

STEAMSHIP

FRESHSPRING

SOCIETY

FRESHSPRING NEWS



www.ssfreshspring.co.uk

No.8 Summer 2016

Preserving the past to inspire knowledge for the future

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

Objects of the Charity:

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

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Ship Visits & Volunteering on the ship: Visits to the ship are not possible while she is in dry dock. The ship will be open once she is at Bideford.

Enquiries about volunteering to help on the ship should be directed to John Austin, Tel: 07967 114 346, or email: john.austin@consultant.com.

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Editor's Ramblings. . . .

What a few months it has been since the last newsletter when we reported on the Gala Dinner at Bideford during which our Patron, Earl Attlee, announced that we had been awarded the money to do the work necessary to move the ship to Bideford.

As I write this, the ship is in the dry dock at Sharpness and work is well underway to establish exactly how much replating of the hull will be needed for her to be towed to Bideford. She is due to leave the dry dock during September and will head for her new home later that week, weather permitting.

It was quite an emotional experience to see *Freshspring* leave her long term home at Newnham. I stood on the opposite bank of the Severn so I could get some good pictures and it was well worth it to see the tug come up river, and then tow the ship away with help from Fred Larkham's barge. Fred, it must be remembered, has played a major part in the survival of *Freshspring* by giving her a berth for so many years, as did John Richards, from whom the Trust bought the ship for £1. John spent many years keeping the old girl in good condition, particularly internally, and travelled to Sharpness on Fred's barge to see his former charge safely into the docks. With everything secure, John advised John Puddy, our chairman, that he would be standing down from the Trust as he felt he had done his 'bit'. We will be forever grateful to John for all his efforts over the years.

Elsewhere, you will see that I am standing down as Membership Secretary and I am pleased that Richard Ker is taking on the job. I hope that he will enjoy doing it as much as I have. I will continue with my other responsibilities on the Trust, including, as John Puddy puts it, being a "one man committee of taste" as I try to keep an eye on all corporate material produced by the Trust for I am keen that we maintain a good corporate image to the public.

They say if you want something done, ask a busy person, but this busy person is just too busy, with a heritage publishing business to run as well as being very active in managing a local (to me) working steam museum, which is currently taking up a huge amount of my time. Having been a volunteer there for well over 30 years, and a committee member or a trustee for most of that time, it is still my first love, but *Freshspring* comes a close second, even if I can't be active on the ship.

We are getting closer to achieving our ultimate aim of returning the ship to service. There are exciting times ahead, for certain.



Brian Gooding

FRONT COVER: Steamship Freshspring, rises above us in the sea lock at Sharpness Docks on the final part of her journey to the drydock. Brian Gooding

Chairman's Report

Over the past months, we have been focussing on the dry docking of the ship. This has required considerable liaison with contractors, surveyors and others who will be involved in this major project. The ship, as I write, is berthed at Sharpness awaiting her docking.

She was towed across from Newnham by Keynvor Morlift, our very supportive towing company, and was accompanied by *Riparian* to help with docking.

Since our very successful dinner, we have acquired quite a few members and most importantly, volunteers. The latter have been from the Bideford area which has been very helpful in preparing the ground for the arrival of the ship and to raise the profile. Maryann Soper, our newest Trustee, has been a very valuable addition to the Governance team as her background is in industrial heritage. The input required to manage the Trust and its activities has dramatically increased since we know that we have the funds to move and carry out works on the ship, so a growing team is very important.

In preparation for the ship moving to Bideford, we have been working with local councils, museums and businesses. It is important that we have an ongoing plan for Bideford as we want to see the ship as a vibrant local resource, adding to the "Bideford experience".

Yet again, this period has been a busy one regarding talks and attendances at events. This work is valuable in keeping people informed and working with others. Recently, I was able to speak at the newly formed Vale of Berkeley Railway. I was due to speak for half an hour and this ended up as a two and a half hour session. It was valuable and very interesting as it was my first talk to a heritage railway. It highlighted just how beneficial it is to meet other heritage organisations and how much we have in common. We were able to share ideas and I was able to provide support with work they could consider in education.

We have been fortunate in being able to meet with our two local MPs, Peter Heaton Jones who represents North Devon, and Geoffrey Cox who represents Torrridge. Both meetings were very positive, with the MPs pledging support for our work. As always, our active Patron, Earl Attlee has been busy, making sure the project remains recognised at high levels.

During a holiday in Scotland, I was able to meet Roger Inglis who was the last Chief Engineer to work on *Freshspring*. His memory was incredible and he recalled in considerable detail, his time with the ship. I was able to record the interview for future use.

As always, I need to thank you, our members, for the loyal support you provide for your Charitable Trust. Increasingly more of you are looking to engage in practical ways, which is very gratifying.

John Puddy

Bideford members meeting

There has been a considerable increase in members from the North Devon area. This initially prompted a visit to the ship by minibus and recently our first members' meeting which was open to all. We plan now to meet monthly, with our next meeting being on Wednesday 24th August from 7pm at the Bideford Conservative Club, 23 Bridgeland Street, Bideford, EX39 2PZ. There is ample free parking available on the Quay, Pill and Riverbank. We look forward to seeing you then.

The first meeting proved to be a success with over thirty people coming along. I was able to speak about the project and the ship coming to Bideford. The great thing was that I was able to speak very positively as we know this is going to happen. I am sure once the ship is in Bideford, we will gain huge support and an increase in volunteers and members.

I was pleased that the meeting lasted for the whole evening with many discussions taking place between members and locals. A very positive outcome is that we now have volunteers to work in Membership, health and safety, and very interestingly, a volunteer who will focus on the ship's radio equipment, potentially creating a maritime radio interest within the Trust. Members attending generally wanted to see a plan of action so they could understand how they might help. We are working on this with support from local members in preparation for discussions at our next meeting.

