

STEAMSHIP

# FRESHSPRING

SOCIETY

## FRESHSPRING NEWS



No.12 Autumn 2017

*Preserving the past to inspire knowledge for the future*

The Steamship Freshspring Society is a registered charity, No.1151907.

**Objects of the Charity:**

To advance the education of the public through the preservation and operation of a historic steamship, and the promotion of maritime studies particularly amongst young people for the public benefit.

**Registered Office:** Little Cleave, Lower Cleave, Northam, Devon, EX39 2RH.

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Keep up to date with progress/news via the Society's website or Facebook page.

**Website:** www.ssfreshspring.co.uk

**Facebook:** www.facebook.com/SSFreshspringSociety?fref=ts

**Membership Enquiries:** Please send an s.a.e. for a form to: Steamship Freshspring Society, c/o Richard Ker, 4 New Street, Appledore, Devon, EX39 1QJ, or you can join online.

**Ship Visits & Volunteering on the ship:** The ship is open by appointment for groups. Members are welcome to visit on working days, which are Sunday and Wednesday. Please call Peter Gillett, our Local Ship Manager on 01237 472 456 or John Puddy 01237 479 730 so we know to expect you. Limited public openings are held and will be advertised locally.

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## Editor's Ramblings. . . .

It's early August and I am into my own mad month of the year, when as the managing trustee of the Hollycombe Working Steam Museum, on the Hampshire/West Sussex border, I spend much of the month at the museum as it is open six days a week. This makes keeping up with all my various work projects quite difficult but I have to admit that I do enjoy the challenge of entertaining our many visitors, many of whom are families, or grandparents entertaining their grandchildren.



The museum gives me the opportunity to indulge my own love of steam – all our main fairground rides are steam-powered, for example – and the atmosphere is great, but what is lacking is a real interest among our visitors in how the machines actually work: they mainly come for the old fashioned atmosphere and the fun. Children are fascinated by the fires in the engines and that we burn wood and coal – some have never seen coal before – to make the steam. As well as the atmosphere, the technology is also old fashioned and isn't controlled by an app on a smart phone, so it is a bit alien to the youngsters.

However, our visitors can see our engines come alive and 'sing' and hiss, rather than being cold and static. A steam engine is only a living being when the fire is lit.



This is one of the challenges that we have with *Freshspring* in educating visitors. The boilers and engines are cold and resting (I won't say 'dead'), and can be difficult to get the idea across to people that one day all will be different and what a difference a living, steaming, sailing *Freshspring* will be. That, of course, is our ultimate goal and one we will achieve in time.

With this Newsletter, we are including a car sticker. Please display it where you can to help promote the Society and our ultimate dream.

**Brian Gooding**

**FRONT COVER:** I asked John Puddy if he could get me an up to date picture of Freshspring for this Newsletter so he went down to the ship and photographed the volunteer team present on Wednesday 2nd August.

**BACK COVER:** How Freshspring will look one day is demonstrated by this picture of the model of the ship on the water.

## Chairman's Report

**Summer** is sizzling along nicely in wildest Devon and work continues on our beloved ship. The funnel is now in primer and fitted with a new cap. Chipping can be heard each Wednesday and Sunday as our stalwart volunteers continue to improve the ship. We now have an engineering team who will be making sure the machinery is preserved in readiness for operation.

Pilot openings have highlighted local interest with numbers at the capacity of our remarkable volunteer guides. On Bideford Heritage Day, generously funded by Bideford Town Council, we had 106 visitors over four hours which was our maximum capacity. Our tours are free but we are finding that people give generously, particularly enjoying engine room tours. The great thing with a steam ship is you don't really appreciate it until you see the propulsion and auxiliary machinery. I have been busy with my 1/3rd scale traction engine, which is exclusively used to promote engineering and, of course, giving kids rides. This activity is also contributing to our coffers. Bideford Town Council also generously funded the Trust on Heritage Day and we are very grateful for this local commitment, ensuring *SS Freshspring* becomes an integral part of this historically important maritime town.

As ever, we are busy providing talks to a wide range of organisations, so much so that we need more speakers. Given that I am usually the speaker, I am always impressed by the interest shown in our educational aspirations. I believe that linking our ship to education is a process which will ensure her operational future. The talks we provide are becoming more varied, from ladies groups to Rotaries, to disabled and disadvantaged groups to wine circles. All are great fun and one of my most enjoyable activities. On a recent Sunday, I spoke at the Mayor's Service in Northam Church about our work.

Our school project has now completed a term at its first school in Barnstaple. In September, it will be going to the second school. I am particularly pleased that this project is proving to be so successful, so much so that we now have requests to deliver in other areas.

I am delighted that, as a result of a partnership with Wings and Integer, we will be opening the North Devon Academy this September. This supportive partnership will provide education and vocational support for those between 16 and 18 who are not in work or education. Our plan is to make the programme attractive and to be a main stream provider in supporting vocational programmes. A major incentive is to steer young people towards maritime careers. Given that the cruise ship industry alone continues to expand, some 62% over the last decade, a predicted 25.3 million passengers this year, 448 ships in service and 26 on order, we really do need to encourage young people to join this burgeoning industry.

We recently had a visit from BMT Defence Systems of Bath. They have agreed to become a collaborative partner and will soon be electronically redrawing the ship. I am delighted that, as a result of our member, Rear-Admiral Nigel Guild CB, we have

gained such prestigious support from a company linked to the Admiralty. As we progress, the services available will be hugely valuable to the trust in the returning of the ship to service.

