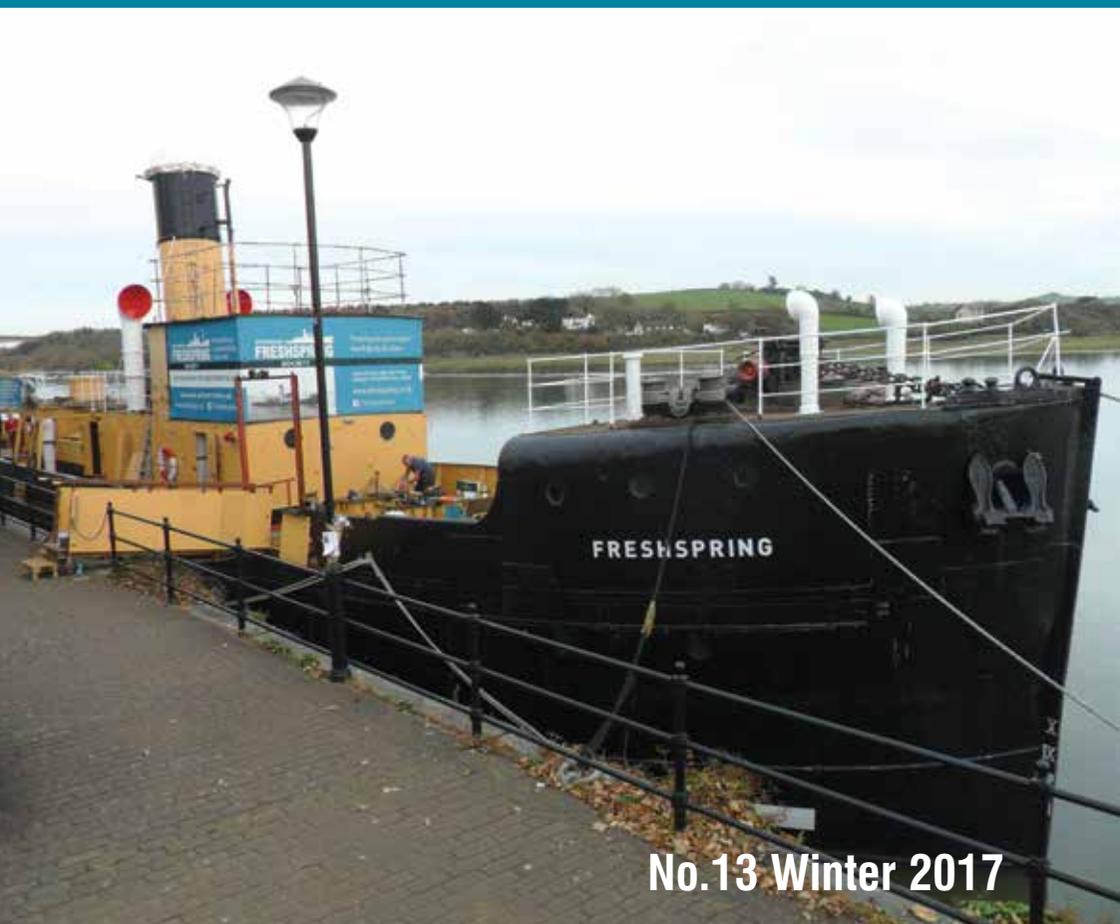


STEAMSHIP

FRESHSPRING

SOCIETY

FRESHSPRING NEWS



No.13 Winter 2017

Preserving the past to inspire knowledge for the future

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

Objects of the Charity:

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

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

Patron: Earl Attlee

Vice President: John Richards

Society Management

Chairman: John Puddy*	john.puddy@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Vice Chairman: Simon Tattersall*	simon.tattersall@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Secretary: Colin Bell*	colinbell50@gmail.com
Treasurer: Simon Tattersall*	simon.tattersall@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Membership: Richard Ker	membership@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Ship Manager: John Austin*	john.austin@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Marketing & Publicity: Brian Gooding*	brian@steamheritage.co.uk
Education: John Puddy*	john.puddy@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Conservation Manager: Stephen Attenborough*	s.attenborough@yahoo.co.uk
Fundraising Lead: Maryann Soper*	maryannsoper@gmail.com
Maria Bailey+	maria@mariabaileyplanning.co.uk

* Trustee + Co-opted Trustee

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

Website: www.ssfreshspring.co.uk

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

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

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

Freshspring News is edited by Brian Gooding, and published by the Steamship Freshspring Society, a registered charity. Design & Production by Steam Heritage Publishing Ltd. Tel: 01403 588 360.

© 2017. Steamship Freshspring Society.
www.ssfreshspring.co.uk



Editor's Ramblings. . . .

Being based south-west of London, I always feel a bit adrift from the busy activities in Bideford so it was good to be able to spend a few days there in October for a trustees' meeting. That meeting coincided with a presentation to the Trust of a very welcome cheque from Torrington District Council, the presentation being made on the ship with all the available volunteers and trustees present. The picture on page 8 shows the assembled group. (I was there too but I was behind the camera!)



I have to say that, with time between my visits, the progress of the volunteers is brilliant. It was interesting that discussions at morning tea break revolved around who was supplying the cake, rather than the work to be done, but it was obvious that this is a happy team under Pete's leadership. They all knew what their projects were, and as soon as the cups were finished, and after a few words from our esteemed chairman who brought good news, they were off again, bustling around the ship. What happens if the cake ration is reduced (see 'Scuttlebutt') I don't know; it is a vital necessity to keep volunteers motivated!

While I was in Bideford, John announced that the Trust had been awarded a grant from the HLF's 'Our Heritage' fund. I will leave the detail to John's Chairman's report on the next two pages. We continue to move onward and upward at a great rate. This is thanks to the hard work of everyone involved but especially John and the team in Bideford. There is so much going on behind the scenes as well as the more obvious work on the ship. The latest round of grants will transform the appearance of the ship with the new wheelhouse and will pave the way to opening the ship to the public on a regular basis in 2018.

