STEAMSHIP

FRESHSPRING

TRUST

MAGAZINE

No.27 Summer 2021

Preserving the past to inspire knowledge for the future

The **Steamship Freshspring Trust** is a registered charity, No.1151907.

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

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

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

Trust Management

Chairman: John Puddy * john.puddy@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Vice Chairman: Simon Tattersall * simon.tattersall@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Secretary: Stephen Attenborough * stephen.attenborough@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Treasurer: Simon Tattersall * simon.tattersall@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Membership: Richard Ker * membership@ssfreshspring.co.uk 01237 422 758
Marketing/Publicity: vacant
Learning & Education: Huw Davies * huw.davies@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Conservation Manager:
Stephen Attenborough * stephen.attenborough@ssfreshspring.co.uk
IT, Website and Social Media Networking
Anne Budd * anne.budd@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Fundraising & Forward Planning
Annemaire Shillito *
John Cooper *
Brian Gooding *
Project Manager: Charlotte Squire charlotte.squire@ssfreshspring.co.uk
Technical Director:
Ken Thompson CEng, CMarEng, FIMarEst

* Trustee

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

Website: www.ssfreshspring.co.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SSFreshspringTrust?fref=ts

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

Ship Visits & Volunteering on the ship: The ship is currently closed to the public due to Coronavirus. However, members may visit by prior appointment, usually on a Wednesday or a Sunday. Please call Peter Gillett, our Local Ship Manager, on 01237 237 183 (email: peter.gillett@ssfreshspring.co.uk) if you are interested in volunteering.

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

Design & Production by Steam Heritage Publishing Ltd.

FRONT COVER: *High and Dry!* SS Freshspring *on blocks in Appledore Shipyard. At this point, the hull was being repainted.* **John Puddy**

Editor's Ramblings. . . .

Welcome to the Summer 2021 magazine.

Having been involved with *Freshspring* since the beginning, it is fantastic to see the progress being made in a relatively short time. Considering the Trust is still fairly young, the progress made, especially since she moved to Bideford about five years ago, has been incredible. Many will remember that rusty ship with a plywood shuttering bridge that was towed into the town, and now she is currently in Appledore Shipyard to emerge looking like a new ship with a fresh coat of paint and her new mast. The teams that work both on and off the ship really are brilliant and so supportive. Well done, all of you.

For various reasons, I have taken a bit of a back seat over the past few months, which included standing down as a trustee. This was partly because of work pressures and the need to have some 'down time' but Simon and John have persuaded me to come back onto the team which I am pleased to do after quite a bit of thought.

Being 200 miles away, I haven't seen the ship for over a year but I can see progress has continued apace despite the restrictions of the pandemic but I am looking forward to coming down again before too long to cause havoc and then disappear back east again. John knows what I mean!

Talking to John this morning (mid-May) we both felt that, in a way, we have lost a year of our lives through not being able to enjoy our 'steaming' hobby – John with his steamboat and me with my steam roller. However, we have both had a chance to steam again – the boat and roller, and not ourselves – and feel much better for it. There is something unique about a steam engine – the sounds and smells are very evocative, with so much power delivered so quietly too. A marine engine is a large version of what we both' play' with, so it will be even more evocative. We are now looking forward to getting *Freshspring* back into steam. There is a lot to do, of course, but it will happen there is no doubt about that.

I didn't realise how much I had missed my regular dose of steam until two days ago (see article later in this magazine) but the bug is back and has bitten hard; I can't wait for the next dose. I suppose I am a steam addict; sadly it is an incurable disease, so there is little hope of recovery.

I hope you are coming out of lockdown in good form and are looking forward to enjoying the return of some normality. I can't wait!

Brian Gooding

From the Chair

Those involved in the Freshspring Trust never encounter a dull moment. Even during lockdown our amazing team have been active, from raising funds to writing articles to preserving our precious ship and even bringing our website up to date. The outcome, as always, is that we move imperceptibly forward. Even as I write, our ship is laying in a covered dry dock at Appledore.

It all started with Harland & Wolff buying the yard last year. I thought I would just roll up to see if I could meet the Manager to discuss possibly docking the ship at some point. It worked, and I met Dave Price, The Technical Lead at the yard, and found him to be most accommodating. This was somewhat of a surprise as the previous occupants were not interested in small fry such as ourselves. My reason for meeting was to discuss possibilities of docking the ship NEXT YEAR. However, shortly after starting our discussions, Dave said "Why not this year?" I was rather taken aback but as a result of the skills of our funding team and our excellent Treasurer Simon, we had been putting funds aside for just such an event, albeit not planned for this year. There and then, I was able to say that we would go for this option. By the next spring tides, SS *Freshspring* was sailing down river to the yard, towed by *Severn Sea* owned by KML. Once again, this remarkable company has offer towage at no cost to the Trust. Moving a ship is not just a simple operation, we had to get a tow survey, prepare the ship for sea, sort out insurance, potential pilotage, check when she would float out of the berth, have pumps at the ready. Ironically, we can see the yard from our berth but rules is rules!

On the due day, *Severn Sea* was returning from Great Yarmouth and so we delayed for 24 hours. The next day, we waited for both the tide and *Severn Sea*, both of which appeared at exactly the right time, hitched *Freshspring* up and then set off. A small number of volunteers was permitted to travel down river and to arrange this Pete put names in a hat and the winners got the trip. There was quite a crowd on the quay to see *Freshspring* depart on her first passage since 2016. I went directly to the yard to see the ship arrive. It was strange seeing our tiny ship entering the dock along with the tug. The berthing was managed in a truly professional manner as per the norm with KML. *Severn Sea* and our volunteers disappeared back to Bideford and *Freshspring* was positioned to settle on the blocks as the tide receded. The precision of the yard team was superb with the ship sitting exactly where she should.

Our Surveyor, Geoff Wilson arrived the next day and spent the day measuring hull thicknesses and generally looking around the ship. Surveyors usually smile when things are wrong but not Geoff, he was smiling because the ship was in such good condition. After five years, the Jotun paint was intact and shining brightly along the bottom plates. Jotun, of course are a Trust supporter and we are so grateful for that.

Last year Trinity House provided a grant to make new rigging for the mast and we have had trial fittings using the massive yard crane. It all appears so easy when you have the kit. Our aim is for SS *Freshspring* to leave the yard looking virtually like new. Our decks will have been pressure blasted and then painted by our team, the hull will be cleaned off and painted by the professionals and Dave Price and Mark Green have made new steelwork parts as required to a second to none standard. The skills retained at the Appledore yard are as good as they ever were and luckily for us we are able to make use of them.

I'll provide a final report on our docking next time but unusually for a ship, it is so far so good!

