

STEAMSHIP

FRESHSPRING

SOCIETY

FRESHSPRING NEWS



No.15 Summer 2018

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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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 will be held and advertised locally.

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Editor's Ramblings. . . .

The Annual General Meeting has come and gone for this year and a successful day it was too. For me, it started with some time spent on board the ship, an important task was to measure the wheelhouse with the chairman in preparation for making new banners which will be used to protect the new structure but which can be drawn up easily to show the wheelhouse on working/open days. Once the scaffolding is down, which at the time of writing, is fairly imminent, we can get some good pictures of the ship with the new wheelhouse, after which the new banners can be designed and made.



While waiting for John to arrive, I had a good look around the new structure, and was joined on the bridge by our Patron, Earl Attlee, and we spent some time admiring the intricate wiring on the switch panel at the rear of the bridge. We were both impressed by the care which had obviously been taken with the wiring at a time of austerity just after World War 2. Everything was so neatly done. We then spent quite a lot of time discussing the museums we are involved with and are both very keen that historic items are kept working for younger generations to see, hear and smell. While Earl Attlee is deeply involved with military vehicles, my own involvement is with steam engines but the common ideal is that if these items are 'stuffed and mounted' in museums, visitors may be able to look at them but without the memories of how they actually worked, or even what they were for!



I know from my experience with my own steam roller that visitors are amazed just how quiet it is on a slow tickover – it is almost silent. That then starts the questions and conversations and the education of the public.

This is precisely what we are doing with the *Freshspring*. She is a unique survivor and one that will be able to educate people about steam power in her own unique way.

Brian Gooding

FRONT COVER:

A classic view of the ship on AGM day, with the new wheelhouse in place. The ship looks very smart indeed and is a credit to the volunteer team. Brian Gooding

From the Chair

Time has flown since the last Newsletter; there is so much to do and so much going on.

Remarkably, Hayley, our Education & Project Officer, has already been with us for three months. She came in to a very full diary and has coped brilliantly. She has dealt with the backlog of contacts and projects which are on-going and is now focussing on projects linked to our Heritage Lottery Funding. I have to say that Hayley has brought new energy into the Trust as our first employee. It means we can do so much more in education, a major objective of the Trust.

I am pleased to report that we have two new Patrons. Both have a prominent maritime background and are a valuable addition to our organisation. Rear Admiral Nigel Guild CB PhD DEng CEng FREng and Captain Kevin Slade, CMar, FNI, Chairman of The Merchant Navy Training Board. Both have already contributed significantly to the Trust and their involvement connects us to both the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy. Earl Attlee, who has been hugely supportive of the Trust remains as our Principal Patron.

Our links with The University of The West of England still flourishes. We now have 49 students working on projects relating to *SS Freshspring* as part of their degree courses. This connects many young people with maritime even though that was not initially a career choice for them.

We are being approached by schools now to engage with us; this is a great step forward as until recently we had to work to get them interested. Our school project is still in use, having been utilised in three schools in Barnstaple and now in Ashwater, a country Primary School.

The wheelhouse has now been fitted and this is the most significant change to the ship since we have owned her. Ashley Butler of Truro has made an exceptional job of restoring the structure, given the scant information he was provided with. The job was started in January and the finishing touches are being made as I write. We also need to thank Nick Sampson for doing a very good job in transporting the finished structure in one piece from Butler's yard. The vehicle they used was vast and required an escort. When they arrived at the ship, an enormous crane arrived along with a secondary crane to assist in turning the wheelhouse over. The professionalism of Nick's men was remarkable to behold. The new wheelhouse provides a very valuable space on the ship for education projects, meetings and as a visitor attraction. For a small ship, it is very large with a floor area of some 196 sq. ft. Our plans now are to find and reinstall missing equipment such as the two wheels and the telegraph. We provide more detail in the Newsletter to see if you can help us find suitable items.

The boatdeck is also progressing well with all the steelwork completed by Faron of Faron's Welding Services. We have the timber on board which came from Hull via Heaver Brothers Transport at a very economical price and incredibly quickly. Volunteers will now lay this deck in readiness for opening the ship later in June.

With opening quite imminent, we have to plan the setting up of the ship. I recently

attended the Maritime Heritage Trust conference and AGM in Portsmouth and part of the day was a tour of the ship and dockyard facilities. I was very impressed with how the ships are presented, particularly the 'Monitor M33' as she is laid out in a similar fashion to *SS Freshspring*. I was very impressed with the fact that the ship looked as though the crew had just walked off, even leaving dinner on the table. I believe we can learn from this and that we should try to create the same impression on *SS Freshspring*.

We have a long way to go with interpretation and this will be an on-going project for two years, but our aim is to provide the best experience we can for visitors. Hayley, of course, has friends in high places and we are gaining help from Portsmouth Historic Dockyard to get things right.

Our engineers continue to make progress in the depths of the engine room and it now looks splendid, I'd say Bristol Fashion, and it is an area we will be proud to show off to our visitors.

Reverting to my day at the Maritime Heritage Trust conference, Hannah Cunliffe, the Director of National Historic Ships UK, was one of the guest speakers and I was appalled to hear that a very valuable ship *MV Winchcombe* was scrapped as recently as 2009. It highlights just how vulnerable our heritage ships are. A big issue is the lack of berths available. Developers are gobbling up waterside properties which are prime for development. Ironically, the new owners of these houses do not want smelly ships outside their windows. This means there is less and less berthing for ships of all sizes. It is an appalling state of affairs for a maritime nation. It was even more galling to hear other speakers from European Countries stating how much support there is for maritime heritage. I have to say, we are very lucky indeed that Torridge District Council recognised the value of a heritage ship and provided us with a long term secure berth. Already people are coming to Bideford to see the ship and one Councillor has stated that *SS Freshspring* is one of the five must see local attractions in Bideford.

Our planned Concert unfortunately had to be cancelled at short notice due to snow. This was quite a blow as we had almost sold out. We hope that at some point during the year we can put the event back into the calendar.