In attendance, we also had a Councillor, timber merchant and a propeller manufacturer so it shows that by holding these meetings we are making new and valuable friendships.

Stephen Attenborough



© Graham Hobbs

Down the Severn to Sharpness

The tow from Newnham-on-Severn to Sharpness dock has been a momentous occasion for the society as it represents the start of works that we have been working towards for over three years. While the tow took place on Wednesday 6th July, volunteers John Austin, John Richards and Stephen Attenborough had been on board over the preceding days to make sure that *Freshspring* was ready for the tow. Work included checking the portable water pumps, preparing fenders and ropes, getting our second anchor and gangway on board and ensuring that everything was stowed away so it couldn't fall and damage anything.

As the day of the tow dawned with beautiful bright skies and little wind, there were a few last jobs to do as we waited for the tide and tug to come in. First off was the anchor chain. One end of this was wrapped around a bollard on the quay and is quite heavy, so could not be released as quickly and easily as the mooring ropes. Some judicious hauling on the chain meant we could disconnect it before carefully lowering it down, not wanting it to slam into the side of the ship. From here we could use the (hand-powered) windlass to bring the chain in and back into the locker.

The tow was to be undertaken by the tug *New Ross One* of Keynvor Morlift and assisted by *Riparian* of F C Larkham marine contractors. While *Riparian* was already next to *Freshspring*, *New Ross One* would come in on the flooding tide, collecting a pilot from Sharpness on the way up. From now on it was just a waiting game, watching the tide come in and hoping that the tug would arrive in time. If the tug



She's properly on the move for the first time in years! Brian Gooding

was too late, we wouldn't be able to get into Sharpness on this tide and we would have to rethink our plans.

Keeping a keen eye out down the river, we soon spied the tug and within twenty minutes of arrival, it was attached via a towing bridle to the fo'c's'le, *Riparian* was made fast along the port aft, all of the mooring ropes released and *Freshspring* was on her way to Sharpness. John Austin and Stephen Attenborough were joined by a member of the tug crew, who had a radio on board *Freshspring*, while John Richards rode on *Riparian*.

The first part of the tow was slower as we worked against the incoming tide, but as we progressed and the tide turned, we soon sped up. We checked the condition



John Austin and Stephen Attenborough look pleased with the outcome of the tow as the ship waits in the lock at Sharpness. Brian Gooding

of *Freshspring* during the tow, but there was not too much to do, so we took the opportunity to take in the scenery and the novelty of the landscape moving past us.

An hour and a half into the tow, we had arrived at the Sharpness tidal basin, where the tug disconnected and quickly made its way off down the river to its home port while the tide was still in its favour. This left *Riparian* to ease *Freshspring* into the lock that would bring us into the dock. For many, this would be the first time they had seen *Freshspring* afloat towering over them.

Out of the lock, we were then moved around the corner to a holding area where we would have to wait for the next few weeks while works to a dredger in the drydock finished.

Freshspring came through the tow unscathed and the tow was thankfully uneventful; let's hope this is a good omen for the works to come.



Chairman John Puddy is interviewed at Sharpness by Graham Sayers of Avalon Video for a forthcoming DVD on the ship. Brian Gooding

Into the drydock. . .



Freshspring waits to be towed into the drydock at Sharpness.

On Sunday 31st July 2016, *Freshspring* was moved from her holding berth where she has been waiting since the tow from Newnham into the drydock at Sharpness. Once tied up alongside, the shipyard spent some time getting her on a more even keel. She usually lists to starboard, probably due to the fuel oil pumping equipment in the boiler room, the lack of fuel in the port bunker to counter that and the gangway also on the starboard side.



The water level goes down in the drydock.

The following day, *Freshspring* was moved to the centre of the dock, with four ropes and turf winches attached, so she could be accurately positioned over the blocks that had been prepared for her on the dock floor. By 1.00pm, about three feet of water had been released from the dock and the position of *Freshspring* was checked again using laser distance gauges, very carefully adjusting each of the turf winches to make sure she was just where we wanted her. This was quite a laborious process, but all of the time was well spent to make sure that no damage was caused.

Draining of the dock recommenced



The dock has been pumped out and Freshspring sits on the blocks.



The hull plates can now be seen as they await cleaning.

and by 2.50pm the aft end of the ship was starting to make contact with the blocks and it was time to check her position again. 40 minutes later, the bow made contact and giving her a little time to relax before letting out all of the water, by 4.20pm, we could see the top of the blocks and we knew for sure that she was sitting down just where she should be, a real testament to the planning and attention to detail by Sharpness Shipyard & Drydock.

It took a little while longer to drain the remaining few feet of water from the dock and add a number of additional supports before I could go all of the way underneath the ship for the entire length, possibly the first person to do so in about forty years. Below the wind and wave line, the hull plating looks in reasonable condition, with paint visible in many areas, though we will not know the true condition until the high pressure water blasting has taken place and the surveying has been completed.

In the drydock, the hull will be blasted to remove old paint and rust to expose thin sections of steelwork before being given a coat of weld-through primer paint to prevent rust. Next comes the surveying, during which the hull will be closely inspected with thickness testing of the plating. It is only after this that we will know for sure exactly what quantity of steel will have to be fitted to the hull. Following the steelwork, the hull will be painted and there will be more surveys, including one by the Maritime Coastguard Agency of both *Freshspring* and the tug that will take her to Bideford.

There will be regular updates on both our website and Facebook page and for those of you who are not online, we will, of course, keep you updated through this newsletter.

As Sharpness is a working commercial dock, we ask that for your own safety you do not visit without first contacting us to make sure there is someone to meet with you and check that we can accommodate you.

