

STEAMSHIP

FRESHSPRING

TRUST

MAGAZINE



No 23 Summer 2020

*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:** The Earl Attlee TD; Rear Admiral Nigel Guild CB CEng FREng;  
Captain Kevin Slade CMMar FNI.

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

- Website:** www.ssfreshspring.co.uk
- Facebook:** www.facebook.com/SSFreshspringTrust?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.*

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## Editor's Ramblings. . . .

My most recent trip to Bideford was in mid-March for a trustees' meeting when we discussed all the usual things, including opening the ship for the summer season with the threat of the Coronavirus in the offing; and it was no more than a threat at the time. A week after I got home, the country went into lockdown and the best laid plans, etc. had to be put on hold. I felt lucky to have been able to go down to Bideford for a couple of days, and lucky to have made it home before the lockdown.



Writing this in mid-May, we have just been told of the easing of some of the rules, having – hopefully – passed through the worst of the pandemic. The loss of life has been sobering, to say the least, and I am sure many of us will know of people who have died. The effect on all our lives has meant we have had to adjust to a new way of doing things and it is set to continue.

On the plus side, I have been sent more contributions than usual for some of the various magazines I edit, and the roads around where I live are much quieter than normal – as are the skies. Living and working under the flightpath for Gatwick, I tend to look up now should an aeroplane happen by on its way to land, whereas normally I would take little notice.

What I do miss, however, is being able to travel to see people for work, but above all, I miss the regular Sunday steamings of my own engine and the rides at Hollycombe, as well as the camaraderie of an excellent team of volunteers. The loss of revenue to the museum is already enormous and the same is true of all museums and heritage sites, especially the railways. How many such sites will be able to reopen, I don't know, but hopefully with the generosity of their members and supporters, they will make it through. While on a much smaller scale, *Freshspring* is also suffering from a lack of income and many of the volunteer team have had to stop work on the ship for the time being. This has an effect on the Trust's finances, of course, but I will leave that for Simon to explain later on in this magazine.

I am also pleased that, despite everything, Scuttlebutt has not become any more sane; he continues in his own unique way – as can be seen on page 12. We have also included a crossword on page 13 – it's just for fun!

Above all, look after yourselves.

**Brian Gooding**

**FRONT COVER:** *Ship volunteers are busy erecting the awning framework on board Freshspring. Like a lot of projects, completion of this is on hold pending our release from lockdown.* **John Puddy**

## From the Chair

**When** I wrote earlier in the year, I said "I hope that 2020 will be a great year for the ship and all the work we do in schools and education in general". Just weeks later, the world changed and we are all locked down for who knows how long. The main thing is, let's be safe.

So much is now on hold. Our crowdfunded deck awning is partially complete with the supporting frame in place, but the awning makers have shut down; we have a skeleton volunteer crew looking after the ship and our plans are on hold. I imagine your lives are on hold too.

We are now very much in survival mode, looking at ways to reduce expenditure and to maintain the activities of the Trust as best we can. We have, of course, lost the valuable income from ship visits and had to cancel our much looked forward to celebration event scheduled for April. This was to thank the Lottery and other major funders for supporting us.

We do have permission from the Police to attend the ship and so we are continuing with groups of two or three people on board at a time. This enables us to carry out essential maintenance tasks and very slowly progress with onboard works. The mast or tree, which is now on board was a worry as it can easily be destroyed by drying out too quickly. We have been able to regularly oil the wood to prevent cracking and Pete has made a cover for the whole 45 feet of it, so it stays out of the sun. It is hoped that we can slowly progress this project.

Our PV system is now fully functioning along with a 240 volt power circuit around the ship and it is such a valuable resource. Most hand tools except welding equipment can now be operated from our 3KW inverter which is fed by a bank of eight batteries, in turn charged by our array of solar panels. This means we can consider the installation of things like video monitors, basic catering equipment and even a refrigerator. Our LED lighting utilises original fittings and so replicates the original lighting around the ship. The PV system is also very good for educating children as the ship has no shore power connection.

I recently had the pleasure of turning the main engine using our refurbished turning gear. This was a very satisfactory experience as the engine turned so easily and smoothly, a great testament to the work done by our excellent team of engineers. It is so good to see a piece of machinery such as our engine actually moving.

As Bideford is very quiet at present, we have brought in a contractor to pressure wash the ship's hull. The aim is to remove algae and below the waterline, to remove barnacles, etc. This will really tidy up the ship and, in due course, we will be able to start painting the hull.

We have plans to have the boiler de-scaled in readiness for a boiler survey, which we hope to carry out as soon as we are able. This is aimed to confirm that the boiler is fit for long term further service, a very critical piece of information which will have a considerable impact on the future of the ship.

Charlotte, our extremely valuable Project Manager, has been furloughed and the funds we have for her salary are on hold so we can keep her going much longer term when we can get her back to work again. Both Pilgrim Trust and Awards For All have given us funds which include her salary and we are very grateful. Awards For All is also funding the upgrading of volunteer welfare by providing funds to dramatically improve on board facilities and catering equipment.

I am very pleased to include another case study in this magazine. My son Tom joined the merchant navy from school and has never regretted his decision. Of course, I am very proud of his achievements and it is exactly in line with Trust objectives, encouraging other young people to enter maritime and engineering careers.

I was lucky to sail with Tom when he was with Princess Cruises. We booked a Norwegian Fjords cruise and we had a very good experience. I was able to look around the ship with Tom and also had a tour of the engine rooms and services. A cruise ship is a stunning life support system and it must work faultlessly. Well, at least from the passenger perspective. He also showed me the control room which is amazing. It is possible to monitor any piece of machinery or system from this area. However, Tom preferred to "do the rounds" and we walked around just observing. In fact, whilst showing me around, he noticed a solenoid controller was working loose, which would shortly cause an alarm to sound. However, he was able to deal with it before monitors sensed a fault. So good old observation does have a purpose. He has chosen the Electro Technical Officer route in engineering and I feel this was a wise decision as ships today are controlled and managed by electronics so the traditional engineer relies on the ETO for much of the information required to maintain machinery.

We are lucky to have Captain Kevin Slade as a Patron who went through the ranks in the Merchant Navy. He has provided a very interesting article of life at sea as have Jim Cuckoo and Tim Gibbs. These articles are of real interest as they depict life at sea through a range of periods. We hope we get more for future magazines.

We have now held our first Zoom meeting online and this was quite satisfactory and productive. It never ceases to amaze me how technology changes our lives and the current pandemic has accelerated this for many of us. Although we cannot physically meet at present, the online system does bring us together in one virtual place and it is very nice to actually see people no matter where they are. It is likely that our Trustee meetings for the foreseeable future will be using Zoom.

We have a great team working on the Freshspring Junior Website as we are keen to have this in use during the shutdown so it provides an education platform for children activity. We will hear more of this later in Charlotte's report.

Although we are very active in education and learning from primary age, I feel we should continue to strive for more. We are always looking for new partners and new ways of encouraging more young people. National governments and educational bodies are developing schemes to boost female participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects. In the UK there is a specific STEM initiative for

girls and 40% of STEM ambassadors are female. Initiatives include Saturday science activity clubs and University outreach. The latter, we are proud to be a part of. It is interesting to note that 41% of scientists in the EU are female, 19% of EU patent applications list a female among authors and 12% of inventors are women.

