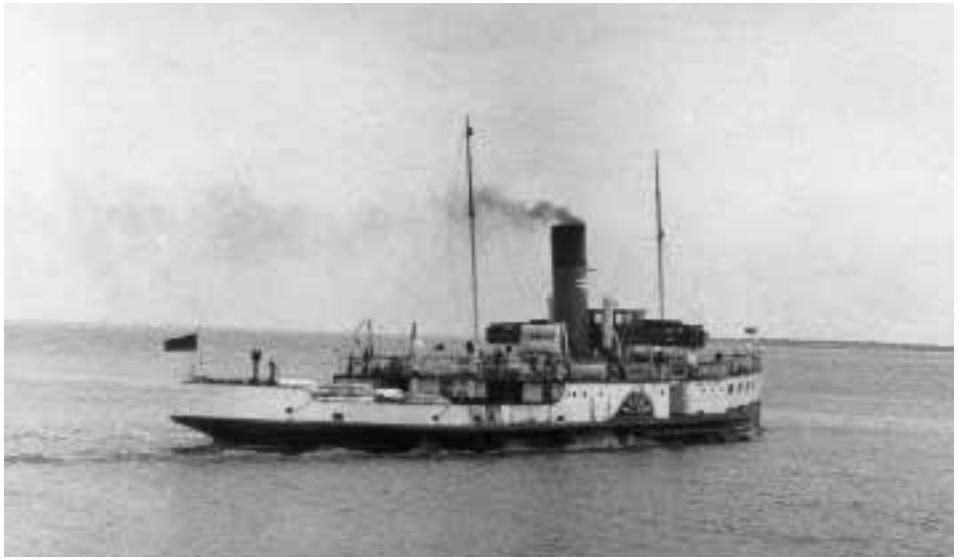
We worked a three shift system – 06.00 until 14.00, 14.00 until 22.00 and then a lone night watchman to keep watch, oil up, clean fires and get her ready for the next morning sailings – she was in steam 24/7 apart from short periods when the boiler needed attention or a thorough cleaning.

There were five Chief Engineers for the ferries – all were passed to work on both vessels, and all were very different characters with a HUGE amount of experience between them. There were two Somali stokers – Hassan and Osman. There were three leading hands at Hull, two at New Holland, for the *Farringford* and three stokers at Hull, of which I was one. The two New Holland men were called Terry Hopper and Geoff Staves – Geoff had been a railway fireman at Immingham shed. In addition, there were the two coal men at New Holland, George Coupland and Harry Holmes, both senior men who could slot in on the *Farringford* if required or as stokers on the *Lincoln Castle* if we were short of staff.

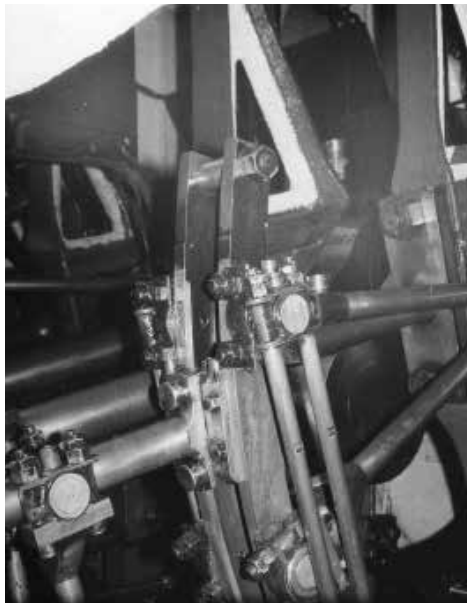
The Chief Engineer I worked with the most was the late 'Jock' Brown. We always got on very well and he taught me a great deal – 'Jock' started his working life very young as a cabin boy on a Clyde "puffer". He was my hero immediately but it gets much better. He went to work for the LMS and did a full apprenticeship at Ayr shed and spent several years on the railways. Then he got called up into the navy and worked his way up through the ranks to become a chief engineer. In peace time he worked on mostly steam vessels, reciprocating or



General view of the engine room.