The day following the successful drydocking of *Freshspring* saw, after a gangway was lowered into place by the shipyard, the hull blasting start. The object of this exercise is to clean off all paint, scale and rust from the hull so we can get a much better idea of the condition of the hull plating.

The hull blasting process only uses ultra-high pressure water to clean the hull and a surprisingly small quantity too, which means there is no media, such as sand or grit to clean up. Providing power to the blasters is a modern six cylinder industrial diesel engine, driving a water pump pushing out 30,000psi and producing a heck of a lot of noise from both the pump assembly and the water blasters themselves.

Blasting started from the bottom with the keel and the almost horizontal flat plates being cleaned first, before working up to the bilge keel and all of the way to the top.



Water blasting is well underway in this view of Freshspring.



This view has not been seen in many years.

Unsurprisingly, at least to those who have worked on *Freshspring* for a number of years and have spent a long time looking at the hull, the blasting process has created a number of holes in the hull, but one of the main reasons to come to the drydock was to find any weaknesses so we can deal with them. The holes found so far are in the wind and wave line, where the hull plates have been bobbing in and out of the water, getting both wet and a good supply of oxygen for rust to form. There are a few minor holes on the underside, probably caused in part by the hull wearing away by ranging from over twenty years going up and down on the tidal river Severn and in part due to rubbish being caught under the hull when she has sat back down on the mud.

All the hull is being blasted, including the fo'c's'le where her name is painted, which is a relief for many of us as access around the bow can be a little challenging without a bosun's chair or, as we have in the drydock, a high-lift scissor lift.

This means that when she leaves Sharpness, she should look pretty smart.

Hull blasting should take around eight working days, after which the bare steel will be given a coat of primer paint that can be welded through, to slow down further



Despite the obvious wear and tear, Freshspring has lovely lines.

corrosion while the surveyors come in to determine exactly what work has to be done to allow *Freshspring* to gain the certificates to enable her to be towed to her new public berth.

Our temporary home at Sharpness has brought about quite a bit more interest in *Freshspring*, as for the first time in over twenty years she is readily publicly viewable. Most days that I have been on site I have seen people peering through the fence trying to get a better look or work out what she is and when I am not in the middle of something, I'll go over to have a chat and hand out a leaflet or two.

Having work carried out on the hull and being in a more public location has also caused a great deal of interest online, with many new 'likes' on Facebook and messages of support being received. If you have only just joined, then welcome, and I hope you can stay with us for the journey to bring *Freshspring* back into full operational condition.



Another view of the cleaned plates on the hull.

Stephen Attenborough

How did we get here?

The preservation years

Freshspring was purchased by Graham Fox and a Bristol businessman Mr Oswald Burgess directly from the M.O.D. in 1979 for further use. Mr Burgess had to sign an official secrets document stating that he would never disclose how much he had paid for the ship. He maintained this secrecy until he sadly passed away in the early 1990s.

She was towed down to Bristol's Princess Quay by the tug, *Pullwell Bravo*, and it was from here that the intention was to operate her as a leisure ship for affluent businessmen with a love of steam ships and to be converted to an incinerator ship. The intention for the latter was to experiment with alternative fuels using a pyrolysis plant to break down the waste by 'cooking' it under controlled conditions, eventually producing a gas which could be used to fire the boiler. Reports suggest that Mr Burgess was pleased with the results he had with a pyrolysis plant on the main deck, but we have not found any remains of this setup.

However, soon after arriving in Bristol, Mr Burgess was approached by enthusiasts who persuaded him that the ship be preserved unaltered.

In 1983, the port furnace was reconverted to solid fuel for more flexible firing by his volunteer workforce, enabling steam to be raised steadily and slowly over 24 hours

or so from cold. She steamed a couple of times in Bristol docks and was regularly opened to the public at weekends. While in Bristol, her bridge was stripped of the telegraphs and wheels. For reasons unknown, the engineer's accommodation skylight was removed from its position and a blank steel plate welded over the aperture. The propeller also lost two tips from adjacent blades.

It appears that in the early 1990s the docking fees at Bristol had become too large a burden on available finances and so the ship was once again hitched to a tug and towed to Gloucester's Monk Meadow Dock. She was at Gloucester for only a short time before being thrown out. Having been banished from Gloucester, she was again under tow to Callow Pill at Newnham on Severn where she sat until 13th July 2016.

With the passing of Mr Burgess in 1997, ownership of *Freshspring* moved to long-time volunteer, John Richards of Newport, Monmouthshire. Mr Richards battled on as best he could to save the ship, hampered by the ravages of the River Severn, the bores that pushed rocks under the hull and the inevitable deterioration of paintwork and steel with limited funds and volunteers.

By September 2012, realising that he could no longer cope with the situation as it was, Mr Richards worked with our now Chairman, John Puddy, to hold a public meeting at a nearby pub to make a fresh appeal for volunteers and seek to create a future for *Freshspring*. With a nucleus of volunteers established, the charity we know today was formed May 2013, shortly after when the charity took ownership of SS *Freshspring*.

The following years have been spent keeping the water out of the ship, preparing her for a tow, securing a long term guaranteed berth and gaining the funding required to move her following drydock work to her public berth in Bideford.

As for the future, we are working hard to create a sustainable future for *Freshspring* in a steaming condition. The workload will only increase from now on, so any assistance is welcomed.

Fundraising

Even before the National Heritage Memorial Fund works on *Freshspring* had started, we have been considering ways to improve her aesthetics and how to get volunteers and visitors on board once in Bideford.

Arts Council England run a scheme called PRISM, which will fund up to £20,000 for conservation work. We are applying to this fund to rebuild the timber bridge, which will dramatically improve the aesthetics of the ship, while opening up a brilliant vantage point and creating a useable visitor/education space.