Wendy and I were recently invited to attend the 100th anniversary dinner of Seafarers UK. This is probably the pinnacle of Trust engagement as we were alongside *SS Great Britain* in company that included the First Sea Lord, who read out a personal note from HM Queen Elizabeth. As a small and relatively new Trust, we are certainly very well recognised and, indeed respected for our education work. I truly thank our energetic Trustees for ensuring that we are progressively recognised as a lead in maritime education. Given that one year ago, we were struggling to save the ship, progress is truly remarkable.

Peter Newell, a local professional artist and lecturer, is running art courses on the ship over the summer and these have been popular. I am stunned by the abilities of our local novice artists. You might well see some of their work in future newsletters.

Local members, Martin Hawkins and David Stiff have created a relationship with Dawson Downie Lamont, a company that manufactured the pumping machinery on the ship. DDL has agreed to take our equipment into their works and refurbish at no cost the Trust. This is a very considerable boost to us as *SS Freshspring* has some seven pumps of varying sizes.

Currently we are in discussions with The Merchant Navy Training Board to identify ways of working together to jointly improve the take up of maritime careers. I am very excited about this link as our objectives are very much in line. Hopefully more in the next edition.

Jotun, a Norwegian paint company continue to support us with hugely discounted paint. This enables our volunteer painting team to progress well with ensuring the ship is both smart and well protected. It also means that our grant from Northam Town Council for paint spreads a little further. Excuse the pun!

On the subject of Northam, our Mayor, Councillor Hugh Brading, has nominated the Trust as one of his two charities for the year. This is a great honour as it gains funds and very importantly cements a relationship with our local authority.

As Chair, I am allowed some indulgences and so I would like report that my son Thomas, following our family engineering tradition, is Second Electrical Technical Officer on the *Crown Princess*, a ship that carries over 3,000 passengers. My recent first cruise on his ship was a highlight for me as I had never been on a cruise before, and probably would never do so except for my son's employment. To me, it confirmed the importance of our work in promoting maritime careers amongst young people. Some would say "How does a steamship relate to modern day maritime?" Well, it really does and moving around a modern ship with Tom highlighted the importance of having a true understanding of the machinery and systems on a ship. Although modern ships are managed by sophisticated computerised systems, there is still huge benefit in the touchy feely element of engineering. Direct contact and understanding of the mechanics of a ship are still as relevant as ever. My good friend John Coulter,

a very active member of the Trust who lives in Canada, has, for the benefit of the Trust, written an excellent paper on the subject, highlighting the importance of SS *Freshspring* in maritime training. With John's permission, I would like to share with you, some extracts from his paper.

*A totally manual classic steamship will provide essential nautical disciplines for the nautical cadets and clearly the manual basics for the engineer cadets. The foundation of the training for the engineer cadets is not learning about steam engines, which provide the most clear presentation of thermodynamics and mechanical systems, but to be immersed in an atmosphere of totally manual systems and functions and the management, awareness and safety disciplines that they demand.*

*Even with that foundation of reasoning, it is the profoundly more complex and technical aspects of the engineering training that may cause some persons to present a challenge in respect to the relevance value of a classic heritage steamship training platform.*

*As some of you will have seen, the image of a new diesel or even more complex steam turbine plant, as in the case of the new LNG ships engine rooms, is totally different than what one views in a classic steam reciprocating engine ship.*

*It is therefore essential in supporting the relevance of a classic steamship as a training platform that the open, manual, human and machine relationship and never changing basics of science be given the same credence as the respected values of the sail training ships strengths. Different platforms, same lessons.*

*In both the engineering and nautical sides, a major component of the classic ship training is the human interrelation aspects. For perhaps the first time in their life, the cadet will find him / herself as a member of a highly structured cross supportive team with very clear and defined levels of authority. Following orders, working with peers, team effort to a common goal, support and respect of others and the totally new one hand for the ship and one for oneself. The ship is their life support system and the cadet quickly learns that they as a single member of a collective team effort are essential in allowing that to be an operational reality.*

*As a totally manual ship, Freshspring, depends on the human relationships in order to function in any aspect and relative to her size, her large number of multi discipline crew will provide the human relations training platform that is so dynamic of a classic heritage ship.*

*In respect to the engineer cadet, Freshspring's classic heritage steam plant provides the most basic, hands on, manually controlled, totally open, visually relatable and practical mechanical engineering laboratory upon which to comprehend and learn the applied world of sciences and mathematics. Her open crank engine is an orchestration of mechanical engineering mathematics in practical and clearly relatable function.*

*Her pistons, rods, cranks, cylinders, bearings, bed plate and cooling systems are all the same or similar in image and function to that found on a diesel engine. Her systems of water, steam, cooling and fuel oil are similarly relatable to those on a new ship.*

*Combustion and lubrication are understood in the most basic and relatable manner. Adjustments and maintenance are performed by the same tools used on any ship. As a result of Freshspring's open plant concept, all aspects of safety are clearly recognised, taught and respected.*