I usually visit the ship once a week and sometimes on my own. I do feel she is alive, and we will get her to steam again. I spend time just standing in the engine room and can sense the heat and smell of oil. The space is so perfectly preserved and maintained by our engineers and is virtually ready for steam. It is very unfortunate that we have had to delay our applications for the essential feasibility and viability studies as these are our major next step to operation. However, our glass is always half full, and we will get there. *SS Freshspring* is a lucky ship and has attracted some remarkable characters since she has been in Trust ownership. Indeed, I would not be writing to you now if she had not survived. One such character is Brian Gooding, a Trustee from day one, who masterminds and edits our magazine. We are very fortunate to have such a professional as a Trustee.

I must finish with a very apt quote from Charlotte: *"The Freshspring Trust is breathing maritime pride back into Bideford and the local area, it is encouraging socially isolated people into a supportive volunteering environment and providing unique learning opportunities to young people on board, in schools and online"*.

Thanks to Victoria Symes, who has supported our fundraising from day one, we have now coined a new phrase to connect us all. I think it suits us very well. We are all now **TeamFreshspring**. Thank you all for being a part of this amazing team.

Please stay safe and well.

**John**



Looking forward to better times ahead... **BG**

## Treasurer's Report

As you'll see in my Trust Matters report, we are not holding an AGM in June so, in this report, I'm going to talk about two things – the financial year end accounts that would normally have been enclosed with this magazine along with the AGM papers, and our financial future.

### Year End 31st January 2020

#### Income

During the year we received a number of grants, amongst them being £4,000 from Trinity House to purchase items for the ship, £1,200 from Bideford Town Council towards our berthing costs, £3,000 (of a £4,000 grant) from Tesco's Bags of Money, £1,250 from Braunton Rotary towards new school sets and £5,000 from The Headley Trust to cover various costs. We also raised £5,365 from our Crowdfunding appeal. Our total income from grants, donations, membership, Crowdfunding and Gift Aid was £47,228.

#### Expenditure

Expenditure on grant items – including Our Heritage – totalled £49,483 and there were other costs of £16,672. Principal amongst these were £1,332 for fundraising, membership costs of £1,750, £6,384 on ship materials, £1,322 on berthing costs and £3,265 on insurance. Our total expenditure was £66,155.

#### Bank Balance

We do not treat the ship as an asset in our accounts so we just have cash. At the end of January 2020 we had £53,377 in the bank. This sounds a lot, but a very large part of this sum – £48,448 – is Restricted funds. By this I mean it is money set aside to meet specific liabilities. In some cases this means money we've already received – like the Crowdfunding raised where we haven't yet spent the money – but by far the largest is a reserve (in accounting parlance, this is a Sinking Fund – quite appropriate for *Freshspring!*) against the expected cost of taking the ship to a dry dock for a six yearly maintenance check or emergency repairs. Taking Restricted funds away from our total funds leaves a mere £4,929 to meet our annual costs!

#### Financial Future

£4,929 is NOT enough to meet our annual running costs. In the last few years we have been able to rely on donations from visitors, attending events, fundraising and the generosity of our members to both cover our annual costs and be able to set aside funds for our reserve – but the world has changed!

With the ship closed we have no visitors, we are not able to hold or attend events and general fundraising has come to a standstill. Consequently our income this year is going to be badly affected which in turn means that we will not be able to set aside enough to keep our reserve fund to the correct level.

The Lottery is currently giving grants to existing recipients – like us – to guard against loss of Heritage, so we will be applying for support. I hope by the next issue we will have more positive news.

We are planning for the worst, but hoping for the best!

**Simon Tattersall**

## Trust Matters

**Whenever** I begin a report, my starting point is to see what the last one covered. In February I talked about the AGM in June, progress on fundraising and – more particularly – our hopes that 2020 would be a pivotal year for *Freshspring*. To progress that hope, at the March Trustees' meeting a paper was proposed and adopted which outlined our plans to develop the Trust during the year by taking on additional volunteers, involving Charlotte more in the day-to-day management of the Trust and reducing the dependence on a small number of Trustees.

What a difference a couple of months makes!

In the space of a few days after lockdown started, we shut the ship to all but emergency and necessary maintenance work, arranged the postponement of the start date of grants from both The Pilgrim Trust and Awards For All, postponed the end date of the Our Heritage grant, decided that the AGM would not proceed and – most unfortunate of all – felt that we had no choice but to furlough Charlotte with effect from 1st May.

Although Charlotte is furloughed, we have also extended her contract, which was due to expire on 30th June, until the end of December because we believe she will play an important part in the long term future of the Trust.

So where do we go from here?

### Annual General Meeting

The purpose of the AGM is to outline the progress we have made over the year against our projections, talk about the future, formally present the accounts for the last financial year and elect, or re-elect, Trustees who have come to the end of their period of office or been co-opted during the year.

When lockdown started, the Charity Commission realised that many charities would not be able to hold AGMs as required, and agreed that these could either be postponed or abandoned altogether. We hope to hold an AGM later this year, but there's little point in speculating when that might be at the moment. If social distancing is maintained into 2021, we may not be able to hold one at all. In the meantime the Trustees will all continue in office and, in my Treasurer's report, I have gone in to some detail about the accounts which we will be filing with the Charity Commission to cover the year to 31st January 2020.

## The Future

If ever I could do with a crystal ball it is now! Clearly much of what we had hoped to achieve this year is on hold and resumption is entirely dependent on when lockdown ends, social distancing is abandoned – or at least reduced – and we can re-open the ship to 'normal' activity. What we ARE doing is:

- a. maintaining contact with, and supporting, our many volunteers
- b. maintaining contacts with schools, universities, suppliers, donors and supporters
- c. regularly keeping in contact with our Investment Manager at the Lottery
- d. re-visiting our website to update it and fill in the gaps, particularly in the Learning section
- e. reviewing and updating our Policies, of which there are many
- f. maintaining momentum with meetings over Zoom and using that thing called a telephone
- g. regularly updating the news section of our website
- h. ensuring the ship is secure and that essential maintenance is continued
- i. preparing to resume 'at a run' as soon as we are able to do so.

This is how we stand today – but it could all change tomorrow! I hope in the next magazine that we can give a clearer picture of how we see the Trust moving forward for the rest of this year and beyond.

**Simon Tattersall**



*The tree is now becoming a mast, thanks to Pete's diligent efforts.*

# Project Manager's Report

## Charlotte Squire

**Early** February saw a ship's visit from Georgina Naylor of The Pilgrim Trust. We'd been successful in round one of Pilgrim's grant application process, so submitted a round two application and the visit was designed to find out more about the work of the Trust. With John away in Vietnam, it fell to Simon and me to answer Georgina's questions with Pete and Mike Greener giving the ship tour. Some weeks later we received the welcome news that Pilgrim would support *Freshspring* to the tune of £10,000.

