

STEAMSHIP

FRESHSPRING

TRUST

FRESHSPRING NEWS



No.21 Winter 2019

*Preserving the past to inspire knowledge for the future*

The Steamship Freshspring Trust 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

**Patrons:** Earl Atlee; Rear Admiral Nigel Guild; Captain Kevin Slade

**Trust Management**

- Chairman:** John Puddy\* john.puddy@ssfreshspring.co.uk
- Vice Chairman:** Simon Tattersall\* simon.tattersall@ssfreshspring.co.uk
- Secretary:** Stephen Attenborough\* stephen.attenborough@ssfreshspring.co.uk
- Treasurer:** Simon Tattersall\* simon.tattersall@ssfreshspring.co.uk
- Membership:** Richard Ker membership@ssfreshspring.co.uk 01237 422 758
- Marine Superintendent:** Jon Short \* jon.short@ssfreshspring.co.uk
- Marketing/Publicity:** Brian Gooding\* brian@steamheritage.co.uk
- Education:** Hayley Buscombe hayley.buscombe@ssfreshspring.co.uk
- Project Manager:** Charlotte Squire charlotte.squire@ssfreshspring.co.uk
- Conservation Manager:** Stephen Attenborough\* stephen.attenborough@ssfreshspring.co.uk
- Technical Director:** Ken Thompson
- John Cooper \*
- Anne Budd \*
- Becky Short \*
- \* Trustee + Co-opted Trustee

Keep up to date with progress/news via the Trust'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 Trust, 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 on the first Sunday of the month over the winter period. Other opening days will be advertised locally and on the website. Please call Peter Gillett, our Local Ship Manager, on 01237 237 183 (email: peter.gillett@ssfreshspring.co.uk ) if you are interested in volunteering.

*Freshspring News is edited by Brian Gooding, and published by the Steamship Freshspring Trust, a registered charity.*

Design & Production by Steam Heritage Publishing Ltd. Tel: 01403 588 360.

© 2019. Steamship Freshspring Trust.



## Editor's Ramblings. . . .

I was pleased to be able to attend the Industrial Heritage Network Cornwall & Devon (IHNCD) meeting in Bideford on 18th September, which was hosted by the Trust (more on which elsewhere in this newsletter). This is a movement which is expanding all over the country, with groups in different areas and they provide an all-important opportunity for local attractions to meet occasionally to discuss items of mutual interest and to learn a bit about each other. It is a perfect way to network and discover how others have dealt with the various challenges that come their way and the successful systems they have put in place. It is good to be part of such a group and to get the message of *Freshspring* across to like-minded people.



Living 200 miles from the ship is always frustrating for me, but it does mean that I can appreciate the physical progress being made on the ship between my visits. I am always impressed by the work that the on board team put in and the obvious camaraderie that exists among the members. You really are a great asset to the Trust.

As Hayley alludes to in her report in this newsletter, a lot goes on quietly behind the scenes and that involves a lot of members, both Trustees and others. There really is a lot to do to support the ship and it is a bit like a full time job for many, especially our esteemed Chairman. None of us are getting any younger and I know the Bideford-based team could really do with more help. It's brain power that is needed – organisational skills, for example. Can YOU help in any small way to ease the burden on our hard working team?



Finally, thank you to those who wrote in last time. We would be pleased to receive your letters to the editor in the future.

*Our Hayley Buscombe introduces the activities of the Trust to the Industrial Heritage Network Cornwall & Devon (IHNCD) meeting held in Bideford.*

**Brian Gooding**

**FRONT COVER:** A portend of things to come? No, it's not the real Freshspring at sea but our model getting its hull wet. One day this will be the full size model...

**John Puddy**

## From the Chair

We have an action packed Newsletter for you again this time, thanks to Brian who continues to excel in his work. I am pleased to say that we have located Scuttlebutt, who is currently touring the West Country with his retrospective show, exhibiting in a series of disused telephone boxes along the A361. We are grateful that he was kind enough to dash off the ode to *SS Freshspring*, which appears in this issue.

The Autumn report highlighted that we had a successful and busy season. Now we are coming to the end of the year, we can review this and, remarkably, we have had some 3,500 people visit the ship this year and a very impressive number of schools. This is a great achievement considering we only open one day a week. The ship has proved to be a very popular attraction, particularly with families. Children very much enjoy coming aboard and we have lots of things for them to do. For example, over the summer school holidays, we held family fun days. Children engaged in a range of activities in the wheelhouse while parents toured the ship.

As a result of a shortage of tour guides, we reviewed the situation and created a tour guide leaflet. It is a comprehensive document, which helps people to move around the ship and to understand about her life and construction. This has proved to be very popular, with people staying on the ship much longer than when we organised tours. People also take the guide with them when they leave and so it is a lasting memento of the visit. We are lucky that there are so many talented people supporting our work and the tour guide has illustrations by Lou Boulter who is a well known local artist. An interesting twist is that once we had the guide, we advertised for Stewards and were much more successful than our efforts to recruit Guides.

Our greatest challenge is raising funds and this year we had plans to apply to the Lottery Heritage Fund to conduct essential studies. This included feasibility, to understand the potential of the ship for carrying passengers, and a viability study to understand how to make the ship viable in operation. In addition, we were looking for support for staff costs. As a result of pressure on our small team, we are delaying the application from November to March next year. This is unfortunate but we must make sure that applications for funding are well thought through and contain evidence of achievements and ongoing public needs.

One of the projects on the Lottery list was to survey the ship's boiler. Many of you have asked about this and quite rightly so as it is the single most costly part of the ship. If the boiler is not serviceable, it could be a game changer. To remove it requires the dismantling of the superstructure above, including the wheelhouse. The wheelhouse, however, is designed to be removable. The cost of major repairs if required will also be very considerable. It is therefore important that we do all we can to conduct the survey as soon as possible.

We now have a very good estimate for this work, which would be carried out by R. Pearce & Co., a company we use for our hull surveys. The cost is likely to be £5,652. There will also be an additional cost for cleaning up the surfaces although much can be done by volunteers. So, thinking caps on please. Does anyone have any ideas as to how we might raise this sort of money? Please contact me if you have any thoughts.

Funding for charities has become much more challenging as there are more organisations chasing funds. This means that we will be losing our Education Officer in January. She has done an amazing job in taking our education work to a new level and engaging large numbers of children from a range of schools. She has also worked with the University of the West of England to create a virtual children's project. Having got so far with the Trust, we are determined not to lose the momentum we have gained. We are likely to bring in new people to the board to expand the skills we already have and Trustees will be provided with training and support to ensure they can continue to drive the Trust forward. In addition, we have been lucky to achieve a highly professional management team and this both reduces pressure on Trustees and brings relevant expertise to areas of work.

As a result of funding from Tesco, we are now able to manufacture another four school STEM units; this means we can work with more schools utilising the very popular equipment which supports engineering. This is currently with Whitelands of Bideford, who are manufacturing the units very competitively for us.

The name of the organisation has been successfully changed to 'Steamship Freshspring Trust' and that will be the name we take forward to the future.

We regularly discuss the future of *SS Freshspring* and what work she could do when operational. One of our Patrons is keen that we should engage in environmental work and utilise the ship for marine clean up work. Careless disposal of plastic, often in rivers, dumps an average of nine million tons per year into our oceans. Sunlight, wind and waves eventually break this waste down into barely visible particles and it never disappears. We are learning that these microplastics are affecting fish, particularly the first feeding of hatched larval fish, which are the foundation of most life at sea. A single thread in the stomach is a potential killer. Given that fish provides critical protein for three billion people and countless seabirds and other marine animals, this is an increasingly serious situation. Each day, I walk 100 yards of waterfront in our tidal estuary and not a day goes by when I am unable to collect plastic waste; thus, the ideas of our Patron are very worthy of consideration.