*Freshspring's totally manual plant teaches in a very clear manner all aspects of steam, water, lubrication, fuel, combustion, temperature, pressure and speed controls. The safe, effective and efficient management and control of all such systems and functions must be performed in a simultaneous and often cascading manner that is guided only by ones basic knowledge, their senses and what should be done in a reactive manner. Only when such personal challenges have been successfully applied to a common and safe endpoint can one truly understand and respect an automated system, how to effectively oversee it and how and when to intervene when it does not function as required.*

*An essential aspect of becoming an effective watchkeeping engineer and plant manager is the development of one's senses and learning the language of the plant. Making rounds of the plant are an important human / machine interface. Visual inspections for faults, correct temperatures and pressures observed on local gauges with control and corrections performed manually by valve adjustments, observation of lubrication flows with corrective adjustments as a result of changing oil temperatures, temperature sensing of components by touch were gauges do not exist or to confirm gauge accuracy, the smell of the plant or specific components and even taste as to fresh or salt are all important in the development of one's valuable plant support senses. Freshspring's plant will hone such skills in a manner that no modern ship can equal.*

*Learning the plants language is an important and time developed skill of an experienced engineer. To the untrained ear the plants sound is an amalgam of noise or in the case of a reciprocating steam plant almost silence. An experienced engineer can segregate the many independent sounds and extracts the good and bad.*

I thank John for his wisdom, input and the significant part he plays in creating a future for our ship. As a matter of entirely parallel interest, The US Coastguard has just released a report of engine room fuel fires, of which there are many. The report states that owners and operators should avoid the out of sight out of mind mentality and ensure that unmanned machinery spaces are inspected at least daily but preferably several times a day, it adds, those who perform such activities should develop an eye for detail by tracing out and inspecting all equipment, systems and components. Clearly our objective, as always has to be to return SS *Freshspring* to operational condition. The more we identify operational advantages of such a ship, how she relates to modern day ship operations and creating partnerships with organisations such as MNTB, along with strategically aligning ourselves with mainstream maritime requirements, the more chance we have of making our ship a significant contributor to our maritime nation. Most importantly, creating a sustainable future for her.

We are, of course, focussed on future engineers and to say that the engineer has benefited mankind more than any other class is hardly to overstate the case. His roads,

railways, aircraft and ships have established easy communication between districts and countries, with all the accruing advantages of a universal commerce. He brings fertilising water to the desert and thereby increases the means of human subsistence. His machinery sows and reaps the crops. He has constantly pushed railway tentacles into otherwise inhospitable regions opening them up for civilisation; and his conquest of territory are far more permanent than those of an Alexander or Bonaparte.

You might, on reading my report and the subsequent contents of the newsletters, ask "how do they do so much". Our secret is that we have a dynamic, visionary and changing Trustee board. The intention is to ensure we always have the best people on the board to drive the project forward. To this end, we have recently appointed a prominent Bideford businesswoman to the Board. Maria Bailey was targeted as someone who would add energy and vision to the Trust and we will be looking for others as the year progresses. The majority of Boards are dominated by subject specialists: it is one of the greatest risks and one which we plan to avoid.

It is also clear that volunteers are the life blood of the Trust as without them little would happen. Since moving the ship to Bideford, we have progressively attracted, or should I say trapped, a very healthy volunteer team led by the remarkably unassuming and competent Peter Gillett. Peter's gentle and supportive approach has galvanised almost unlikely people to join a team, which impeccably manages the ship. I really have to take my hat off to this team who, when I visit the ship, make me feel we are very much on the right track.

I must, yet again thank our members, who continue to engage and support the Trust, we are all in this together and I am humbled by your generosity, support, advice and dedication. *SS Freshspring* will steam again, because you are making that possible.



Marine engineer in the making. Tom aged 12.

Don't forget, 'Freshspring Steam Beer' is available from our local Clearwater brewery. It is a great brew and I do have to thank the brewery for sharing the profits with the trust. There is a report on the first steam delivery by Brian Gooding within this newsletter.

**John Puddy**

## Treasurer's Report

We are very much indebted to a local firm of Chartered Accountants – RT Marke – who have kindly offered to maintain our accounts for us in exchange for advertising in this magazine. A very generous and valuable contribution as we grow and become more financially sophisticated.

I am also pleased to say that the Trust remains financially stable with generous donations from some members. Our recent 'pilot' ship openings, ably managed by our willing band of volunteers, have also brought a small but regular income. Our opening over the Heritage weekend saw 106 visitors in 4 hours, which is very encouraging.

We are also grateful to Boatsharefinder, who donate about £100 per month from their revenue, a local group – Volunteering Matters – for manufacturing items for sale and The International Guild of Knot Tiers for beautiful items made with cord, also for sale. As the production of excellent Freshspring Steam Ale from the Clearwater Brewery grows – order direct on 01237 420 492 – we will be receiving a percentage of the profit.

**Simon Tattersall**

### Maria Bailey

Maria Bailey MA(HONS) joined the Trustees of *Freshspring* earlier this year. Maria was born in the Midlands and moved to Bideford ten years ago with her family. She worked for Torridge District Council as Community Planning & Development Manager before setting up her own Bideford-based planning and development consultancy which now employs six local people, with an emphasis on projects that will develop skills and create employment in an area where it is a great place to live and visit but a difficult place to earn a living. In 2016, she was finalist for the New Business Award of the Devon Venus Awards, dubbed "The Working Women's Oscars". Maria has previously been Chair of Directors at Law & Torridge Voluntary Services and is a past President of Bideford & District Chamber of Commerce where she first got involved with the *Freshspring* project and showed her commitment to what is and will be a fantastic opportunity for the area.