This is an almost £36,000 project, so while PRISM will cover much of this, we have also made an application to the Bideford Bridge Trust for partnership funding towards the ship's bridge project and items that will enable the ship to open to volunteers and visitors in Bideford. It will also be an important step in the major restoration of the ship.

Looking even further forward, we are already considering the fundraising required for the full restoration of *Freshspring* to operational condition. Following the lead from many other large heritage projects, a large proportion of this is likely to be funded by Heritage Lottery Fund investment. Before submitting a bid, we will have to build up the information required, e.g. market research, long term planning, proof of match funding, estimates of costs for ship repairs, etc.

The *Freshspring* project continues to gain momentum, and we are giving an ever increasing number of talks to interested groups. While many have a projector that we can use, there are often times when having one of our own would be really useful as a talk with photos on display is much more engaging. Can you contribute towards the cost for a projector? Around £300 would cover a reasonable quality version. Call 01237 479730 or email info@ssfreshspring.co.uk if you feel that you can help. Even a good second hand projector would suit as long as we can use it for presentations.

We do still receive regular donations from our members in addition to membership fees and we thank you very much for this valuable ongoing support.

Volunteering

As we get ready for *Freshspring* to arrive in Bideford, the need for more volunteers increases. We are currently seeking volunteers for;

- Working on the ship at all levels of competence
- Administration
- Fundraising
- PR and Marketing
- Publicity
- Treasurer
- Social media management
- Website maintenance
- Education development
- Tour guide on ship

We will be developing work programmes and job descriptions for each of these volunteer roles, including details of who you will be working with, so don't feel that you'd be taking on anything without assistance from current volunteers. If you are interested in any of these, please contact us by calling 01237 479 730 or email info@ssfreshspring.co.uk. Alternatively, come and have a chat with us at our next meeting on Wednesday 24th August from 7pm at the Bideford Conservative Club, 23 Bridgeland Street, Bideford, EX39 2PZ.

Steam into the jet age

John Austin

Many moons ago, I was a student apprentice with Bristol-Siddeley in Coventry. We made jet and rocket engines. Most of our work was military, but eventually we were caught fiddling the books on 'cost plus' contracts and forced into a merger with ailing Rolls-Royce. Both sides made diesels; RR had the old Sentinel works at Shrewsbury and we made Maybach diesels under licence for BR. (I don't ever want to see another Maybach con rod – they were polished all over and not much fun.)

My time was split between the Parkside factory (we made and ran engines on test only half a mile from the centre of Coventry) and Ansty plant, which was the base for the Industrial & Marine division. I remember the old Ansty aerodrome where we had our plant was used extensively by Rootes (Chrysler) in the sixties and seventies to store unsold cars for months on end. Not many white Hillman Hunters went into airfield stock because rust stains became obvious after a few weeks.

Anyway, back to the topic.

Imagine a jet engine with three stages, compressor, combustion, and turbine. The turbine drives the compressor and any surplus energy left is used to drive a fan or propeller, just provides thrust, or drive a secondary turbine to power a generator or ship propulsion.

The compressor needs a large part of the energy produced by the turbine stage to drive it, which causes a big problem in development work on compressors themselves. Performance over the whole rev. range has to be assessed and optimised, which means a lot of testing, and a powerful (thousands of HP) and flexible power source is needed.

The answer – a boiler and steam turbine out of a destroyer. Yes we did use steam power in our then state of the art jet engine factory.

The other nautical device we used was a submarine periscope.

We made the 'Stentor' rocket engine for the Blue Steel nuclear stand off bomb carried by the V bombers, and had a test cell on the airfield.

Imagine a substantial three sided concrete bunker with chain mesh over the top to catch any big bits if an engine blew. The control room was alongside and the periscope went horizontally through the four foot thick concrete to let us observe the engine on test in some sort of safety.

The thing was a bit awkward to use, but very effective, although only one person could view at a time. These were the days before CCTV with everything, and this rig had been operating since the fifties.

Padding Down The Channel 1938

Capt David Gannicliff

Little did I know that this day would set me on my dream, and it would take 30 years to achieve.

Sunday 18th July 1938

There was an excursion to Clovelly from Clevedon at 9.30am. An early start! I cannot remember the weather on that day but I do remember standing on the pierhead and seeing the PS *Britannia* coming down from Portishead, steaming past the pier, turning to port and coming in to the ebb tide and then along side the pierhead "starboard to". A lovely bit of seamanship.

We boarded over the paddle box and then went down to the main deck. My mother knew the best place to go, the reserve deck behind the funnel. This was on top of the Purser's Office and the stairway to the lower deck.

As soon as we were under way, my mother said, "Off you go, son. I know where to find you," and, of course, she was right! Down the stairway, past the galley with its stable doors open so you could see the cooks preparing the lunches. I turned to my left and there was the engine room. The smell of hot oil, the wisps of steam, and the thump, thump, thump of the paddles, and seeing the rotating crankshaft all very brightly polished, all wonders for a small boy.

Standing on the control platform was the duty engineer and another engineer who kept the bearing pots topped up with oil. And! The engine telegraph set for 'Full



Britannia before WW2. She was launched in 1896 and scrapped in 1956.

Ahead'. I asked questions, as any young boy would, but I am sorry I cannot remember the answers given. I know now it would have been 17 knots with the engine turning at 50rpm; this would have been *Britannia's* service speed.

PS *Britannia* was the Campbell flagship and their fastest. She survived the war as a mine sweeper but I was told the hard work took a heavy toll on her "haystack" boiler and in 1946 a new boiler was fitted, giving her two funnels.