Christmas is on the way and, thanks to help from Peter Newell, who runs the art courses on the ship, we have a lovely painting on the front of our 2017 Christmas card. These are available now, so please do buy some to send to your friends – or just to have some for perpetuity. Details are on page 6.

Thanks for your support with ss *Freshspring*. It's a great journey we are all on.

Brian Gooding

FRONT COVER: *This was the ship at Bideford on 1st November 2017, looking smarter than ever with the scaffolding around the repainted funnel just taken down. John Puddy*

BACK COVER: *A more unusual view of ss Freshspring from the river taken by John Puddy from his steamboat.*

Chairman's Report

I can't believe how quickly the year has gone. We are entering our second winter in Bideford, with a very smart looking ship and a positive future.

The scaffolding has at last been taken down from the funnel area of the ship, which is a good step forward. We can plan our Christmas lights now! The ship continues to improve as a result of our remarkable volunteer team. It is pure joy to go aboard on a Wednesday or Sunday, both to chat to the team and to see progress. I feel they are key to our future in many ways.

Our Engineers have removed a boiler feed pump which is with Dawson Downie Lamont in Glenrothes. They are restoring all our DD pumps at no cost which is a huge boost as the costs otherwise would be very considerable. Engineers are also installing a coal stove in the crew area, as per original. This will make life during winter much more bearable. I look forward to roasted chestnuts with the team.

We have completed pilot openings and these have been remarkably successful with capacity being achieved each time. I am amazed how many people come to see the ship and on any day, they can be seen just looking at her from Landivisiau Walk.

I continue to give increasing numbers of talks and have expanded material to include the history of steam at sea as background information. I recently spoke to Paddle Steamer Preservation Society and Steam Boat Association, both organisations that have been very supportive and helpful.

The School project is now at a school in Barnstaple and is very well received by teachers and pupils. This has been a real success story and something we wish to expand upon. We will expand our school work during the next two years to include other projects.

The North Devon Academy opened in Bideford this September. The partnership provides education and vocational support for those between 16 and 18 who are not in work or education. Although we have taken more of a back seat, it was our initiative which started the scheme. It is rightly being run by professionals from Wings and Integer and is well subscribed. Our input is to provide activity on the ship and steer young people into maritime careers.

BMT Defence Systems of Bath are working with us now for the long term and have mapped the ship's hull, producing an accurate lines plan, which is essential to have to inform stability, etc. An international Naval Architects company has an office in Bideford. OSD-IMT has been hugely supportive in providing advice and services linked to Naval Architecture. With this level of backing our plans to carry passengers are ever closer.

The links with The Merchant Navy Training Board are progressing well and I hope the relationship leads to very positive activity in recruiting future seafarers. Maryann Soper, a Trustee, is now leading this relationship and overall Fundraising.

I am very pleased to report that The Trust has been awarded £62,000 from The Heritage Lottery Fund under the banner, Our Heritage. The grant is awarded to support

the restoration of the timber bridge, rebuild the boatdeck, create safe visitor access and interpretation and to provide education resources. The grant also supports the employment of a part time Volunteer Manager. For delivery we have partnered with Torridge Volunteer Services. With other funds received or pledged, the project cost is £118,000 over two years. This is the second major HLF grant that has been awarded to the Trust within 18 months and bodes very well for the future of the ship.

Torridge District Council, our local Authority, has awarded a grant to the Trust which is really cementing the ship into the local community. I am very pleased to report that we have engaged Victoria Symes to carry out a fundraising strategy. Victoria has been integral to our funding success so far and we are very pleased to have her on the team.

Three local papers have included articles on *ss Freshspring*, with both the *Western Morning News* and the *North Devon Journal* dedicating centre pages to the ship and Trust. I believe we really have landed our ship in the right town with a significant maritime history.

Recently we were invited to attend the gala event at the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. This was a great weekend when *Lyn*, the brand new Baldwin replica locomotive, was named and hauled her first passengers. Links such as this are vital in promoting industrial heritage in the region and it makes us feel we are all pulling in the same direction. Heritage tourism is increasing dramatically and it is something we will be a part of. Our recent Lottery success means the *ss Freshspring* will be fully open next



The team from BMT Defence Systems at work mapping the ship's hull.

year with a restored bridge, boatdeck and quality interpretation for visitors.

Peter Newell, has been running art courses on the ship over the summer and these have been popular and successful. Peter has kindly provided the picture for the Christmas card which is now available.

Last time I mentioned how much is being achieved by our Trustees; yet again, I have to compliment the team for remarkable results. We are still a relatively new project but progress is consistent and professionally managed. Peter Gillett continues to manage the ship and keep his team happy. We are, however, looking for more people to help with administration as this is becoming a major requirement. Stephen Attenborough is now our heritage consultant, a crucial role which ensures we make the best decisions both for the maintenance and renovation of the ship.

Don't forget, Freshspring Steam Beer is available from our local Clearwater brewery. It is a great brew and I do have to thank the brewery for sharing the profits with the trust. It can now be found in several local pubs.

We have a Christmas social on 16th December from 6.30pm on the Café barge, Bideford, next to the ship. I hope we can see some of you on the night for a pint of Freshspring Steam. Our AGM will be a special event and will be held on 21st April at the Royal Hotel, Bideford. Full details in the newsletter.

I thank you all for your membership and support of the Trust. We simply could not do this without you. I hope you all have a good Christmas and New Year, and we hope to see as many of you as possible during the coming year.