### New Members – welcome

Mr Gregory Rix	Salisbury, Wiltshire
Mr Bob Hunter	Bideford, Devon
Mr & Mrs Tom George	Bideford, Devon
Mr Martin Lancaster	Crewkerne, Somerset
Mr Leslie Breame	South Molton, Devon
Mr Robert Harrison	Barnstaple, Devon
Mr Robert Broughton	Cambridge
Mr Melvyn Harris	Barnstaple, Devon

# Beer delivery – by steam!

Brian Gooding

**Fundraising** is very important for any charity as is sponsorship, and the Steamship Freshspring Society, which owns the ship, has been very lucky to have been offered the chance to have its own beer produced by Bideford's Clearwater Brewery. As a trustee of the charity, I was asked to design a label for the bottled version (the beer is also available on draft) and these now adorn bottles of the new 'Freshspring Steam Beer'.

Ever with an eye on publicity, it was decided to make some of the first deliveries by steam, so a plan was hatched to use a miniature traction engine and a steam boat. The idea was easy as both the engine, actually built in the 1950s, and the steam boat are owned by society Chairman John Puddy. What was more difficult was getting permission to take the engine along three miles of the former railway line, now the Tarka Trail. It would be jostling with walkers and cyclists for space.

The plan gradually came to fruition and the date was fixed for Sunday 18th June. Little



Miniature engine driver Stephen Attenborough (left) receives the single line token for the section to Instow.



Reliving the railway days, two members of the heritage group barrow the beer to the waiting miniature traction engine.



The little engine makes good progress along the old railway line as it passes under a road bridge.

did anyone know that this would be a day of non-stop sunshine and blistering heat.

The beer would be collected from the former Bideford station, now home to a couple of old railway carriages which house an exhibition and the all-important tea room. The signal box is still in place and looked after by a group of enthusiasts, some of whom turned up to support the day.



Bideford signal box is looked after by the Bideford Railway Heritage Centre group and looks as if it had never been closed.

As departure time approached, more and more people turned up, including society trustees and members as well as the Mayor of Northam, Hugh Brading, and his consort. Freshspring is one of the Mayor's two charities this year. The little engine appeared on the other side of the old railway bridge which had been raised following



The reason for the new beer – to support the steamship Freshspring which is seen from the Tarka Trail across the river. With the tide rising, she would be afloat in a couple of hours.

closure of the line. The engine was not allowed to cross the bridge due to a weight restriction which was a pity as it would have been good to have the engine set off from adjacent to the signal box. In the event, driver and trustee Stephen Attenborough had to collect the single line token from the box which gave permission to use the single track as far as Instow.

Meanwhile, the beer arrived at the station and was taken by traditional station barrow to the waiting engine and trailer where it was loaded into the trailer. This done, and after the obligatory press photographs, it was time to set off along the old railway along the banks of the River Torridge to Instow, some three miles to the north. The river is tidal and the trip had been timed to coincide with near high tide, otherwise the second stage of the delivery would have been more difficult.

A group of society members walked with the engine, all enduring the strong mid-summer sunshine with little shade on the way,



*The main A39 is carried high over the River Torridge on this bridge. Stephen and the engine pass below unnoticed.*



*Instow is in sight as Stephen stops to oil round the engine. Appledore is across the river out of shot to the left.*

but the views across the river to Northam and later Appledore were spectacular and made up for the discomfort. The entourage passed under the magnificent Torridge Bridge, built in 1987, and which towers over the river.

After an hour or so, the little engine pulled into the old platform at Instow where the signal box also survives. Here Stephen handed in the token before turning off the railway to make the first delivery at the Quay Inn on Marine Parade. Again, more photos were taken for the local press, while bemused car drivers had to wait while the fun ensued.

With this done, the second phase of the delivery began. The remaining beer was taken onto the jetty where it would be loaded into the steam boat, Sioux, for the short journey across the river to Appledore Quay.

The little steamer could only accommodate a handful of people and luckily another boat had been arranged to transport the rest of the party, including the Mayor and consort. This was an open 1960s wooden boat, the Marie J, fitted with a slow running Lister diesel engine, so quite nostalgic in its own right. With everyone aboard, we stood off from the jetty so that Sioux could pull in and the beer be loaded. Meanwhile, the passenger ferry from Appledore waited to come in. I am sure that bystanders and ferry passengers wondered just what was going on!

However, we were all quickly away, sailing



*The little engine stops at Instow signal box at the end of the run along the Tarka Trail.*



*Stephen hands back the single line token to the signalman, having completed the run from Bideford.*



The interior of Instow signal box with the lever frame prominent. It is hard to believe the last train passed this way 35 years ago.



Stephen gets a sample of Freshspring Steam Beer while Paul, the brewer (right), poses for a publicity shot with the landlord of the Quay Inn.



The support boat was the Marie J, which is powered by a Lister diesel engine. The Mayor of Northam, Cllr Hugh Brading, is on the left.



John Puddy sounds the whistle as Paul loads the beer onto the steam boat for the trip across the river to Appledore.



Appledore as seen from Instow before the crossing.

across the calm waters of the river while the sun continued to beat down – an idyllic crossing in sublime conditions; all the while we were tracking the steam boat in an attempt to get the best pictures of the crossing.