Martyn at the engine controls.

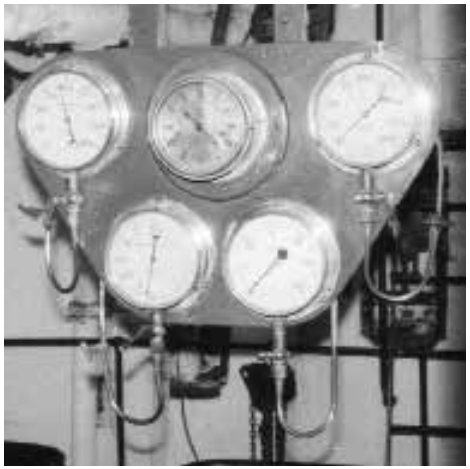


Close up of the link in the valve gear.

turbine, and sailed the world, many times. I was mortified when I got back to work one Monday morning to find out that he had passed away – 'Jock' was a friend and mentor as well as a work colleague.

When one of the leading hands went off on long term sick, we had to get by and we did this by the rest of us working 12 hour shifts! I did not mind – I was young and single, I was earning my first wage and I thoroughly enjoyed the job.

The leading hands at Hull were Harry Baker, Joe Davies and George Hambley.



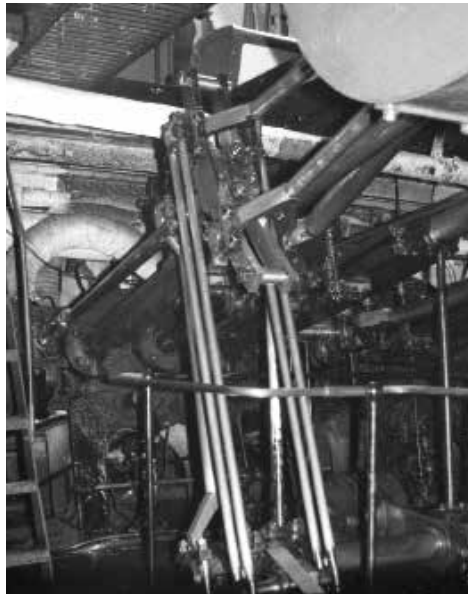
Engine gauges.

A relaxing moment for Martyn.

George had been a fireman on the railways at Hull. I enjoyed working with them all – they were all very different characters and good to work with. It was George who had been on nights in the bad Winter of 1963 when pack ice had come down the Humber and got between the ferry and the quayside to the point that her mooring ropes stretched and then broke – he woke up to find himself in the middle of the Humber! A tug had to come out from Hull and fetch her back to the quayside.

When we booked on at 06.00, the night man would go home leaving all four fires nice and clean and bright and off we would go on the first sailing of the day. Throughout the morning, you would run down one fire at a time, clean it and pile up the ashes ready for their disposal at New Holland. The coal would arrive by rail in 16 ton mineral wagons placed by diesel locos in the head shunt at the end of New Holland Pier – the coal men would then transfer the coal into four wheel tubs hauled by a "tug" down the ramp and on to the boat – we then pushed them by hand down the port side corridor and lifted them up using a block and tackle suspended from the roof and tipped the coal into the bunker – we only ever used one side although there were two bunkers – we would then "trim" the coal across the back of the stokehold so there were four heaps – one for each fire. The ashes would go up by bucket on a rope and be tipped into the now empty coal wagons and taken away for disposal in the empty 16 ton mineral wagons – this was BR steam in the late 1970s!