The recent AGM was held in Bideford at The Old Custom House; it was a good venue with lunch provided. I was very pleased to see so many members turning up to what turned out to be quite a lively event with considerable input from members. Two new Trustees were formally appointed: Maria Bailey, who was co-opted during the year, and John Cooper, a member of our engineering team. Our esteemed Patron, Earl Attlee, said a few words at the opening of the AGM, highlighting the need for donations, ideally on a regular basis to keep the Trust afloat. After the formal business, an excellent talk was provided by Rear Admiral Nigel Guild who focussed on the functions of water carriers such as *SS Freshspring*. The ship was open in the morning and was very well attended. An important part of our AGM is to show members what progress has been made during the year.

I find the Union magazine, *Nautilus Telegraph*, a very informative read. It keeps

us up to date with the global maritime industry. An article in the latest magazine highlights that the demand for seafarers overall is increasing and studies show that there could be a global shortfall of some 150,000 marine officers by 2025, which is not far away. To cope with demand, the UK needs an annual intake of around 1,500 cadets given the increase in tonnage requiring British seafarers. The cruise ship industry is building some 96 new ships and no yard space is available in Europe until 2022. These vessels will, of course, require British seafarers. The UK is still not recruiting enough young people and the intake needs to be dramatically increased to meet the growth in the market. The offshore sector is also in need of up to 500 cadets per year given the growth in the industry. The fall out rate is also higher than it should be, adding significantly to the numbers of cadets required.

Current small increases in cadet numbers are very much as a result of the work of the Merchant Navy Training Board's (MNTB) Careers at Sea initiative, but we are not seeing anything like enough young people entering the industry. The Trust's aim is to support MNTB and liaise closely with them to support the valuable work being done. So many young people are missing out on very exciting careers as a result of a lack of knowledge.

Ship owners also need to do more to support cadets. Cadets could be placed on vessels where 95% speak a foreign language or where officers are Russian. A long term aim is that when *SS Freshspring* is operational, she will provide placements for cadets. We see this as a very important part of ship operation given our objectives. I hope also that our work in schools will create ideas for young people and, from an early age, make them think more about the future. Certainly our projects linked to Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Maths (STEAM) will focus young people on the core subjects required for their futures.

We continue to invest a considerable effort into fundraising and currently we are working towards a Lottery application to create resilience. If successful, this fund will help Trustees to strengthen the Trust and build capacity in preparation for a major application to return our ship to operation. We would like to build on the success already achieved as a result of employing Hayley by, hopefully, increasing her hours and bringing in another staff member. Life as Trustees is very demanding, particularly as we are an ambitious organisation. I have to sincerely thank our team for effectively moving the projects forwards with such momentum. This of course, progressively adds to the burden and we are looking to co-opt people at all levels with particular skills during the current year to cope. All Trustees were at the recent AGM and we all came away feeling very good about the Trust as we know we have a great and active membership. Without you all, we could not survive, so I thank you very much.

Do come along when you can to see the ship and to meet our swarthy crew, led by their unflappable leader, Scuttlebutt (alias Pete Gillett). You might even get a piece of Didi Mann's excellent cake, the fuel of all ship works!

John

Treasurer's Report

At our very well attended AGM, I presented our accounts for the year and these were unanimously adopted by the members.

Today – 30th April – we have £52,243.86 in the bank, of which £31,617.73 is 'Restricted' and useable only to meet our obligations under the 'Our Heritage' Lottery grant. The remaining £20,626.13 is to cover our overheads and any costs incurred as part of the OH project not covered by the grants received.

As has been well covered in previous reports, and was mentioned by both our Patron and Chairman at the AGM, a regular donation by our members of a small amount can make a huge difference to our ongoing financial position. I'm delighted to report that more and more members are setting up standing orders, and it is as a result of these regular donations that our 'free' balance remains at its current level. Thank you!

If you have not set up a standing order yet, but would like to do so, our bank details are:

Account name – SS Freshspring Society

Account number – 00023232

Sort code 40-52-40 – and use your initials and surname as the reference

Finally, a plea! By now you should have received a separate letter about the General Data Protection Regulations – GDPR. These regulations, which come into force on 25th May, require every organisation that holds personal data to obtain positive agreement/ consent from each person that their data can be held and used in the way described in the letter – in our case to keep you up to date with Society matters.

If you have NOT yet responded to this letter, PLEASE do so now!

Simon Tattersall – May 2018

Membership – and the changes we plan to introduce!

When the Society was formed in 2013, it was decided that our regular magazine must be of a very high quality. We wanted to reflect our aspirations to restore the ship to working order and, perhaps most importantly, to give the Society the right 'look and feel' to prospective funders and donors. Our progress to date suggests that we continue to achieve that aim.

High quality magazines are costly to produce. The membership fee – our only income – was set at a level that would enable us to produce such a publication with a little bit to spare because, at that stage, the Society had no significant overhead costs to cover.

That all changed in 2016 when, after some repairs, we brought the ship to Bideford. Suddenly we were faced with berthing fees, insurance, licences, ongoing maintenance costs and other overheads that today total about £15,000 a year.

As has been mentioned in a recent Newsletter, we commissioned a Fundraising Strategy and one of the recommendations in the resulting document was that we must 'up our game' in terms of raising income to cover general costs. It was also pointed out that our membership retention is good; however the fee level is, comparatively, very low. In fact, the income no longer covers the cost of producing the magazines, let alone a contribution to other overheads.

We have therefore decided to increase membership fees with effect from 1st July 2018. This is the first increase we have ever made. The new adult fee will be £25 and Concessions (retired, student, not working) will be £20. We also plan to introduce a Life Membership but our research on that is not complete. I hope this rise in fees will not put you off as we really do need you. We are able to offer much more now than when we started and intend to continue that trend with occasional member events and offers.

We also want to try and make Richard Ker's job as Membership Secretary a lot easier – particularly with the renewal process as this currently involves sending a reminder, and reminders to the reminder!

It is simply too costly to introduce Direct Debit payment but we have found a system where, over the 'phone, members can give Richard their credit/debit card details and he can use a card machine linked to either a smart 'phone or a computer to accept payment. He is keen to get cracking with this so, if he rings and asks you to renew this way, please do! It will save a lot of work!