All too soon we approached Appledore and the final delivery of beer was unloaded from the steam boat onto the quayside and on to a couple of locations in the town including The Champ pub. Somehow I was left holding the rope that kept the steam boat from sailing off on its own, a task that was made more interesting



The steam boat Sioux makes good progress from Instow on an idyllic day to be on the water.



The welcoming committee at Appledore...



Unloading beer on the slipway at Appledore.

when the ferryman on the slip asked if it could be moved to let the ferry in. That was quite easy apart from having to dodge families intent on catching crabs off the slip! Luckily I didn't end up in the water.

With deliveries done, there was some repositioning of people back to Instow. Meanwhile I took the opportunity to grab a welcome ice cream while I waited for the boats to come back. I was wondering how I



*Freshspring Steam Beer was on tap at The Champ pub in Appledore, and a very nice pint it was too!*



*Chairman John Puddy enjoys a bottle of beer after pulling the steam boat out of the water at Appledore.*

was going to get back to my hotel in Bideford so I asked Paul, the brewer, and his wife Alison if they could give me a lift. "Yes," Paul said, " but not before I've had a pint." What else could I do but head for The Champ with Paul and Ali to savour a welcome pint of – yes – draft Freshspring Steam Beer!

It was a super day and a novel way to deliver one of the first consignments of the new brew. There was only one thing left to do on the Monday – call in at the brewery to pick up some supplies for home.

*The two boats make their way back to Instow to drop off people who had left their cars on that side of the river.*



## Fundraising report

Since the last newsletter, we have been working to resubmit an application to Heritage Lottery for the Our Heritage Fund. There were some weaknesses in our previous application, which we have now addressed with addition match funding from Headley Trust to strengthen our application and we have entered a supportive partnership with TTVS, the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) for Torridge District. We are about to submit the application, which will include the restoration of the ship's bridge and boatdeck. It will also enable the ship to be fully opened for visitors and the employment of an education officer. This is an essential stepping stone towards bringing SS *Freshspring* back into service.

Funds still come in from Members and individuals which is very valuable to the work, especially in maintaining the ship. We do not have all the answers and would welcome funding advice from our Members, such as telling us about funding opportunities and Grant giving Trusts.

We continue to apply to grant giving Trusts for general and specific funds and The Headley Trust has been a recent success.



*The Chairman speaking about the Freshspring Society at the Northam Mayor's Civic Service on 16th July. The Trust is one of our Mayor, Cllr Hugh Brading's, two Chosen Charities for the duration of his office.*

## Cycle trip

**Earlier** in the year, my daughter Emma who is 42 years younger than me, suggested that we should cycle from John o' Groats to Lands End to raise money for a charity she volunteers for. The Flying Seagulls provide education and performing arts fun for refugee children, mostly in camps. These children have had such an awful time as a result of conflict that the support from Seagulls is often the only pleasure they get. See: [theflyingseagullproject.com](http://theflyingseagullproject.com)

I thought the ride for me was unrealistic, but Em insisted we should do it, therefore I relented and foolishly agreed. After some basic training and overhauling our ancient Raleigh bicycles (no moderns for us!), we set off from John o' Groats on 20th May, planning to complete the ride in two weeks supported by Wendy and the dog in a car.

The ride was very eventful with headwinds most of the way. Using the Google route kept us off main roads but took us along some very challenging off road sections. However, apart from a very rough section through a forest not suited to road bikes, we cycled up every hill. It was great experience and it gave us a very different and illuminating view of our country.

The outcome was that we made it in exactly 14 days, having cycled 960 miles with



*Departure from John o' Groats on a wet and windy day.*



only three punctures, all mine. The arrival at Lands End was quite an event with a small crowd there to greet us; we even got a trophy. The great news is we raised almost £2,500 and I have experienced a very special ride for a very special cause, something I never thought I could do.

**John Puddy**

*LEFT: My first puncture.*



*A Cheerful arrival at Lands End.*

## Man wanted for Lighthouse work *Part 1*

### Phil Tarry

I was born in Weymouth and I spent most of my younger life close to the sea. My father had been an Officer in the Royal Navy. My last school was at Earnley near Chichester, where some weekends were spent sailing in Chichester Harbour.

In 1969, we were living in Gillingham in Kent. I had been in several short term jobs, but had itchy feet. Not for me the boring 9 to 5 routine, I wanted more money and new challenges; then I saw an advertisement in a local paper.

I joined Trinity House as a Lighthouse Keeper in early 1969, and went to Harwich for initial training. There were several young chaps like myself. I had been to boarding school, whilst for others, it was their first time away from home; I enjoyed it. We learnt all sorts of technical work, cookery, housework, etc. After a few weeks we were transferred to the Trinity House workshops at Blackwall in the East End of London. In those days it was still a rough area, and certainly opened one's eyes.

In due course, I found myself attached to the Holyhead Group of the Lighthouse Service, working on offshore lighthouses.

My first station was the Skerries. I was a Supernumerary Assistant Keeper. I was transferred to the lighthouse via THV *Argos*, each area having its own Tender. The Skerries was a small group of islands a few miles off Holyhead. There was the Principal Keeper with two Assistant Keepers plus myself as the Super. The main island upon which the lighthouse was built had a 2ft gauge railway running from the Landing Stage up to the buildings; there was a wagon turntable halfway up where a track ran into a storage area. The railway was powered by a winch but was rarely used.