We are still benefiting from the Lottery Recovery Fund, which is supporting our Viability Study. This is now almost complete and it highlights very interesting operational possibilities. Our good friends from other ships such as *Daniel Adamson*, *Shieldhall*, *Kingswear Castle*, *Maid of the Loch* and others have been hugely supportive in sharing information to help us to understand the implications of operating steamships. Once the study is complete, we will much better understand how *Freshspring* can operate successfully and where.

Our 360 degree and Virtual Reality projects are really coming together with much support from BMT Global and The University of The West of England, which has provided us with two excellent students to carry out research and design. A range of funders have supported this project which will be a valuable asset for schools and also the public. Less abled people will also be able to tour the ship from the deck, making her much more accessible.

We are looking forward to being released from the Covid period and to welcoming visitors back to the ship again. I look forward to the regular talks I used to do after a year of Zoom presentations, which never do seem to provide the connection that real life does.

Blasters at work cleaning the ship.

To prepare for a return to activity, we have utilised some of our Lottery funds to employ two members of staff, a Community Learning Officer and a Public Engagement Officer. These are both part time roles, which will enable the Trust to become fully active in schools, career support and to be equipped to promote the ship and engage with the Public.

The Trust has an amazing team of volunteers who dedicate so much of their lives to the project and without them we would not exist. I am also pleased to report that Brian Gooding has returned as a co-opted Trustee. Brian was in at the start and, with some persuasion, we have him back as a valued member of the Team. The Lottery Heritage Fund has hugely impacted on our progress and without ticket buyers, this simply could not happen. Our members are the mainstay of the Trust and you keep supporting us. It's what keeps us motivated and going.

John

Pete Gillett on board the ship in the shipyard at Appledore.

A fish's view of the ship. Note the excellent condition.

With the ship at Appledore, progress is swift, as can be seen from these pictures from John Puddy. The top one is before work started, the bottom one was taken on Monday 10th May with the ship's hull already in primer.

Project Manager's Report

Over the last few months much of my time has been taken up with recruitment, writing and posting adverts, sending out application forms, short listing and creating interview questions. I'm pleased to announce that we now have two new part time staff starting over the coming weeks. Sam and Becca's roles are covered in a separate article, but we're really looking forward to welcoming them both "on board".

We had a meeting with Kayleigh from the Lottery in mid-March as the National Lottery Grants for Heritage are now open again. Under the guidance of our fundraising Trustee Annemarie, we hope to submit a project enquiry and all things being well, an application by the end of June. All projects have to demonstrate how they will enable a wider range of people to be involved in heritage and also how long term environmental sustainability will be achieved.

The Culture Recovery Fund completes at the end of June, so we're making sure that funds are spent appropriately. I'm about to embark on the progress report and will start work on the completion report next month.

As you know, work on board has continued in a restricted fashion throughout the pandemic. This has been possible due to Pete's volunteer rota system, so it was brilliant to have Pete's efforts recognised with a Highly Commended Marsh Volunteer Award for Historic Vessel Conservation.

I attended Fundraising Training as part of The Heritage Compass programme. The take home messages were to ensure that our cause for support is clear; to convert audience into donor, you need to build trust first and how powerful video and image is in social media, as you only have six seconds to engage with your audience. I've also had my first meeting with our critical friend Bea and look forward to using her skills to support the Trust.

Pete Gillett receiving his award from Chairman John Puddy.

I met up with some of Petrocs Travel & Tourism students who are using *Freshspring* for a research and promotion assignment. The students had a variety of interesting ideas to encourage more young people on board, such as using the ship as an events venue and a night club!

I'm working on a plan for the ship's re-opening on 31st May. We've engaged cleaners, are creating signage and will risk assess nearer the time. The ship is already looking fantastic thanks to our volunteers as Martins' filming required the wheelhouse, engine room and accommodation to look just right.

As you know, *Freshspring* is currently in dry dock at Appledore shipyard. With her hull painted, mast stepped and the awning in situ, she's going to look quite a picture making her way back to Bideford, ready to welcome visitors on board.

Malcolm's weekly Facebook posts continue to engage increasing audiences. His use of image and text works well to tell the day to day story of *Freshspring*. We also created a blog that our IT Trustee Anne linked to a QR code to let people know quayside where *Freshspring* is. By following the code on a laminate posted on the railings, passers-by can stay informed.

We're looking forward to attending events as the Covid situation allows. The Bideford Water Festival is due to take place at the start of July, so fingers crossed we can all enjoy a bit of social normality.

Charlotte Squire

The Trust is looking forward to welcoming two new part time members of staff to the team

Becca Craft is our Public Engagement Officer and brings the majority of her experience from the corporate world. Working in communication and public relations, Becca will be able to guide us in delivering social media campaigns and plan our marketing strategy. She also has experience of WordPress, so will be able to support our website that you may remember recently transferred to the WordPress platform.

Starting with us on 24th May, Becca's role is designed to provide first class ship tours and virtual reality (VR) experiences, increase the number of Trust supporters and promote the unique significance of the Trust through appropriate marketing channels and events.

Sam Roberts is our Community Learning Officer and she starts with the Trust on 1st June. Sam qualified as a teacher in 2000 and has been working in both mainstream and specialist education settings ever since. Sam also worked with Babcock, preparing and delivering education resources and training, so has a wealth of experience to bring to the table.

As our Community Learning Officer, Sam will grow and expand on the work that Hayley, our previous Education Officer started. Sam will encourage relationships with local schools and further education colleges, encouraging ship visits and uptake of our Engineering Box project. Developing high quality learning resources and delivering educational activities for families and community groups will also be part of Sam's role.

You may recall that in 2019 Sam delivered some well received family activities on board *Freshspring*. She was a great success with our visitors, so we look forward to welcoming families back on board, supported by Sam's creative ideas and experience.

Treasurer's & Trust Report

Finances

I used the phrase 'everything changes but nothing changes' at the start of my last report and it's still true – but the changes in the meantime have all been very positive!

I mentioned that we had been offered a Recovery Grant of £66,000 (of which we have received 90% with the remaining 10% receivable after completion) and the possibility that the grant end date may be extended beyond March. All Recovery Grant recipients were offered the opportunity to extend the date through to the end of June and we applied to do that along with a bit of re-profiling of the way we use the funds.

Although we had planned originally to open the ship at Easter, it became pretty clear that, because of Covid restrictions, this was simply not going to happen and that, by the time we could re-open, some of the costs we'd applied for might not be necessary. We therefore asked to re-allocate some of the funding to pay Martin Kemp a fee for the excellent work he is doing in managing and directing the VR/360 filming, and to employ two part time members of staff – Charlotte's report says more about them and the job they will do.