Finally, as a member-led Charity, we are all in this together and so I hope you agree with the above and continue to support the Trust.

Simon Tattersall – Deputy Chairman

Scuttlebutt from the Quay

After what has felt like a long, cold, dark, wet winter, it's good to have our man Bill Slipper back on board. Bill has chipped, scraped and painted more of the ship than any other and, just as importantly, has organised the tea and coffee rota to perfection. His experience in the B&B trade has left him untarnished and he is probably our most affable Guide on open days.

During his absence, we started the process of taking down the temporary wheelhouse in eager anticipation of the re-construction of the original being undertaken by Butler's boatyard near Truro. The removal of the Monkey Island railings around the very top gave us the Health & Safety willies so we decided to err on the side of caution. Taking the view that treating adults like children is a good starting point for H&S, we purchased new safety harnesses and were then treated to the glorious sight of three grown men effectively in reins, like recalcitrant toddlers, a policy that continues to this day! All went surprisingly well and we continued the demolition of the 'shack' in remarkable time and without incident.

There is a touch of magic about our welders, who have now finished replacing the boatdeck steelwork. We very rarely actually saw them, but as if having Pixies on board, and leaving plenty of cake out for them, new structures sprang into being in our absence. The new boatdeck timber is now here and we're looking forward to laying it on the freshly painted steels.

By arrangement with the boatbuilders, two volunteers spent a couple of happy days at Penpol, near Truro, oiling the rebuilt wheelhouse inside and out. Dave parked his motorhome and his wife in the boatyard itself on a somewhat challenging slope and I was allowed to stay at my daughter's multi-student house in nearby Falmouth, under strict instructions to behave myself; never an easy matter. The wheelhouse was looking beautiful when we left, myself less so after a night crashing out in student accommodation!

There was much stirring of young blood in old veins in mid-April as we started to drool at the imminent arrival of the wheelhouse, by low-loader, from the wilds of Cornwall. We made frantic attempts to get everything ready on the day and then waited for the lorry. And waited, and waited and then waited a bit more. When it did turn up it was clear why we had to wait so long. Not only was it the biggest low-loader I have ever seen up close, the sort of thing you might use to shift intercontinental missiles about, they had also taken the chance for a bit of sight seeing and chosen the scenic coastal route. We then waited a bit more for the crane, and like buses, if you wait long enough, two turned up together, one big enough to lift intercontinental missiles. After a bit of aerial juggling to turn the wheelhouse up the right way, it was swung into position and has transformed the look of the ship.

Pete Gillett

The new wheelhouse

Clearly the most progress since the last newsletter has been the delivery and fitting of the new wheelhouse for the ship.

Monday 16th April saw frenetic activity on the quayside in Bideford when a low-loader and two cranes arrived, the former carrying the new wheelhouse, made by boatbuilders Butler & Co. of Truro. For the low-loader to reach the boatyard, it had to reverse half a mile down a narrow lane! The low-loader and cranes were supplied for a very good price by Nick Sampson Mechanical Engineering of Barnstaple, to whom we are grateful.

The timing of the delivery of the wheelhouse was very



Removing the old plywood cladding from the wheelhouse in preparation for the new one's arrival.



With the old plywood removed, the next step was to prepare the base for the new wheelhouse.

opportune as the Society held its AGM on the following Saturday and members were able to see the progress on the ship where the volunteer team has been busy in many areas.

This sequence of pictures are only a few taken before, during and after the arrival of the wheelhouse, and were taken variously by John Puddy, Jim Smith and the editor.



The new wheelhouse arrives on the lorry... .. and is lifted, ready for turning upright.



Landing the new wheelhouse in the car park, having turned it upright.



The teams from Freshspring and Butler & Co. pose with the wheelhouse before it is lifted from the car park, over the trees and onto the ship.



LEFT: Here it comes! The wheelhouse 'flies' over the trees towards its new home on the ship. Ropes are used to guide it and reduce the swing.

BELOW: On its final approach – the wheelhouse is gently lowered into position to begin a new era in the ship's future.



LEFT: It's landed! The team get to grips with bolting it down following some minor adjustments.

RIGHT: The inside of the wheelhouse on AGM Saturday. The glass for the windows was awaited as that delivered was the wrong size.



LEFT: The next big job after the wheelhouse is the rebuilding of the boatdeck. With new steelwork in place, the timber, under the tarpaulins, is ready to be fitted.

Good progress all round!

Beer and Salt Tablets!

(Or how to survive on a steam ship in the tropics)

John Richardson

The **SS Esso Durham** had started life in 1959 as a 36,000dwt tanker with the bridge amidships. In 1961, however, she suffered a massive explosion, which blew a hole in her side and the damage was so severe that the decision was taken to cut her in half and put in a new 40ft long section, which increased her deadweight to 40,929. At the same time, the bridge superstructure was removed and a new all aft accommodation block put on instead, in which guise I joined her as 5th engineer in April 1969.

By this time, she was already in a seriously run down condition and if I had thought that the automation problems on my previous ship (*SS Esso Edinburgh*) were bad, the *Durham* was even worse and it really needed three officers on watch down below to keep up with all the running around that was required. Unlike my other ships, the *Durham* was on a regular run from Rotterdam to Nigeria and we completed three round trips during the time I was aboard her – if we hadn't kept breaking down it would have been four!

Right from the start it was obvious that we were going to have a rough trip because I am fairly sure we 'blacked out' just after we had left Rotterdam and had to 'drop the pick' for an hour or so while we sorted ourselves out. I can't remember what the trouble was this time – feed pump tripped possibly but I certainly recall hearing the engineers' alarm for the first time. This was a very loud klaxon hooter situated in the passageway outside my cabin, whose purpose was summon all the off watch engineers and get them to go below if there was a serious problem. I know that I was in my bunk when it sounded off and I nearly jumped out of my skin. I reckon I got into my boilersuit and down to the engine room in less than a minute!