John Puddy

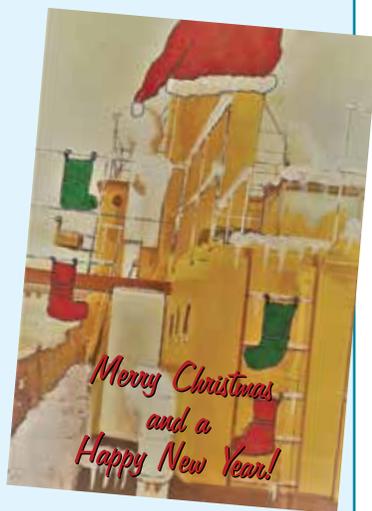
Freshspring Society Christmas Cards

Introduce your friends to the Steamship *Freshspring* by sending them a *Freshspring* Christmas card while helping to raise funds for the ship's restoration.

These A5 size cards are now available in batches of 5s, for £3.75 per 5 (£7.50 for 10, etc). Please make cheques payable to: [Steamship Freshspring Society](#), and send with your order to:

Brian Gooding, Unit 1, Alfold Business Centre,
Loxwood Road, Alfold, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 8HP.

We are grateful to Pete Newell for the painting of the ship for the front of the card (see right).



Treasurer's Report

It's been an exciting few months for *Freshspring*!

Since my last report, we have applied for a number of grants towards the next phase of development on the ship, the major element of which is the replacement of the temporary plywood wheelhouse and other structural and access changes.

The total value of the work we wished to undertake totalled nearly £120,000. We applied to the 'Our Heritage' Lottery fund for £61,000, supported by grants from The Balsdon Trust of £500, The Headley Trust of £5,000, Torrridge District Council through a Community Grant of £9,500, and match funding of Our Heritage by the Bridge Trust of 50% or up to £30,000.

We are delighted to say that all our applications have been successful so we are now able to start the project with additional funding from donations and other sources to make up the total! There will be more about this in future reports.

Delighted though we are, all these grants have to be spent on the projects described in the grant applications, which does NOT include the everyday costs of berthing and insuring the ship, an annual survey, daily repairs and maintenance and other necessary costs of keeping *Freshspring* moving forward – and obtaining grants to cover day-to-day overheads is not easy!

A few members kindly donate a monthly amount to *Freshspring* which, with Gift Aid, contributes towards our overheads – but we really need more help! Could you possibly donate a small amount each month? If you could, please set up a standing order to SS Freshspring Society, account number 00023232, sort code 40-52-40 – and use your initials and surname as the reference.

A big thank you in advance!!

Simon Tattersall
November 2017

New Members – welcome

Mr Clive Waters	Bristol
Mr Russell Bulley	Burton Latimer, Northants
Mr Geoffrey Bamber	Dunoon, Argyll & Bute
Mr Alan Davidson	Bideford, Devon
Mr Chris Bell	Chulmleigh, Devon
Mr David Avery	Appledore, Devon
Mr Barry Marshall	Bideford, Devon
Mr John Simms	Hemington, Somerset
Mrs Norma Shenton	Bideford, Devon
Mr Lawrence Fox	Bristol
Mr Douglas Jackson	Bideford, Devon
Mr Arthur Moore	Beaufort, Ebbw Vale, Gwent

Boost for new wheelhouse

The Steamship Freshsprig Society has secured sufficient funding to be able to go ahead with the construction of a new wooden wheelhouse for the ship. The funding has come from a number of sources including a £9,500 grant from Torrridge District Council's Community Grants Scheme, which was presented to the Society by Peter Soper of the Council on Wednesday 11th October.

Wednesdays are regular volunteer working days on the ship and the presentation coincided with a trustees' meeting later that day and so it was fitting that local dignitaries, volunteers and trustees gathered for the cheque presentation.

The new wheelhouse, which will replace the boarded up area under the banners, should be fitted during next year. A major Lottery bid to return the ship to steam is the next focus for our trustees.



ABOVE: Peter Soper from Torrridge District Council with the cheque for £9,500.

BELOW: Friends, Volunteers and Trustees of the Society gather for the cheque presentation.



Freshsprig Art Courses

This year, three art courses were run and, although numbers were small, the outcomes were successful. Students used areas of the main deck, crew quarters and engine room to produce a series of paintings and drawings. As with all art courses, for the exercise to be enjoyable and to improve or develop, skills are the main criteria. The ship provides ample opportunities to fulfil these criteria with exciting forms to draw such as the mechanisms on deck and to paint intriguing environments with dramatic lighting such as the engine room.

The act of drawing or painting from observation reveals all sorts of aspects about the ship that perhaps were not seen at first glance. The work also documents the ship as it is now, providing another snapshot of a time in the ship's history. Several of the students came because of the art course and thus were introduced to the ship, society and its aims for the first time. The activity also provided evidence if it were needed that educational courses could be run on the ship. Many thanks need to go to Pete Gillett for the time he put in.

It will not be possible to run further courses this year because of the weather and



light, but there have already been enquiries about running courses next year. Finally, half the fees after costs went to the society, a small contribution which will grow when more courses are run.

Pete Newell
info@quaydrawing.
co.uk

That broken propeller

Stephen Attenborough

Many times, while volunteering on board, have I heard people remarking on the damaged propeller on *Freshspring*. If you haven't seen this, the tip of two blades are missing. Until recently, we believed that those tips were lost at the hands of her first private owners in the 1980s, Messrs Oswald Burgess and Graham Fox, while manoeuvring in Bristol when she came too close to the quay wall, due to the combination of her counterstern and a low quay wall.



Recent contact with the brother of Mr Fox, Lawrence, has provided another theory. It is now believed that the propeller was damaged by a huge 8ft x 5ft x 2ft timber fender, which was used to hold the ship off the quay wall for security and also as a painting pontoon while in Bristol. The normal practice was to let go aft and allow the ship to drift off with only the bow secured. She was then run slow astern until warmed through. Unfortunately on this occasion, Oswald forgot about the timber and when warming through the engine, he turned it over alongside and the timber was sucked into the propeller breaking two blades. The jolt was so violent that the stern lifted up.