The other major change to our financial position revolves around the ship's transfer to Harland & Wolff. Since the ship arrived in Bideford in 2016, we have been setting aside money every month to build a 'reserve' to cover the expected cost of moving the ship to, and return from, the dry dock on the Severn, and for any work that might be necessary to ensure she remains watertight for another six years.

The employment of Harland & Wolff has been a game-changer because the final bill from them will represent a substantial saving to our reserve, and enable us to look to the future with more confidence. As always, we need to spend our money wisely and we continue to focus on 'best value' and looking to build a sustainable income stream for the future.

Forward Planning

Over the last few months much time has been spent concentrating on fulfilling our commitments and obligations under the Recovery Grant, but we are progressively moving towards looking at the future structure of the Trust, the skills we need both from Trustees and paid employees and how we are going to morph from where we are to where we perceive we need to be.

All our Trustees play a role in this but I particularly want to mention Annemarie's contribution. Annemarie is not only an excellent fundraiser but she also has a great 'vision' of how we need to develop and the processes involved in getting there. I'm really looking forward to seeing how the Trust is re-shaped over the remainder of this year.

Simon Tattersall

Be a Volunteer!

It's a *Freshspring* volunteer day as I pull on overalls and flick the kettle switch for the all-important flask of coffee.

My background is within the travel industry, so no mechanical or engineering skills, and I'm a girl (well an ageing female!). However, with a love for the sea and all things maritime, I found myself volunteering to work on *Freshspring*.

Lou hard at work with the brass polish.

Volunteers usually gather twice a week, we are an interesting mix, at the moment, mainly retirees, with a vast array of skills which makes it all work. With no mechanical or engineering experience, I was soon shown to the paint locker. I restrained the urge to clean it out and re-organise, quickly realising that every item did indeed have a special place!!

With guidance, I am learning the secrets of sanding and painting, have a vague knowledge of steam power (it's all still a bit of a mystery) and I know that the on board "telegraph" is not a newspaper!

Possibly the best part is an atmosphere of true teamwork on such a special worthwhile project, a group of happy people using valuable knowledge gained from previous lives which otherwise may have lain dormant. A group engaging socially, laughter, storytelling and generally solving world problems over coffee in a well-earned lunch break.

Another area of volunteering is when this grand old lady is open to the public. Currently, due to the virus, this has been put on hold. However, this should soon be reinstated. Stewards are needed to provide a friendly welcome to visitors.

So another day ends with a huge feeling of satisfaction and an empty coffee flask!

Come and join the *Freshspring* volunteers!

Lou Boulter

Petroc Travel & Tourism Students and Freshspring

Huw Davies

This report is an update on some partnership work with students at Petroc College in Barnstaple.

Following a chance meeting in early March 2021 with some lecturers at Petroc College, *Freshspring* Trust was asked if they could support a group of Travel & Tourism students with a product development assignment. The students are required to investigate a local tourism attraction, carry out primary and secondary research, then develop a product/service for the attraction and finally develop a promotional campaign for the product/service. The original assignment for the students was impacted by the pandemic but I was confident the Trust could respond effectively to mutual benefit. The assignment needed to be completed fairly quickly and take into account the two week Easter break.

The students (like all current students) have had a disrupted education. The majority spent the latter half of the last academic year studying on line and this year has been similarly disjointed. During the second half of the autumn term (2020) students 'toggled' – I'm not sure if this is the technical or colloquial term – but it basically means half the students were present in class and the other half attended on line and then swapped around the following week. After Christmas 2020, we all went into full lockdown and the students didn't resume face to face classroom teaching until the week beginning 15th March 2021. There are still some limitations as all community spaces at College are currently closed. The pandemic also impacted on the assessment process which is usually a combination of assignments and external exams, however the temporary process is solely teacher assessed grades and these are to be completed earlier than the traditional assessment cycle adding further pressure for students to complete work.

There are twelve students in the group and studying the first year of a BTEC Extended Diploma in Travel and Tourism, they are aged between 16 and 17 and all female. The students come from a range of schools in the North Devon area. Their career aspirations are to work as cabin crew on airlines or as tour reps abroad. They have limited understanding and interest in heritage tourism, and ships even more so. Their first introduction to SS *Freshspring* took place on the first week after lockdown (16th March) that included a presentation about the history of the ship, the Trust and the future plans to develop the ship as a tourist destination. To my genuine surprise, the students were very enthusiastic. Only the students from the Bideford area recognised the ship, but knew little of its history and significance. As mentioned above, the assessment regime is very different to a normal year and assessments are fairly prescriptive; there is little opportunity to veer beyond the awarding body expectations and it would be fair to say neither students or teaching staff wanted this, especially as the time frame is so limited.

The students were put into groups of three and brain stormed potential ideas; they then devised primary research methods. This research was limited to online questions. The students devised questions on Googleforms and posted out to their own social networks, and so far they have had over 200 responses. Any face to face research or focus groups were dismissed because of the pandemic restrictions. Students also interviewed Charlotte via Zoom. For secondary research the students investigated similar local and national heritage tourism destinations. They are currently writing up their reports for submission in mid May.

As you would expect from the profile of the students, the suggestions they investigated are not what you would typically expect for a heritage tourism destination but I was keen not to steer them too much. I will be reporting back on their proposals in the next issue. I have had further discussions with the curriculum staff and they are keen to view this year as a pilot and work more closely with us to develop this assessment opportunity ensuring adequate time and resource is allocated. The assignment we devise with Petroc could be used by other schools and colleges. The staff are excited about working with a real life opportunity and as I have said to all the students, I am confident one of you is going to come up with a product or service that the Trust will get really excited about.

Another view of the newly-painted hull in the shipyard at Appledore.

Memories of a life as a Radio Officer in the Merchant Navy in the 1960s

Nigel Davies

Introduction

During lockdown, earlier last year, I decided to attempt to write my life story, for my children and grandchildren. Strangely the relatively brief portion of my life to date had by far the most stories and anecdotes from any period. The extract below is taken from my story and was just a fraction of the memories I have, as it risked becoming just a story of my life at sea. It was exciting times for a 20 year old.

Life in the Merchant Navy/MV Benstac

I started my life commuting daily to Southampton, which lasted for three years, training to be a Merchant Navy Radio Officer, or Electronics Officer as the job subsequently became known. I had to learn four main topics: electronics, practical and theory, Morse code, equipment servicing and maintenance and operation of all the radio and navigation equipment on the ship's radio room and bridge.

At age 20, I completed my PMG examinations and qualified to go to sea. I joined Marconi Marine who supplied Radio Officers and their electronic equipment to the majority of the British Merchant Navy, being seconded to the MV *Benstac*. This was a high speed (20kt) passenger cargo ship and at the time very state of the art. This was an induction of fire as it was a new ship being completed in Glasgow, which I joined as 2nd Radio Officer to do sea trials.