I can never write without mentioning the ship volunteers who are managed by Pete Gillett. It is always a joy to visit the ship and to see them happily dealing with whatever is needed. We recently purchased some needle guns for stripping paint and scale. These have been a huge bonus as work can now proceed much more quickly, albeit with incredible noise. So much so, that the noisy gang often work on a different day both to maintain some sanity aboard and also not to annoy our neighbours on the barge. The handrails are now back on the top of the wheelhouse and painting always continues when it is dry. Jotun, our paint supplier, continues to be incredibly supportive and hugely discount coatings. We now class them as an official sponsor.

We have a volunteer lunch outing later in the week, which I am honoured to be invited to attend and very much looking forward to.

Thank you for staying with us, your membership means a great deal and is very motivational for the team. I hope you all have a great Christmas and New Year. Come and see us in 2020.

**John**

## Treasurer's Report

I think the best way of describing *Freshspring* from a financial standpoint over the last three months is 'steady as she goes'.

The Our Heritage project is well under control. This is thanks in no small part to Mike Blackman, one of our excellent volunteers, who keeps very firm control of our OH data management. Mike has a very comprehensive spreadsheet showing exactly what we've spent, what we still need to spend and the level of under/over spend and this allows us to 'fine tune' to a great degree. One result has been that, as we have under-spent on our marketing budget, we have commissioned an illustrated children's book. This will be offered free to all libraries in Devon and Cornwall and to all children who visit the ship, or whose schools we attend. We expect at least 1,000 copies – all with the Lottery logo – to be distributed in this way.

Our members continue to generously support our progress and shortly there will be a crowd funding appeal for an awning we want to erect on the ship. This will provide us with a dry space at all times and offers opportunities for holding events – ours or on hire to others – that at the moment are entirely subject to the vagaries of the weather.

One job that is critical to the future of the ship is to establish whether the boiler is sound or effectively scrap. A boiler survey is not cheap and we will be looking at ways of raising finance to cover this essential expense. Again, one member has already generously made a donation toward this cost.

As always, meeting overhead expenses is a challenge and another very generous member has contributed the equivalent of three month's salary for a part time person to help with various aspects of our work. We are hugely grateful!

We will be starting 2020 in good shape financially but with many challenges to face. Many members very kindly donate money straight to our bank account on a regular monthly or quarterly basis so, if you are not currently donating on a regular basis but would like to do so, our bank details are:

Account name – Steamship Freshspring Trust

Account number – 00023232. Sort code 40-52-40 – and please use your initials and surname as the reference.

If you are 'refreshing' your Will and would like to include *Freshspring* as a beneficiary, you can use the Legacy form in this Newsletter, or of course instruct your solicitor.

However you choose to help it will – as always – be greatly appreciated.

Finally... when we introduced the GoCardless method of payment for membership, we offered a discount. What might not have been clear is that this ONLY applies for a year – after that the full membership subscription applies.

**Simon Tattersall**

## Ship Report

**Going forward...**

In looking back through history, we can see the hope we have for the future.

This is very plain to see through the prestige the Torridge river has placed in British history. Bideford was the third largest port in the 16th century, not only proving itself in maritime trade but in ship building, all which will continue today albeit on a much smaller scale to the numbers of the past. The recent positive news of the local Appledore ship yard reopening in December is of great news to the area.

This shipyard was the biggest undercover yard in Europe when opened in 1970 and produced many ships, of which the largest was the HMS *Scott*, length 131.1m 8.3m draft in 1997. Bideford also had many shipyards, the last one being at Bank End which ceased trading in 1981. The Torridge still sees merchant ships call loading Ball Clay, timber or discharging salt and sand, the largest of these being 125m at Yelland and 94m at Bideford. The river in 1835 had its first ever built steam paddle ship aptly named the *Torridge* which served ports in the Bristol channel. The last wooden schooner built was the *Sarah Neumann* in 1855 as shown here. The area was home to well-known ship owners such as William Reardon Smith and sailors like Sir Richard Grenville (captain of the *Revenge*) and merchant politician Sir Walter Raleigh.



This snippet of our history within the local area to the *Freshspring* shows the potential of great things that we have in our past and also that we can expect of the future.

The past quarter has been a very busy one personally for me as I have been away to complete all my many years of training and undertake my last MCA oral exam for Master Unlimited, which I passed! This has meant that I'm eager to get back onboard to see the progress. I know that the volunteers have been working extremely hard, as they always do. This quarter their time has been devoted to the guard rails on the Compass Deck or Monkey Island, then preparing the framework for the solar panels, which are ready for installation. Down in the engine room the team has removed the forward end of the condenser plate utilising the new lifting equipment that is on board.

As always, come on board if you can; it is great to see new people, always great to have new volunteers and great to see what a team can produce on board a vessel such as *Freshspring*.

Best Regards

**Jon Short**  
**Marine Superintendent**

## Another piece for Freshspring's Jigsaw Puzzle!

At long last it has happened!! An example of the original radio equipment which *Freshspring* would have had fitted has been procured and will be installed in her wheelhouse over the next few weeks.

Mike Mills, of Appledore, an ex-Merchant Navy Radio Officer (a long time ago in the 1950s), has spent the last year trying to establish what radio equipment *Freshspring* would have had when she was launched back in 1946.

This has been a difficult task. *Freshspring* played many different roles before being finally attached to the RFA in the early 50s, when she was sent to Malta to service Royal Navy ships in the Mediterranean. She was destined to supply water for ships' boilers. A document was found which gave Mike a few leads to follow. And so the hunt was on.

Altogether Mike sent and received over 400 e-mails; Royal Navy and Merchant Navy organisations, seafaring museums and amateur radio society clubs throughout the country and abroad responded. Each of them went out of their way to help in the quest but it was only recently that he found just what he was looking for.

Sarah Harvey, Curatorial & Learning Officer of Chelmsford City Museum got in touch and invited Mike over to rummage in their archives... and being the home of Marconi Radio, it was too good an opportunity to miss. In one of the store rooms there it was – and in remarkably good condition considering its age... nearly 80 years!

Official documentation took a little while, but the museum pulled out all the stops and last week Mike went to Chelmsford to pick it up and bring it home!

Hopefully, it will be installed later this month in its original place in the wheelhouse – maybe we will even find the original screw holes, you never know!

The plan is to make this area on the bridge a place where visiting school children can learn about radio communications in those far off days and have a go at using a morse key! – listen to messages in morse code and discover how *Freshspring* went about her daily business.



## Project Manager's Report

*SS Freshspring* has welcomed thousands of visitors on board this season and feedback has been extremely positive. As the winter draws in, the ship now opens to the public on the first Sunday of the month, so here's hoping for some dry days to encourage continued visitor engagement.

The Trust held an Industrial Heritage Network Cornwall & Devon (IHNC) meeting in Bideford on 18th September 2019. We had some twenty attendees from heritage attractions around the area who we welcomed to Bideford for a day of presentations, discussion, networking and learning.

Hayley and I gave a presentation on engagement which seemed to go down well. Jon Pain the Managing Director of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway gave a very interesting presentation about their journey so far. They have achieved amazing successes, so it was really useful for us to absorb their experience.

Once members had updated the group on their organisations, we enjoyed a fantastic lunch provided by the Panier Pantry and kindly paid for by Bideford Bay Chamber of Commerce, after which we went down to the ship. The group was split in two with John Puddy and Stephen Attenborough giving guided tours of the ship. Following the ship visit, with the sun still shining, delegates enjoyed a Way of the Wharves tour by Mike Teare.

21 Bideford Sea Cadets visited *SS Freshspring* on Thursday 26th September. John Puddy and Chris Bell gave tours of the ship while Jenny from the Marine Society and Sea Cadets entertained and educated the third group of cadets with the engineering POD. The visit was really successful which I hope will be the beginning of a step change in our relationship with our local Sea Cadet unit.

The Trust has recently completed their first crowd funding video. Richard Ker managed the production, with Paulo from Panotion creating the video. It was really interesting working on the voiceover for the video as we had to consider our audience, how we wanted to be perceived as a Trust and how we could encourage people to donate to the awning appeal. The campaign is due to be launched imminently, so watch this space!

I attended Park School Options at 16+ evening in early October. I collected Matthew Wakeham from the railway station and Nadine Finck met us at the school. We had conversations with about twenty parents and students, many of whom had never considered the possibilities of a career at sea. Matthew was able to talk to the students with first hand experience as a 4th engineer, which was a real draw to his peers.