On 6th March, Trustees and the Headmaster of West Buckland School enjoyed a visit to the ship. The aim of the meeting was to build on the relationship with the school. They'd already enjoyed our STEM box project and outreach visits, but now wanted to consider closer partnership working. After informal presentations in the wheelhouse and a tour of the ship, we settled into the newly painted crew's accommodation for lunch. Feedback from the visit was really positive with potential partnership working on the Children's Website and Virtual Reality Goggles, as well as work experience opportunities for their students.

As you may be aware, we had planned our Celebration Event for 9th April, to showcase the progress that *Freshspring* has made and launch the *Wish Fish* children's book. With the appearance of Covid-19, these plans had to be postponed and we'll have to see what the "new normal" is before deciding the best way forward with this event.

With new working arrangements in place, we're all having to embrace technology. Two Trustees and I "attended" a Webinar entitled Maximising Business Opportunity in a Remote Environment. Although it had a business rather than a charity bias, there were a number of noteworthy points, such as making sure that we're looking outwards rather than inwards, regularly using social media to communicate how we're using our time constructively and keeping up meaningful contact with our customers/funders.

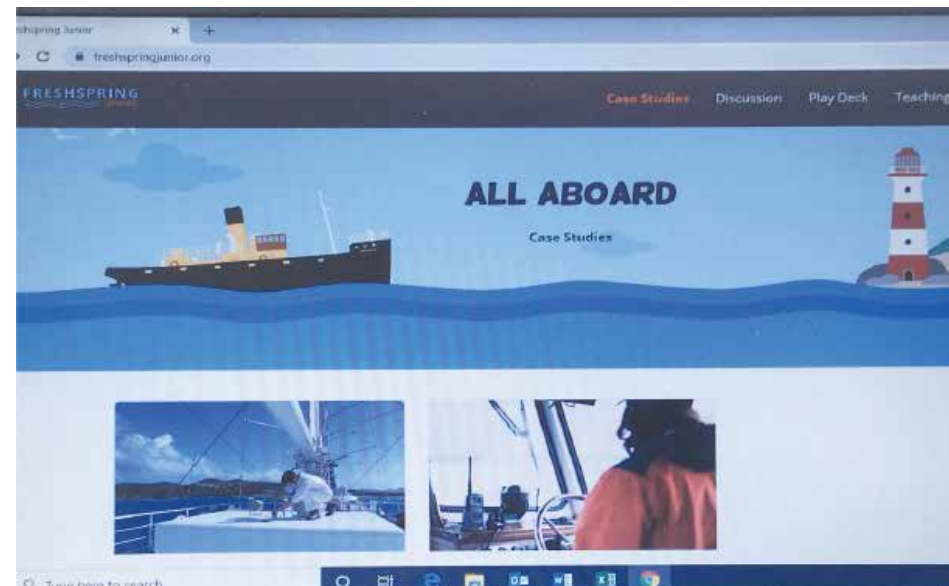
Freshspring is taking part in the 2.6 Challenge, which is a virtual challenge and fundraising platform designed to help charities raise money when other fundraising events, such as the London Marathon are unable to take place.

We have a couple of challenges posted on our Facebook page. All have to be linked to the numbers 2.6 or 26 (due to the marathon being 26 miles) and comply with current Government



social distancing guidelines. Anyone can join in and help to support their chosen charity.

The Freshspring Children's Website is a prime example of partnership working between the University of the West of England (UWE) and *Freshspring*. The website platform was set up several months ago, with Hayley liaising with UWE and John's niece, who is a Primary Teacher, uploading content. My daughters have been on the site and were very impressed, particularly with the Salty the Seal Game! The site will hopefully be made available to local schools in the very near future as it's a valuable learning resource for both teachers and pupils, particularly in the current home schooling environment.



At the time of writing, I'm about to be put on furlough as the projects that were due to start are being delayed due to Covid-19. This is the right business decision for the Trust as we can't open the ship to visitors or carry out the community consultation as scheduled. I very much look forward to carrying on with The Freshspring Trust in the not too distant future.

Charlotte Squire

## New members

We welcome the following new member of the Trust:

Huw Davies

Barnstaple, Devon

# Scuttlebutt from the Quay

At the insistence of the local community, Scuttlebutt has been, belatedly, placed in total lockdown in a disused slate quarry near Ysbyty Ystwyth in Ceredigion. He is currently furloughed from his new career as a Saggar Maker's Bottom Knocker and is whiling away his time developing a range of gooseberry-based health remedies. He has, with the help of a local salmon tickler, managed to smuggle out a draft copy of a song for our times. It exemplifies, he claims, a Churchillian fortitude and can be sung to the tune of the Ballad of Jesse James, the Lonnie Donegan version (see below). He may well be right, so here it is for the first and possibly only time.

## The Lockdown Shanty

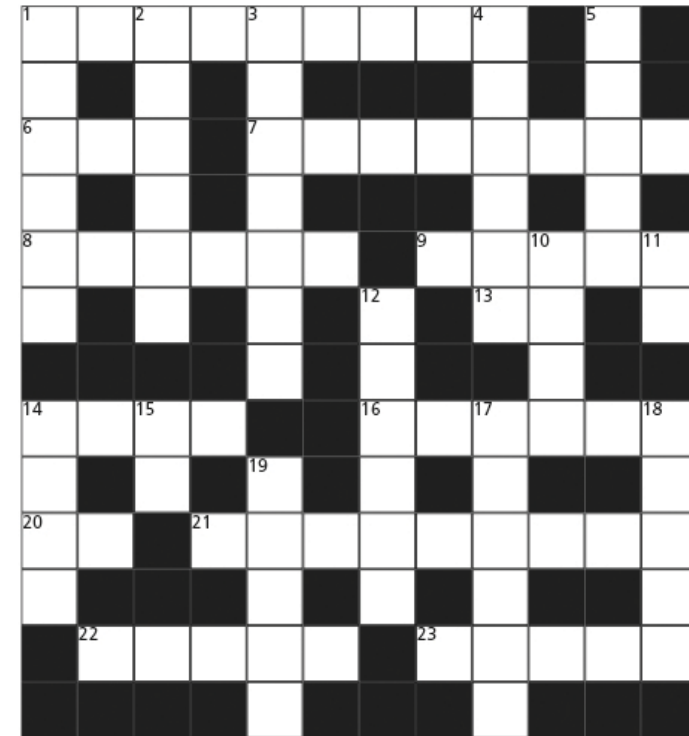
As I walk through the shadow of the valley of fear,  
Sipping my Freshspring beer.  
I'll keep moving on my way, to a brighter day,  
And I'll just keep on bugging on.  
When the news is always grim and your mood starts to dim,  
Fill your glass to the brim.  
Have a drink to one and all, have a drink to all your kin.  
And just keep on bugging on.

With the lockdown in place we'll bear it with good grace,  
And we'll treat our neighbours well.  
We'll stay at home if told, all the young and the old.  
But we'll keep on bugging on.  
When the days are hard to fill, be glad you're not ill,  
And think of those that are.  
We'll come out the other side with a special sense of pride.  
If we just keep on bugging on.