Our first real journey was to take the ship from Glasgow to embark on our maiden voyage to the Far East. This first short trip was used by the ship's owners, Ben Line, to take a number of VIP guests on a mini cruise to London. As I was a junior officer but had a nice cabin, I was instructed that it would be used on this trip by a VIP and I had to use a lesser cabin lower in the ship. Unfortunately, when we were rounding the north cape of Scotland, we encountered Force 9 gales which caused a completely unladen *Benstac* to role and pitch very badly. I recall evacuating the dining saloon hastily feeling very seasick and rushing into my cabin. This cabin unlike mine didn't have an en suite bathroom and knowing I was about to be sick, I grabbed the only thing I could see to be ill into, the polythene bag that my new naval cap had been in. Unfortunately, it was a safety bag with numerous holes in it to prevent children suffocating themselves, with the result that all I did was to strain the contents, before they fell to the floor which fortunately was covered by vinyl flooring, unlike my fully carpeted official cabin. As I sat on the bed trying to force myself to get up and clear up the mess, the ship once more rolled severely, the sick ran across the floor and disappeared under the skirting board which had a small gap between it and the floor. Horrified I went to the adjacent cabin to apologize, fortunately vacant at the time. Nothing however had appeared. I returned to my cabin to expect it to return the next time the ship rolled, it never did! I left that cabin two days later in London and often wondered how the proper owner of the cabin fared months later when we were in the extreme heat of the Far East! The *Benstac* was, I have to say, not a lucky ship. We left London, en route for Singapore, stopping at Dakar in Senegal, West Africa to take on fuel. On arrival, the Captain was advised that much of the grey paint, put onto the hull in Glasgow was peeling off! In order to make a claim, knowing I had a camera, he asked that I took pictures. Sadly, on arrival in Singapore, I discovered that I had not correctly put the film in my camera, and unfortunately, as by now the ship had been repainted, no pictures had been taken!

Later on, during the maiden voyage, we were greeted at the prestigious Hong Kong Ocean Terminal with a host of VIPs and the Royal Marines Band. Unfortunately, there was a breakdown in communication on the bridge and our ship, instead of coming gracefully alongside the terminal (a three-story block), ploughed into the end of it, scattering the onlookers and causing a large hole in the side of the ship!

This was, however, nothing compared with the next voyage. We were travelling from Hong Kong to Taiwan when we encountered a 120mph typhoon. After a very violent 36 hours, we arrived in Taiwan and the ship's carpenter went below to check

The 'MV Benstac'.

the cargo. Unfortunately, the bolts holding the ladder to go into the ship's hold had broken free. On trying to replace them, he found that the holes no longer lined up and we had the first indications that the ship had been severely damaged; indeed the ship was bent like a banana and we were advised that another 12 hours of being in the storm would have resulted in the ship being in two halves! We were instructed to off load all our cargo and return to Hong Kong at slow speed in perfect weather where we spent three months in dry dock having a new bottom put on the ship. We all stayed on the ship, but as you can imagine with nothing to do whilst the ship was in dry dock, the crew were effectively on holiday in the centre of one of the world's great cities. Indeed, some of the crew on our eventual return to Europe after working for eight months at sea, found they still owed the ship money and could not take their leave to pay off their debt accrued in HK!

I celebrated my 21st birthday on the *Benstac*. A strange day, about ten miles offshore from Port Elizabeth in South Africa, I recall. The ship gave me a huge birthday card, signed by all, which I have to this day, addressed to Fu Din which was Chinese, which many of our crew were, which translated as Thunder & Lightning Man. I have so many stories of my time on the *Benstac*, that I could write a book on my time aboard – the returning from Taiwan to Hong Kong to return stowaways, the flooding of the engine room with molten latex rubber, the racing of Japanese cars (cargo), on the car deck, racing Scalextric cars (also cargo) on huge circuits, the liberation of large amounts of whisky (again cargo) by the Chinese crew, the unluckiest cadet in the world, the Blue Funnel feud, the making of the Cadbury's Black Magic advert; the list goes on.

Being a 20 year old with money in his pocket, travelling to such destinations as Singapore and Hong Kong did, however, allow me to acquire some of the luxuries that were not easily affordable at that time in the UK: a wonderful Japanese transistor radio that allowed me to listen to the latest pop music from home, a Seiko watch, Chinese crafts, but most memorably a multi-coloured parrot, which I later discovered was a Swanson's Lorikeet, indigenous in Australia. The parrot was bought with the Captain's wife, who I had been instructed to accompany ashore in Singapore to allow her to go shopping. It was probably just as well, as the parrot, subsequently named Ben, was caught pecking the pelmet in my cabin by the Captain on his weekly inspection!

Talking of Captain's inspection, I am reminded of another story. Each week the cabin steward had to ensure that I had plenty of soap in my cabin. We had discovered that in Taiwan soap was a valuable commodity and could be used to exchange for many things. Girls would come down to the ship when we docked, on bicycles, like French onion sellers, selling pineapples, which could be bought for a bar of soap. Of greater interest to me, however, was that pirated LP vinyl records could also be swapped for soap! Consequently, the day before the Captain's inspection, I replaced all soap in my cabin, with old nearly used tablets, which the steward would add a nice new tablet to! This was then removed after the Captain's inspection and stored, ready for arrival in Taiwan! I made two voyages to the Far East, London,

Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan, calling into Malaya on the return to pick up rubber and shrimp and then on to Hamburg and London.

While on the *Benstac* the war was taking place in Vietnam. I well recall sailing through an American Navy fleet in the night whilst they were launching Crusader jets, afterburners blazing, from the aircraft carriers to strike the Vietcong. In quiet moments I would tune the ship's radio receiver into military channels ashore, listening to the US forces. We did, however, fall out with the crew of a US aircraft carrier on one occasion. As we left Hong Kong, sailing to Japan, we passed the US ship entering port, all its crew standing to attention as they do, on every flat bit of their ship. Sadly for them, at the precise time we passed close by in opposite direction our engineers decided to blow the ship's boilers clear of soot, a daily procedure to keep them clean. The soot snowflakes blew from our smokestack across the water to fall on the motionless US sailors who until then only thought of R&R in HK. It seemed hilarious at the time, but two weeks later, when we returned, and the US ship was still there, the joke didn't seem so funny. They watched us come in and despite it being an accident, many of our crew were thrown off jetties, thrown through a shop window and indeed our Captain had to rescue crew from police custody to allow us to sail 24 hours later.

I left the *Benstac* after about two years, but its bad luck continued. The voyage after I left, it caught fire, obviously serious, but more so when the entire front half of the ship was carrying ammunition for the British army in Hong Kong. The *Benstac* was sold by Ben Line a few years later to a Greek company. Sadly, it sank in the South Atlantic shortly afterwards, probably as an insurance scam.