A photo recently acquired from member, Billy Trelour, shows the offending article.

When we were in the drydock last year, we had a good opportunity to have a closer look at the propeller and it would appear that all four tips have been replaced at some point, made evident by the welding on the two remaining tips and the relatively clean break where the other two tips have been lost, the break happening at the weakest point.

We know that the propeller currently fitted to *Freshspring* was made by Friedenthals Ltd of Preston, as this is cast onto the blades. Near the hub of the propeller is also '2071A', which we presume to be a casting or pattern number.

A report regarding the refit of a sister ship from 27th June 1949 might give some useful or misleading information about a propeller design. We do not know if the below went ahead or if one of those propellers was fitted to *ss Freshspring*.

'Subject to confirmation by D.N.C. that the modified design propeller prepared by A.E.W., Haslar (Print No.A.E.W.140/46) for FRESH Class Water Tank Vessels to minimise Cavitation and refitted to Freshwell at



Portsmouth in May 1947 has proved satisfactory in service, it is proposed that 12 in No. spare C.I. Propellers be manufactured to the new design.'

Looking forward, the propeller will, of course, have to be repaired again or replaced, the latter option also giving us the opportunity to change the design for a more efficient and appropriate design suited to the further use of *Freshspring*.

Scuttlebutt from the Quay

Pete Gillett

As autumn turns the leaves on the trees lining the quay a gorgeous riot of orange and brown, we are turning our attention to the scuppers which is where most of the leaves end up, blocking the drain holes and metamorphosing into a slippery sludge. The scuppers need doing anyway as part of our next major chip, scrape and paint exercise which will have us on our hands and knees applying a two part finish to all the decks. Given the overall colour scheme, the end result could well give the impression of a series of sand sculptures rising up from a verdant lawn, as much an oasis as a *Freshspring*.

We are planning the refurbishment of the galley, not before time, and as part of the need to accommodate up to eight volunteers at a time, we are discussing various seating arrangements. To the merriment of all, I have been measuring the width of the Wednesday crew to see if they can all fit in. They come in such a variety of sizes that much will depend on who is prepared to sit next to whom, so we are considering place names carved into the table in order to get the same length of seated volunteers, either side, if not the same number. If we reduced the cake ration, in time, we may be able to squeeze one more person in, a suggestion that has been robustly rejected.

Now the funnel and vents are finished and the scaffolding has come down, George is spending more time at deck level. He and Trevor, along with assorted others, have spent a lot of the summer "up aloft", while down below we had forgotten George's gift for relating anecdotes from his life up and down the Torridge. He grew up in Appledore and has an endless store of tales of the fishermen, their lifestyles and choices, and of all the boatyards he worked in and the rich variety of people he met along the way. A suitable case, I think, for making a recording for posterity as an oral history of a disappearing way of life; it will be several gigabytes of storage space well spent.

Now we are in the next phase of restoration and development, with the new wheelhouse, boat deck and gangway in sight and regular opening to the public next year, we will be meeting a whole host of new and colourful characters, some of whom will become firm friends and others who will no doubt become new legends in their own lunchtimes.

Filming the wrecks

Chris Witts

It began a few months ago, when out of the blue I received a phone call from a charming young lady from Belfast. She explained that she was a researcher for Tern TV and they were planning to make a new episode for the Channel 4 series called 'Britain at Low Tide' (to be shown in October). Would I be prepared to be interviewed about the Severn Railway Bridge disaster of 1960? Without asking too much, I agreed.

A few weeks later and another phone call from Belfast asking if Laureen, the young lady from Northern Ireland, and Natalie, a research assistant from Yorkshire, could meet me in Gloucester. "Of course," I said, "come round and have tea at my house." They did and in the course of the conversation, asked if I would meet them at Purton the following day to walk out to the wrecks as part of their research. Having been stuck in Severn mud twice before, I flatly refused. I felt my luck was running out and I didn't want to be the next victim claimed by this dangerous river.

From that point, all communications were carried out via emails, with the first one asking if I was available for filming on Sunday 23rd April. More followed with the final one saying be at Purton for 11:30am. Attached were instructions about the running schedule for me and the presenter, Dr Tori Herridge. Tori works for the Natural History Museum in London and has been the presenter of the series as well as appearing in 'Walking Through Time' for Channel 4.

Tern TV insists that their story line focuses on objects found beneath the water when the tide goes out, not objects sat in a museum, thus their keenness to film the two wrecked tanker barges off Purton. It was on the evening of 25th October 1960, when in thick fog the *Arkendale H* and *Wastdale H* came together off the Old Dock at Sharpness and in the strong tide, were swept upriver into the Severn Railway Bridge. Two spans dropped onto the barges, across their cargo tanks resulting in an explosion, which set the river ablaze. That night five crewmen were killed and three men were saved, including the two skippers.

Reading one of the emails started me thinking that they were planning to walk out to the wrecks to film. I asked for clarification and was told that yes,



The wrecks of the Arkendale H and Wastdale H on the sand.

we would be walking out and that Fred Larkham would be our guide. I have known Fred since I was 16 years old and trust his knowledge of the Severn; indeed it is he who owns the two wrecked barges. I rang Fred and he assured me he knew the best walking route out from the shore to the wrecks, albeit still through that horrible mud.

Before leaving home, I searched for an old pair of wellingtons, preferably of a smaller shoe size as when your foot is stuck in the mud, you don't want your foot coming out of the boot! Sunday the 23rd looked as though it was going to be a hot day so no heavy coats were required; indeed, the film crew were in shorts. For the filming, quite a large crew assembled at Purton, not all though, going out to the wrecks. I was introduced to Tori and another presenter, Oliver Hutchinson, then listened to a briefing by the director, including words of advice by Fred, who advised that we were to be off the sands by 3:30pm.