We may weave along the street being wary who we meet,  
With masks and gloves on tight.  
But we shop till we drop, careful not to cough.  
We just keep on bugging on.  
There's nothing else to do but sing this song for you,  
We know we're not that good.  
But in times like this we try to make you laugh not cry.  
As we keep on bugging on.

Pete Gillett

# Crossword – Compiled by Phil Walters



## Clues

### Across

- 1 Really interesting way to join plates (9)
- 6 Party shelters underground twosome (3)
- 7 Keep heat in; slight with A + E (8)
- 8 Edward knocks spirit back before mother, mystery (6)
- 9 Triple handled can (5)
- 13 The ancient (2)
- 14 Confusion where sailors eat (4)
- 16+21. Freshspring's engine type (6,9)
22. Arrive at boat with wind on beam (5)
23. Stone for deceased, south first (5)

### Down

1. Right milk source (6)
2. Fiddle not found on edge of shelf (6)
3. Neat French sea for cutter (7)
4. Kitchen girl found near meadow (6)
5. Mother is an official on board, right (5)
10. About short application cut the corn (4)
11. Normal pirate dialogue before Ho Ho (2)
12. Mix my lath where Freshspring built (6)
14. Beech seeds stick on boat (4)
- 15+20ac. Mediocre (2,2)
17. Slight without A+E keeps heat in (6)
18. Fastest milkman in the west (5)
19. Take money precisely (5)

The solution can be found on page 25.

## Kevin Slade

It was never my ambition to go to sea, but I'm so glad I did!

I am from a family of non-seafarers and at the age of sixteen, I simply decided I wanted to travel and see the world. A chance conversation with the dad of one of my pals, who happened to be a ship's captain, made me interested in the Merchant Navy. He advised me on the steps to take and weeks later I was summoned to the P&O Head Office in the City of London for an interview. I was accepted and was offered the position of a "Indentured Navigating Cadet" with Trident Tankers – one of their shipping companies, and within weeks I was joining my first ship, the MV *Orama* in Milford Haven, Wales, at the age of sixteen and a half. Luckily one of the advantages of a Merchant Navy Training is that the company paid for my training and education, as well as a wage, so my parents did not have to pay anything – and it is the same today!

My career has been in two parts, twenty years at sea, from Cadet to Captain, followed by a land-based career for thirty years, but luckily for me this involved looking after seafarers from many countries – and a lot of travel! Fortunately English is the international language of the sea, and of the shipping business, so no difficulty communicating.

The unique feature of the Merchant Navy is that all ships are different, and most are trading internationally, so I rarely left my ship in the same port and country I joined in. This is exactly the same today – every day is different, every voyage different, and you almost never sail with the same crew twice (unless you are on a ferry).



MV *Geestcape* – my first ship as Third Officer.

I joined my second ship, the MV *Heythrop*, in 1967 in Japan. The ship was brand new and was being prepared for its maiden voyage, so I was lucky and spent a couple of weeks in Japan – very strange food, a lot of fish, and all menus had photos of the food on offer. At the hotel we stayed in, the cook kindly tried to cook English food for us – bacon, egg and beans – wrapped and baked in tin foil!

After a year at sea, I was sent to London for six months in King Edward VII Nautical College; fond memories of exploring London, we even managed a trip up the Thames on the college boat – and all paid for (although we had little spending money).

After my time in college I went back to sea for another year, this time joining one of the first supertankers ever built, the *ss Ardtaraig*, in Japan again! Lucky for me, the ship developed engine trouble on the maiden voyage and we were diverted to Singapore for repairs – and three weeks to explore. In those days, Singapore had not developed into the modern city of today but was still fascinating, with so many cultures mixing with each other. Interestingly, the ship was one of the biggest ships in the world at that time; the deck area was more than three football pitches, and we were issued with bicycles to travel from one end to the other!

In between exams, I worked on small Bristol-based ships trading between Dublin and Avonmouth – carrying containers – and Guinness! It was from the deck of one of these ships – MV *Echo* – that I saw the *SS Great Britain* return from the Falkland Islands and voyage up the River Avon to her original building dock in the centre of Bristol – where she is today.



MV *Playas* – my first ship as Captain – previously *Brunskappel*.



After my examinations, I joined the Geest Line, which operated a regular (liner) service between Barry in South Wales and the Windward Islands of the Caribbean. We took everything from manhole covers, manufactured goods and even racehorses out, and returned with bananas, rum and tropical produce – a fair swap!

A ship cannot rely on land-based services such as ambulances, firefighting, etc. and has to be self-supporting. Being a ship's officer involves a unique set of skill sets – team management, ship stability, firefighting, seamanship, meteorology and, for a deck officer – navigation. Navigating by the sun, stars and moon without a computer or satellite in sight is immensely rewarding, and the sight of the Milky Way carpeting the sky on a cloudless night in the middle of the ocean is never to be forgotten.

In a few years I rose through the ranks to Chief Officer and realising promotion to Captain would take a long time (dead man's shoes), in 1977 I decided to seek my fortune elsewhere and joined an USA-based company operating globally. Within a year I was promoted to Captain, at the age of 29 years, and my first port as a Captain was war-torn Beirut, carrying a cargo from America that was mostly paper tissues and toilet rolls – which were in very short supply in Lebanon at the time – nothing changes!!

I then sailed as a ship's captain on many types of ships, ranging in size from 1,000 tons to 22,000 tons, carrying cargo to and from every continent except Antarctica,



*MV Cavara at Sydney in 1984; ex-Contender Argent (sister ship of RFA Argus).*

with crews drawn from them all (except, of course, Antarctica!). Although all the crew knew some English, I tried to learn a few simple words from each nationality; it is amazing how much this is appreciated!

I transited all the major canals and waterways of the world: for example, the Suez, Panama, Kiel, and Corinth Canals, and passing through busy areas such as the Dover, Gibraltar, Singapore and even the Magellan Straits.

After nine years as a Captain, I decided to 'swallow the anchor' (retire from the sea) and started my second career in Ship Management, and at the age of 38 years, I took up employment as crewing manager for Sealink UK, later Stena Line Ferries, moving in 1997 to the role as International Personnel Manager for Northern Marine Management, another Stena company. In 2003, I was appointed to the Main Board as Personnel Director, responsible for over 300 shore employees in six offices worldwide, and supporting over 7,000 seafarers, serving on over 100 ships, coming from many nationalities – mainly from Europe, the Philippines, Russia, Croatia and India.

I then retired in 2014, at the age of 65 years, but continue to be active in Merchant Navy training and development issues, and was Chair of the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) from 2015 to 2018.

In 2019, I was awarded the Merchant Navy Medal for services to maritime training and charities.



*MV Nagara, again at Sydney. My last ship.*

## Tom Puddy

I am a British Seafarer, currently working as an Electro-Technical Officer (ETO) on board a privately owned superyacht.

I did not always have the intention to go to sea, or even work in the technical field. In fact, as I was approaching the end of my secondary school in Bideford, North Devon, I was very unsure as to what direction I would take in life. At GCSE level I had taken electronics as a subject which I had enjoyed, but due to a lack of applicants, the college I was attending did not offer a continuation of study in that field at A Level.