At 14.00 we got relieved at Hull Corporation Pier by the afternoon men and we handed her over in good shape to them with all four fires cleaned and ready for their first sailing of the day. We looked out for each other – it was great camaraderie and I learned a lot in my two years on the ferry service – partly about engines, shipping, steam and boilers but mostly about real people. When we were short staffed and as I

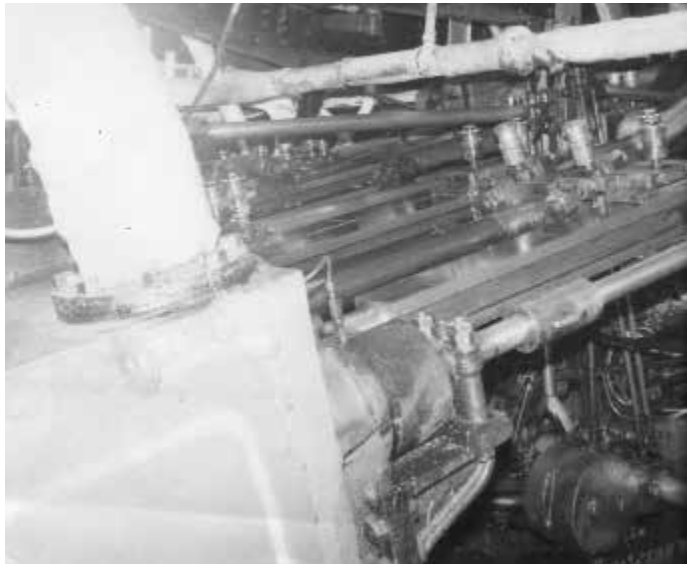


Looking towards the cylinder end.

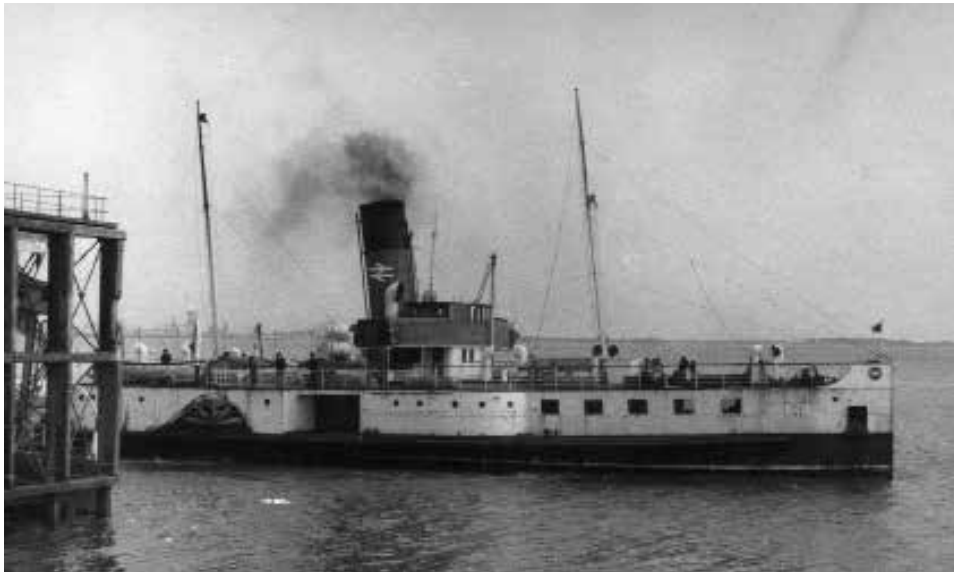
One of the furnaces.

got to know the routines better, I ended up doing some days as leading hand. This meant I had the dubious pleasure of climbing out through a small hatch and onto the middle of the paddle wheels to fill up the grease cups – quite interesting with a winter swell on the river Humber and the boat swaying around! I also used to oil and grease the main engines and keep them clean – in fact we all did – the engine room was always spotless.

This was the routine Monday to Saturday – we had rest days just like the rest of BR, and we got paid the same way, i.e. time and a half for Saturdays; worked rest days were double time and midweek overtime was time plus a quarter. Sometimes the boat would be chartered – we often used to do summer jazz nights and every year the University chartered her for "Freshers week" – these were great



A view of part of the engine from the cylinder end.