One of the things that plagued us on the *Durham* was a shortage of distilled water for the boilers. In theory, seeing as all the steam used fetches up in the condenser where it gets turned back into water again, the daily consumption should be nearly zero. However, all the oil burners in the boilers used steam to atomise the oil spray, which improved the combustion and this went straight up the funnel, possibly using as much as four tons a day. Add to this the steam used when soot blowing the boiler tubes, which was also lost up the flue, plus a multiplicity of small steam and water leaks from various joints and glands meant that the normal daily consumption on a turbine ship of this power would be between 10 and 12 tons per day. On the *Durham*, however, we seemed to suffer from so many disasters, such as condenser leaks, boiler tube failures and the like, that our daily consumption was usually between 15 and 20 tons and we were always playing catch up with the water supply. Although we had fresh water tanks which we could top up in port from the mains supply, we didn't trust the quality of the water in Nigeria, so our distillation plant also had to be able to produce some for our domestic use at times. We tried to avoid having to do this if

possible, because distilled water is awful to wash in – it feels like thin oil and however much you rinse off, you never seem to be able to get rid of the soap.

We had two evaporators on the *Durham*, each supposedly able to produce 15 tons per day but if they ever managed 10, we thought we were doing well. They were in continuous use – and required almost continuous attention! When you boil ordinary tap water (unless it came from a really soft water source) it causes scale to be formed, which will build up on the heating surfaces and reduce the efficiency – if you are boiling sea water to start with, this problem is very much worse. In an attempt to get round it, ships' evaporators make use of the principal that water boils at much lower temperatures when under vacuum conditions and at these lower temperatures, scale is much less likely to form. That was the theory, but in practice we had to remove the heating coils for de-scaling at least once a week, which was an unpleasant job taking several hours to complete.

After the initial black out, we had managed to get out to Bonny, in Nigeria, without too much else in the way of drama. Bonny itself is a town situated at the mouth of the Bonny River just a few miles to the east of where the mighty river Niger spreads out into a huge delta before meeting the Atlantic ocean. It grew up with the country's oil industry, until its importance eclipsed that of Port Harcourt, which is the older town and harbour, lying a bit further upstream.

We did not tie up immediately and had to anchor off for a few days while we waited for a berth. Whilst we were at anchor, we were greeted by quite a few of the local inhabitants, who paddled out to see us in a flotilla of outrigger canoes. These canoes were very slender, about 20 feet long and appeared to have been made by hollowing out a single large log of some very dark wood. They brought great stalks



The Esso Durham as built.

of bananas and various other fruits, which they traded for bars of soap, cans of Coca Cola (they didn't want beer) and anything else we cared to lower down to them – even a few pairs of discarded engine room boots left by some of the previous crew were greeted with much delight. At first they were all happy and smiling but after a few hours, by which time we had enough bananas to last us back to Rotterdam and our supplies of spare soap bars and Cokes had run out, they became rather surly and abusive. The only surprise to me was that they found anything at all to smile at, as they were obviously desperately poor and the climate, which I don't suppose varied much over the course of the year, was always hot and humid.

We were none too happy either, as the *Durham* was an unbearably hot ship – and not just in the engine room. Older vessels, which had been built in the days before air conditioning, were equipped with fans in the cabins and a whole forest of ventilators up on deck, each with a cowl that could be turned to face into wind to make the most of whatever cooling breezes there were. The *Durham* was of a later generation, which relied on the air conditioning to keep the accommodation cool and had none of these things. This was fine of course if the 'AC' was working but when it wasn't (and this was most of the time), then you were much worse off than if you had never had it in the first place. Our trouble was that there were so many other things going wrong, that we had our work cut out just to keep the ship running and the AC was well down on the priority list. It was a Freon gas system and due to the lack of maintenance, the gas was constantly leaking away until eventually we had used up all our spare gas cylinders, after which there was no more AC.

My cabin was on the starboard side, one deck below the boat deck and the bulkhead next to my bunk adjoined the boiler room – at times it was almost too hot to touch! This was nice and cosy in Rotterdam in winter but out here in West Africa it was hell. Neither was it possible to cool off in the shower – the domestic water plumbing had to travel all the way up through the engine and boiler rooms to get to the accommodation and by the time it reached my cabin, even the cold water was too hot to stand under. To get the temperature down enough to be bearable, it was necessary to run the cold tap for about five minutes first – with everyone else having to do the same; this was another reason why we were always short of water.

Of course, I was not the only one suffering and we each had our own ways of dealing with it. When off watch, cold beer in liberal quantities was one answer and the ship's consumption of this particular commodity must have been astronomical at this time. Some of the crew, who had cabins on the lower decks, with a porthole on the ship's side, had rigged up air scoops made from five gallon oil drums suitably cut down with tin snips so they fitted neatly into the porthole opening and faced forward to catch our 'wind of passage'. I couldn't do this because my porthole faced onto the deck and anything sticking out would present a hazard to people walking past in the dark. In the end, I found the only way to sleep was to take my mattress up onto the boat deck and lay it down in a quiet corner. Bonny was in a malarial area and we had been warned against doing this in case of getting a bite from an infected mosquito, but I was not the only one who preferred taking a chance with the 'mossies' to

sweating their guts out in their cabin. We were provided with Paludrine tablets, which we had been taking every day since we joined and I think that most of us believed this would give us at least a sporting chance of avoiding the dreaded malaria.

'Google' tells me that El Azizia in Libya holds the record for being the hottest place on earth, where the temperature once reached 136° (Fahrenheit) in the shade. On the *Durham* out in Bonny, our average engine room temperature was always the wrong side of 120° on the plates (at the control console) but in the boiler room, it was much higher, depending on where you were. At the bottom by the furnace fronts, where there were plenty of 'blowers', it was often 130° plus – this strangely enough, felt better than being in the engine room where the humidity was higher but at the top level beside the uptakes, it was often around 150° and reached 156... on one occasion! I know these figures are true because every watch I had to climb up three steep engine room ladders to reach the thermometer to record them for the engine room log and they were so exceptionally high that I have never forgotten them. Apart from the daily soot blowing ritual, when it was necessary to access the steam control valves, this top level was normally only visited when you had some washing to hang out to dry – our old fashioned boilersuit washing machine had no spin dryer, just a hand-cranked mangle but a wringing wet boilersuit could be hung over the rails here and be bone dry and stiff as a board in half an hour. Even that was not the hottest place where you could go: there was a walkway at this top level that actually passed between the two boiler uptakes, where, of course, there was a lot of radiated heat as well. The only reason to be there normally was to take flue gas samples for analysis to work out the boiler efficiency – needless to say this didn't happen very often on the *Durham*! Just for a change, I once hung the thermometer on the handrail there



The Esso Durham after rebuild.

instead, to see what it would get up to – it reached an astounding 168°, which remains the all time hottest place I experienced during my career at sea.