Our next port of call was Bembeck Pier at Weston-Super-Mare (again long side



Britannia's engine room.

"starboard to") and after disembarking passengers for Weston, the Purser waited at the head of the gangplank to count on passengers to continue down to Clovelly.

We left Bembeck like a cork out of a bottle "Full astern", and then on down to Minehead pier. This pier was destroyed in 1940 and never replaced. After our stop at Minehead, it was on to Lynmouth. As we passed the North Foreland and



A fine study of the 1915-built Glen Usk. Could this be Cardiff with the railway signals?

into Lynmouth bay, *Britannia* sounded her whistle, one long blast; this was to tell the boatmen at Lynmouth to “stand off” and be ready to receive passengers going ashore.

Britannia “hove to” just off the entrance to the Lyn river, and two boats came along side onto the port paddle box sponson. Passengers wishing to go ashore had been called to collect on the lower deck where the crewmen waited to open the water tight doors on to the sponson deck ready for them to embark. It was completed very quickly and we were under way to our next port of call – Ilfracombe.

In 1938, Ilfracombe harbour and the pier were the hub for P&A Campbell steamers; they ran excursions from Bristol and across from Swansea, Cardiff and Barry.

We came in “long side” the pierhead where there were passengers ready to embark for the afternoon trip to Clovelly. We were fully loaded!

With three blasts on the whistle, we came out of Ilfracombe “full astern” and then turned down the coast, past Bull Point and the lighthouse, turning to cross into Bideford Bay, past the Horseshoe lightbuoy to port, and then on to Clovelly.

Britannia rounded up very



Looking down the passageway alongside the engine room with the step over the paddle shaft visible.



The Cardiff Queen off Appledore on 3rd June 1954.

close to the shore and dropped her anchor. Within a short time, four small boats came out from the harbour using Seagull outboard motors.

I remember mother saying “have I got to get into that?”, seeing the small boats, but we did. We were lucky. The tide was still in the harbour so we were able to land by some steps and walk along the harbour wall towards the Red Lion pub. As we passed the pub door, there was a notice – ‘Fresh crab sandwiches’.

We both loved fresh crab, so we sat on a bench enjoying our “crabbies” and watching some of the children from the ship taking donkey rides up the cobbled street.

Now in 2016, I can say it has not changed; only the donkey rides have gone.

We had just over one and a half hours before *Britannia* sounded her whistle to summon us to the ship. This time we had to walk down the pebble beach to the waiting boats. We had to “walk the plank”; yes a large wood plank with a rope ring attached that was slipped over the bow of the boat up which we walked.

Boatmen in hip waders helped us to board, then with



The dining saloon on the Britannia.



The Cardiff Queen very close in at Clovelly.

a push, we were off and on our way back to the ship.

My mother had booked a late dinner "cold salmon salad", so as soon as we were under way, it was down to the dining saloon. I remember the sight that greeted us. Drape curtains with tassels, white table cloths and all the ship's chinaware with company flag logo, serviettes folded into hats, and cane chairs. At the end of the saloon was a large table set out with two large poached salmon ready to be served. The chef was standing ready to carve. This was a sight never to happen again after the war.

All too soon, we were back at Weston-Super-Mare. I took a long look at the ship's bridge and said to myself: "one day I am going to be up there". It took thirty years to do it, but then that is another story!

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| With Porridge, Fish, Ham and Egg... | 3 0 |
| COLD LUNCHEON—With Cold Meat, Salad, Sweets or Cheese | 2 6 |
| With Cold Salmon, Cold Meat, Salad, Sweets or Cheese | 3 0 |
| HOT LUNCHEON—Soup, Fish, Joint, Vegetables, Sweets, (See Menu) Cheese | 3 6 |
| Soup, Joint, Vegetables, Sweets or Cheese | 2 6 |
| SPECIAL LATE DINNERS—Passengers desiring dinner on homeward journey are requested to order on outward journey. | |
| TEA—Plain, with Preserves, Cake, Bread and Butter | 1 6 |
| With Fried Fillets Plaice (or other Fish), etc. | 2 0 |
| With Cold Meat, Salad, etc., etc. | 2 0 |
| With Cold Salmon, etc., etc. | 2 0 |
| With Fried Fish, Cold Meat, Salad, etc. | 2 6 |
| With Salmon, Cold Meat, Salad, etc., etc. | 3 0 |
| Stewed Fruit or other Cold Sweets served with above | 6 |
| <i>Special requirements will be catered for if notice is given on outward journey.</i> | |
| SUNDRIES. | |
| Served in Lounge. | |
| Cup of Tea, Coffee, or Cocoa | 3d. |
| Ditto, with Bread and Butter or Biscuits | 6d. |
| Small Cakes | each 2d. |
| Cake | per slice 3d. |
| Sandwiches | each 3d. |
| Biscuits and Cheese | 6d. |
| Bovril or Oxo | per cup 3d. |
| Orange or Lemon Crush | per glass 3d. |
| Horlick's Malted Milk | per glass 4d. & 6d. |
| CHOCOLATES CAN BE OBTAINED ON BOARD | |
| <i>Any complaints as to incivility or overcharge should be made to the Chief Steward at once, or address to: Superintendent, Catering Department, P. & A. Campbell Ltd., Cumberland Basin, Bristol.</i> | |
| For Wines and Spirits List, see following page. | |

The dining room menu.



Bristol Channel Steamers

Clevedon pier came into sight and that was the end of a day never to be forgotten.

• I wish to thank Chris Collard and Tempus Publishing Group for the use of some of the pictures in this article taken from 'White Funnels the story of P&A Campbell Steamers'.