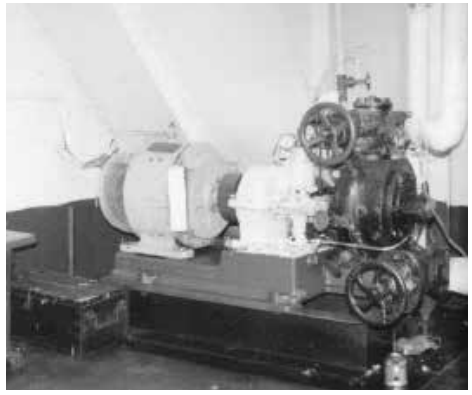
fun. The students enjoyed themselves but it gave us the chance to take her down to Spurn Point or up the river as far as we could or across to Grimsby. On one memorable Sunday we went upriver as far as Keadby Staithe.

The Humber is a large and fast flowing estuary and we used to have to fight the tide on our way back up stream – this really put our firing skills to the test – with four nice bright fires and full steam on, the beat of the paddles on the water and the swish of the engine big ends was music to the ears – how I wish people had the opportunity to still hear those sounds today. Memories of the smell of warm oil and coal in the engine room and the warmth of the place, and the steam generator humming away are as clear to me now as they were over 30 years ago.

Many people used the ferries to get to work in Hull and to watch the deck hands fitting all the 20 cars tightly together on the rear car deck was quite something – but before the bridge opened this was the only real way to cross the Humber. The onboard café did a roaring trade and the ferry service was a vital piece of Humberside social history – one that has now been destroyed forever.

Hopefully no one will start the engine with Martyn sitting where he is!

I loved the way of life and I enjoyed every minute of working on the ferries but I had taken time out from University to do this and I knew it was all coming to an end, especially for the *Lincoln Castle* (as it was she finished in Febuary 1978). So, with a heavy heart, I gave in my notice to Ted Sangster, the un-flappable general manager of the Humber ferry service,



Two of the auxiliary engines.

and my very last shift was on Thursday 22nd September 1977 when I worked the 06.00 till 14.00 turn. I moved back to Keighley the next day and started back at college the next Monday.

As a post script – 30 odd years later, I was on duty at the GCR as a steam driver and I met for the first time a new volunteer called Kirk Martin – Kirk is now a well known railway author, but in 1976 he was that relief fireman on the *Lincoln Castle* who went off to America to join a sailing boat thus allowing me to take up the post. In 2010, he started to write his book called *Smoke across the Humbe*r – the story of the Humber ferries, which is due for publication soon and the full version of my memories will be available in this book, co-written by well known Lincolnshire railway authority and historian Alf Ludlam.

Finally, in about 1995, Chris Shaw of CCLR fame and Russell Hollowood, then the Curator of the National Fisheries museum at Grimsby, asked me to go back and open up the engine room of the *Lincoln Castle* for a day which I did but this was to be the last time I set foot on her. It is SUCH a tragedy that she is now gone forever – I went with Anthony Coulls and Dave Holroyde to see her just before Copes started to demolish her in September 2010 and we all just knew that this would be the last time we would see her.

When the appeal went out for people to get involved with the *Freshspring* project, the scrapping of the PS *Lincoln Castle* was still raw and made me even more determined to help – so much of our maritime heritage has been lost and it is now vital that we do all we can to save and conserve what is left.

It is a strange twist of fate that so much of my life from 1994 onwards would be intertwined with the Great Central Railway – the original GCR operated the Humber ferries for so many years until they were taken over by the LNER and then BR. The Humber ferries were always a railway service and I was proud to work for BR, Sealink division. There was banter aplenty but it was always great team work and the Humber ferries always ran, whatever the weather.

Volunteers on board

As you will all have realised, moving the ship into the Pill dominated our work for some time, coming immediately after stemming leaks in the cable locker and the boiler room. However, being in the Pill and only floating on the highest tides means that the temporary repairs we made can be left for a little while we get on with other jobs - some specific, some general.

A clear out/general tidy up is underway around the ship. Most foreign stuff has been moved out of the galley to more appropriate areas, or disposed of. We want to make the galley a decent place for break times. We will soon have power sockets installed there (shore power is now connected all the time).