George Powe shared his shipyard memories with me as part of Oral Histories, as did Ron Robins RFA. Both had amazing stories to tell and it was a real privilege to hear and record their memories.

**Charlotte Squire**

## Educational and Project Update

On Sundays throughout the school summer holidays, we had free drop-in family activities onboard the ship. Activities included making ocean mats, 'writing' your name using signal flags, a ship trail and dressing up. In addition, we had a cosy area with cushions and nautical/sea themed books for children to curl up with. These sessions have been facilitated by Samantha Roberts, who was taken on as a freelancer, and planned by her and myself. Over 100 children participated in these activities. In addition, I facilitated another family activity day on 27th October, the last weekend of the half term.



*Knot tying.*



*At the ship's wheel.*



*Enjoying a book sitting on our new sea-themed cushions!*

The Trust's partnership/relationship with West Buckland School has continued to develop this autumn. On 25th September, John Puddy, Matthew Wakeham and I went to West Buckland School to talk to the entire sixth form about *Freshspring's* journey to date and the opportunities she offers for work experience. This was then followed up by a more informal talk and question/answer session on both careers at sea and work experience with a small number of interested students the next week. The plan is for these students to complete some work experience on board in the Spring Term. Matthew's experience, knowledge and youth are undoubtedly an asset in igniting interest in young people and developing relationships with them and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his support.

A group of Sixth Form Design & Technology students from the school visited the ship a few days later on the 8th October. John and Pete gave them a tour of the ship, focusing on the process of renovation, and the design/engineering of the time. The pupils got a lot from the trip and the school hopes to bring more of their students in the future. The teacher particularly commented on how good the guides were so a big thank you to John Puddy and Pete Gillett!



*West Buckland Design & Technology Sixth Form Students ship visit.*

Groups of pupils from Marland School visited the ship on three days in October/November. Again they benefitted from a tour by John and/or Pete.

As part of the National Lottery Heritage Funded Project, we are producing a picture book for children loosely based around *Freshspring* aiming to spark an interest in careers in engineering and maritime. Anthony Burt is writing it and Rebecca Bracey is illustrating it. We hope that it will be completed by early 2020. I am particularly pleased that this project is underway as it has been something I have wanted to do since I first heard about *Freshspring* and subsequently joined the team. With just over two months left of my contract, it will be very satisfying to see this vision become a reality. I would like to thank Anthony for his patience, advice and expertise.

Talking of thanks – you may have noticed that I've thanked several people in this article. As it's probably my last update for *Freshspring*, I would like to add a big thank you to all the volunteers: from the ship crew, to the stewards, to the admin volunteers, to those who helped with ship interpretation; to the Trustees; and to all those who quietly work hard behind the scenes making things happen! I would also like to thank you, the members, for all your support. The *Freshspring* team is truly a great one!

Finally I would like to wish The Trust all the very best for the future – with your passion and dedication I am sure you will continue to see the ship develop and thrive.

**Hayley Buscombe**  
**Educational and Project Officer**

## Scuttlebutt from the Quay



It was Christmas Eve in the wheelhouse and barely a sound could be heard, just the moan of a biting easterly wind and the squawk of a roosting bird.

The quay was eerily empty, even the winos had fled, it was the night for Christmas Eve spirits, even the long ago dead.

From a shadow in the corner of the wheelhouse the Mate was first to appear and he beamed in delight as he took in the sight of a bottle of Freshspring beer.

The Chief was next to emerge from the gloom as he strode to the First Mate's side but when he grasped at the bottle, his hand went straight through "I must be a ghost," he cried.

"Yes, ghosts we all are", a voice boomed forth as the Master hove into view. "I've summoned you here on this night of the year for we have a job to do."

The Chief and the Mate stood as straight as they could and they stared at the Master wide-eyed. "You've summoned us ghosts back to our posts to do what?" the Mate sighed.

"I agree with the Mate," said the Chief in a state as he grabbed yet again at the ale. "We can't do much if we've all lost our touch and whatever we try will fail."

"Take heart," said the Master in a commanding tone. "There is much that we can do, we'll help this ship after years of neglect and remind her of when she was new."

"When she slid through the water on her way out to Malta and docked at her very first home, when she did her job well and rose to the swell her decks all awash with the foam."

"When the deck and the keel and the ribs all could feel how the engine was working so well, and the boiler and screw and windlass all knew the galley's familiar smell."

"We'll talk to the parts of the ship stem to stern and tell her of how she once was, how she worked with all parts and all parts shared the life of the ship that was almost lost."

"We'll wake up her bones, we'll talk to the steel and tell her of what she can be; we'll talk of the day when shiny and bright she will again know the joy of the sea."

So they went and they talked to the parts of the ship from deck-beams to hull-plates and frames, from rivet to bracket and hatch-cover coamings and all of the bits without names.

They talked to the engines, the boiler and bunkers, the holds and the pipework below, they talked to the funnel, the handrails and gunwales, the rudder, the glands and the screw.

As the dawn was approaching their task was completed and the ship was awake once more, they gathered together up in the wheelhouse, three ghosts in the gloom by the door.

"I offer a toast," the Master said, "with the ghost of this long drunk beer, we'll gather again upon this day if ever we're needed here."

They faded away in the first light of day and the ship looked as sharp as a knife, she seemed lighter and tighter and very much brighter and eager to start her new life.

**Pete Gillett**

## Autumn news from the Engine Room

Since the last issue of the *Freshspring* magazine, I can report there has been significant progress on Engineering tasks being completed over the summer.

During the last quarter I can report that the under floor pipe schematics has been completed by Roger Palmer. Roger undertook the mammoth task of removing the floor plates and has mapped out the complex pipework system for the ship along with the relevant valves within the system. This information has been modelled using CAD, so we now have an electronic copy of the model and drawing of the boat's pipework system to aid the engineering team or dockyard for any future work which needs to be undertaken.

The lubrication and weekly turning of the engine continues, ensuring all the bearing surfaces are coated with fresh oil. Several of the oil pipes have been removed and cleaned out as we were not happy with the flow being seen.

The general service pump valve chest has been removed from the pump structure and stripped back to



bare metal. It was known that the chest had suffered from frost cracking sometime in the past and the extent needed to be evaluated, firstly to identify if the chest had been either fabricated or was of a cast construction, and secondly the level of cracking on the casing. It was confirmed that the chest is of a cast construction and the level of cracking is confined to the front face of the structure. Once the paint and rust were removed, it was found that the valve chest and the valves were in reasonably good condition and well worth salvaging.



The chest will be going out to specialist welders to see if it can in fact be salvaged.

During the summer there has been significant progress made on removing the end plates of the Condenser. The engineering team has been able to remove the remaining nuts from the rear end plate and with the assistance of the use of Fox wedges, has been able to separate the end plate from the condenser body to expose the pipes for examination. The piping system appears to be in really good condition with only a thin layer of salt residue over the assembly. In the coming months these pipes and the end plates will be cleaned out using specialist brushes to see if there has been any erosion of the tubes throughout the assembly.

The anodes show little erosion which indicates how little the engine was used after its refit.

Work has started on getting the engine telegraph system back up and running. The telegraph has been bolted in position on the bridge floor and the turnbuckles removed. The chain system from the engine repeater to the bridge appears on first observation to be serviceable. In the coming weeks, the ducting and pulleys will be examined to confirm the rods and chains run freely, and will then be connected to the bridge telegraph. Hopefully for the next article, I will be able to report that we have a fully functioning system.

**Mike Greener**

## New members

We welcome the following new members of the Trust:

Andy Blackburn  
J.W. Fennell  
Matthew Wakeham

*Instow, Devon  
Ilfracombe, Devon  
Cwmbran, Torfaen*

## The First Motor Race

**John Puddy**

We so much take cars for granted but in the infancy of motoring in 1897, a race was put on to test motorised vehicles, both steam and petrol. This was classed as the first serious race.