Stoker's Lament

Now each of us from time to time, has gazed upon the sea,
And watched the war ships pulling out, to keep his country free,
And most of us have read a book or heard a lusty tale,
About the men who sail these ships, through lightning, wind and hail,
But there's a place within each ship, that legend fails to teach.

It's hot down below the water line, it takes a living toll,
A hot metal living hell, that sailors call the "Hole",
It houses engines run by steam, that make the shafts go round,
Where boilers like a hellish heart, with blood of angry steam,
Are of moulded Gods without remorse, are nightmares in a dream.

Whose threat that from the fires roar is like a living doubt,
That any minute would with scorn, escape and crush you out,
Where turbines scream like tortured souls, alone and lost in hell,
And ordered from above somewhere they answer every bell,
The men who keep the fires lit, and make the engines run,
Are strangers to the world of light, and rarely see the sun.

They have no time for men or god, no tolerance for fear,
Their aspect pays no living thing, the tribute of a tear,
For there's not much that men can do, that these men haven't done,
Beneath the decks, deep in the hole, to make the engines run,
And every hour of every day, they keep the watch in hell,
For if the fires ever fail, the ship's a useless shell.

When ships converge to have a war, upon the angry sea,
The men below just grimly smile, at what their fate might be,
They're locked in below like men for doomed, who hear no battle cry,
It's well assumed that if they're hit, the men below will die,
For every day is a war down there, when the gauges all read red,
Twelve hundred pounds of superheated steam, can kill you mighty dead.

So if you ever write these sons, or try to tell their tale,
The very words would make you hear, a fired furnace's wail,
And people as a general rule, don't hear of men of steel,
So little is heard about the place, that sailors call the hole,
But I can sing about this place, and try to make you see,
The hardened life of men down there, cause one of them is me.

I've seen these sweat soaked hero's fight, in superheated air,
To keep their ship alive and right, though no one knows they're there,
And thus they'll fight for ages on, till war ships sail no more,
Amid the boiler's mighty heat, and the turbines hellish roar,
So when you see a ship pull out, to meet a war like foe,
Remember faintly if you can, "The men who sail below".

By the unknown Stoker

Cunarder's Story – Part One

Graham Mimms

First let me introduce myself. I was 12 years old when I first joined the London Railway Preservation Society at Luton. The year was 1962 and the Society had only been formed a year or so earlier. At Luton, the LRPS, as it was known, rented a siding at the local cold storage depot and it was here that I started my long association with heritage railways.

Since that time, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge during which time I was proud to become one of the founder members of the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre and Swanage Railways. For over 25 years, I served as a volunteer driver at the Swanage Railway and during recent years also at the Barrow Hill Engine Shed Museum. At these excellent heritage railway venues I have been privileged to drive many famous and interesting steam locomotives, many of which were former British Railways express engines now thankfully preserved so that future generations can enjoy seeing them working or on display.

Early Days

It was during the late 1960s that two LRPS friends and I got together and decided to look for a railway locomotive to preserve for ourselves. Along with a wider group of LRPS members from the Luton area, we had previously worked hard to raise funds to preserve ex-Midland Railway half cab 0-6-0T No.41708. This objective was achieved in 1967 with the help of the Association of Railway Preservation Societies (now the Heritage Railway Association – HRA). Initially 41708 went to the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway but that's another story which I will tell at a later date.

Around that time, my fellow preservationists David Britton, Geoff Kingham and I spent time visiting various industrial railway sites throughout the South East and Midlands areas looking for a possible engine that would be within our financial capability to buy. At this time we looked at dozens of engines, particularly those found in the ironstones quarries and coal mines of the search area.

In 1969, we called into the Blue Circle Cement works at Harbury near Daventry as we had heard that there was an old engine lying derelict there. We first set our eyes on *Cunarder*. Stored in a forlorn and dilapidated condition, *Cunarder* looked a sorry sight to behold but the locomotive looked essentially complete although there was considerable rusting of the bunker and the smokebox. The ashpan was missing and the locomotive was fitted with massive round buffers which appeared to have been



The author driving A4 No.60009 at a Barrow Hill Gala.

ordinary buffers with a large circular extension added. Of particular interest was the fact that *Cunarder* had Walscherts valve gear, unusual for an industrial locomotive. This was commonplace on most British Railways' passenger locomotives at the time but most unusual on an industrial engine. Another unusual feature was that under the light green lined livery there was extensive evidence that the locomotive had previously been painted yellow – all over!

We established who the foreman was and asked him questions about the engine. He said that it had been out of use for some while and that when it did operate it did so without an ashpan. This probably contributed to its withdrawal from service as it was not easy to control the fire and regulate steam production without this important piece of basic equipment!

The foreman told us that he thought that the locomotive had been, or was going to be sold, to a local scrap merchant so we asked him who we should contact at Blue Circle in case it was not too late to put in a bid. We had our picture taken (see below - sorry about the quality) and then went away to research the engine and to see what could be done to save it.

After carrying out some initial research, we established that *Cunarder* was originally built in 1931 to the order of Edmund Nuttall & Company who subsequently became part of John Mowlem & Co., a famous civil engineering company that had strong connections with the building of many of London's impressive buildings in years gone by.

In 1931, Edmund Nuttall & Co. required a number of locomotives to work as part of the resources needed to fulfill a recently won contract at Southampton – the construction of the King George V Graving Dock (dry dock). This huge dock was



Graham Mimms, Dave Britton and Geoff Kingham on Cunarder in 1969.

necessary to facilitate the inspection and repair work on the "huge" new Cunard "Queens" – Trans Atlantic liners RMS *Queen Mary* and RMS *Queen Elizabeth*.

In all, six similar locomotives were purchased from the Hunslet Engine Company at Leeds and *Cunarder* became Works No.1690 and was completed in 1931.