Being young and unsure what to do, I stayed at the same college with my friends and chose subjects I didn't really have an interest in. I spent one year attending lectures and completing the coursework without any enthusiasm; even as the first year was coming to an end, I still didn't have any further ideas for my future life.

For the next school term, I was planning to change to another local college, slightly farther away which offered a better selection of subjects.

Fortunately, this was not to be, as over the summer holiday break, I learned about careers in the marine industry. I cannot say exactly how I discovered this; I think it was a conversation with my Dad, who is an engineer and has always had an interest in maritime. I did some research on the internet and it sounded like the perfect job.



Tom with the luxury yacht behind.

I read that I would have the opportunity to travel all over the world, working as part of a team to maintain the engine room and operational side of a ship which greatly appealed to me.

Over that summer I volunteered on board mv *Oldenburg*, a local passenger ferry which served the island of Lundy, my early childhood home, off the coast of North Devon. I assisted Steve, the ferry's sole engineer, in his engine room checks, start ups and general operations as he taught me some of the basics. I would also lend a hand with some of the cargo operations and throwing of ropes (as well as making cups of tea for the crew!). This involved some very early starts, late finishes and longer days than I was used to at school, but it also provided me with a sense of satisfaction and responsibility that I had previously felt lacking.

Within the marine industry, companies sponsor students through their cadetship which comprised of time at college and total of six months sea time on board. In addition to covering the course fees, cadets are given a small salary to spend as needed. This meant that I would finish my education without any worries of student debt. I initially applied for Clyde Marine and was accepted to be an engineering cadet within their company for the upcoming term.

After learning that I was starting a career at sea, a neighbour who was a local retired sea captain and friend of my parents, recommended that I apply to Trinity House. Trinity House is the official organisation responsible for the maintenance of navigation buoys and lighthouses around the United Kingdom, initially set up by King Henry VIII. They also operate as a charitable organisation sponsoring cadets, offering them the chance to either serve their sea time aboard one of their own vessels or another cooperating company's vessels, and thus providing a chance for a greater range of experiences.

I travelled up to London with my dad for the interview, which took place in the grand Trinity House Building close to the Tower of London. At the interview I was offered the position on the grounds that I complete the dual ETO/Engineer OOW cadetship. I had initially only been intending to apply for the engineer cadetship, but accepted the offer nonetheless, in the mindset that the more strings to my figurative bow, the better.

I started at South Tyneside College, South Shields the following January. My parents drove me up shortly after the New Year. This was a nerve racking experience for me. At 17 years old, I was shy and very used to home life, to be moving 400 miles away to the other side of the country was very out of my character.

I was initially accommodated in the Dr Winterbottom Halls of Residence at the college along with all the other cadets of my term intake. The majority of students were in a similar situation, young and experiencing their first time away from home; we all bonded well and had a great social life.

I enjoyed my studies very much as they were functional and applicable to the real world. Learning maths became a lot more interesting and relevant when seeing how the calculations apply to physics and the behaviours affecting things around us every

day. Alongside the mathematics studies we learned about the operation of machinery and electrical systems, as well as learning hands on skills, welding and using workshop tools and lathes.

After the mandatory first year stay in Dr Winterbottom, the majority of students left to rent local houses between small groups of friends. This gave an additional sense of responsibility as we were free to cook for ourselves and look after our new homes. I moved into a house with my newly met best friend, Alex, for whom in later years I acted as his best man and Godfather to his daughter. We enjoyed the freedom of our new place and enjoyed the opportunity to host parties and barbecues for our friends.

Interspersed with the school terms was our sea time. I spent my first trip on board THV *Galatea*, one of Trinity House's own vessels and their flagship. She did the majority of her sailing around UK waters. I worked with the supportive engine room team, learning about the systems on board first hand, tracing pipes and understanding how everything worked in practice.

My second sea trip was spent on board the MSY *Wind Surf*. This was one of the largest sailing cruise ships in the world, at that time, operating in the Caribbean. This provided a very different experience; while still relatively small in terms of cruise ships, this was much larger than the *Galatea*. I worked both with



*Cadetship on the Wind Surf.*



*Fault finding on an AC unit.*



*Computer diagnostic tool.*

the ETO on board, as well as sitting watch in the engine room with the watch keepers.

I was occasionally able to get out to explore the different Caribbean islands and beaches. On board I was able to see the more luxurious side of sailing, dressed in formal whites, sitting and having drinks with the passengers!

Both vessels offered me a series of exciting and interesting work experiences, from maintenance of batteries aboard an unmanned light ship vessel, to climbing the 60m+masts of the *Wind Surf* to change a bulb in the navigation lights.



*Shore power connection.*

On finishing our cadetships, the majority of students split their separate ways. Some of them continued pursuing their careers at sea, whilst others used their qualifications and experience to follow a route in technical jobs ashore.

My first job, which I started not long after finishing college, was as a 3rd ETO with Princess Cruises. This was also a scary new start. Although I'd been living away from home for over three years now and had experience being on board ships, this was my first time with real responsibilities away from family and friends.

As a 3rd ETO, I was responsible for one of two roles, either the safety equipment on board ships or the maintenance of the ship's many elevators (35!). The



*Windlass repair.*

first involved maintaining the fire detection systems, watertight doors and life saving equipment onboard. The other role, maintenance of the elevators, was an interesting job for me as I enjoyed the combination of maintenance of mechanical and electrical equipment.

Just over a year later, I was promoted to 2nd ETO. The two roles for this position were either hotel management or engine room maintenance. The first role for this position was the

maintenance of hotel equipment, such as galley, pools and air conditioning, as well as managing a team of electrical fitters to ensure the best experience for the passengers. The alternative role was to serve as the ship's engine room electrician. Once again I very much enjoyed this position as I was responsible for the electrical maintenance of a large array of heavy machinery equipment spanning almost the whole length of the close to 300m vessel.

I also had the opportunity to work with high voltage equipment. Due to the large size and high power demand, the regular ships I was on, operated with an 11,000V switchboard, feeding large electrical synchro-converters for the propulsion.

This meant that the six huge Wartsila diesel generators were particularly critical. Issues arising on them could stop the ship from sailing, and as such there were big rushes and plenty of pressure to get them up and running again if there were problems!

As the cruise ships are constantly in action, they were required to be continuously running with little down time for repair. Every couple of years a ship would be taken out of the water in a dry dock in order to carry out major checks, repairs and maintenance. The dry dock periods, usually in Vancouver, would be carried out on a tight schedule in order to get everything completed before the ship had to go back into the water. This posed a disruption to the normal routine of shipboard working life; the days were much longer with few chances to rest. It was more challenging with many tasks to complete to ensure everything was safely finished on time.

A large number of external contractors would come on board to finish projects not possible for the crew to complete. On one vessel, a multi-storey incinerator was

removed and replaced with an exhaust scrubber installation designed to reduce environmental pollution. I carried out the safe isolation and disconnection of the power and monitoring equipment for the incinerator which was permanently removed. In addition to this, two of the funnels needed to be cut and lifted out of place to install new equipment. For this task to be completed, I was required to carry out the disconnection and proper removal of the exhaust monitoring systems, and subsequently re-installation and calibration to make sure they still worked!