Metal at these temperatures will burn the skin which means that watches, bracelets and St Christopher chains, etc. cannot be worn and the hands had to be protected by gloves or a rag before grabbing a hand rail. The following example I think also helps to show how hot it was on the *Durham*. The engineers' alarm sounded off once when I was in my bunk and in my hurry to get down below, I didn't bother putting on any socks. I soon noticed that the tops of my feet were starting to get sore and when the panic was all over and I got back to my cabin, I found that each of my feet had two rows of red marks on top where they had been burnt by the brass lace eyelets of my boots!

How we stood it was basically by drinking fluids by the bucket full (preferably beer when off watch!) and by taking plenty of salt. There were large glass jars each containing 500 salt tablets on the mess room tables and we simply helped ourselves – I used to take 10 or 12 a day in the tropics, in addition to liberally dosing all the food on my plate from the salt cellar. There was simple way to determine how much you needed and that was to taste your own sweat – if you couldn't taste salt you were not getting enough and would soon succumb to heat exhaustion. These days, we are constantly being exhorted by various experts to cut down our salt intake and it makes me wonder how long these clever types would have lasted on the *Esso Durham* in Nigeria!

Why we stood it, when any self-respecting shop steward in this country would be leading his troops out of the factory if the temperature got much above 80°, may need some explanation. In the first place, we didn't have any shop stewards and having signed articles, we were under the Captain's orders so any refusal to work would be mutiny. Naturally, we could not be flogged anymore but it was still a serious offence and would no doubt mean we would never get another job at sea if we ever went on strike. The main reason, however, is nothing to do with rules and regulations but simply that we were all (literally) in the same boat – if we lost our engine and the ship was wrecked, then we would all be in equal peril. There was also a certain esprit de corps amongst the engineers, which meant that we stuck together and tried to make the best of it. Finally, this was a very well paid job, which we were unlikely to be able to match ashore.

Leaving Bonny, we hadn't gone very far before we had another black out and this time it took several hours before we could get re-started again, due to the fact that without the engine room fans, nobody could stay in the engine room for more than about 15 minutes at a stretch and there never seemed to be enough men available at any one time to do all the required starting and stopping of pumps and 'gennies', etc. As with the *Edinburgh*, the diesel emergency generator was far too small and could not be synchronised with the turbos, so having raised steam on the diesel, we deliberately had to black out again while the turbo was run up to speed and the breaker thrown in. Eventually, after a particularly heroic effort by about five of us,

we managed it, by which time we were all half dead. Having finally escaped from the hell hole for a 'blow', we simply collapsed on deck and baled water over our heads from a bucket with a rope to lower it down to sea level that someone had thoughtfully provided.

Although I can't remember exactly what happened where during my five months on the *Durham*, what does stick in the mind is that nearly all our troubles occurred when we were out in the tropics, rather than in more comfortable climes – this I suppose, being yet another fine example of Sod's law!

Typical of this was when we had a couple of boiler tube failures, following straight on from the last black out – as if it hadn't been hot enough anyway, we were now going to have to get inside the ruddy boilers! The failures were probably caused by our chronic water problems, which meant that we had been unable to keep the quality of the boiler water up to the usual standards. Unlike a Scotch boiler, where a tube failure will be immediately obvious and potentially very dangerous, in a water tube boiler, where the furnace volume is huge by comparison, steam from any leaking tube, even at pressures of 860psi, can go straight through and up the funnel without giving any visible sign. The only reason we knew we had a leak was when the 4th engineer on the 8 to 12 reported that the water consumption on his watch had rocketed up from the usual 2 or 3 tons, to around 12! By testing water samples from both boilers and seeing which one had lost the most treatment chemicals since the previous test, we were quickly able to establish which was the affected boiler and shut it down – thereby reducing our speed from around 16 knots to a measly 11.

Our water tube boilers basically consisted of a water drum at the bottom and a steam drum at the top (this is actually half full of water too), each about 20ft long, joined together by an enormous number of tubes, which also formed the roof and sides of the furnace. The water drum was only about 2ft in diameter internally, which meant it was an extremely tight squeeze to get in, and once inside, it was impossible to turn round, so if you went in head first, you had to come out feet first. The steam drum was about a foot bigger but was full of steam separators along the bottom, which had to be removed and passed back out one by one as you worked your way along into the drum. These 'Cyclone Separators' were a Babcock & Wilcox patent and were designed to help prevent water being carried over into the steam outlet pipe. When steaming hard, the mouth of each steam generating tube would be issuing a huge stream of steam bubbles into the drum and the froth formed might eventually build up enough to cause a 'carry over', of water into the steam pipe, in the same way that a bottle of fizzy drink may overflow if it has been shaken up before you open it.

It took about six hours before the furnace side had cooled down enough for us to climb in and have a look, but it was quite a bit longer before we could get inside the steam and water drums to find and plug the affected tube. Access to the furnace was provided by removing one of the burner assemblies, complete with the air register, which gave an opening around two feet in diameter through which to crawl. Once inside, I was aware immediately of the tremendous heat that was still radiating back

from the metal surfaces, but there was also a nice bit of natural draught coming through, which made it bearable.

The furnace was big enough to walk around in and in fact, you needed a step ladder to be able to reach up to inspect the roof. The floor was of refractory material and the sides and roof were formed of very closely spaced tubes – so close that they were called ‘water walls’. On the inboard side, the tubes were spaced more widely, to enable the furnace gases to pass through before they reached the superheater. After this, they continued onwards and upwards up through the economiser and eventually into the uptakes. These wider spaced tubes were called ‘screen’ tubes because they protected the superheater from the radiant heat of the burners and being exposed to the hot gases on all sides, were the most likely source of our problem. I looked around very carefully but was unable to see anything that looked like it might be a leak, but the 2nd, with his more practiced eye, spotted a slightly less soot blackened area up by the steam drum, which he guessed would be about the right spot.