Cunarder and her sister engines were subsequently dispatched to Southampton and were put to work moving spoil and aggregates associated with the

construction of the new dock at the head of Southampton Water.

While at Southampton, it appears that the locomotives had their standard buffers removed in favour of large wooden blocks which were fitted. It is believed that this modification was undertaken locally due to the operating conditions prevailing at the time.

Following the completion of the King George V Southampton Graving Dock contract, Mowlem's used *Cunarder* and the sister locomotives on various short contracts until eventually sold. Unfortunately, not very much is known about the specific whereabouts of *Cunarder* or the other locomotives between working at Southampton and *Cunarder* being purchased from the Blue Circle Cement Co. in 1969. She is known to have worked for the British Sugar Corporation and possibly the National Coal Board during the intervening years. If any reader has any information about where *Cunarder* or the other outside motion Hunslets were stored or worked, could they please contact Graham Mimms.

Shortly after seeing *Cunarder* at Harbury, we contacted Blue Circle and made a case not to have *Cunarder* scrapped because of the uniqueness and historical significance of the locomotive. We appealed to the management in London to be allowed to purchase



One of the batch of Hunslet locomotives purchased by the Mowlem Company being shown during a Royal party visit to the Hunslet factory in 1931 (this is probably Cunarder).

the locomotive at the best possible price. Previously we had been told that the engine was probably worth between £600 and £800 as scrap. Added to this would be the cost of transporting it to Quainton Road where the huge task of restoration and all the associated costs would take place.

Around this time, the three members of the Cunarder Group used to meet up with other local railway preservationists every Thursday evening at a pub in the village of Harlington in Bedfordshire called the Carpenters Arms. Harlington is a small village which lies about ten miles north of Luton and it has a station on the Midland main line. One of the local enthusiasts we met up with was Pete Standbridge, who worked as a fireman on British Railways at Cricklewood Motive Power Depot (14B) until the end of steam. Pete then retrained to become a signaller and found himself working at Harlington Station Signal Box. On occasions, when he was on a late turn, it was normal for one or two of us to visit Pete after our session at the pub. We would visit him in his signal box which was conveniently located on the down fast platform.

It was on just such a night that I turned up at the pub to tell Geoff Kingham and Dave Britton the good news that I had received a letter from Blue Circle confirming that we could purchase the locomotive. I then told them that I had wasted no time and had already paid for it!! They wondered how I had managed to pay for it without their contributions until I asked for their share to settle up with me. Naturally they asked me how much they owed me and to their amazement I told them £6 6s 8d each (six Pounds, six Shillings and eight Pence each – pre-decimal money! - £6.33 in today's money) Thanks to the generosity of Blue Circle, we had been able to acquire the locomotive for a nominal cost and with the purchase money saved, we had a ready



Cunarder at Southampton Docks circa 1932. (Courtesy of Southampton Museum.)

made fund by which to start the restoration straight away. On that evening after a few extra pints to celebrate becoming owners of a unique locomotive, we walked back to the station and met up with Pete for a further celebration, drinking signal box tea whilst watching Peak Class diesels (Class 45s) roaring by on the Midland main line expresses. Oh, happy days!

A few days later, I received the receipt and a collection docket so we very soon went to Harbury Cement works. Harbury is located on the Great Western main line near Leamington Spa, and we learned from the yard foreman in the works that *Cunarder* used to travel over Great Western exchange sidings nearby. In order to do this, *Cunarder* had two plates attached showing that it was registered by the Transport Commission and approved to run on British Railways' tracks.

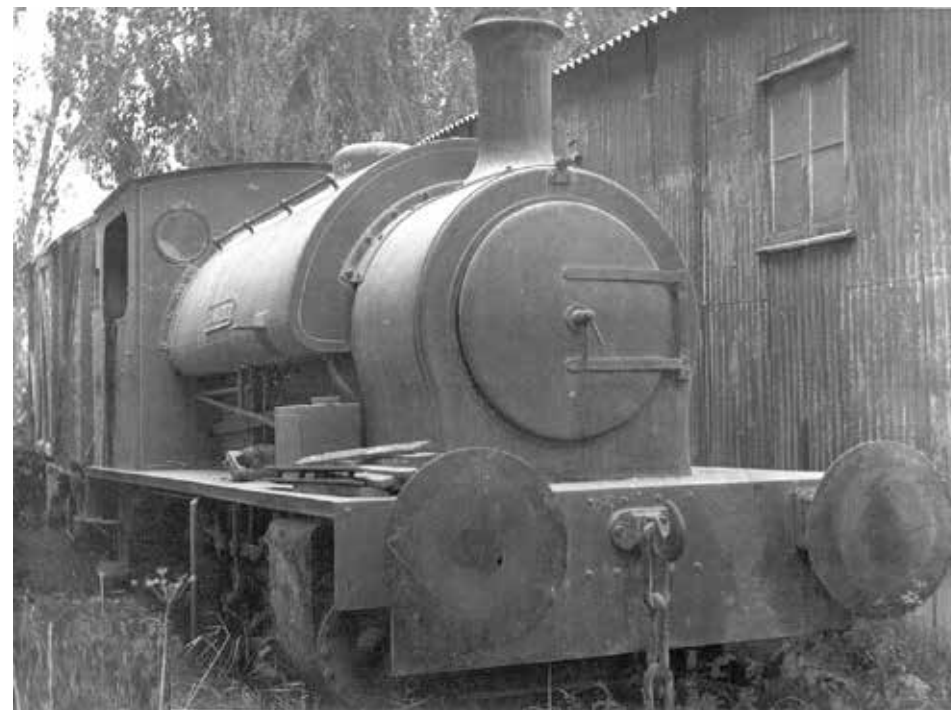
On this, only our second visit to Harbury, we got the first real opportunity to examine the locomotive in detail. The foreman was very helpful, giving us information about the operation of the engine and giving us various fittings that had been removed from the locomotive for safe keeping. *Cunarder* was forlorn, with paint faded, rust damage in many areas of the steel sheeting, in particular the bunker. Of note was a large brass 'Detroit' cylinder lubricator in the cab. The foreman gave us various