Besides the enjoyment and interest of the job itself, I was granted the ability to travel a lot as I would work on a variety of ships within the Princess Fleet, sailing locations such as Hawaii, Alaska, Caribbean, Mediterranean, Mexican Riviera and the other side of the world around Asia. I also had the chance to meet a variety of interesting people from around the world; experiencing new cultures and making new and strong friendships which have lasted years.

While the trips initially seemed like a long time away from home, working away up to four or five months at a time, I came to develop two lives which were hard to determine which was more enjoyable. On board, I was surrounded by a great social life, able to access the passenger facilities such as restaurants and bars, as well as the use of the fully equipped gyms.

On the other hand, once my work trips were finished, I would have two or three months of vacations to spend as I liked. I have had the opportunity to travel independently around the world, and was frequently lucky enough to visit the friends I'd made on board, in their home countries, who were excited to show me around (and help with the translation!).

Due to the duration of my holidays I have been able to carry out trips I would never have been able to manage in the majority of 9-5 jobs; from backpacking around Europe, to motorbiking the length of Vietnam.



Tom's cabin on a Princess cruise liner.



Tom and Alex.



On a bike trip in Vietnam.

I had just spent my 5th year with Princess Cruises, when my friend Alex from college told me of an opening on board a private superyacht in the role as Electrician. This meant for a better salary, and a better time on and off ratio. I applied there and after the checks of my certification, CV, and an interview with the Chief Electrician – also an ex-cruise ship crew member – I was accepted for the role.

The equipment on board the vessel was very similar to that of a cruise ship, but on a smaller scale. There was no longer a high voltage switchboard; instead the electrical distribution was more similar to that on land with a neutral system. The propulsion was driven by two main engines which took up most of the engine room.

A big difference with the equipment on board was the increased blend with computer monitoring and PLC control. This meant that some aspects of troubleshooting were frustratingly not always able to be carried out by us crew on board, instead requiring the remote dial in from equipment manufacturers ashore.

The sailing pattern of the yacht was quite different from the cruise ship. The majority of the year the vessel was unused, and with the summer season, the owner would come on board with guests. This meant that the yacht was mostly stationary and alongside, with maintenance work being carried out during this period, in preparation for the guest visits. There were ups and downs to this arrangement. While not travelling as much during my working period, it meant that the crew were able to go ashore almost every evening providing a more normal lifestyle.

During this employment, and during one of my leave periods, I returned to college to attend an oral examination to attain my ETO Certificate of Competency. This was a newly recognised qualification which had been implemented after I had completed college and as such, I had not had the opportunity to attain it during my initial cadetship.

I spent two years working with the first yacht, but have recently accepted a new job on a differently owned yacht where I will act as the sole ETO on board. This will be an exciting new step in my career as, in addition to the increased responsibility, I will once again be working alongside Alex.



Touring Sri Lanka.



For interest, a photo of our very successful primary school project.

### Crossword Solution

(see Crossword on page 13)

1	R	I	V	E	T	T	I	N	G		5	M				
	U		I		R				A			A				
6	D	U	O		7	I	N	S	U	L	A	T	E			
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8	E	N	I	G	M	A		9	J	E	10	R	R	11	Y	
	R		N		E		12	L		13	Y	E			O	
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# Life on a Boom Defence Vessel

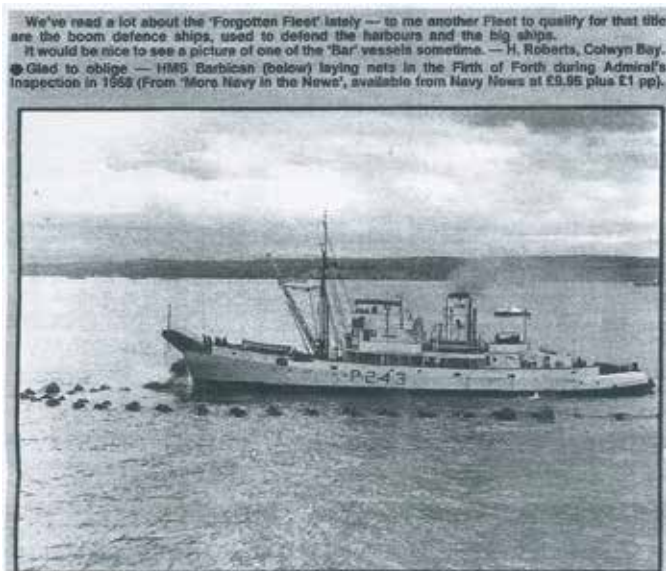
## Jim Cuckoo

I joined HMS *Barbican* in October 1957 at Rosyth Dockyard. She was commissioned in 1938, and was 135ft in length 542 tons with a crew of thirty and she burnt coal. Having previously served on oil burners, this came as a surprise to say the least.

Things on board were very basic, as one would expect for a ship built for coastal waters. The *Barbican* was designed to lay, open and close, and maintain anti-submarine nets across harbour mouths and anchorages in time of war. Living accommodation was a little primitive. The bathroom was on the upper deck aft, while the messdeck was for'd. A trip for a shower in the middle of winter and the return trip along the open deck with just a towel wrapped round you was enough to make your eyes water.

The galley was on the upper deck port side with half doors like stable doors. There was one cook to feed the crew including the Captain and First Lieutenant. The cook had to provide food on a coal-fired range in a galley not big enough to swing a cat in. The boiler for the domestic hot water was in the corner of the galley and was also coal fired. This domestic boiler couldn't cope with supplying enough hot water in the rush hour so it paid to get up early.

No disrespect to the cook but the food was mediocre. The chap just could not get the stove hot as the quality of the coal was so poor. You had your basic meat and two veg. type meal. Only on rare occasions did you have a pudding. As someone who has a good appetite, I wasn't a happy chappy when it came to the food provided. I went and had a word with the cook and said if I can make a steamer in the engine room can you produce food that I can cook by steaming. The cook agreed to this plan. I acquired a large drum with a lid, about the size of a 45 gallon drum and connected it to the exhaust steam system. Our first trial of the cooker was spotted dick. I think we steamed it for one and a half hours. It turned out better than you could have wished for, a hit all round with the crew. After that the steamer was in daily use.



I was on the upper deck one day when the Captain came up to me and said "I am so pleased you have come on board." "Why is that?" I asked. "Because the food has improved 100%," he said.

Things were fine when the ship was in steam. When the boilers were shut down, so was our steamer. If we were alongside in the dockyard, I would get a compressed air line on board and put the end of the air line into the galley chimney through the small access door used for sweeping the chimney. This created a good draft through the stove fire and it was easy to get the top of the range red hot. We even had decent roast potatoes, that was a first.

Coaling the ship was straight forward, no lifting required. The coal bunkers were port and starboard either side of the boiler room with a manhole cover let into the deck. A crane with a bucket would empty the coal onto the deck and the stokers then shovelled the coal into the bunker. This was fine for a while. As the bunker filled through the hole, the mountain of coal came up to a point. Two men would then go into the bunker through the deck opening and trim the coal into the corners. There they would stay until there was just enough room for them to squeeze out of the bunker onto the deck. By then they would be as black as the coal itself – a horrible job.