The Skerries was a lovely place with good accommodation; we each had our own bedroom. I soon got used to the watch routine, which was run on a three day rota. The shifts being 0001-0400, 0400-1200, 1200-2000, and 2000-2359. The pattern was 0001-0400, then back on for the 1200-2000 shift. The following day one worked the 0400-1200 and then 2000-2359. Then one enjoyed a full 24 hours off. The day off man was the cook for the day and made the lunch which was the only meal where all were present. Each shift had specific tasks to carry out in addition to normal watch keeping. The Skerries was also a triangulation station for the Decca navigation system. There were six stations each emitting a single 'beep' on a radio signal on the hour. Passing ships could triangulate their position by the strength of each 'beep'.

The normal duty turn was two months on station followed by a month at home. Time actually went quite quickly. I carried out a couple of tours on The Skerries. There was electric lighting and electric fog horns; it was a nice place.

My next lighthouse was Bardsey Island; this transfer was my first Helicopter relief. Once again there was separate living accommodation. The square tower was detached from the accommodation as was the Fog Room. Once again, we had Ruston engines to

operate the generators and fog compressors. The engine rooms were kept scrupulously clean, the floors were mopped every morning, all brasswork was polished each week with Brasso and Bath Brick. Bardsey was a weather station, for which we were paid extra. Every two hours during the day and every four hours at night we took readings of all the metrological instruments. These readings were transmitted to Holyhead Coastguard, and became part of the national weather forecast. Bardsey is a large island so there was plenty of scope to wander about.

We were always in touch with the Coastguard and had regular reporting times when messages were transmitted to and fro. On one occasion, we picked up a message, a 'Pan' message to the effect that could observation be kept for a flotilla of unmanned private boats! The story was that a 'weekend sailor' had stopped at Aberdaron and tied onto a mooring chain in the harbour. They had then gone ashore. Because they had had a wet and rough night aboard, the 'skipper' decided to leave the sails up and slack so that they could dry out. Naturally, whilst the crew were enjoying some local onshore hospitality, the wind increased and changed direction, the result being that the yacht decided to hop it. This it did, but managed to drag the mooring chain as well as several other craft that were attached to it. This little flotilla slipped out of the harbour during the darkness and sailed away. The group eventually ran ashore and was wrecked. I do not recall what words of advice were given to the skipper! Nor the wording on the insurance claim.

Bardsey was being prepared for modernisation during my stay. It was to be run from the office at Holyhead. On the appointed day, the Elder Brethren arrived, and a call was made to 'turn on the light', the foghorn sounded instead. The next request was to activate the foghorn – the lantern curtains opened instead. A technical problem! Our jobs would remain safe for a while longer.

After Bardsey, I got appointed as Assistant Keeper and transferred to Coquet Island off Amble in the North East. Transfer would be via a local boat. I remember that the transfer was delayed due to the weather. It was New Year's Eve; I was put up in a local hotel. When it was announced that I was going to the lighthouse, I never had to buy a drink all evening; whisky and orange was the in thing! I think that I went to bed at about 0100. Two hours later, I was awoken and told to be ready for the transfer as there was a break in the weather. I do not remember the rough crossing where I had to stand all the way.

Coquet was an old lighthouse. The main light was oil powered and mantles were changed almost daily. A 75mm burner provided to light source, the beam of the light being seen around 20 miles out at sea. The island was flat, fairly low lying and covered about one square mile. Oil was transferred in the open cobble used to transfer the staff. Some 200 or so 25 gallon drums had to be manually unloaded and carried to the stores; this needed all hands and would take all day. The catadioptric lens for the light weighed several tons and floated on a bath of mercury; the lens was cleaned with meths on a daily basis. The means of turning the lens was a weight dropping down a tube, this needed winding up every four hours. There were electric foghorns powered

by Ruston engines of some vintage; they were started by swinging the flywheel. If you were unlucky, they could start on the backswing, and run backwards covering the unfortunate operator with soot and oil!

One evening, the newly completed *Esso Northumbria* sailed past on her sea trial. I think that this was the largest ship afloat at that time. I sent a message via the Aldis Lamp wishing her 'God speed'.

I then spent a short time as a relief Keeper, and was stationed at Europa Point Lighthouse in Gibraltar for a week or so to cover for someone else. This was an exciting place, at the southernmost point of the Iberian Peninsula, facing Africa. It was attached to the mainland, and off duty time was spent exploring Gibraltar. It was hot, and nice to walk into shops or bars saying that I worked in Gib!

Again I returned to the UK and carried out a relief at Hartland Point, once again on the mainland but in a bleak and isolated spot. Now over 40 years later, I live 30 or so miles from there.

My next permanent posting was to The Smalls, a rock station situated in the Irish Sea some 20 miles west of Milford Haven. By now, helicopter reliefs were the norm, and I made my first wire descent, whilst the Wessex hovered overhead. It was low tide and I found my feet touching down on the small landing stage, this area was under water most of the time except at low water. To access the lighthouse, one had to climb the Dog Steps to the door which was 30ft up. The Smalls was a single tower lighthouse 146ft tall. It was a very old station with oil vapour light, and exploding fog signal. There was also a fixed 'sector light' indicating the reef heading towards St Anne's Head.



Postcard of Europa Point, Gibraltar.