Access at the moment is by a plank onto the ship. We have started work to re-instate parts of the original gangway, with access onto the main deck.

We are re-organising stores. The aft accommodation is being cleared of bits that would be better in the main stores, such as parts of the steering gear. We have some dexion angle and will see what racking we can make out of it. We really need to go through all the parts and tools that we have around the ship and group them together in marked locations – would anyone like to help?

Other imminent projects include freeing off the rudder centre bearing (access is much better in the Pill) and splitting the prop shaft coupling. Then, as soon as we have the new turning gear, we can bar over the main engine.

If anyone can help, we could do with a decent size tap wrench and both 2 inch and 2¼ inch diestocks. We have started a collection of Whitworth taps and dies on board. I know members have also started collecting taps and dies and look forward to adding them to the ship's collection.

Please contact me if you feel you can help in any way.

John Austin 07967 114 346

Ian Finlator

I am sad to report that a very valued member and sponsor of the Trust passed away on 13th September. Ian Finlator had a great interest in everything steam and was hugely supportive, both personally and through his charity, The Guiting Trust. I met with Ian regularly to discuss the project and he invariably provided very good advice and ideas for the sustainable preservation of *SS Freshspring*. He has provided a foundation for the development of the aims of the Trust to bring the ship back into working order to educate young people. He will be very much missed.

John Puddy

At the end of the war, all of the Fresh *class manned by RFA crews came under dockyard control and became PAS vessels. A member of the RFA Historical Society, Mr Peter Madden a former senior engineering officer with the RFA, actually worked on one of these ships during his apprenticeship, here is his story.*

PAS Freshford

As part of my apprenticeship as an Engineer Cadet in the RFA, I had to spend the summer of 1963 prior to going to sea in Portsmouth Dockyard. Start time was 7am and we clocked in at No.4 Boathouse and were introduced to Mr Smart. He informed the four of us that we would be working with a gang called "Fitters Afloat West" and that I should walk along the road, collect an ill-fitting brown boilersuit on the way, and on to No.4 dry dock and find a fitter called "Arfer" who was to look after me for the next eight or so weeks.

In No.4 dry dock, was a Port Auxiliary Service (PAS) fresh water tanker *Freshford* (ex RFA) as this was as near to an RFA as possible, i.e. not a warship. She had been on lay-up on the trot out in the harbour for a couple of years and was being brought back into service and given a quick and dirty refit to give another five or so years work. *Freshford* was one of 12 water tankers built during the war to provide water, either potable or boiler feed to ships. I think they must have had limited water capacity of about 200 tons as the engine and boiler room stretched to just under the midships wheelhouse.

I duly found "Arfer" who wished to be known as "Art" looking at the deck steam main line that ran from the underside of the wheelhouse to the windlass forward, about 60 feet in length with a few bends thrown in. The pipe was constructed of two inch diameter steel pipe with four bolt flanges. It had suffered in lay-up due to the frost and had to be renewed. Art gave me a 2lb club hammer and a chisel and asked me to remove the flange nuts so that the pipe could be dismantled, taken to the pipe shop and be re-made.

Not being used to such work, it was not long before the knuckles on my left hand were red and bruised and started to bleed with the mis-hits of the chisel. It took me some time to get into the swing of things with 8 to 10 hits of the hammer to crack each nut off. I could not reach the bottom inside nut due to the curve of the tumble home. I worked all day and the next to get the nuts off but still could not get the inner bottom nuts split. This is where "Art" came into his own. He only had a few months to go to retire after over 45 years in the yard and got an extra 6 shillings (30 pence) a day to look after me and this increased his pay and hence his final pension which made him look on me a bit more favourably.

I'm sure that "Art" was short for "Artful" after all that time in the yard as he had a word with a welder working nearby who burned the nuts off in about five minutes and it cost me five cigarettes, the currency of the yard for favours. He also found a pair of leather gloves rather belatedly.