Each of us going out to the wrecks was given a shiny, new broom handle, a much needed simple piece of kit to steady us on the sticky and slippery mud. I was told to walk with Tori and talk about that horrific night of over fifty years ago. As we walked along the Severn bank towards where we would step onto the mud, I must admit to feeling apprehensive. I've done this before with the BBC and it wasn't pleasant! For Tori though, she was elated when a couple sat on a bench recognised her and shouted out her name.

What greeted me filled me with horror – a steep slope of wet mud to negotiate before reaching the bed of the river. I was determined not to make a fool of myself and thought of the two cameramen with their expensive cameras, the sound man with all of his kit, having to stay upright whilst I simply had my stick. I soon learnt a knack of how to walk on mud: short steps and put the heel down first.

It was a hard, torturous route to the wrecks, taking a long time to walk but the friendly banter from the film crew helped take the misery away. Tori and Ollie were two great characters, easy to talk to and quite soon I forgot that I was being filmed and recorded as we walked out towards the sandbanks. Maybe a few choice words

were voiced by me as I nearly came to grief once or twice.

Eventually, we arrived at the wrecks and Fred told us to be careful if we stepped aboard them due to the thin metal plates of the decks which were worn very thin and in holes similar to a colander. I was out at the wrecks seven years ago and I can see



A landscape of Severn mud.

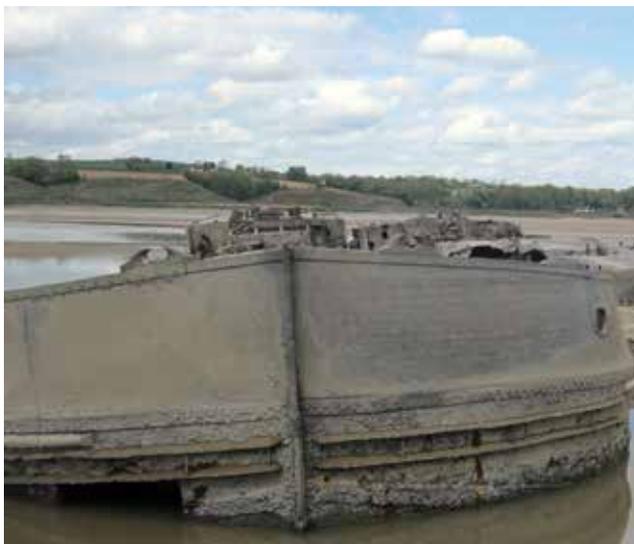
that they are ready to break apart with far more holes in the decking than before.

With the cameramen in position, we were ready to begin filming, take after take after take. Repeating my story many times, beginning with the story of what happened as they hit the bridge. The *Wastdale H* was on the inside of the two vessels and as she struck a column, she turned onto her side tipping the crew into the river. The *Arkendale H* on the outside was being pushed hard into the *Wastdale H* with the bridge shaking above them. Soon two spans dropped, resulting in the explosion. People on the shore could hear the men screaming in the water.

With the tide, the two vessels drifted upriver a little way and lay where they are today. To make sure they remained there, the army blew off the bow and stern of the *Wastdale H*. Both barges had been built to a high standard and it shows today. With over fifty years of tides, twice each day, sweeping over them, they don't look too bad, apart from the steelwork now getting very thin.

Drones are now an important piece of kit used by film crews in situations such as we were that day out on the sands alongside the two wrecks. To complete our filming, a state of the art drone flew out from the shore at Purton to film aerial shots of me, the two presenters and the wrecks. I was informed that this drone was new and full of high tech equipment which made it very expensive, a great loss if it had crashed into the river!

As the day wore on, I became wary of when the tide would sweep in as it is not forgiving



The Arkendale H.



From left: Chris Witts, Tori Herridge & Oliver Hutchinson.

and many a good person has been lost from being out on the sands on a rising tide. Shortly after 3pm, I said to Ollie that it would be best if we began walking back to the shore. He agreed and with the director's agreement, we set off at a leisurely pace. I am pleased to say I made it back in one piece having not fallen over once despite getting my feet stuck a few times. The others weren't far behind us and about thirty minutes later we could see the tide beginning to flow in.

Everyone was happy, especially when the boot of one vehicle was opened to display food for us to eat. We were all hungry and I forgot my diet and tucked into sandwiches, sausage rolls, Scotch eggs and other food that I shouldn't eat. Whilst I was eating this fine food, Fred told me that he was taking his barge *Riparian* from Sharpness Docks up to his berth at Newnham on Severn and asked if I would I like to go with him. You bet; not often do you get the chance to sail on the Severn between Sharpness and Gloucester.

We bade farewell to the film crew and set off in our cars to the Low Level Bridge at Sharpness Docks to join Fred's barge. Soon we had the engine started and with the



Fred Larkham on the wheel of Riparian.



The SARA lifeboat.

bridge opened, we slowly made our way down the dock and into the large sea lock. It was like old times for me, standing on the bow, throwing a rope to the lock keeper, just as I did as a lad with Harker's. We waited in the lock for thirty minutes until Fred's wife joined us, then locked down, out through the basin and out between the piers into the Severn. As we turned to starboard, we could see to the port of us an air sea rescue helicopter taking part in an exercise with a lifeboat from the SARA station at Sharpness.

Soon we were passing the Old Dock entrance to Sharpness;

passing us at speed was the lifeboat, pleased that their exercise was over. It felt surreal that only a few hours previously I had been walking on the sand beneath us and now we were going over close to where the wrecks lay. Ten minutes later, Fred took the revs off the engine and said we were too early to proceed on up the river. He had markers on the shore which told him the state of tide and with a craft of this size, he said, it is not wise to touch the bottom. Fred told me that all around us are wrecks of the wooden sailing ships that came to grief in years gone by.