The facilities were somewhat 'bijou', The single bedroom contained four bunks which were curved around the walls, the maximum length that one could get was 5ft 6ins. The kitchen contained an oil powered 'Hamco' range, an oil powered fridge, a table, three chairs, a TV, dresser and very little else. The windows were double glazed with glazing about 3ft apart; the gap was used to store food. The 'loo' was an elsan type and kept in the Lamp Room at the top, there was also an old saucepan for urine. The golden rule was always to check the wind direction, before emptying the pan or elsan, otherwise you would be getting your own back!

*To be continued. . .*



St Anne's Head Lighthouse near Milford Haven.



The Coastguard lookout at St Anne's Head.



*The landing stage on the Smalls.*

**RIGHT:** *THV Strathclyde as seen from Smalls.*

**BELOW:** *Smalls Lighthouse in 1970, as seen from THV Strathclyde.*



## Scuttlebutt from the Quay

To understand the interest in visiting the ship, we have arranged pilot openings to visitors. Since April, we have had over 450 people come on board either as pre-booked groups or on pilot open days. Our most recent open day, Bideford Heritage day 15th July, was our busiest yet with over 100 visitors safely on and off in a four hour period. Much thanks to our Guides and Stewards for all the work and care they put into looking after our guests. There are no further definite pilot open days at present but we may open to the public over selected weekends during the school holidays if enough Guides and Stewards are available. We have also had an Art Class run by Peter Newell on the ship for the last three weeks, ended now but we hope to see more in the not too distant future.

Chipping, scraping and painting continues with the major progress visible above deck. The funnel and adjacent ventilators and steam pipes are nearly done and we look forward to having the scaffolding removed. By the time you read this, the first batch of the deck paint will have been ordered and will be with us for the next spell of good weather. Total volunteer numbers stand currently at 56 with some considerably more active than others!

The tree for the mast is being turned over regularly and we are coming up with neat ideas to make it easier and safer. We will start removing the bark soon and need to consider the next steps.

The current temporary gangway modifications are progressing with a new walking surface laid last week and the materials to hand for relocating the mounting point.

The Engineering Committee is meeting regularly to plan future priorities and actions. They have been taking photos of the pumps and pipework and have started logging the Engine Room tools and spares. An important step forward is the initiative by Dave Stiff in contacting Dawson Downey, who made some of the original pumps for the ship. There is now a strong possibility that they will refurbish those pumps, free of charge, if we can get them to their factory in Scotland.

There is still much to be done in the Bosun's Stores and the Aft Accommodation but when the weather allows, it's nicer to have everyone on deck rather than sweltering below so it will probably become an over-winter job.

The Galley has not really progressed apart from the gift of two new kettles from Members Nic & Didi Mann, one of which still looks so new that some volunteers are afraid to use it! They have also been most generous in providing cakes for the volunteers working on the ship and what a difference that makes to a day on board, much of which revolves around tea and cake.

All in all, July has been a steady month with no major ups or downs, just consistent progress involving much paint and a little sunburn.

Long may it continue.

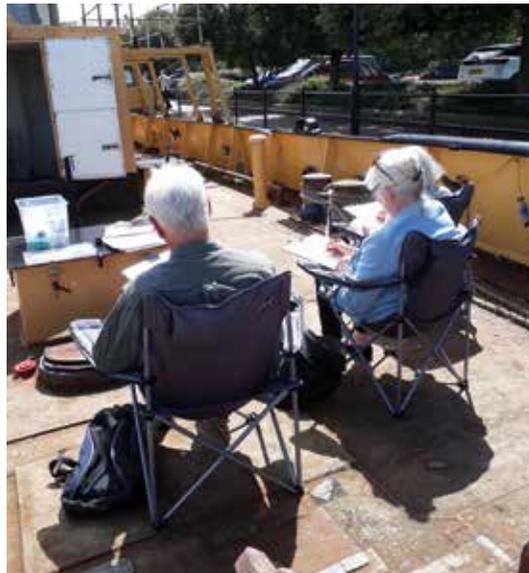
**Pete Gillett**

## On board art courses



On 13th June, Pete Newell hosted the first painting and drawing course to be held on the ship. This was a pilot project to see if the course could work. With much help from Pete Gillett, a risk assessment was made and the course advertised. Eight people attended on a beautiful hot day, the ship providing excellent subject matter to record perspective, colour and light. The students left with a series of drawings and watercolours.

Building on the success of the pilot project, three other sessions were planned and advertised.



Students had the chance to draw on deck, exploring perspective found in the superstructure of the ship. The second session focussed on the engine room, making pen and colour wash drawings of various parts of the machinery. The course concluded with an acrylic painting on canvas.

Painting and drawing courses on the ship brought in people who would not otherwise have visited the *SS Freshspring* and helped those who had visited, to see the ship in a different light. Further courses will be run in the Autumn.

For more information and to join the mailing list, please contact Pete on: [info@quaydrawing.co.uk](mailto:info@quaydrawing.co.uk) or 07831 493 326.

### Interested in Education?

Are you, or have you recently been, involved with education – teacher, lecturer, OFSTED? If so, and you live in North Devon, would you like to use your skills to make a real difference to the *Freshspring* project?

Our aim is to use *SS Freshspring* as an educational platform for young people. We already have a STEM Primary school project and wish to expand our work in schools and colleges. With partners, we are setting up an academy for 16 to 18 year olds in September.