Once the pipes had been consigned to the pipe shop, we turned our attention to the windlass. The bearings were stripped down, the crank pins and main bearings checked for true and the white metal bearings scraped in, using engineers' blue and after messing around with shim leads were taken. These were thin strips of lead left in the bearing, the bearing tightened up and then released and the thickness of the squashed lead would give some indication of the internal bearing clearance, about 2 thou per inch of pin diameter. The scraped bearings had to be covered with the engineers' blue dye for about 80% of its surface. The windlass was reassembled and connected to a nearby air compressor (more cigarettes) and turned over as there was no steam.

We also worked on the steering engine in a similar way. This was located under the wheelhouse. The wheel was connected directly to the differential valve on the engine which controlled the direction of operation; the hunting gear driven by the engine ran to return the differential valve to its central or neutral position. In doing so, it moved chains laid down each side of the deck via rollers, etc. to the rudder stock and moved the rudder.

We then went into the engine and boiler room to work on the Weir cargo pump. This was the only independent pump in the engine room, all the rest being driven off the main reciprocating engine. The pump was stripped down and Art explained the rather complicated workings of the Weir pump valve gear. Being a single cylinder, a complex method of putting steam at each end of the cylinder was required. The movement of the piston rod moved an auxiliary valve at the back of the valve box and this admitted steam to the bells surrounding a shuttle valve which moved over and applied steam to the opposite side of the pump piston. The shuttle reversed position toward the end of the stroke and steam was applied to the other side of the piston.

The pump was in good condition requiring only a light grind of the valve faces to ensure minimum leakage.

I was taken off the *Freshford* after about a week and sent to work on HMT *Grinder* which was a diesel-electric paddle tugs, one of a number designed to go under the overhang of aircraft carriers. The starboard paddle had been damaged in an "accident" with a floating log platform which kept ships about six feet from the jetty side.

● Postscript by your secretary, Stephen Attenborough. *Freshford* was completed July 1944 and finally broken up at Antwerp after being sold out of service August 1967.

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Trustees head for Chatham

In order for trustees to learn about other projects and to see a very important heritage site, it was decided to hold the Spring Trustee meeting at Chatham Historic Dockyard. Henry Cleary, who is known to us, is a prominent figure in the area and had invited us to visit when convenient.

Having decided that we should go, Henry very kindly sorted it all out for us, arranging an impressive room in the Commissioners House within the dockyard. We also had a long standing invitation from John Kempton, Deputy Chair of the Medway Queen Preservation Society, to see *Medway Queen* and meet some of the volunteers; again this was a good education for trustees. It also demonstrated much needed collaboration between trusts.

The Trustees' meeting was attended by Henry Cleary and Chris Jones, the Chatham Dockyard Engineer, both of whom spoke to us extensively about the trials and tribulations of heritage ships. Indeed, the presentations were very sobering and highlighted the issues we will face in the task to bring SS *Freshspring* back to life.

Lord Attlee attended; this was his first appearance as Trust Patron. His input on the day was very valuable and added to the occasion considerably.

After the meeting, we were invited by Chris Jones to take a tour of the dockyard. This was extremely illuminating as we were shown vessels from a submarine to a lifeboat. The highlight for us was to see a complete Fresh Class ship's main engine on display. The museum requires at least two days to fully absorb the artefacts and the architecture and I am sure most of us will return.

The Trustees and Patron are very grateful for the considerable work carried out by Henry Cleary and Chris Jones, to ensure the day was a huge success and a valuable learning experience. In addition, John Kempton provided a very informative insight into ship preservation.

John Puddy

The Medway Queen's *engines; fitted but now awaiting a boiler – and a clean up.*

The Fresh Class engine at Chatham Dockyard.

At Chatham Dockyard:

ABOVE: *HM Submarine* Ocelot *from 1962.*
RIGHT: *The* Ocelot's *two diesel engines.*

BELOW: *Steam and sail combined to propel HMS* Gannet *from 1878.*

BACK COVER: *Henry Cleary's* VIC56 *at Chatham Dockyard.*

Edited by Brian Gooding.

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