We began to head to the centre of the river as we approached Fretherne where, if all goes to plan, there is deeper water from here to Newnham. Safe and sound, we were in deep water and headed on upriver to Fred's berth a little way downstream from the cliffs at Newnham on Severn. Ideally, Fred said, he wanted the stern downstream and to be lying alongside the stone wall of his berth. With his skill we managed to do as he wanted but as he pointed out to me, the tide had dropped a good six inches on the wall, yet out in the river the tide was still racing in! As Fred says, that is the Severn for you.

It had now gone 7pm and both of us were a little hungry to say the least. Fred very kindly invited me to share a superb roast lamb meal cooked by his wife Joy, followed by rhubarb pie and cream followed by chocolate cake, all washed down with a cold beer. My thanks to Joy for such a splendid meal.



South Pier, Sharpness.

Now, how to get back to Sharpness to retrieve three cars? Fred's daughter took us from Newnham to Gloucester and my wife Susan took us down to Sharpness. Although I didn't arrive home until 10:30pm, it was one of those days I will remember for a very long time.



Sharpness, Old Dock entrance.

'Lyn' debuts at Woody Bay



John Puddy attended a special event at the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway over the first weekend of October when the railway held the first operational day for the line's new loco, a replica of the Baldwin loco No.762, *Lyn*, that was one of the locos on the original line. There was a record turn out and the line has never carried so many passengers. John was there will a stand for ss *Freshspring*.



Tales of the sailing barge *Cambria*

Thanks to a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for its restoration, Britain's last commercial sailing vessel is back. Dick Durham recalls the *Cambria's* final days carrying cargo, nearly 50 years ago...

If there is a single moment in time which symbolises the end of British commercial sail and the beginning of its heritage, it is the day the Thames sailing barge *Cambria*, the last vessel to carry cargo under canvas alone, shipped an engine.

This was a motor, not to propel her from the bustling London docks where she loaded freight to the solitary east coast quays where she discharged it, but an engine to stop her sinking en route. That moment was in May 1970 when *Cambria's* skipper, Bob Roberts, purchased a petrol-powered motor-pump for his 91ft Thames sailing barge.

For, when deep-loaded, and despite a 63 year old man and an 18 year old youth – myself – pumping day and night, *Cambria* had started wetting freight. After a heavy weather passage, the dusty bulk loaded wheat or maize would be sucked out of her until the discharge nozzle hit a crusty bottom layer of hardened grain. This then had to be dug out of the barge with shovels,



Cambria restored and sailing in a 2011 Thames barge match.



Penny, Bob Roberts and Dick Durham aboard *Cambria* in 1970. Credit: Kentish Times



Bob Roberts at the wheel of *Cambria* in 1966. Credit: BBC



Bob and Dick discharging at Colchester in 1970.

Credit: Colchester Express

bagged and given away as pig feed rather than being ingested into the grain silos.

The grain merchants were unhappy in case any spoiled corn had accidentally mixed in with the good stuff and we were unhappy as the ruined part of the freight – six, sometimes eight tons of our 175 total – would come off our share. It was only a question of time before merchants would tell the agents they did not want any more freights coming to them in that 'bloody old museum piece'. The days of Britain's last sailing ship were numbered.

It was inevitable that the 60 year old timbers of a trading vessel – which, in her best years, had carried anything from dirty freights like timber, clay and coal to 'dry' freights such as sugar, wheat and barley to all ports between Goole in Lincolnshire and Exeter in Devon or across Channel to Rotterdam, Antwerp, Calais and Treport – would wear out.

By the time I came to join the barge as mate in 1969, her Board of Trade limits had come right down to those between Ipswich and Dover. The department ruled she was no longer seaworthy enough to go further afield.

But although the destinations were limited, the arcane silhouette of *Cambria's* rig was still throwing shadows in the London Docks: themselves in serious decline.

Well, I recall the 2am arrival at the Royal Docks entrance. I hopped up on the dockside to get a turn as Bob let the topsail sheet go. But the 237 acres of docked water formed by the ten miles of quayside that was the Royal Victoria, Royal Albert

and King George V dock complex was completely deserted. There was no-one to let us in!

"Nip along and wake up those lazy buggers," Bob ordered. I banged on the door of the PLA building and out shuffled duffle-coated reluctants to operate the lock gates.

Cambria technical details

Cambria, mule-rigged spritsail sailing barge

Built in 1906 at Greenhithe, Kent at a cost of £1,895.
 Owners and builders: F T Everard & Sons.
 LOA between perpendiculars: 91.1ft (with a 38ft boltsprit)
 Beam: 21.9ft
 Depth: 2ft 6ins (light) 7.3ft (loaded)
 Gross tonnage: 109 (79 net)
 Cargo capacity: 170 tons, up to 200 tons with stack
 Mainmast 49ft, topmast 43ft
 Mizzen 45ft, sprit 62ft
 Sail area: 5,000 Sq. ft.

"What craft are yer?" one asked.

"Cambria," I said proudly.

"What yer come here to load, cannon balls?" he said, and another spotting *Cambria's* lofty masts added: "Where's Nelson, down the cabin?"

But the rueful Cockney humour ended when it came to loading from the ship. A sailing vessel meant masts. Masts meant we couldn't get past the ship's mooring warps to sit between her and the quayside and thus be loaded by the tall Stothert & Pitt dock cranes. Instead, we had to raft up alongside the ship's off side, which in turn meant the stevedores had to rig up the ship's own derricks in order to drop the sacks into our hold. This entailed extra time and more work. We were not popular.

Once, in the Tilbury Dock, I recall a mouthy ship worker voicing personal comments about first of all the 'effing old galleon' and then her decrepit old captain. "Where was his parrot? Probably died of starvation." Bob walked calmly across the deck and started scaling the rope ladder up the ship's side. The ship worker ran away.