Life in the Merchant Navy / SS Texaco Pembroke

After about five weeks leave, I returned to sea, to join the largest tanker, at the time, in the Texaco fleet, the SS Texaco *Pembroke*, this time as Senior Radio Officer. I was flown out on a BOAC VC10 to Ras Tanura in the Persian Gulf, via Bagdad, where we refuelled. My memories of that flight were being taken off the aircraft at Bagdad, with all the passengers and held in a barrack block whilst the refuelling took place, overseen by armed Iraqi soldiers. My entry into Saudi Arabia, transiting to Ras Tanura via Bahrain, was somewhat 'interesting'. The Saudi customs confiscated my bottle of duty free whisky, putting it under the counter and refusing to give me a receipt and then telling me that my plastic model kit of a Lotus racing car was car parts and I would have to pay duty on it! Sadly, as I didn't want to see that also disappear under the counter, I begrudgingly paid the duty. I well recall the trip out offshore in a small supply launch to the *Pembroke* which had just begun to load oil. The ship, being empty of oil at the time, seemed enormous, towering many metres up into the sky. Most worrying was that I had to board via a rope ladder up the ship's side with my case, with other new members of the crew's bags slung in a cargo net and hauled up, fearing that all my possessions would end up at the bottom of the Persian Gulf!

After about 12 hours we completed loading and set sail for Pembroke, via the Cape, which would take about four weeks. Prior to leaving England, Texaco had given

me a full safety briefing about the hazards of sailing on an oil tanker, which they described as a floating bomb! On my first day at sea, after lunch, the sea was flat and as always in the Gulf the sun shining with 30° temperatures, I decided it would be a great way to get some exercise and walk from the accommodation area at the rear of the ship, along the deck, to the bow. About halfway along I was horrified to hear a very large bang and the ship's decks vibrate severely. Fearing the warnings from my safety briefing had come true, I legged it back. Only when I got back, I was informed that this happened every day, when the heat from the sun caused the air in the tanks to expand and the metal tanks to effectively pop!

After the four weeks, we duly arrived in Pembroke, but not until I had learnt a valuable lesson. On joining the ship, I discovered that the ship's emergency radio receiver, which detected SOS calls from other ships, had been severely detuned, such that its reception was very limited. Feeling very proud I adjusted the settings such that things were much improved. In the middle of the night about a day later, the ship's bridge alarms went off as a result of the receiver picking up a distress. This, of course, woke the Captain and was causing great excitement, until I discovered the distress was in the Baltic and we were in the Indian Ocean. I was not over popular at that time and we resumed the journey with a detuned radio! We did, however, have to go to a distress during that trip, a South African fishing boat which sank, and its crew rescued, prior to our arrival. Our arrival in Pembroke was on a Sunday. We had endured four weeks of boredom travelling back, but arrival on a Sunday in Wales was a disaster! Wales at that time did not allow pubs to open on Sundays and we basically sat around unloading oil before we set off again.

This time we were loading oil in Libya and Lebanon, for discharge in Trieste,

The 'Texaco Pembroke'.

Italy. The highlight of that trip was a day of being used as a target by the US Air Force from Wheelhus Airbase in Libya, practicing attacks from all directions. Fun for the first 30 minutes, but after several hours of jets screaming low overhead somewhat annoying.

We then set sail for The Persian Gulf to load more oil, again at Ras Tanura. Because tankers at that time loaded oil offshore, we never left the ship for months at a time. The highlight when we were loading oil was fishing, as we could do this once the ship was stopped. Bait was invariably steak and what we caught was usually a mystery, although often a brightly coloured mystery! The crew, on that ship from Goa were always at hand to help us take the fish off the lines, which they kept and then hung out to dry, much to the Captain's displeasure. We even caught a shark on one occasion, which lived in the ship's swimming pool for some days!

On our return from the Gulf, travelling down the Atlantic we were diverted to go to South America, to British Guiana, to unload our cargo. We arrived at our destination awaiting clearance to enter port when we were given a change of orders. War had broken out in the Middle East and no oil was likely to be coming from that area for a while and our cargo was now wanted in the UK. We set sail for Pembroke again, our Engineers calculating that as a result of us coming part of the way back on only one engine (the other had broken down, but now repaired!), we would have JUST enough oil to reach Pembroke. We arrived late at night, with the fuel gauges on empty, to be told by the harbour pilot that we would have to wait until morning, as we would be too close to the bottom at that stage of the tide to get in. Our Captain advised them that if we did that, then they would have to send out tugs as we wouldn't have any power by then. A decision was made to proceed, and our echo sounders showed no water as we went over the bar into the deeper area of the port. Definitely touch and go!

I got into trouble with Lloyds shipping inspectors in the Lebanon on one occasion. The Deck Officers had asked if I could improve the radio reception of the walkie-talkie sets, used when mooring the ship. I thought that taking a length of copper wire from one end of the ship to the bow, where they were having problems would help, which it did. I and the crew however failed to understand that it might have another unwanted effect, a spark! Not a great idea in an oil tanker. I left the *Pembroke* after about 18 months in about 1970 to enjoy a lengthy leave.

New members

We welcome the following new members of the Trust:

Paul Smith	*Pennington, Hampshire*
Mark Weston	*Dartmouth, Devon*
Annemarie Shillito	*Barnstaple, Devon*
Alexander Ferguson	*Bideford, Devon*

Becoming a Naval Constructor

Wyn Davies

After a prodding from John Puddy, I realised that I ought to write a bit about becoming a Naval Constructor and a Naval Architect, not quite the same thing as you may see.

First my background. My childhood was mainly spent amongst the splendid oaks and beech trees of the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire. A successful eleven plus led to East Dean Grammar School (whose reunions we still attend although the school has long since ceased to exist). A propensity for maths and art might have suggested a future in engineering, but the main drivers in that direction were my parents. They had both served in the Navy during WW2 and my mother had worked with a naval constructor – so my future was set?

Unfortunately in those days you needed a foreign language for university and good eyesight to join the Royal Navy, so my failings in both these areas led to following my second enthusiasm, the aircraft industry, and a place at a college of advanced technology. As a result, I had joined Avro's aircraft factory in Manchester straight from school, and was sponsored by them for an engineering degree at the Royal College of Advanced Technology in Salford, which college shortly became Salford University! Avro's was in reality the Avro Whitworth Division of Hawker Siddeley Aviation Ltd, much easier just to say Avro's. Ironically this organisation had just shut down Gloster Aircraft, much nearer home, just as I had taken the decision to join them!

Following a four year sandwich course, much the best way of learning I feel, and a subsequent spell at the College of Aeronautics at Cranfield, I found myself with two degrees but looking at a diminishing order book and little hope of promotion when along came an advert for direct entry into the Royal Corps of Naval Constructors (RCNC)! Needless to say I applied and happily was accepted after an interview in Basingstoke of all places.