Two good friends decided that it would be a good plan to cover the race route from Paris to Rouen as a reason for a continental foray. They kindly invited me along as a passenger in a 1937 Bentley. We would accompany another companion in a similar car. A formal meeting was held to discuss this short adventure and at a suitable point, I interjected that I would accompany them in my MG TC. There was a great deal of puffing and blowing with resultant cigar smoke rings rising to the ceiling and stiff whiskies being dispatched before it was agreed that I might tag along. Tagging along in my MG was a challenge to me as I had just spent a fortune doing up the engine and it needed a good test. Having made the commitment, I took an interest in the plan. We were to drive to Paris and re-enact the very early race of mechanically propelled velocipedes.

The due date came and we lined up at the Channel Tunnel crossing ready for the off.

Day one was uneventful as the aim was simply to get to Paris for the night. However, we did stop for an excellent lunch at a motorway service area, something you can't do in England! The pace was acceptable with speeds not exceeding 70mph, which suited us all. During dinner that evening in a rather swanky street restaurant,



*The team before setting off.*

there was mild interest in the MG from my companions who by now realised my attendance was far from tagging along. Indeed, it was agreed that we should lead on the next day, given our perceived expertise as navigators. The satellite navigator was discreetly hidden below the dash! The aim was to follow the route from Paris to Rouen, which was taken by the veteran velocipedes in 1897. It was fortunate that we had details of the places passed and we were able to follow the route relatively accurately. In some places the road had been moved or not there at all, but none the less, we made progress. Incidentally, the fastest car in 1897 was averaging 11mph, probably better than our Paris average on the first day of the re-enactment.

We set off from the hotel in fine style to find the start point. After some deviations due to no entry roads and a pass of the Arc de Triomphe, we arrived at our start. Cars were duly photographed and we looked for a plaque commemorating the event, of which there was none. Within minutes we were off, parading through the streets of Paris with determination and an air of importance. In the days of the race, vehicles were incapable of climbing gradients so the route followed the Seign providing a flattish route. Needless to say, we were deprived of this luxury on many occasions where roads turned to paths or did not exist. However, we progressed until a point was reached where I was alone, the others had disappeared. In this situation, I deemed it best to stop and see what might happen. Within ten minutes a Bentley arrived from the direction we were travelling in and another emerged from a side street. After congratulating ourselves on a successful recovery, we set off again, now into a less urban area. We clearly were on the correct route as there were beautiful mansions and buildings, which well predated the event, that lined the roads.

Our lunch that day, however, was at a La Routier restaurant and, dare I say it, rather prolonged. Le Patron was most accommodating and it was with some reluctance that we left two and a half hours later to continue the route to Rouen.

Our drive was quite painless and we arrived in Rouen in very good time in spite of our heavy lunch. In order to finish the day in style and follow our earlier motorists, we decided to dine at the oldest restaurant in France. The Restaurant La Coursonne. The fare was excellent and a perfect end to a day of historic motoring.

The original race really started with Cugnot who invented a medieval looking tricar, which did cover fair distances although this unwieldy vehicle was both dangerous and impractical. A competition was organised in 1887 by M. Fossier; however, this was not a memorable success as only one car started, a little steam quadricycle driven by Count de Dion, who did cover a short course within Paris at a respectable speed. Several heavy vehicles were produced for various purposes including a big steam omnibus which ran the streets of Paris for a while in 1873. However, these were built for commercial purposes not for light work.

In the early 90s, the petrol cars of Panhard and Levassor, Peugeot and Benz appeared and were occasionally met on the roads of France although usually in difficulties. The public took only a mild interest in this new mode of evil smelling shaky travel, considering the grimy occupants as misguided cranks. I have noticed that this

sentiment still applies to those with interests in Morris Garages vehicles. Occasionally rumours arose of engineers who achieved amazing things with these cars despite the innumerable breakdowns. By degrees, the people of France began to think there may be some merits in this new way of getting around.

In 1891, M. Serpoulet drove his steam car from Paris to Lyon and MM Doriot and Rigoulot went from Paris to Brest on a Peugeot with adventures and vicissitudes which would astound us modern motorists. These very notable journeys were few and far between and the vast majority of the public had no idea of the capabilities of these machines. It was therefore felt necessary to hold a trial of some sort to show the public what self-propelled vehicles could do. Perhaps also to show that they might be of use to private owners as a substitute for horse-drawn carriages. Oh, how we now dream for horse-drawn carriages! As a result M. Pierre Giffard of *le Petit Journal*, along with a group of consultant engineers would examine the cars throughout the trials. It was agreed that the first prize would be afforded to the car which seemed to best fulfil the conditions of being without danger, easily handled and of low running cost. In order to qualify, each car was required to undertake a preliminary trial which was to cover 50 kilometres in three hours. As a result of perceived danger to occupants and the public due to breakneck speeds, this was increased to four hours. The only requirement was that the cars had to move under their own power.

The competition was a huge success and when the list closed, there were no fewer than 102 applicants. The entries included steam, petrol and a range of less likely propulsion modes, such as gravity, multiple system of levers, pendulums, weight of passengers, "automatic", self acting, system of pedals and compressed air. Clearly with



*A break en route.*

this strange and wonderful range of motive powers, it is probable that a considerable number of entries were simply their inventors' figments of imagination. Indeed other than steam and petrol none of these showed on the day.

The event was arranged for 7th June when M Marioni would be present. He was owner of *le Petit Journal* and provided 2nd, 3rd and 4th prizes. Needless to say, the majority of competitors were far from ready and it was decided to postpone the run until 22nd July. To provide the public with an opportunity to view the cars, an exhibition was held on 18th July, when so many people turned up that the cars could hardly force a passage through. The next day eliminating trials began.

17 cars started the trials over five routes aimed to spread competitors over several roads in the hope that irritation would be reduced. Remarkably only four cars failed to finish and the population on the various routes received the cars with great enthusiasm. Flowers and receptions awaited the drivers and a triumphal arch had been erected at Precy.

The next day six more cars started including two steam, a Peugeot, a Panhard, steam tricycle and a petrol car. All finished the routes bringing the accepted number of cars to 19. Six others had sent requests to be tried but only two appeared. Both were accepted into the race making the number up to 21 cars out of the 102 entries.

The programme for the great event was:

7 to 7.45am to assemble at Port Maillot.

8.00am start from Boulevard Maillot. As we did over 100 years later.

12.00 arrive Mantes for lunch. Which we did too.

1.30pm leave Mantes for Rouen. Albeit, rather late in our case. Oh dear, we failed on this one.

8pm arrive Rouen.

The total distance was 126 kilometers or nearly 80 miles.



the MG en route.

The weather throughout was perfect and cars began to assemble at 7.00am. Crowds and huge numbers of cyclists came from all parts of Paris, the cyclists intending to follow the race. James Gordon-Bennett was there and had a reporter from his *New York Herald* on a bicycle ready to follow the race to Rouen.

By 7.15, cars were ranged ready for the

start along the Boulevard Maillot. A problem ensued that there were not enough people who could drive so many cars at one time. Minutes before the start, Maurice Le Blant was still vainly searching for a fearless fellow to drive a large delivery van. His brother, described as a person of good intentions, had already driven the van on to the footpath and demolished a bench. As no one else could be found to continue, he valiantly agreed to pilot the clumsy vehicle to Rouen, much to the dismay of the official observer of that car.

At 10 to 8, the nineteen vehicles were in line with two still without drivers. Eventually all were manned and at one minute past the hour, the signal to start was given. The De Dion tractor moved off and was immediately surrounded by a crowd of cyclists. The remaining 18 followed at intervals of 30 seconds. As the last car left, the two steam cars of M Le Blant appeared and were sent off without waiting, following the wheezing line of vehicles.

The Steam Tractor was the most powerful car and kept a lead, followed closely by the Panhards and Peugeots, which although less powerful, were very light. As cars dropped out for various reasons such as broken axles, their occupants were picked up by other cars. The De Dion tractor was always out in front and due to its enormous speed, positively terrified spectators who nonetheless cheered the heavy vehicle.