It was about this time that I first made the acquaintance of ‘Board of Trade Lime Juice’. It is fairly well known that during the 18th century, the British Navy discovered the link between a lack of fresh fruit (especially citrus fruit) and the disease of scurvy, which had in the past times killed thousands of sailors on long voyages. Thereafter, they used to supply all their ships with lime juice, which the crew had to drink or be flogged. When we were fighting the Americans during their war of independence and they heard about this, we were for ever afterward known as ‘Limeys’.

What is less well known, is that lime juice was still required to be provided as an essential part of ships’ stores well through the 20th century. No doubt all my earlier ships had carried some as well but it was only on the *Durham* that I ever saw it actually being drunk. It was brown rather than green in colour and used to come in Winchester quart bottles – it was so concentrated that I am sure it would completely dissolve an old penny, never mind take the tarnish off! Our cook, however, who was very sympathetic to the torments we were enduring, had come up with a way of making a refreshing drink out of it. He would pour about a cupful of the stuff into a two gallon bucket of water and add a pound or so of sugar. After a good stir, this was then left in one of the chilled rooms to cool off for an hour or two. When this arrived down below, five or six of us could drink the lot in a few minutes! When the cook heard of the success of his concoction, these buckets of lime juice were provided for us every couple of hours during a work-up and were most welcome.

When the boiler had been drained down and the pressure was off, we could remove the manhole covers at the end of the steam and water drums, which speeded up the cooling down process. These manholes were oval and measured a meagre 15ins by 10ins, which would probably mean that at least half today’s adult population would be unable to get through them! This does indeed sound impossibly small, but by stretching one’s arms out straight in front of your head, the shoulders go through quite easily. Hips are a different matter, however, and anyone measuring much over 36ins in this area would probably get stuck. In those days I only weighed in at just over

ten stone, so I had no problems – which was probably why the 2nd suggested I had first go in the water drum!

Now we had an idea of the approximate location of the leak, I was given about 20 wooden bungs and told which tubes to try first – they were all near the far end of the drum at the top, so I had to wriggle my way down quite a way to reach them and then turn on my back so I could gently tap them into the tube ends above me. The next stage was for a man to crawl along into the steam drum, taking with him a fresh water hose with a tap on the end to fill the tubes I had plugged – needless to say, if he got any down the wrong tube, it would run straight through and pour out all over me! He would then proceed to fill all the plugged tubes – obviously, the one that did not stay filled was the one with the leak. Our first attempt was a failure, as they all held water, so now I had to remove the bungs and shift the search area. You can probably guess what happened next: being unable to get out of the way, every time I knocked out a bung, about a gallon of none too cool water cascaded out all over me!

The 2nd engineer, who we nicknamed ‘Batman’, was not a bad bloke, although a bit of a panic merchant and he was keeping an eye on me from the outside. He now enquired if I was OK to have another go. Upon receiving my somewhat reluctant affirmative, he suggested which lot to try next. Fortunately, we guessed right this time. Having found the offending tube, it was plugged with fine tapered steel plugs, well hammered in – the boiler pressure itself would also be holding them in, so there was really no possibility of their ever coming out on their own. For some reason, the



Another view of the Esso Durham.

2nd insisted on doing this part himself and I was more than happy to let him do so – having wriggled backwards down the drum again until I was able to stick my feet through the hole, he grabbed hold of my legs and gave me a good heave to help me out. Having been released from my cylindrical and claustrophobic prison, soaked to the skin and with a face as red as a beetroot, I was sent up topsides for a much needed ‘blow’ and a dry boilersuit.

Returning to the engine room some 20 minutes later, I was surprised to find ‘Batman’ running round like a headless chicken, exhorting everyone to hurry up and finish boxing the job up so we could get it going again. It transpired that the other boiler had also now sprung a leak and we had to get the newly repaired one on line as soon as possible, before we lost too much water. The poor chap had been going a bit thin on top before he joined the *Durham* but by the time we paid off, he needed a wig!

As soon as we had the manholes back on again, we started filling the boiler and the second a water level appeared in the gauge glass, the burning torch was stuck through the lighting up hole and the oil and steam atomizing turned on. When the burner ignited with the usual ‘woompf’, the air register was opened and the forced draught fan adjusted, until we could see through the periscope that the smoke had cleared. We raised steam in that boiler from nothing to 860psi in about 25 minutes, which, as it was a water tube boiler, appeared to do it no harm at all! So, having just completed one major work up, we were straight into the next one without a break and by the end of that we were all just about finished – oh the joys of steam ships!

New Members – welcome

Mr John Hill	<i>Exeter, Devon</i>
Mr Mike Blackman	<i>Barnstaple, Devon</i>
Mr Hamish Tailyour	<i>Plymouth, Devon</i>
Lt-Col Ewen Southby-Tailyour	<i>Ivybridge, Devon</i>
Mr Anthony Sharp	<i>Gunnislake, Cornwall</i>
Ms Betty Mead	<i>Sticklepath, Devon</i>
Ms Hayley Buscombe	<i>Kennford, Devon</i>
Mr Dave Jackson	<i>Bideford, Devon</i>
Mr Martin Wright	<i>Bradworthy, Devon</i>
Mr Jim Cuckoo	<i>Almondsbury, Bristol</i>
Mr Basil Brambleby	<i>Cuxton, Kent</i>
Mr Alan Taylor	<i>Payhembury, Devon</i>
Mr Andrew Dawson	<i>Sheringham, Norfolk</i>
Mr P F Peatey	<i>Ilfracombe, Devon</i>

Steam at the fair



The Northam May Fair, a prominent local event, was attended by our volunteers with steam rides for both children and adults provided by John’s trusty one-third scale Clayton & Shuttleworth engine. Our stand was very popular with local people as many have watched progress on *SS Freshspring* with interest.

On the day we raised over £100 which will go towards our sustainable wind and Photovoltaic power supply.