The RCNC was a seriously professional body of engineers, civil servants uniquely wearing uniform when on naval premises, who had been designing the Navy's ships since 1880. The training started with a bit of square bashing at Victory Barracks, Portsmouth, we were newly in uniform after all! We then spent a further year in uniform learning all about hands-on naval engineering matters and basic naval architecture, including visiting many shipyards and other naval facilities throughout the UK, Holland and West Germany.

This was in turn followed by a further master's degree at University College, London, and then several months at sea, back in uniform again. My first ship was HMS *Wasperton*, a wooden and aluminium alloy Ton class vessel based in Hong Kong. Direct entry Constructors were given the rank of Lieutenant, but with a bit of grey felt between the gold stripes so others could tell we weren't real sailors! Nonetheless, this made me the third most senior officer on board, a situation that really encouraged me to learn quickly!

Hong Kong bound!

Subsequent ships were HMS *Argonaut*, a steam frigate, HMS *Bristol*, a guided missile destroyer, and the original steam-powered *Ark Royal*.

Argonaut was perhaps the most interesting posting, and most useful for a trainee naval architect. She was in the NATO squadron at the time and officer and ratings could swop ships for a time, allowing me to spend time on US Navy, Canadian and West German destroyers. It also allowed me to visit most of the North Atlantic seaboard from Norfolk, Virginia, right around to our North Sea.

After some further post grad work, I was posted to the MOD's then design centre at Foxhill, Bath. Here I was lucky enough to be involved in the design and production of the first plastic mine counter measures vessel, HMS *Brecon*, an offshore patrol vessel, the latest Castle class, and two iterations of T22 frigates, the Batch 2 and 3. I was then moved to the Clyde as an overseer and was even luckier to be able to watch the ships I had designed being built and then going to sea on them for the usual ten day acceptance trials. I don't believe many commercial naval architects get such a full picture of the process.

By 1982 I had fulfilled my posting as an overseer and was due to move back to Bath on promotion when some civil service genius put a seven year moratorium on moves and promotion. Along with many of my contemporaries, I chose to leave. Within a very short time, I found myself in the commercial world, initially as a technical manager of a supply boat company in Aberdeen, looking after their new buildings in Singapore, Korea and Leith! Having then been made redundant as a result of Norwegian overbuilding, I joined a P&O Group company in London, covering a wide range of civil and military projects including work on HMS *Warrior* and the *Cutty Sark*, both for the Heritage Lottery Fund.

In 2003 I set up my own company, having been made redundant for the second time, oddly enough by the same man! It was then that I started to concentrate on heritage ships, albeit not exclusively. Since then I have had the privilege of working on around 50 heritage vessels, from the 40ft *Barnabas* in Cornwall to Cunard's *Queen Mary* in California. Each with its own problems and possibilities, each with its own team of personalities supporting it. If nothing else life so far has taught the naval architect to become a diplomat!

Monarch… as good as ever…

Brian Gooding

This 'Monarch' is a very rare steam roller, one of a dozen of different weights built for W W Buncombe of Highbridge in Somerset. What makes her rare is that, while built to a design by the Lincoln firm of Clayton & Shuttleworth, that firm had recently been taken over by Babcock & Wilcox, so they all emerged from the factory with the Babcock name and works numbers. Of the twelve, five have survived into preservation, three 10 ton engines and two six tonners. Of these, three are currently in working order, though the second six tonner in the museum at Bicton Gardens is reputedly going to be restored to working order. The other non-runner, a 10 tonner, is owned by Doosan Babcock at their Renfrew base. All five survivors were built in 1926.

Back in the summer of 2013 *Monarch* came into my ownership, having been owned by a friend of mine for some 25 years. Being a long term volunteer and trustee of the Hollycombe Working Steam Museum, near Liphook on the Hampshire/West Sussex border, Hollycombe was the obvious place to keep the engine and she has been there ever since. In November 2017, on my birthday, we took part in the Lord Mayor's Show in London, a great honour and a very interesting day.

Smoke from the first fire in 20 months drifts lazily from the chimney of Monarch. *In the foreground are new wheels for one of the carriages on the museum's 2ft gauge railway.*

During 2019 she was gainfully employed pulling trailer loads of visitors around the museum's roads but towards the end of the season, the flywheel was starting to rock very slightly on the crankshaft, so she was parked up pending remedial work over the winter. By early 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic was beginning and so nothing was done to the engine, and with various lockdowns, we decided not to open the museum during 2020, so *Monarch* stood unloved until this Spring when our new engineer Bob fixed the flywheel problem by fitting a new key to hold the flywheel to the crankshaft. He rang me to say that he had refitted the firebars and ashpan and the mudhole doors, and apart from fitting the injector (to push water into the boiler) which I kept at home as it is too valuable to leave on the engine when not in use, she was ready for a test steaming.

And so on Sunday 9th May, after fitting the injector and checking all round the engine, a small fire was lit in the grate for the first time in 20 months, *Monarch* had some heat in her stomach. As she warmed through – a very gradual process so as not to overstress the metal – more wood and coal were added to the fire and she began to make those ever-so-familiar noises of an engine raising steam. (I try to explain to visitors that you listen to a steam engine more than you watch it for it is the sounds it makes that tell you what is going on.)

With new water gauge glasses having been fitted by Bob, there were the inevitable fizzes from them, but as pressure rose, they sealed up. Eventually there was enough steam to attempt to turn over the engine (the bit on top of the roller…) and so the regulator was opened, and she came to life with all those familiar rattles from the gears out of mesh. *Monarch* was alive! Next it was time to see if she would move from where she had been parked for so long. And yes, she did!

During the morning, my fellow trustee Rob had been busy delivering loads and loads of road planings to a dirt road near our main visitor centre that we wanted to improve and a couple of the other volunteers had been raking the planings across the road. It was our task to squash them in once *Monarch* was ready. With lunch out of the way, it was time to drive around the building and back onto the new road, hoping we wouldn't get stuck.

Ready to go rolling the road in the background. The site is a bit of a mess with so much new infrastructure being installed.

Rolling is under way, supervised by Rob (left) and Roy with close inspection by Bob, the young hand-reared peacock and not the engineer(!), who spent most of the morning supervising the first steaming of the roller!

More rolling as Rob and Roy rake more planings onto the road.

All went well and *Monarch* trundled very slowly up and down the road, her nominal 10 tons (more like 12 in reality) working wonders on the new surface. This brought out some of the other volunteers to watch and video, these newer ones not having seen *Monarch* in steam before. For an hour or so we ran up and down the road, moving over slightly each time to squash in another part. We couldn't roll the whole road, though, as we would have run off the end of the prepared area, but luckily we have an old and cantankerous small vibrating diesel roller to finish the job. That was once it was coaxed into life which took several attempts and more smoke than you get from a steamer! Once running, you don't turn it off until finished with!