The ship had two Scotch boilers with forced draught. When at sea with both alight, three stokers were on watch. As I mentioned before, the coal was of very poor quality – none of your best Welsh anthracite for the RN. Stoking was not a case of opening the firebox door and throwing in some coal. There is a certain technique to firing. Ideally there should be six inches of coal covering the firebars. As the firebox was just under six feet long and just over two feet wide, it took some accurate use of the shovel to get an even fire. Bearing in mind the door to the fire was eighteen inches by fourteen inches and the shovel was a Pan shovel (Po.10).

Firing the wing fires which are higher took some getting used to. Should there be a hole in the fire, cold air from the ashpit would pass through the fire and reduce the efficiency of the fire. Keeping a clean fire was very important, the poor quality coal caused clinker to build up on the firebars. If this wasn't removed, the firebars would burn through and your fire would drop into the ash pit.

To keep the firebars clean, a slice had to be used. This was a heavy iron bar about seventy pounds in weight, approx eight feet long with a chisel end to get under the clinker and lift it off. The clinker was then pulled from the fire on to the plates and quenched with sea water. You could also burn the firebars through by letting the ashpit fill until the ashes touched the bars, stopping the air flow through the fire. When the ashes were cooled by sea water, they were put into a container, hoisted up and thrown over the side. Fortunately I didn't have to do this hard, dirty and physical work as by then I had reached the dizzy heights of Petty Officer Engineering Mechanic and my watch keeping station was the engine room. To this day, anyone in the engine room branch of the RN, even though they work with diesels and gas turbines, are still known as stokers.

In the spring of 1958 the *Barbican* was required to go round to Loch Ewe for maintenance work on mooring buoys. We had an uneventful trip up the east coast of Scotland to John o' Groats at a steady eight knots. The weather forecast was not good, westerly gales forecast. As we had two enormous buoys on our foredeck, the thought of them breaking loose was something to be considered. The captain decided it would be prudent to take shelter in Thurso harbour. We tied up astern of a fishing trawler which had just come in. Amongst their catch was a very large flat fish, a Turbot I think. The fisherman explained the fish was too big for the market and would the ship's company like the fish. Of course, the answer was a yes. The wings of that fish fed the entire crew of thirty. If I recall, the pieces of fish were six inches thick.



However, while enjoying our fish and chip supper, it was obvious the wind was picking up and a big swell was coming into the harbour. The ship was banging up against the wall with some force and it was likely some damage could occur. The decision was made to go back out and continue our passage. It was after leaving Thurso that the ship's radio decided to stop working. Consequently we were unable to report our progress. The powers that be must have been a little concerned as to our whereabouts, not hearing from us. A search was set in motion to establish our position –or had we sunk? Sometime in the following forenoon, appearing out of rain and spray came the aircraft carrier HMS *Ark Royal*. She circled us a couple of times, we confirmed we were OK and the carrier disappeared into the murk. The rest of the trip was uneventful.

Loch Ewe was the main assembly point for convoys, mainly to Russia during WW2. The anti-submarine defences were still there and it was our job to inspect and maintain all the mooring tackle. In this day of the guide missile perhaps it is all a little pointless now. We worked in the Loch for about a month. We needed to coal the ship for our return journey to Rosyth. We went alongside the coaling jetty at Aultbea to fill our bunkers. The coal there was brown coal which is a cross between peat and coal and looks like charcoal. The coal is mined by a local family, father and two sons being

the entire work force. This coal was a stoker's dream: it burnt to a fine white ash with no sign of the dreaded clinker. The coaling crane on the jetty was a very old steam affair with a very short jib which could only reach the bunker on the side nearest the jetty. That bunker would be filled which gave the ship a severe list. When that bunker was full, the ship then had to be turned around under her own steam to bring the empty side to the jetty.

We left Loch Ewe for Rosyth and a mini refit. Before going into dock, the ship carried out a full power trial over a measured mile in the Firth of Forth. When the ship was built, the builders carried full power trials and achieved eleven knots. Thanks to brown coal, the *Barbican* managed eleven and a half knots, not bad for a twenty year old. An interesting thing regarding the ship was she had a cast iron propeller; not the best of materials as the propeller would develop holes like Swiss cheese. There was an easy remedy: a welder would simply fill the holes – job done.

After our refit, the ship was chartered by the National Coal Board and the ship spent a month working out of Hull. All I know is the work carried out was involved with the coal seams which ran out for miles under the North Sea. I do know we worked such long days I never did get ashore to see the delights of Hull.

Our next assignment lasted for several months. The ship was sent to Sheerness and our duties were to take up the anti-submarine net ground tackle which stretched across the Thames estuary. The reason for removing the ground tackle was to permit dredgers to dredge a deep water channel up to the Isle of Grain refinery for the new super tankers that were being built. Sheerness was our base and daily we would sail out pass the ss *Richard Montgomery*, the American ship which sank in the Thames estuary during the war with 1,500 tons of explosives on board. Needless to say, we kept well within the permitted speed past the wreck.

The ground tackle which held the net in place consisted of a ten ton block of concrete shaped like a truncated pyramid. Attached to the block by chain were two six ton pick anchors. These in turn were connected to the same arrangement by chain and on across the estuary. Our winches could cope with a seventy ton lift. Providing the block hadn't sunk to far into the mud the winch would cope. However, there was always one that would not budge. The only solution was to secure to the block at low water and wait for the tide to lift the ship and hence the block. We hated those stick in the mud blocks as a whole day was wasted on one lift.

While at Sheerness, an old wooden man-of-war which was built in Bombay in 1861 was being broken up. The prize were the 2ft long by an inch in dia. copper rivets. The contractors arrived with their chainsaws. The hulk was built of teak and was as hard as iron. The chainsaws were no match for the teak, so they were soon put to one side and plan B put into operation. At low water, explosive charges were laid and blown at high water. This was done on every tide until nothing was left of the old wooden wall.

After several months, the work of lifting the ground tackle was completed and the ship returned to her home port of Rosyth where I left the ship to be demobbed. I enjoyed my time on the *Barbican* as the life style was more like being a civilian.

### What became of the *Barbican*?

In 2016, I was buying my remembrance poppy when I noticed the chap selling the poppy was wearing a RN tie. We talked old ships, etc. when he mentioned that he was ex-POM (E) and had served on the *Barbican* in the late 1960s. He then told me of the sad demise of the ship. The ship was proceeding into the dockyard to go alongside the wall and tie up. The bridge rang down half astern; nothing happened. The ship kept going and hit the wall with some force. It appears when the PO opened the throttle for the astern movement, the throttle wheel went round but did not open the steam inlet valve to the HP cylinder. The inlet valve was connected to the throttle by a rod and joining the two was a pin through both; the pin had sheared off. The damage to the ship was so severe the dear old *Barbican* was sent for scrap.

## SS Freshspring Social Events

**When** I joined the ss *Freshspring* back in July 2018, I asked whether the society held any social events but was told that if you wanted social events you could organise them yourself!

This surprised me as the team of volunteers are all very friendly and full of beans, not literally, so I asked around if they would be interested in holding social events outside of the working days on the ship. There was a resounding 'yes please' from my colleagues with a few offering to help me locate suitable venues but this would entail trying the local beverages just for quality assurance purposes!