The first driver across the finishing line at Rouen was le Comte de Dion but he did not win the main prize because his steam tractor needed a 'stoker' and was thus ineligible. The fastest petrol powered car was a 3hp Peugeot driven by Albert Lemaître. The premier prize, the 5,000 franc Prix du Petit Journal, for 'the competitor whose car comes closest to the ideal' was shared equally by manufacturers Panhard et Levassor and Les fils de Peugeot frères (The sons of Peugeot brothers) with vehicles that were classed as easy to use.

The joy of our own event was the great company, lack of traffic, amazing scenery and yes, the excited French pedestrians who waved us along. I have to say though, they had no idea what we were doing, nor did they seem to care.

## Billy Treloar



I am sorry to report that Billy Treloar, a great friend of the Trust and one of our earliest members, passed away on Saturday 31st August 2019, aged 74.

Billy traveled all the way from Haltwhistle to attend our events and Trust AGMs. He was regularly on the phone offering advice and support.

He will be sadly missed by all of us as a friend and colleague.

John

## Britannia update

Following on from Vicki Samuels' article on the historic wooden sailing vessel *Britannia* in the summer newsletter, I arranged to have a personal look at her on my way home from a trip to Bideford in mid-September.

She is currently housed in a large purpose-built timber and plastic shed on a site at Winkleigh in north Devon, several miles from the sea. *Britannia* is owned by Haydn (Sam) & Vicki Samuels who have formed a charitable trust to restore the vessel to her former glory, but their association with *Britannia* goes back a long way – see Vicki's article in that newsletter.

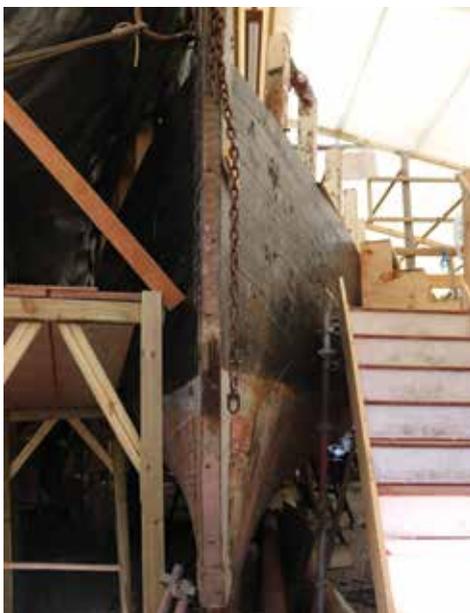
When I called by, 75 year old Haydn was my host as Vicki was in London. As Haydn showed me the vessel, my thoughts turned to when I first saw *Freshspring* which I visited in October 2011, also the first time I met John Puddy. As that time, I felt strongly *Freshspring* was a ship that needed saving, and eight years on, and the Steamship *Freshspring* Trust has worked wonders with that ship, which, of course, now resides in Bideford and is open for public visits.

*Britannia* is a different kind of vessel, being a wooden sailing ship, 30 years older than *Freshspring*, and has had a very different life, a good bit of it in the ownership of the Samuels family.

I was very taken by the story of *Britannia*, and my visit to see this interesting vessel. Listed by National Historic Ships, she is the sole survivor of her type and while looking quite sad, is still very restorable and needs to sail again, preferably before it is too late for the Samuels family.



*A reminder from the summer newsletter: Britannia anchored off Skye in the 1990s.*



*The bow of Britannia with access steps to the right.*



*A general view of the deck of Britannia, showing the large cabin space that was added when owned by a training organisation. The plan is to return this area back to its much smaller original size.*



After the Samuels sold her in 1996, she had suffered from a poor conversion into a youth training vessel by the use of incompatible materials and the cutting away of large areas of the deck. She was left to rot on a mooring at Brixham where a combination of neglect, poor workmanship and fresh water has done a lot of damage. However, she is eminently restorable and needs to take her place as one of Britain's ever-diminished heritage ships, all the more important as she is a sailing ship so is environmentally friendly.

The immediate need is to raise £15,000 to acquire some special timber to carry forward the restoration work which is currently holding up work, much to the frustration of the team of volunteers.

We helped saved the *Freshspring* – can we save *Britannia* too?

**Brian Gooding**

**Centre picture:** *During its training life, a diesel engine was fitted near the stern, altering the centre of gravity of the ship.*

**Lower left:** *Inside the fore cabin.*

# A World of Robeys

## Hwyel Edwards

Upon reflection, many inquisitive visitors allude to the charity's location in Tavistock, astutely querying the rationale behind the 300 mile displacement from Lincoln, the original home of Robey & Co Ltd! The story intertwining Robey, the former company and current charity, revolves around a small 'tandem' tarmacadam steam roller which found itself in the hands the Robey Trust charity back in 1983. This abbreviated article tells the anecdotal story of past industrial and agricultural contributions made by Robey of Lincoln and the efforts of the charity to honour their legacy, intertwined.

In 1925, the Robey tandem roller, No.42693, was delivered to Devon County Council, arriving by rail on an LNER well wagon. Allocated to various depots throughout Devon, No.42693 finally ended up in Tavistock. The engine had a simple commercial life, ending its career by 1962 when it was parked in the Tavistock Meadows children's playground, where the swimming pool now stands. During this time the engine affectionately developed the name 'Stumbles' by the local children. The name comes from the popular book 'Tootles the Taxi & Other Rhymes' written by Joyce Clegg, published by Ladybird in 1956. Upon the engine's removal in 1982 by the charity's founder, David Davies, the engine received an extensive eleven year overhaul due to the degree of corrosion and vandalism which had taken its toll. The restoration was undertaken as a 'training exercise' at the local Plymouth Marjon University with the help of many voracious students!

During this period, a stroke of luck was found in the form of sponsorship from Beel Industrial Boilers (BIB), tenants of the former Robey Globe Works, who kindly supported the economical boiler restoration. Sadly, BIB closed in February 1988 before the site of Robey & Co Ltd, home for 134 years, was demolished for housing; by all accounts a museum was not a viable proposition. Nevertheless, BIB's support to produce the last Robey boiler in the original Robey Globe Works served as a fitting tribute to the prevalent legacy of Robey. The crossover between Robey's unfortunate demise and pastures new for the Robey Trust charity was a remarkable level of foresight in the making; a sense of handing over the baton was felt.



Then and now. **Left:** Tavistock Meadows 1975. **Right:** Torbay Steam Rally 2018.

Sadly, problems of corrosion, to which many pressure vessels succumb, was felt at the Robey Trust in February when *Stumbles* failed the mandatory ten year hydraulic test. Although BIB kindly returned the engine to steam, the original 1925 firebox was recycled to economise on cost and time. The fireboxes are 'stayless', making them rather intricate pieces of flanging. At the time, no one had reattempted to fabricate a firebox of this type since the days of Robey. Presently, five new boxes have been pressed, most recently including Robey wagon, No.42522, in the charity's collection. The level of skill required to press one of these fireboxes may be on par with Bulleid's Leader class thermic syphons.

To catalyse efforts to return *Stumbles* to steam, the charity has several fundraising initiatives planned to take the static engine to several events around the West Country this year. Additionally, the Heritage Lottery Fund has been engaged in a bid to cover the major expenses required. This grant has also spurred on a new forward plan to bolster the charity's general resilience by improving community engagement,



From this – the current site with container storage and 'the hill' (RHS)...



... to this – New visitor centre (LHS) new false façade (middle) and new 5,000sq.ft outbuilding (RHS).

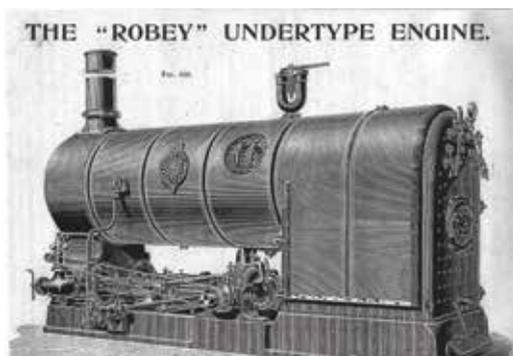
volunteering opportunities and annual income generation methods. Below is an artistic impression which illustrates the exciting proposals being formulated to transform both the external image and interior layout, as funds become available.