We plan to engage in education at various levels, whether that involvement results in a career in the maritime industry or not.

If you would like to develop our educational programme we would like to talk to you! Please either ring John Puddy on 01237 479 730 or Simon Tattersall on 01237 423 169. We look forward to speaking to you.

### STEAMSHIP FRESHSPRING CLOTHING

1/4 Zip Fleece Sweatshirt



£32.00  Size \_\_\_\_

Hoody



£28.00  Size \_\_\_\_

Polo Shirt



£17.00  Size \_\_\_\_

Soft Shell



£48.00  Size \_\_\_\_

Sweatshirt



£20.00  Size \_\_\_\_

Tee Shirt



£12.00  Size \_\_\_\_

Sizes: XS, S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL, 4XL

All are embroidered with the Steamship Freshspring Society logo.

### STEAMSHIP FRESHSPRING CLOTHING

By arrangement with MJM Sports of Bideford, we have arranged a range of Society clothing to suit all tastes.

#### ORDERING

You can order online at: <http://mjm-sports.co.uk/steamship-freshspring-society> or by phone, using a card payment: 01237 477 757.

You may also order by post by using the form below and posting to the address below. Please enter the number of items you require in the box below the illustrations, and the size on the line adjacent. If you require additional items of a different size, please note that in the space below marked 'NOTES'.

Please make cheques payable to 'MJM Sports'.

ANY NOTES to MJM Sports:

Name

Address

  
  
  
 Post Code 

Telephone

**IF ORDERING BY POST, PLEASE SEND YOUR ORDER TO:**

MJM Sports,  
Unit 1 Daddon Rise,  
Clovelly Road Ind Estate,  
Bideford,  
Devon.  
EX39 3HN

**CARD PAYMENT**

Visa  Mastercard

Card Number

Expiry Date  /  2 0  CSC

Signature

Date

## Freshspring Steam Beer!

The Steamship Freshspring Society has teamed up with Bideford's Clearwater Brewery in a new venture to produce 'Freshspring Steam Beer'.

The Freshspring Beer is 4.5% abv, hand crafted and is a light copper colour. Taste is defined as: citrus notes and nutty with a light bitterness... very drinkable!

500ml brown bottles will be available from June and they will be 'bottle conditioned' which means some of the active ingredients will be present in the bottle. Generally this gives a more intense flavour but does mean that the bottle needs to stand before drinking to allow it to settle.

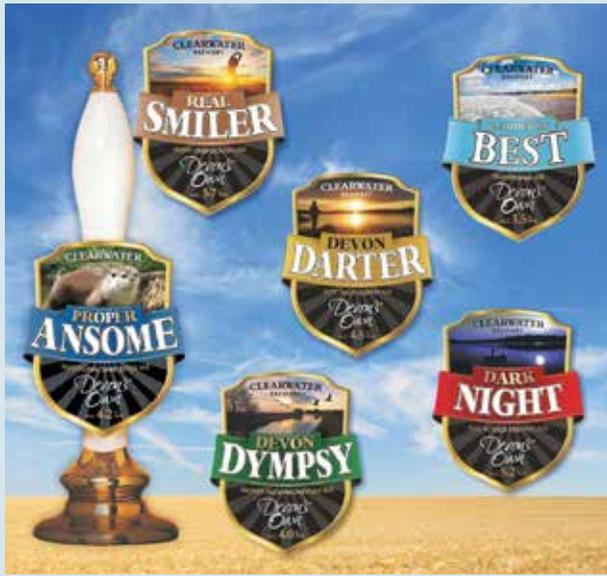
The beer is available direct from the brewery:

6x500ml cases for £11.40 and 12x500ml cases for £21.85.

Delivery within 20 miles of Bideford will be free, but for everywhere else in the country there will be a £12 delivery charge and will be sent by courier.

Orders can be placed either by email to [sales@clearwaterbrewery.co.uk](mailto:sales@clearwaterbrewery.co.uk) or by phone on 01237 420 492. Payment will need to be made in advance either by BACS (call the brewery for bank details) or by sending a cheque made payable to [Clearwater Brewery Ltd](#) and sending to:

Clearwater Brewery Ltd  
Unit 1 Little Court  
Manteo Way  
Bideford  
Devon  
EX39 4FG



## Leaving a legacy to the SS Freshspring Society

The SS Freshspring Society has benefitted greatly from the generosity of its members and friends who have left or given money to the Society.

Legacies provide very necessary financial support in helping the Society to meet its stated objectives of preserving the past and inspiring knowledge for the future

If you would like to think of giving the SS Freshspring Society a legacy, it could not be easier: The following codicil can be completed by you, witnessed, and kept with your Will.

### CODICIL

I (full name).....

of (full address).....

declare this to be the (1st/2nd/other.....) codicil to my Will dated.....

I give, free of Inheritance Tax, the sum of

£..... (.....pounds)

to the SS Freshspring Society of Little Cleave, Lower Cleave, Northam, Devon EX39 2RH (Registered Charity Number 1151907), absolutely for its general charitable purposes.

In all other respects I confirm my said Will.

Testator's signature:.....Date.....

Signed in the presence of:

First witness

Second Witness

Signature

Signature

Full name

Full name

Address

Address

Occupation

Occupation

Note: The witnesses must not be your executor, your executor's spouse or a beneficiary of your Will.