Cunarder as purchased in 1969 from store at Blue Circle Cement Works at Harbury in Warwickshire. Note the large short reach buffers fitted to work short radius curves without locking buffers.

cab fittings from the Blue Circle stores. The examination revealed rust holes in the smokebox, all the tubes were rusted out and most of the firebars had gone. This all sounds grim but we did have the basic locomotive and as we had secured its purchase at such a low price, we had a fighting chance of returning it to steam if we did most of the work ourselves.

At this time, the Cunarder Group was all active members of the London Railway Preservation Society (LRPS), was one of the founding heritage railway societies to be formed in the United Kingdom in the early 1960s. Initially, the Society worked out of rented sidings at both Luton and Bishops Stortford. During this time, the LRPS had been successful in purchasing and acquiring a number of important items. These included the purchase from British Railways of 2-4-0 Beattie Well Tank No.30585 which was stored pending restoration at Bishops Stortford, and an ex-Metropolitan 0-4-4 Class E tank number L44 (Formerly Metropolitan No.1) purchased in working order from London Transport. The latter was delivered to the LRPS cold store sidings at Luton in steam straight out of traffic. Other notable items of rolling stock included a magnificent 12-wheel ex-London & North Western Railway saloon carriage that had been taken out of service from the Royal Train. This vehicle was also delivered by rail to



Cunarder at Harbury in 1969. Note the general run down state of the engine, only one lamp bracket and large buffers. The locomotive was light green with white lining under the grime. The Nameplates were still on each side!

the depot at Luton direct from Wolverton Works where the Royal Train was maintained. Of note was the fact that this carriage was painted all over with whitewash paint because it was not allowed to be sold in Royal Train colours; incredibly, the wine racks inside the carriage still contained bottles of wine! Other notable items of stock owned by the LRPS included a London Chatham & Dover Railway six-wheel carriage and other historical items of rolling stock and equipment. Of the latter, a notable item was a Midland Railway road crane which came from the station at Henlow Camp on the Bedford to Hitchin branch.

When I joined the Society at Luton, every weekend I would join a small but dedicated team of local enthusiasts to work on the LRPS collection at the Cold Store sidings. These sidings were connected to the Luton to Dunstable former Great Northern Railway branch line at Skimpot about half way between Luton and Dunstable. During the next few years a number of industrial locomotives joined the collection, most of them being privately owned, so on Sundays, Skimpot became a very busy and productive place where a band of dedicated heritage railway pioneers were amongst the earliest of their kind in the U.K.

Unlike Bishops Stortford where it was not possible to operate, the Luton depot had a much more extensive track system which we were, by prior arrangement, able to use. This meant that from time to time we were able to steam up L44 and one of the industrial engines, an 0-4-0 Andrew Barclay called *Swanscombe* (both locomotives are now based at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre – the successor of the LRPS). Initially the team was trained by a former railway fireman John Payn, who was helped by ex-steam drivers from Bedford MPD but eventually the regular team were allowed to operate the engines themselves. It was in this environment that I learned the ropes, learning the various parts of a steam engine through assisting with restoration and maintenance and on operating days doing some firing and driving under supervision. Happy days!

It was in 1969 that the LRPS, after much searching, found a permanent site of its own. This was necessary because both cold stores were scheduled for major rebuilding to adapt them to road only operations. The site that the LRPS secured was the former down side sidings at Quanton Road which is located on the former Great Central main line about nine miles north of Aylesbury. Eventually the site was developed on both sides of the running line into the very successful operating Buckinghamshire Railway Centre and museum it is today – but that's another story.

I have now bought us to Quanton for a very special reason. The Cunarder Group had negotiated an agreement for *Cunarder* to go to the LRPS Luton depot but with the knowledge that the LRPS was about to obtain access to the Quanton site, the Cunarder Group decided to wait until the site was ready to receive the LRPS and other locomotives and rolling stock under its care. Accordingly, *Cunarder* was moved by road from Harbury to Quanton Road in late 1969 and this is where all the hard work would begin but that's another story!

To be continued.

Membership

This should be the last time I write this column as I am handing over membership responsibilities to Richard Ker who has kindly offered (or so I am told!) to take on the task of looking after you. His contact details will be published in due course, but he can be contacted by email at: membership@ssfreshspring.co.uk.

My address is still on the *Freshspring* leaflets and will no doubt remain so for some time, but I will be passing these on to Richard until we print a new leaflet which will be after the ship reaches Bideford when there will be lots of new pictures and updated information to use in a new leaflet to encourage even more people to join us.

Brian Gooding

New Members – welcome

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Edward Talbot | <i>Kidlington, Oxon</i> |
| Susan Davies | <i>Holyhead, Anglesey</i> |
| Peter Jeffery | <i>Bideford, Devon</i> |
| Joel Pease | <i>Whitstable, Kent</i> |
| Anthony Harris | <i>Stoke Gifford, Bristol</i> |
| Diane Harris | <i>Stoke Gifford, Bristol</i> |
| Roger Spittles | <i>Great Horwood, Bucks</i> |
| Bob Stevens | <i>Southampton</i> |



Just to prove that our Chairman does have other interests! Here he was running around Bideford on his miniature traction engine on a fundraising day. Colin Bell

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Under tow, Freshspring approaches the entrance to Sharpness Docks. Brian Gooding