It was very good to see that, locally, the ship is now very much accepted as something very special in the area and of interest to a large number of people. The refitting of the ship’s wheelhouse has added very considerably to local interest. We thank our volunteers for making the day so successful.



Thursday 10th May saw a very successful visit from 25 members of the Vintage Motorcycle Club, Touring Section. The group came from all across the country. JP

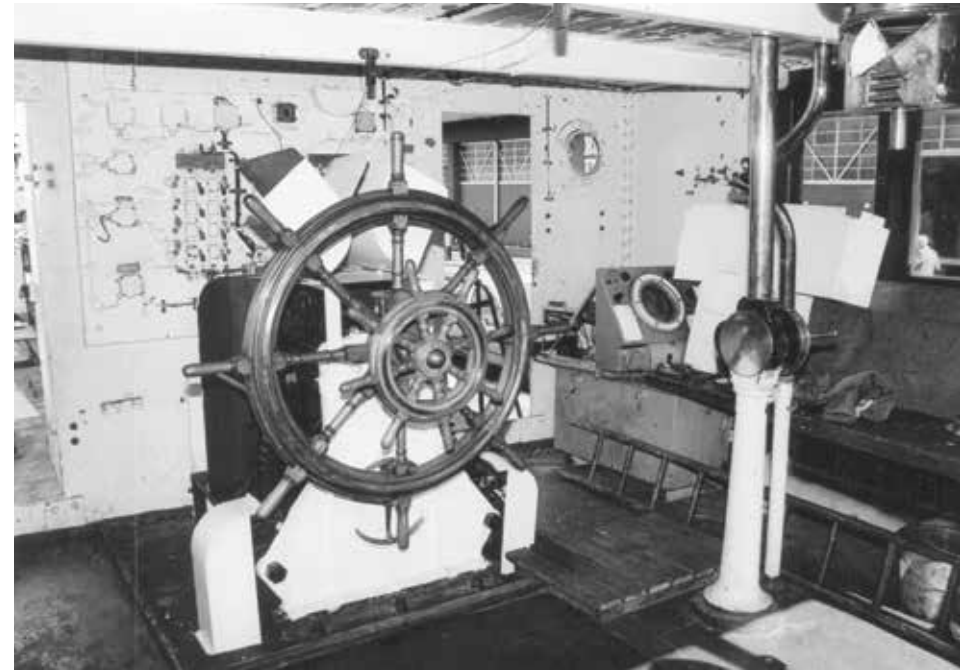
Appeal for Wheels & Telegraph

Now we have the new wheelhouse in place, we are on the lookout for some of the missing equipment. In particular, we need suitable wheels and a telegraph for the ship.

We estimate that the large wheel is 54ins OA, 2in. bore and the small wheel 26ins OA, 1¼in. bore. The black and white photo attached is from Richard Clammer and was taken inside the wheelhouse around 1985.

The colour photos are of a very similar telegraph to the one we are looking for. These are of a telegraph from the MV Farringay at the Appledore Maritime Museum. This has the correct number of positions (9) though instead of 'STAND BY' ours would read 'FINISHED WITH ENGINES'.

If anyone can help, please contact either Pete Gillett or John Puddy on the telephone numbers on page 2 of this newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you.



A look back to *Freshspring's* days in Bristol, courtesy of Neil Baker.

A life on the Ocean Wave

Many youngsters are faced with difficult choices to make regarding career choices. When I left school at 17 years of age, I had no real idea what I wanted to do. Careers advice given in school was singularly unhelpful and I did not feel that university was for me. Having tried various jobs, I quickly came to realise that if I wanted a stable and successful career, it was important to obtain a qualification.

Having been brought up in the city of Cardiff, I had at various stages seen and visited (as we were able to in those far off days before the ISPS or to give it its full title International Ship & Port Security) various ships in Cardiff Docks with my father. I was most impressed on one vessel we visited when the Captain offered us a cup of tea.

He pressed a buzzer by his desk and a smartly dressed steward arrived to serve us. It was also the first time that I had eaten salami sandwiches! I thought, how wonderful to have a job like that Captain with a Steward at my beck and call to look after me so well.

Accordingly, I wrote to various shipping companies to find out about a career at sea – no emails in those days. Many companies replied with glossy brochures showing smartly dressed young cadets on the bridges of ships in such far off places as Valparaiso, Vera Cruz and Vanuatu.

Studying these brochures, it became apparent that this was the job for me. Living in Cardiff, with my family's help, we applied for a Cadetship with Sir William



The author's first ship, the Atlantic City, which he joined in the USA. The ship was registered in Bideford.



Not all jobs involved being smartly dressed on the bridge!

Reardon Smith of Cardiff. Due to the Reardon Smith family connections, all their ships were registered in Bideford.

Following an interview at their Head Office, Devonshire House, Greyfriars Road, Cardiff, I was offered a four year apprenticeship. We took the papers home and got our next door neighbour to act as witness to my signing my indentures. Obviously, before going to sea, pre-sea training was required for safety purposes. In July 1971, I attended a four week induction course at the Reardon Smith Nautical College where we were taught the basics of sea survival. Times were certainly different in those days. We were taken out into the Bristol Channel wearing lifejackets and then thrown overboard from the training vessel *Margherita*. She steamed off a short way and launched a liferaft which we had to swim to and board. Nowadays due to Health &



Christmas Day 1972 – the Captain (top right) was from Bideford.



Loading cotton bales in Mexico.

Safety regulations, this training is carried out in swimming pools!

We also had to go down to the Department of Trade offices in Bute Street, Cardiff for eyesight tests including a lantern test for colour blindness. We were then proudly issued with British Discharge Books. These books were used to record all the voyages we would make. This was necessary for proving the amount of time we had spent at sea when going up for our various examinations.

I remember joining my first vessel, the *Atlantic City* in Savannah, Georgia, USA. We all flew out on an Air India Jumbo Jet from Heathrow – again a new and exciting experience for a young lad of 17. My pay was the princely sum of £40 per month. Our apprenticeship was made up of time at sea interspersed with two six



Geest Banana Boat in the West Indies.

month spells in Nautical College. After three years of my cadetship, I was promoted to uncertificated Third Officer.