To elaborate on the influential figure behind this story, Robert Robey started manufacturing portable steam engines and thrashing machines in 1854 at 'The New Perseverance Ironworks', Canwick Road, Lincoln. The name was later changed to the 'Globe Works' to reflect expanding markets in all seven continents. By the Great Exhibition of 1862, "fixed engines, traction engines, ploughing tackle, corn mills, saw benches, etc." were on display, and soon a complete range of mining equipment was on offer.

Traction engines, following the conventional design, were built to Robey's own designs and to patents of others, such as Thomson (road steamers) and Savory (ploughing engines). Several variations on a theme were explored including the semi-portable "Undertype", with the engine underneath the boiler. The whole motive assembly was mounted on a bedframe making foundations unnecessary, this configuration was reportedly 'invented' by Robey's in 1872. Fortunately, two examples exist in the charity's collection, including an early duplex (double high) example used to drive a DC dynamo in Mashfords boatyard, Torpoint, a stone's throw away from the Robey Trust. The rescued operation facilitated the ingenious use of fence posts, copious amounts of weed killer, head scratching and relentless shovelling to move the engine out of the claustrophobic and dilapidated engine shed, interestingly built inside another shed!

The engine was nigh on derelict with the boiler used as an incinerator in later years, thus little expertise was required to conclude its total condemnation. Upon the advent of connection to the National Grid, Mashfords were told to decommission any auxiliary methods of generating power. This facilitated the use of a gas axe to slice the nail-crank in half – one half with attached flywheel now resides somewhere on the seabed, possibly with a buoy tied to it; any interested takers? The engine is currently undergoing a major overhaul, which has included the fabrication of a brand new spheroidal graphite cast iron crankshaft, using the remaining piece as the pattern for revised engineering drawings. Several non-ferrous parts are next in line to be machined along with the cosmetic overhaul of the original boiler; for the stout-hearted volunteers!

By the turn of the 20th century, the firm was a limited company, the Works had expanded to cover 15 acres, and 20,000 engines had been built. 'Fixed' engines of many types were added to the range, such as the Quick Revolution vertical, for electricity generation. Indeed, Robey's Globe Works was claimed to be the first factory in the UK lit by electricity. Engines with slide valves, expansion gear, piston valves and drop valves (such as our 'Class-E') were developed for application in most industries. Colliery winders up to 84ins stroke were amongst the largest engines, exported all over



The Robey Undertype c.1880 (left), with the end goal in focus as the current restoration (right) continues.

the world; many are still in use in India and elsewhere. To this day, many eidetic minds struggle to truly comprehend both the initial conception of the drop valve and its variable cut off.

Overtypes, superheater and Uniflow engines were sold, the latter, the most efficient type of steam engine made, being a speciality of the firm. Engines were made to every configuration: horizontal, vertical and diagonal; with single, tandem and cross-compound cylinders; open and high speed enclosed, all in a variety of sizes and powers.

The road vehicle department also expanded considerably. A new range of traction engines was introduced, and the steam wagon made its appearance in 1906, various models of which remained in production until 1934. Steam road rollers were made from 1913: the Trust is fortunate to have the very first one made in its collection, No.32387. Interestingly, a photo recently emerged of an early overtype Robey wagon that also worked for J & A Stephens, Pembrokeshire, prior to their purchase of No.32387 new from the Lincolnshire Show, see below. As manufacturers of predominantly industrial and agricultural engines, Robeys came late into the road rolling market, but were innovative in designing a light, quick reversing tandem roller for the new hot rolled asphalts, which were becoming increasingly used, post First World War. The charity's second acquisition came in the idiosyncratic form of Robey tri-tandem, No.45655, built 1930, which is preserved by a Partnership operating to this day. This engine is one of three that used to work for Wirksworth Quarries Ltd, Hertfordshire, ably assisting with the construction of the M1 motorway in the early 1960s.

Steam tractors and trailers enjoyed a ready sale: an unusual variant designed by Robey was a direct ploughing tractor that worked on the renowned Sena Sugar Estates, in Mozambique. The sole survivor resides in the collection, nearing the end of a lengthy 15 year restoration. Road locomotives also became popular, especially in overseas markets; a few still exist in New Zealand and Australia. Robey were never as



Robey three-point roller, built 1913, No.32387, which resides in the collection in complete, running order.

popular nor reputed in this area of design as other makes such as Burrell or Fowler, nevertheless the charity is fortunate to have a privately-owned 8nhp Robey colonial traction engine under restoration. Next year should see the engine move under its own power after a seven year restoration from a pile of rusted bits.

Robey's contribution to the war effort was considerable. Because Robey made an early entry into the

internal combustion engine market, for half a century vertical and horizontal oil and diesel engines were produced for many applications, including ship propulsion. Air compressors, rock crushers and hemp decorticators serve as examples to illustrate the wide range of products made. Because of this industrious streak, in 1916 Sopwith aircraft and Short seaplanes were built in large numbers.



*An early 1906 Robey overtype lorry, also once part of the J & A Stephens fleet in Pembrokeshire.*

From 1939 production centred on gun mountings, frigate engines and other heavy items, contributing to the war effort. After the war, the capacity and expertise of the company was used to fabricate everything from converters for steelworks to parts for the Jodrell Bank radio telescope. In the firm's later years, however, package boilers in oil, gas or solid fuel fired versions, were made in larger numbers. Many Babcock-Robey industrial boilers still exist in commercial applications to this day.

Although a brief excerpt, please come along and see what we're doing. The Works (as we call it) is open most Saturdays, some Thursdays and at other times by appointment. Visitors are most welcome, but if travelling from afar, please telephone first: Alex Masters (07597 797 053) or Jack Ayland (07805 541 192). We are particularly pleased to welcome active participants, whether skilled or not. There are projects to suit all ages and both sexes, working on your own project or as part of a convivial team. There is the opportunity to learn new skills and take part in engine and machine training schemes. For further details, including membership, feel free to come along and have a chat with us at the Works. Alternatively, see our website for more information: [www.therobeytrust.co.uk](http://www.therobeytrust.co.uk).

- *You can even see a Robey engine on board SS Freshspring! – Ed.*



*Sopwith aircraft. 1 1/2 Strutter, serial 9376, RNAS, built 1916.*



*Robey municipal 20hp oil engine, No. 45234, built 1919, based at Amberley Museum.*

## Memories of a North Devon childhood

**Our** family lived and farmed in North Devon for many generations, mainly within the Torridge catchment area. I was born in August 1938 about a year before the beginning of the Second World War. My parents were farming a 150 acre farm. The household consisted of me, my parents, my grandfather, a woman who lived in and helped both in the house and outside, and the tractor driver who also lived in. It was quite common in those days to have staff living in the farmhouse with the family. Two other men worked on the farm and lived in the village. It was, of course, wartime and the pressure was on to produce as much food as possible.

The house was very old, dating back to at least Tudor times even to the mediaeval period. It had a thatched roof and a yellow climbing rose going up the wall beside the front door. Barn owls nested in the roof and the young ones made snoring noises at night which I found a bit disturbing although not frightening. The farm had been part of the estate belonging to Montacute Abbey in Somerset, and on the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century, had passed to the Coffin family at Portledge; they sold it off in 1887.

The next event I remember was starting school which was a Church of England primary school with two teachers. I set off with my satchel on my back and my gas mask over my shoulder and in the care of a neighbour's daughter. I was, of course, in the infant's class. My teacher had taught my mother. When visiting the churchyard recently, I saw on her gravestone that she had lived to the age of 94 years old and had never married. The playground in those days wasn't tarmacked and was a bit dusty in the summer and muddy in the winter. One tragedy that happened was the sudden collapse and death of the vicar who was visiting. He was in the other classroom at the time but I remember the commotion. I saw his grave a few days later covered in flowers; this was my first introduction to death. He was well respected in the parish, he had christened me and married my parents as well as burying some of my relatives.