So, *Monarch's* first outing in 20 months was a success and it was good she could do a worthwhile job while in steam. There are one or two niggles to sort out, but that's for next week and before the official steam test at the end of May.

I have no doubt that her talents will be called on again before we reopen to the public sometime in July, for there has been a huge amount of infrastructure work going on during the closed period.

However, it is good to be back, and it shows the resilience of a steam engine that you can leave it for almost two years, chuck a fire in it, liberally throw some oil around, and it all works like it was last used yesterday. And I even remembered how to drive the old girl!

Yours truly behind Monarch *before putting the engine away. A young peahen approaches…*

Volunteer Jeremy with the vibroroll compacting stone adjacent to the road after he'd been over the tarmac area.

Tales Too Ticklish To Tell *Part 1*

John Boxall

A personal account of Freshspring's *time in Bristol and the joys of being an amateur marine engineer.*

Quite how I got involved with *Freshspring* when she was in Bristol in the early 1980s is lost in the mists of time, but as one of my earliest memories is of being taken on the paddle steamer *Bristol Queen* by my father, followed by trips on my own on *Balmoral* in P&A Campbell days, membership of the Navy section of the Combined Cadet Force at school, and spending time in the engine room, including being allowed to take the controls of the SS *Manxman*, perhaps it was only natural that I would find myself on *Freshspring* at some stage.

Having given it some thought, I decided that the best way to put my thoughts on paper would be to take you on a tour of the ship and recount some of the things that happened in those parts of the ship, introduce some of the characters involved and talk about what happened whenever the ship moved.

Hopefully the Statute of Limitations should protect all of those involved.

The People

There are three people who I remember by name from this time, others came and went.

The owner was Oswald Burgess. I gather that he had bought *Freshspring* with a 'businessman' who then had to sell his share to Oswald after a problem with his business. Oswald (Oz) had been a marine engineer, serving both at sea and in ship repair – it paid better than shipbuilding; both were 'casual' but shipbuilding jobs lasted longer than ship repair ones. He had worked for two employers in one day. Like many engineers in Bristol, he ended up in British Aerospace.

The engineering side of things was looked after by Dan Hayman, another retired British Aerospace engineer. He was also a keen cyclist and youth hosteller who didn't own a car. The YHA in Bristol, Hayman House, is named after him. Dan had started (I think) at Cammell Laird before going to sea in WW2 then ending up in Bristol and working on the Brabazon, including time as the flight engineer. He certainly both knew his stuff and how to teach muppets like me. Sadly both are now long gone.

The last name I remember was Tig. Unlike the others, Tig was a woman in her late 20s (?) (the question is about her age, not gender). Her previous job had been breaking 2CVs for parts but then she had decided, much to the annoyance of her by now ex-husband to join the Merchant Navy as an engineer officer. To the credit of the college, they decided that her one and only 'O' level – in Art would at least mean that she could read drawings. Like Dan & Oswald, she was a skilled practical engineer.

Moving the Ship

If you are of a nervous disposition, I suggest that you go and make yourself a nice cup of tea before skipping to the next piece in the magazine.

Freshspring was normally moored in front of the Industrial Museum in Bristol. I believe that as a 'Historic' vessel she got free moorings and in exchange was occasionally opened to the public. From time to time she had to be moved, or on at least one occasion it was decided to take her for a spin. With a crew that were not as practised as might normally be expected, in the confined waters of the City Docks this was not without its moments.

From memory the first time I was aboard her when she moved I brought a friend with me, who was not overly impressed at having to 'walk a plank' to get aboard.

As we got ready to sail, a youngish couple walked past with their father / father-in-law, who was down from Fleetwood to help with the decoration of their new house. He was also something of a ship enthusiast having seen the deep water fishing fleet based in the town. After showing an interest, Dan invited them aboard. We then set off down the docks.

Dad had a 'peg leg' and would have made a perfect Long John Silver. He climbed to the foredeck and promptly took over dealing with the ropes in the bow. The young couple simply stood on the main deck looking about as happy as a vampire at a Garlic Festival.

A rather grainy picture of Freshspring *in the Floating Harbour at Bristol.*

The plan was to sail down the docks and turn off the Underfall Yard where the docks are quite wide. I had recently passed my boatman's licence which included a pilotage exam for the City Docks. While the docks are dredged, the area by the Underfall adjacent to the Baltic and Gefle Wharfs has always been rather shallow and when timber ships discharged there, they had to moor away from the quay. As we headed towards the Underfall Yard, I shouted to the bridge "Oswald, it gets rather shallow here." "Dont Worry, John, its fine." "Oswald, we are getting very close to the barge moored in front of the yard." "Hang on everyone, somebody has mucked about with the piston valve on the HP cylinder, we can't put the engine astern." CRASH and we piled into a WW2 vintage concrete barge moored in front of the Underfall Yard. By this time, things were back to normal in The Great Hall of Technology and we went astern and turned without further ado. No concrete barges were damaged in this little jolly.

I don't know if it was on this trip or another one but while turning opposite the Industrial Museum, *Freshspring* went broadside across St Augustines Reach – the stretch of water that leads up to The City Centre. The Captain – not Oswald – put her astern and we ended up colliding with the *Lochiel*, an ex-McBrayne ship that ended her days as a floating pub in Bristol. This was during Sunday lunch and livened things up no end.

Anyway, Dad made a great job of tying us up – not a simple task as most of our mooring ropes were, to say the least, short. He went off with a spring in his step while his son and daughter-in-law simply seemed glad to be alive.

On another occasion we had to move *Freshspring* from the top of St Augustine's Reach by the Watershed back to the front of the Industrial Museum. The first job was to turn her using a spring. This took some time and provided a welcome spectacle on an otherwise wet and windy Saturday and a free coffee from the grateful owners of a nearby sandwich shop who had benefited from the resultant crowd. Now facing the right way, unusually Oswald had the conn, usually he had a retired Deck Officer take command but this time he was enjoying the perk of ownership. Normally my role would have been in the engine or boiler room but he asked if I could take the wheel. This led to my conclusion that power steering is never a good idea, why? Well, *Freshspring's* steering engine is in the wheelhouse and fills it up with steam…

Waverley had been due to go to Lundy Island that day. However, the trip had been cancelled due to the weather; instead she had sailed back from Penarth to Avonmouth and buses had then taken passengers into Bristol to enjoy the sights. Several of *Waverley's* regulars were enjoying the rare sight of a steamship moving in the City Docks. As we headed to our berth, we saw that the Birmingham Navy had occupied part of it despite clear notices not to moor. There was little we could do other than moor, and Oswald made a good job of a bad situation to bring her in, catching the offending cabin cruiser with the stern. This caused hilarity amongst the *Waverley* passengers who identified me on the wheel.