By the end of my cadetship, I had passed my Foreign Going Second Mate's Certificate. The only part of the examination that presented problems was the signals examination. We had to read semaphore; I am convinced that the examiner was a bit arthritic in the elbows, making it rather difficult to work out what letters he was sending!

I fancied a change of employment and had always admired the look of the fast sleek white Geest banana boats that ran out of Barry on a regular four week round voyage, sailing to and from the West Indies. I phoned Geest and was told that they had a vacancy for a Third Officer for one voyage and could I start next week. Going there was like changing from driving an articulated lorry to a sports car. The conditions were fantastic, since in addition to carrying bananas, the ships also carried 12 passengers. We sailed from Barry and spent around eight days travelling out to the West Indies. We then spent around eight days visiting Barbados, Grenada, St Lucia, St Vincent, Dominica and St Kitts before heading back to Barry. The one trip turned into working for Geest for over 28 years. During this period, I obtained my Chief Officer's and Master's certificates and was slowly promoted to Master. In 1993, Geest built two new vessels that proved to be too large for the West Indian trade, so we went on worldwide trading, going to such places as Ecuador, Panama, Guatemala, the United States, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, England and Northern Europe. I also was able to take my wife and children with me during the school holidays.

In 2004, there was a change of management, which resulted in my being made



View aft from the bridge of a large container ship.



Climbing down the ladder to my waiting "taxi".

redundant. However, I immediately found employment as a North Sea Pilot. This involved an examination at Trinity House to obtain the necessary Deep Sea Pilot's licence. I am still piloting vessels, ranging from 400 metre long containers ships, to car carriers, passenger ships, tankers and bulk carriers. I work on average 15 days every month and sail with a variety of crew.

On one voyage I might have Indian curries, another voyage it might be Chinese or Korean food. I am fortunate that I have a strong stomach and like all foods. I am also privileged to have sailed with many different nationalities who are by and large unsung heroes, putting up with long times away from their families. As an island nation, it is staggering how much of what we require is brought in by ship. I have sailed in good weather and also in hurricane conditions – on good ships and on not so good ships.

I can truly relate to the words of the Psalm which says
 "Some went down to the sea in ships,
 doing business on the great waters;
 They saw the deeds of the Lord, his
 wondrous works in the deep.
 For he commanded and raised the stormy
 wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea,
 They mounted up to heaven, they went
 down to the depths;
 Their courage melted away in their evil
 plight;
 they reeled and staggered like drunken men
 and were at their wits end..."

Many school friends who went to University and obtained degrees in various ologies, found it difficult to get work. I have never been without work. Times have certainly changed since I went to sea; the ships have got bigger and the number of crew members has been dramatically reduced. Technology has made incredible advances, though I do believe that in many respects, the advent of the computer has increased the workload on board.

I have no regrets about choosing a life at sea, and can recommend it to anyone who wants to see the world and doesn't mind hard work. Various companies such as Trinity House are offering cadetships which can lead to a long and rewarding career.

Should you require further information on careers at sea, if you contact Trinity House in London, I am sure that they will be delighted to provide you with information.

Captain Andrew Ward
Master Mariner
Trinity House Licensed Deep Sea Pilot



On the bridge.



A look back to March this year with some inclement weather!
Photo: Stephen Attenborough

'The Ladies'

Capt David Gannicliff is a long standing member and supporter of the Steamship Freshspring Society and he has written a lovely book about his life which makes compelling reading, sometimes funny, sometimes sad, but certainly a very interesting account of a life well lived.

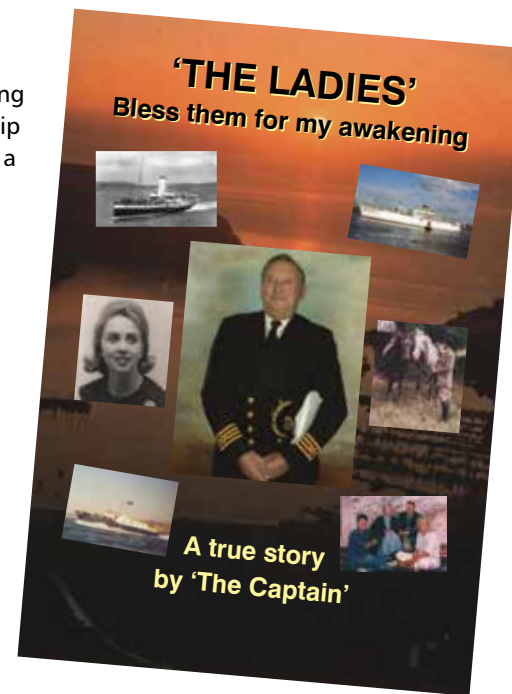
The back cover notes:

A varied and enchanted life told by a man who has been a Sea Captain, Explosives Expert, owner of a Naturist Club and eventually a trained Psychic.

Married twice and with four children, he has been all over the world and met many interesting and diverse characters.

A life related in detail, with humour, interspersed with danger and tragedy.

A born survivor's story that will keep you gripped from beginning to end.



The book has been designed and edited by Society Trustee and Newsletter Editor, Brian Gooding, who has worked closely with David to bring this book to life.

David has generously offered to give 10% of the profits from sales to the Steamship Freshspring Society, for which we are very grateful.



Copies are available direct from David at £6.95, or via www.vintagespirit.co.uk/shop, or by post from Steam Heritage Publishing Ltd, Unit 1, Alfold Business Centre, Loxwood Road, Alfold, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 8HP. Price £7.95 inc. UK p&p. Cheques payable to Steam Heritage Publishing Ltd. You may also order by phone: 01403 588 360.



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 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 are available and they are 'bottle conditioned' which means some of the active ingredients are 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 are free, but for everywhere else in the country, there will be a £12 delivery charge and your order 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 Steamship 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
Signature

Second Witness
Signature

.....
Full name

.....
Full name

.....
Address

.....
Address

.....
Occupation

.....
Occupation

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

Freshspring's Sponsors

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



RT Marke
Clearwater Brewery
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Northam Town Council
The Bideford Bridge Trust
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