*John Squire's childhood home.*

Other memories were of evacuees from Bristol and London, army convoys along the main road – the Americans used to throw out sweets – and the drone of the engines of the German bombers going over to bomb South Wales. There were also prisoners of war working on local farms laying drains, mostly Italians.

Christmas brought excitement in the form of Father Christmas and presents of books and toys, some of which were probably homemade.

On Boxing Day we had a shooting party; friends and relatives came for a day's rabbit shooting. The men formed pairs and with the help of a ferret, went off to shoot over the whole farm. This had the double effect of a day's sport as well as clearing a lot of the rabbits off the farm before they started breeding in the spring and eating the crops. It also produced a lot of food in the form of rabbit meat which was sold to the butcher. There seemed to be a never ending battle against their numbers because, of course, they bred like rabbits; they were also continually trapped during the winter. At the end of the day, the dead rabbits would be collected together and counted. There was a certain amount of friendly competition as to which pair had the biggest bag. My grandfather and my father's brother were the best shots and if they got together, they were difficult to beat. At dusk, the men would go home and do their work before coming back with their wives and children for supper and a game of nap, which is a card game favoured by country people where small sums of money change hands.

One of the big events of the winter would be a threshing day when the mobile threshing machine arrived on the farm to thresh out one of the corn ricks. First of all, a supply of steam coal would have to be arranged to feed the steam-powered traction engine which pulled the threshing machine and then drove it. This would arrive in the afternoon and be set up ready for work the following day which entailed levelling it both lengthways and crossways. Early the next morning the two man crew would arrive to get up steam and prepare for work. Soon the workforce would turn up from neighbouring farms, it needed a team of at least ten men to work efficiently. By now the engine would be hot and giving off steam and it would be time for the men to take up their positions and for the engine driver to put the whole outfit into motion. The big fly wheel begins to turn the driving belt and with a clacking of belts the whole machine gives off a gentle but powerful roar as the sheaves of corn are carefully fed into the top of the thresher. There was not much thought about health and safety in those days with belts and chains running everywhere. The grain came out at one end of the machine and the straw at the other, the husks and general rubbish known as drowse came out somewhere around the middle. The grain was cleaned as it came out, good grain on the left, small grain in the middle and weed seed and rubbish on the right. The sacks of grain were loaded onto a cart and taken off to the granary, the straw was made into a rick, and the whole area would be enveloped in a cloud of dust. About mid-morning the whole outfit would be shut down to a gentle murmur and everyone stopped for a break when tea and refreshments were brought out from the farmhouse, and then it was off again for a couple more hours. When it was time to stop for dinner, everyone trooped into the house leaving the machine motionless and the engine gently steaming. It was up to the farmer's wife to supply a good meal for ten or a dozen hungry men and then it was back to the rick yard again for the afternoon session. As the rick descended, the rats appeared, disturbed from their warm winter quarters and there would be a lot of shouting and barking as men and dogs tried to kill as many as they could. It was a constant battle against vermin, rats, mice, rabbits, pigeons, foxes, badgers etc. they all preyed on the farm stock and crops and had to be kept under control. The job generally finished in the late afternoon and

the men went back to their own farms to feed the animals and milk the cows. The threshing crew pulled out the next morning and went on to the next farm, leaving the farm staff to clear up the mess and get things back to normal.

Most country people had sufficient food during the war, they would have had their vegetable garden and they could catch rabbits by flushing them out of their holes with ferrets and catching them in nets, and there was also the produce of the poultry run. With petrol being rationed we were unable to travel much beyond the neighbouring parish or two. With everyone doing their bit for the war efforts farmers, although they were not in any danger, had to work hard to keep up with everything there was to be done. The government laid down what crops had to be grown and this meant ploughing up some extra fields to grow crops we had not grown before such as sugar beet which was sent by rail to the factories in the east.

Living standards were quite primitive by modern standards, very few farmhouses had bathrooms, it was the tin bath on the kitchen floor if you felt you needed one, and the privy across the yard. Most families spent any leisure time in the kitchen, it was the only room that was heated on normal days. The front room was kept for special occasions, with the big open fire replaced by a Triplex stove which was much more efficient.

The farm was a mixed farm as most farms were, and a good selection of livestock was kept. Cows for some milk, and the calves reared for beef or replacements, a flock of sheep, a few pigs and some poultry. Corn was grown, known as dredge corn which was a mixture of barley and oats and sometimes wheat. This was used for stock feed. There were potatoes and the fore mentioned sugar beet, we also grew vegetables to supply a shop in Bideford. The motive power consisted of a Standard Fordson tractor, bought new in 1939 which did the heavy work such as ploughing and cultivating and two cart horses which pulled carts and did the lighter cultivations. The horse and cart of my grandfather's day had been replaced by a blue Morris 8 car. My mother started driving when she was seventeen in the days before driving tests and drove until her eighties. It was only when she gave up that she found she had been driving without a licence for the last few years having forgotten to renew it!

I don't remember much about spring tilling, or very much about hay harvest either, I do remember the hay being swept up to the rick by a hay sweep mounted on the front of the tractor which pushed the hay along until it reached the rick and then it was hoisted up by a grab mounted on a pole and pulled up by a horse. The corn was cut by a binder which went round and round the field cutting corn and throwing the sheaves out the side and then they would be stood up in stooks until they were taken to the rick yard and stacked to await threshing.

A couple of months before my sixth birthday I was given a toy farm yard, complete with animals as a present and a few days later I seemed to have acquired a little sister. A while later my father came back from his daily trip to Bideford to deliver the milk with a strange yellow fruit, my first banana. Later still came VE Day and I remember a circus and fireworks in Bideford.

**John Squire**

## Scilly Sailing.....

### Lou Boulter

The beautiful old Brixham fishing trawler *Leader* was built in the W A Gibbs' shipyard in Galmpton Creek on the river Dart, Devon in 1892... and she's still sailing.



She is now part of the Brixham based Trinity Sailing Foundation, a registered charity with aims to preserve historic vessels plus assisting in the personal development of young people. So very similar to the Steamship Freshspring Trust based in Bideford, North Devon.

Miraculously I was offered a last minute place on the 3rd August sailing out of Falmouth to The Scilly Isles for six nights. My previous sailing experiences has been strictly warm weather in the Caribbean laced with the odd rum punch or two, so this was to be an adventure into the unknown!

*Leader* was tied up on the Pendennis Marina, where she stood out from all the other craft with her black hull and red 'boot top' waterline. Stepping aboard, my eyes were immediately drawn to the beautifully worn timber, almost sculptural, cleats and blocks. Throwing my bag on a bunk (previously a hold for fish!), her soul had already touched me.

There were six crew and twelve guests, and after our health & safety briefing and tea and cake, we set off. Her itinerary is always subject to change due to weather conditions and in planning the best sail, skipper Mark decided we should anchor up for the night not far from Falmouth in Mullion Bay as the whole south coast was experiencing large swells. At anchor, we rolled and the old lady creaked (apparently caused by the modern infrastructure within the wooden hull). A superb dinner (all food included) was served up in the spacious saloon, prepared by Neil who prefers to be a 'cook' rather than a 'chef'. As we eighteen humans chatted excitedly, everyone, myself included, started to go a bit green... I made it through pudding! So feeling rather smug, I later climbed into my cosy bunk; then from nowhere I too succumbed and joined my new mates on deck where we compared seasick remedies.

Participation in crewing was optional as this was not a 'training' voyage. We were a mixed bunch, some serious sailors (the logo-ed well worn clothing was a big clue); others just wanting to see the Scillies whilst learning some maritime skills on

the way. Stefan, the Bosun, demonstrated various skills required for a traditional sailing vessel including: retracting the bowsprit (what a surprise and so practical!), sail changing (super heavy), anchor work (a huge big old anchor that you usually only see in museums or pirate films!) and the importance of listening to instructions, also life jackets to be worn at all times on deck whilst sailing. During our voyage Mark allowed us to helm using the compass or flag directions to stay on course. My attempt at this was not good.