Luckily for me, the charity has a wealth of volunteers from all kinds of backgrounds and contacts, so we quickly decided to use the North Devon Yacht Club on Friday 26th October in the evening as our first event having a meal and a few drinks. This was well attended; the venue was a great success for us and everyone had a good time.

On to the second event. Having another volunteer suggest the local golf club in Westward Ho!, I made a booking at the Royal North Devon Golf Club on Friday 15th November at lunchtime. Again this was well attended with all enjoying themselves in each other's company.

This has proved to me that there is a need for a social event calendar as it is quite clear that the volunteers do want to socialise, enjoying their colleagues' company as well as their wives, partners, etc.

So two events down and onto the third. If anyone had any ideas for future events they would like to share with me, please let me know.

Please remember this is open to all ss *Freshspring* members and volunteers. Keep socialising.

**Malcolm Allen**  
**07711 486 004**  
**Malcolmallen1950@gmail.com**

## A Life At Sea – How It Started For Me

### Tim Gibbs

I was born in Hemel Hempstead on Tuesday 16th March 1943, the eldest of four siblings. Early academic success faded with age and by the sixth form I had become disenchanted, almost detached, from the education process but then... I found a book in the library, "The Merchant Navy Today", outlining entry into the Merchant Navy via a four and a half year sandwich course, with three years at marine college and 18 months at sea as an Engineer Cadet.



Tim Gibbs in 1960.

This sounded a good wheeze and so I applied to four companies, Ellerman Lines, Esso Tankers, BP Tankers and Alfred Holt. The interviews were quite extensive, the shortest two days and the longest four. Not really knowing anything about the merits of any of the companies, I was disconcerted to be accepted by all four within a few days and having to decide within a week. I decided to select with a pin and Ellerman Lines were the chosen ones but I would probably have selected them anyway if I couldn't have found a pin because, as a 17 year old from the country, I was very impressed by the surroundings of the interview, held on the *City of Port Elizabeth*, one of the company's four passenger/cargo ships.

I departed north to South Shields on Saturday 17th September 1960 to enrol at the Marine & Technical College there and where the company had arranged digs for me, Taffy Balsdon and Tim Hudson with Miss Lee at 45 Oxford Street.

The college had been founded in 1861 and opened in a purpose-built facility in Ocean Road in 1868. It continued to be based there until 1956 when a new college was built at Westoe but the original building remained in use for workshop training for many years after that.

The new college was extremely well equipped



City of Port Elizabeth, where the Ellerman interview took place. (tynebuiltships.co.uk)



and had a fantastic group of lecturers, many of whom had been to sea. It became the foremost marine college in the world and in the 1960s was taking over 170 engineering students per year and today still attracts students from all over the world. However, it has now lost a bit of its aura, being known as South Shields Marine School, part of Tyne Coast College.

At college I quickly established all that uninteresting physics, maths and chemistry stuff had an application after all, despite how it had appeared at school. So I was off on, what turned out to be, an all-consuming career with ships. It is interesting that prior to this, the nearest I had come to the marine industry was a holiday on a boat the Grand Union Canal, although, previously, there may have been a portent of things to come when I was asked at my 11+ interview if I had any idea of the value of the liner *Queen Mary*. I had said about £2m which was probably not a bad guess for an eleven year old country boy in 1954.

The Ellerman Group fleet around this time consisted of more than 70 ships, mainly general cargo ships, some of which had accommodation for 12 passengers, four passenger / cargo ships for the South African trade and a number of refrigerated cargo ships. The ships at this time were a mixture of steam turbine and diesel engine-powered but I spent the first nine years almost exclusively with motorships.

What I hadn't realised at the time was that it was a particularly opportune time to be joining the industry. The Merchant Navy was a reserved profession during the period of National Service and many people were only at sea to avoid being called up. So, when conscription ended around 1960, many, particularly engineers, returned to work ashore. This is why many shipping companies, realising there was a developing problem, invested heavily in the Engineer Cadet training scheme and sent large numbers of students to colleges around the country. Ellermans sent 25 of us to South Shields and BP sent over 100 in addition several to Liverpool, Poplar and Glasgow. The gap resulting from the end of National Service left a large number of vacancies at sea so those of my generation were able to gain fairly rapid promotion as a result. In

my case, I was promoted to Chief Engineer when I was still only 28, when ten years previously many were into their early 40s before being promoted.

There was, of course, life after college; the Country Hotel opposite the college was the regular lunchtime watering hole or sometimes the slightly upmarket Westoe. Bailey's Jazz Club in Beach Road



City of Hull, my first ship. (Charlie Hill)

was a regular nighttime haunt and if a particularly exciting evening was wanted, a trip across the Tyne to the Northumberland Arms (aka The Jungle) in North Shields on a Friday night would give you all needed – and then some. It was said that Alan Price and the Animals started in the Jungle but I never saw them. All I saw was some very serious drinking and quite a few fights.

My first ship was a coastal voyage in 1961 on the *City of Hull*, a vessel which started as an armed merchantman during WW2 and eventually completed as a cargo ship carrying 12 passengers in 1948. It had a huge engine room with five boilers and two turbines that seemed to leave little room in the rest of the ship for cargo. It was rumoured to be capable of over 20 knots but this speed was never used because the fuel consumption would have been prohibitive. She carried nine engineers, all Scots and eight from Aberdeen – or so it seemed to a young lad from Hemel Hempstead.

It was about this time that an infamous incident occurred involving one of our ships, the *City of Brooklyn*, as she was entering Avonmouth Docks. She was coming out of the lock and the pilot rang 'Dead Slow Astern' on the engine telegraph. Unfortunately, the engineer put the engine to 'Dead Slow Ahead' and so, when the pilot, noting that his order had not had the desired effect in slowing the vessel's movement, put the telegraph to half astern; but the engineer not realising his mistake increased power to half but still ahead. The next movement was 'Full Astern' which resulted in the engines now running at 'Full Ahead'. Meanwhile, immediately opposite the lock, the crew of a small cargo vessel, the *Cato*, were just starting their breakfast when the bow of the *City of Brooklyn* crashed through their ship, effectively pinning it to the quayside. The crew made a very rapid escape to the quayside and then watched in amazement as the *City of Brooklyn* backed away from their ship which then sunk slowly to the dock bottom. As a consequence of this disaster, all our vessels were fitted with a "wrong way alarm" that warned when the engine was turning in the opposite direction to that ordered by the telegraph. Sort of shutting the dock gate after the ship had bolted. The *Brooklyn* was sold in 1967 and in 1970 whilst carrying a cargo of fertiliser from France to China, blew up and sank off the coast of, what was then, Ceylon.

So the scene was set for 50-odd years sailing, managing, designing and building ships. And some of the years were indeed quite odd.



City of Brooklyn, before she became intimate with the *Cato*. (tynebuiltships.co.uk)



*Cato*, before breakfast was rudely interrupted. (wrecksite.eu)

## 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.	Northam Town Council
Awards for All	OSD-IMT
Bideford Town Council	RT Marke
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