And yet, rather like a son criticising his father, disparaging remarks about the *Cambria* were OK if kept in the family. Dockers did not take kindly to 'outsiders' panning their irritant.

Once, when loading out of a German ship, two officers were discussing the barge's antiquated appearance. One said to the other: "If that is all England had, how come she won the war?" To which a docker, sweating in *Cambria's* hold below, instantly looked up and replied: "If that's all we had, how come you lost it?"

Perhaps nowhere was *Cambria's* stem rubbed more into the 20th century than at the Tilbury Grain Silo. Here, with a cacophony of bells and buzzers and men 40 feet above us wearing industrial helmets and ear muffs pushing buttons on hand-held remote control units, a vast sewer-sized pipe was aimed at *Cambria's* hold and 45 tons of grain shot out in 10 minutes listing the barge alarmingly.

I recall loading maize there one night and seeing black bilge water spilling out onto the white, dusty corn as the barge



Dick Durham (far left) tallying in a freight.



Cambria becalmed.

heeled over. Twenty-five minutes later we were loaded with 150 tons of maize before the dust had settled. It took two days to discharge her at the sleepy mill at Fingringhoe off the River Colne in Essex.

In 1970, she carried her last freight, 100 tons of cattle feed from Tilbury Dock to Ipswich.

Become a Cambria volunteer

Cambria was never really forgotten by the Thames maritime community, and over the years could be viewed as an exhibit in London's St Katherine's dock and at the Dolphin yard barge museum in Kent. However, the vessel's condition deteriorated greatly during this time, with few resources available for repair.

Full restoration to seaworthiness finally became possible, thanks to a £990,000



Cambria restored and racing in a Thames barge match in 2011.



Cambria's replacement – the new container port of London Gateway, just west of Canvey Island.

Heritage Lottery Grant awarded to the Cambria Trust in 2006, and the vessel was brought back to life in Faversham under the supervision of master shipwright Tim Goldsack.

Cambria was relaunched in 2011 and now has a range of uses: taking part in barge races, providing a venue for events, and offering sail training sessions and private charters. The Trust is seeking volunteers to help maintain and operate the historic vessel, and readers are invited to get in touch via www.cambriatrust.org.uk.

• This article first appeared in the *Nautilus Telegraph* to whom we are grateful for permission to reproduce it here.

Man wanted for Lighthouse work *Part 2*

Phil Tarry

The Smalls was equipped with RACON. It sent out an electronic bleep and registered the return bleep on a meter, the more the needle moved, the closer the ship. The fog signal was to fire a single explosive shot every five minutes. On one occasion we were getting low on supplies due to adverse weather and rough seas. After being notified, we were given permission to change our 'character' to one shot every now and then. On one particularly foggy night, when I was on watch, I fired a shot off and heard a ships horn in response, I carried out the procedure and ran up the flag indicating that 'you are running into danger' and fired off a second shot. I was covered in burning material – the wind had blown the flag against the Fogging Jib and I had blown up the flag. Think of the paperwork!

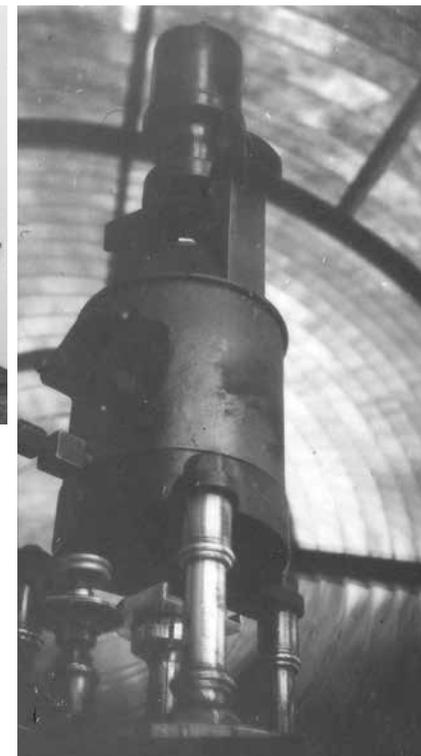
In a south-westerly gale, the seas could be really rough, and several times we had waves crashing over the top of the lighthouse and were able to get fish and small stones off the roof. You could be sitting in the living room with all windows battened down when you would notice that the mugs hanging on the hooks would start to sway slightly. Next there would be a rushing sound including the popping of the ears on occasions, then everywhere went a strange shade of green as the wave would ascend the tower. The first time this occurred it was most frightening. The phenomenon was



Smalls – the old legs of the original lighthouse.



Dog steps leading to the door; the door is twenty feet up the tower.



The main oil light on Smalls (believed to be 150mm) inside the lens.



A Keeper servicing the exploding fog jib on Smalls.



Smalls – looking down from the gallery.

caused because the lighthouse was on the end of a subsurface reef. On one side there was an undersea ridge with a fast tidal race, on the other side, the sea dropped to 30 fathoms plus. To the south-west, the next point of land was South America. The swell had a long distance to build up. The lighthouse had been there for well over 100 years. It was dry built with no mortar, each stone being cut and jiggled in such a way that it was interlocked with its neighbours, and had rope mats inserted at different levels to accommodate the sway. It was said that the top of the tower could withstand a sway of 20 degrees. We never found out!

Life on The Smalls was always enjoyable. Days off could be spent on the small patch of rock outside – tide dependant. If you went for a swim, you had to be tied onto the bollards on the Landing, to avoid be swept away. The Smalls had a colony of seals who would always come and see you if you were in the water. It was also normal that if you were outside, an eye was kept on the sea state. On one occasion when we were out, the sea was flat calm. Suddenly someone saw a wave coming which rose as it approached. We managed to get into the tower before the waves hit; waves often come in threes. The waves had developed due to a ship passing several miles away. Our diet in those days was sustained by catching crabs in the water in the 'Cut' by the Landing Stage. Alternative forms of fishing were also carried out either by using a kite, or setting off a charge in the water which stunned the fish, so that you could scoop up what you wanted, and after a few seconds, the other fish would gather their senses and swim away. There are many tales to tell about The Smalls, but they are for another day!