Anchor up and sails set (muscle power involving sweating and tailing ropes, not a winch in sight) we left for St Martins. On the horizon numerous yachts appeared, more and more, tacking and flying with the good winds, it was the Fastnet Race! More excitement occurred when dolphins joined in the party. We anchored off the north shore, the Zodiac dinghy was launched, which involved rigging up the 'derrick' and we went ashore to a deserted beach strewn with shells. I climbed a hill through clouds of heather, ferns and butterflies. Choosing not to go further, I turned and there down on the beach one of my shipmates had donned a wet suit and was snorkelling!

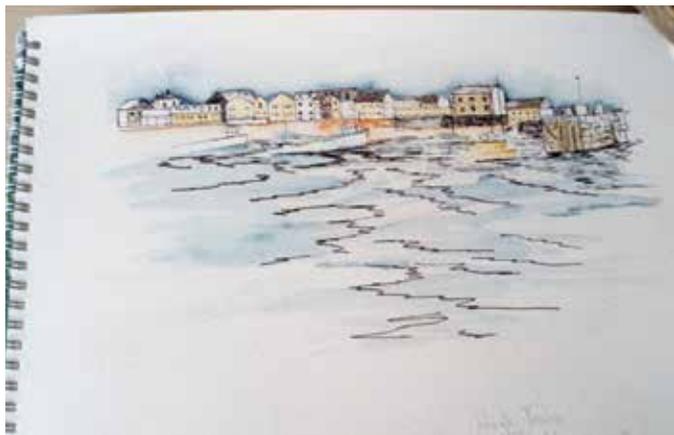
Back on board we had another great meal, the wine flowed, we laughed a lot and someone strummed a guitar whilst Neil, our cook, sang sea shanties and regaled us with tales.

Next morning our destination was to be New Grimsby Bay on Tresco. However, skipper Mark decided to take us for a sail first, so with a mizzen, staysail, flying jib and main set, we headed out to sea. Apparently the seas were slight to moderate with a few three metre waves thrown in; for most of us the biggest seas we had experienced. Personally I gloried in seeing this old lady confidently tackling the wind and waves under the expert steering of Mark. My respect for both was sealed.

We went ashore clutching towels to have a shower, which was conveniently located in



a pub, so we had a pint whilst we waited in the short queue. First impressions as I wandered over to the pub were it was all so clean: Tresco employees busily going about their chores, wearing neatly logo-ed uniforms whilst riding equally smart basketed bicycles; holidaymakers driving around it in



branded golf carts, some might say a tad Disney; however all very lovely. Beautiful swathes of blue Agapanthus everywhere.

The following morning, after another wonderful breakfast (porridge seemed to be popular), we went ashore again to explore. The Abbey Gardens (started in 1834) extend over grounds surrounding the remains of 12th century St Nicholas Priory. Famed for its tropical plants, you could be forgiven for thinking you were in another country, definitely worth a visit.

At the start of my adventure, copious notes were made but by this point it was all so exciting meeting new friends, sailing and sojourns on shore that all note making ceased! So this account becomes a blur of wonderful experiences... During the afternoon the artist side of me kicked in with a few sketchbook pieces whilst sitting in the sunshine on the stern.

Arriving in St Mary's early morning, *Leader* briefly tied up at the quayside to refuel then anchored out in the harbour. After this, we were free to go ashore for as long as we liked, the dingy was available for returning to the boat at two hour intervals, all perfect. The island offers many walks, criss-crossing over the centre and spectacular coastal walks with views over crystal clear blue sea. After walking and the mandatory ice cream cone, a few of us headed to The Mermaid Pub situated almost on the quay to wait for the last dinghy back.

More delicious food that night was rounded off with a cheese board and port! Yes, we passed it to the left... To avoid the imminent storm, we sailed out a day earlier, homeward bound, but not before we had a front row view of St Mary's ladies' gig race. With many boats accompanying them shouting support, they passed us (still at anchor) rowing into a spectacular sunset swept by dramatic pre-storm clouds.

We left lovely St Mary's. That big old anchor was pulled up and we set off to sail overnight heading for the Helford River to anchor there for a barbeque lunch before returning to Falmouth. I remained on deck hoping to see a starry sky between the brooding clouds. We did have peeps of possibly Orion's Belt but just as I thought I



would turn in for the night, the dolphins came to play, silver gorgeousness!

The following morning our last breakfast became 'brunch' (inclement weather meant no barbeque) and what a treat... smoked salmon, scrambled eggs, burgers, sausages.

Falmouth was celebrating 'Falmouth Week' so *Leader* could not tie up quayside. Instead we nudged up against a friendly and very welcoming Dutch sailing vessel (I'm sure there is a technical term for this) complete with her own jet ski and a clutch of bicycles.

Unable to grasp the fact that this superb experience was at an end, we had to say our goodbyes. Very awkwardly, holding onto skipper Mark's hand, I eased down a very narrow and angled plank to reach the quayside. More hugs with everyone then we went our separate ways.

*Leader*, the oldest surviving sailing trawler and one of the largest of her type, 105ft in length overall, displaces 110 tonnes, carrying 3,150 square feet of sail on a gaff ketch rig. (Sailing Trawlers, published by The Sail Loft, Pump Street, Brixham).

Trinity Sailing Foundation is always on the lookout for volunteers through the summer months for on board help whilst sailing and in the winter for Brixham-based maintenance tasks. For more information, volunteering or donations see [www.trinitysailing.co.uk](http://www.trinitysailing.co.uk).

- Photos: Harry Gottschalk, Sales & Marketing Manager at Trinity Sailing who joined us on this trip.

- *Lou Boulter travelled and lived all over the world before settling in North Devon where she finds inspiration for her artwork. She recently completed the line drawings for the 'Welcome Aboard' brochure given to all visitors on SS Freshspring.*

- *According to National Historic Ships, Trinity Sailing Foundation have ceased operations at the end of the 2019 sailing season. For more, see... <https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/news/nhs/official-statement-nhs-uk-re-trinity-sailing>*

## Freshspring Steam Beer!

Continuing our successful relationship with Bideford's Clearwater Brewery, The Steamship Freshspring Trust is excited to announce a new recipe for our 'Freshspring Steam Beer'.

The new Freshspring Beer is 4.2% abv and is a golden hoppy beer with a distinct clean and crisp edge... very drinkable!

Freshspring Beer comes in 500ml bottles and is 'bottle conditioned' which means some of the natural ingredients are present in the beer. This gives a more intense flavour but the bottle needs to stand before drinking to allow it to settle and requires careful pouring.

The beer is available direct from the brewery at £2.50 per bottle including VAT and can be ordered through sales@clearwaterbrewery.co.uk or by phone on 01237 420 492.

Delivery for a minimum of 12 bottles can be made for free within a 10 mile radius. Deliveries further afield will be made by courier with a £15 charge.

Payment to be made in advance by BACS (call the brewery for bank details) or by cheque made payable to Clearwater Brewery Ltd.



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



## Leaving a legacy to the SS Freshspring Trust

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

Legacies provide very necessary financial support in helping the Trust 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 Trust 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 Trust 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  
Signature

Second Witness  
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.

# Freshspring's Sponsors

With grateful thanks to our Sponsors who enable us to achieve remarkable progress.

Alco Engineering (Manufacturing) Co.

Bideford Town Council

BMT Defence Services

Boatsharefinder

Braddicks Leisure

Clearwater Brewery

Daniel Adamson Preservation Society

Dawson Downie Lamont

DM Scaffolding Bideford

Evans Transport

Jewsons

Jotun

Keynvor Morlift

Marsh Christian Trust

National Heritage Memorial Fund

National Historic Ships UK

National Maritime Development Group

Nautilus International

Nick Sampson Haulage

Northam Town Council

OSD-IMT

RT Marke

Sky High Media

Steam Heritage Publishing Ltd/Vintage Spirit Magazine

The Balsdon Trust

The Bideford Bridge Trust

The Charles Dunstone Charitable Trust

The Headley Trust

The Heritage Lottery Fund

The Marsh Christian Trust

Torrige District Council

Transport Trust

Trinity House

University of the West of England

West Buckland School

Whitelands Engineering

Woods Group

Worshipful Company of Shipwrights