The lighthouse on Skokholm Island in the 1970s.

I spent the best part of 12 months on The Smalls using the two months on and one month off pattern. During the last few months, mechanics arrived to start updating the place. With all of the noise we were switched to Month about.

I was then transferred to Skokholm Lighthouse, close to the entrance to Milford Haven. This was a prize station, a fairly large island with visitors stopping during the summer. Skokholm was and still is a bird sanctuary. It is famous for the Manx Shearwaters, peculiar looking birds, which spend much of their time at sea, and have their legs right aft. They are ungainly birds on land and used to frequent rabbit holes. Because we were on a famous bird island, the light on Skokholm was a red light, as the birds would not be blinded nor attracted to the normal white light. The lighthouse was situated on the south-west tip of the island whilst the landing was a good mile away in a natural inlet. We had a dumper truck to transfer stores. We also had a surfaced helipad – how times had changed. There were thousands of rabbits on the island; these augmented the menu at times. Air rifles were used. We became expert at skinning them, and rabbit stew became a favourite. Even now, when I have rabbit, the years roll back. Talking about culinary delights, have you ever tried cooking with seagull eggs? It is said that you can make a beautiful sponge cake with them although they do taste a bit fishy! Also you could boil them, but the yoke would be done long before the white.

The lighthouse was a palace after the Smalls, with separate bedrooms, proper living room and kitchen; again there was a separate engine room and Fog Signalling room. There were also outside workshops and a garage for the dumper.



A postcard of Skokholm Island.

With visitors coming daily during the summer, or stopping at the bird observatory, there were often people around; sometimes there were chances to show visitors around the lighthouse. As it was located at the entrance to Milford Haven, there was a great deal of shipping to look out for as well.

As with all lighthouses, we used to monitor the 2182 emergency radio frequency. You could listen to incidents as they occurred, and whilst on watch, kept an eye out to sea in order to look out for anything untoward. In those days, many smaller craft did not have radios fitted and relied on flares in case of trouble.

I finished my time in the lighthouse service in 1972. Automation was coming in, and lightships were being replaced by LANBYs, which were large automatic buoys with live aboard accommodation for the mechanics who looked after them. The times they were a changing. The Smalls was automated and had a large lid put on top so that helicopters could drop material and staff on the very top. I did one crew relief off the top – in those days the deck atop the lantern was no more than about 6ft in diameter, and it was scary to be at the end of a winch cable trying to make such a small landfall.

A few years ago, Alan Titchmarsh wrote a book called 'The last Lighthouse keeper'. The chapters were named after various lighthouses, and I can say quite categorically that I worked on several of his chapters.



The bird observatory on Skokholm Island.



Bristow Helicopters' Wessex at Skokholm – Crew changeover.



St Anne's, with kit for crew relief (note the air rifle for rabbit stew) en route to Skokholm. A Bristow Helicopters Wessex delivering a replacement generator.



Skomer Island from Skokholm.

STEAMSHIP FRESHSPRING CLOTHING

1/4 Zip Fleece Sweatshirt



£32.00 Size _____

Hoody



£28.00 Size _____

Polo Shirt



£17.00 Size _____

Soft Shell



£48.00 Size _____

Sweatshirt



£20.00 Size _____

Tee Shirt



£12.00 Size _____

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

All are embroidered with the Steamship Freshspring Society logo.

STEAMSHIP FRESHSPRING CLOTHING

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

ORDERING

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

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

Please make cheques payable to 'MJM Sports'.

ANY NOTES to MJM Sports:

Name

Address

 Post Code

Telephone

IF ORDERING BY POST, PLEASE SEND YOUR ORDER TO:

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

CARD PAYMENT

Visa

Mastercard

Card Number

Expiry Date

 / 2 0 CSC

Signature

Date

Freshspring Steam Beer!

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

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

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

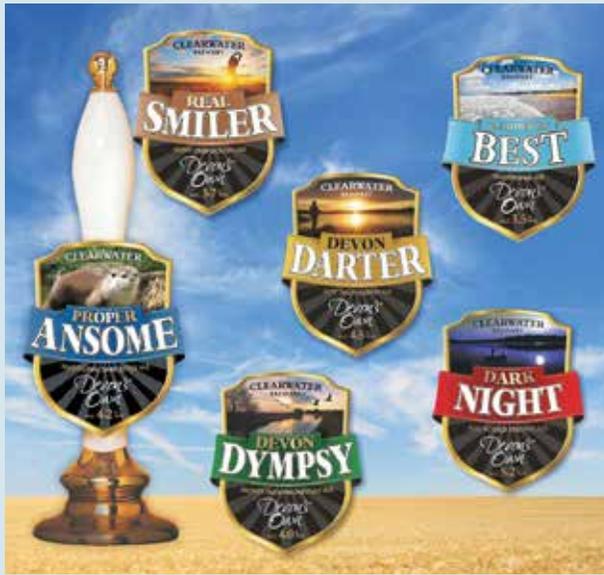
The beer is available direct from the brewery:

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

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

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

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



Leaving a legacy to the SS Freshspring Society

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

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

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

CODICIL

I (full name).....

of (full address).....

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

I give, free of Inheritance Tax, the sum of

£..... (.....pounds)

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

In all other respects I confirm my said Will.

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

Signed in the presence of:

First witness

Second Witness

Signature

Signature

Full name

Full name

Address

Address

Occupation

Occupation

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



FRESH