Later I was told that despite not causing any visible damage, the impact had ripped out all the internal bulkheads in the offending craft. However, because it was moored in a 'no mooring' area, there was no claim against *Freshspring*.

But seriously, folks, moving the ship didn't always result in disaster, steaming slowly through the docks on a real steamship was delightful. I only saw her under way in the docks once – I had had to leave to go and work an evening trip on the Docks Ferry. We were astern of *Freshspring* as she sailed gracefully through Prince Street Bridge – yes, it WAS open! Before tucking neatly into a berth just upstream to make way for a Harbour event.

Oh and the marvellous Navy siren – whoop, whoop, whoop; if you get the chance blow it!

A Tour of The Ship

As it was in my days…

Right in the bows was the fo'c'sle with the crew accommodation. In those days there were wooden bunks – I seem to remember blankets on them and there was at least one rather nice traditional coal burning stove. There were also some steam heated radiators, and I seem to remember an electric heater.

On deck there was the windlass which did work, except that we never seemed to have a length of rope long enough to use with it!

Moving aft, you then came to the cargo tanks. Now for reasons I don't fully understand these were filled with drinking straws, something I think was to do with Oz's 'Experiment'; more of which anon.

Then there was the Captain's Cabin with the Bridge on top. The Bridge was very simple by today's standards with the only thing run by electricity being the lights. Unlike most ships where the steering gear is in the stern, *Freshspring's* steering engine is in the wheelhouse, and the valves are of the 'outside admission' type – what the uninitiated need to know is that they leak steam. The 'rod and chain' mechanism was long obsolete by the time she was built and Dan suspected that when the Merchant Navy steering orders were reversed in the 1930s so that when the order was given to put the helm to port the wheel steered the ship to port – previously it was the other way round as if you were using a tiller – the maker's simply put the steam and exhaust the other way round rather than redesign obsolete equipment.

It was possible to conn the ship from the open bridge above the wheelhouse but we weren't entirely convinced about the condition of the deck, so she was always controlled from the wheelhouse.

Moving aft was the Galley. This was the site of the fabled 'Experiment'. Oswald was interested in developing a way of stripping insulation from scrap electrical cable. The cable went into a furnace. Heating it 'burnt off' the insulation, the resultant gas was then collected and burnt in the furnace to heat the cable. The 'experiment' also generated quantities of a rather dubious liquid which was then dumped into the ship's fuel tanks, and then burnt, the consequences of which could be 'interesting'.

On the boat deck above the galley was the diesel generator – OK it isn't a diesel really the thermal cycle is much closer to the British Ackroyd-Stuart engine. This had been installed by Oswald to provide power when the ship was not in steam although we never seemed to run it and generally power was only available when we had steam up.

The last space I entered at the stern was the shaft tunnel. I spent an 'amusing' day in it with Dan trying to adjust the clearances in the plummer block, the intermediate bearings that supported the propeller shaft.

Now on the *Manxman* it was a doddle, the blocks were mounted on screw wedges to allow for adjustment. Whoever designed *Freshspring* must have hated marine engineers with a vengeance; the only way to adjust the clearance was to jack up the propeller shaft, then put a shim under the block. This was a process that could result in the lucky souls given the task going through Rogers Profanisaurus from A to Z. (Rogers Profanisaurus is a Lexicon of Language frequently used in times of excitement or stress, from the publishers of Viz Magazine.)

To be continued…

A rather forlorn looking Freshspring *during her time at Bristol.*

A trip on an 'Up and Downer' *Part 2*

John Richardson

The following morning, I was down on watch by myself as usual, when the phone rang: this was the bridge who enquired, "Could we be ready to go in three-quarters of an hour?" Provisionally we had been expecting to sail after breakfast, so this left me in a bit of a dilemma, as to whether or not I should go and wake up the 2nd Engineer for stand-by. I had never actually prepared the engine for sea by myself but on the other hand, the 2nd had been drinking with the Chief until well past midnight. This meant he would not be in a very fit state to do much anyway and could be pretty well guaranteed to give me a mouthful of abuse if I woke him up, so I decided to have a go myself. The fireman on my watch was quite a useful sort of chap and could look after the boilers on his own, which meant that all I had to worry about was getting the engine ready, putting steam on the steering and running up the turbo 'jenny'.

I attended to the 'jenny' first, which, as the 'Preston' was a DC ship, meant that there was none of the synchronisation procedure to go through that is associated with AC plant; it was simply a case of running up the turbine until the governor took over, ensuring that it was actually producing some voltage and then throwing in a knife switch on the very old fashioned DC switchboard. The load would then be balanced between the two using the trimmers on the field coil regulators. When we were 'full away' at sea, the diesel 'jenny' could be disconnected by throwing out another knife switch and then shut down.

Warming through the engine consisted simply of opening all the cylinder drains so that any condensed water in the cylinders could escape, starting the reversing engine so that it went from ahead to astern and back again about every 15 seconds and then cracking open the throttle, so that between about 10 and 20 pounds of steam showed on the high pressure steam chest gauge. At first, nothing would happen except for the sound of steam and water blowing out of the drains, while the weighshaft which operated the Stephenson's valve gear would move slowly to and fro, taking the expansion links and eccentric rods from side to side with it. After a minute or two, however, the engine would give a convulsive movement one way or the other and

then, as the reversing gear moved over to the opposite direction, it would kick back again – steam reciprocating engines run equally well either way and are reversed by resetting the valve gear using the reversing engine as described above. These oscillations would get steadily larger as the engine warmed up, until eventually it was making a complete turn or so each way – I never ceased to be fascinated by the sight of all the gleaming steel rods and cranks slowly coming to life.

The engine could be left on its own to kick over like this for several minutes, but as it warmed up, it would steadily become more energetic, until it might be making a couple of full turns in each direction; at this stage the throttle would be closed in a bit because we didn't want to be turning the propeller enough to start moving the ship and straining the ropes. At around the same time the high and intermediate pressure drains could also be closed as by then they would be blowing mostly steam, although the low pressure ones were usually left open until we were actually on the move – the low pressure cylinder being the largest, took longest to warm up.

The reversing engine itself was a little two cylinder vertical job sited conveniently beside the main throttle, so that both were within easy reach of the man on manoeuvring duty. It was operated by a small valve on the steam supply which was of the quick acting variety, so that it could be started and stopped easily and precisely where required. The engine drove a worm and worm wheel, to which was connected a crank pin and rod that operated the weighshaft as noted above. On the worm wheel, which was of burnished steel, two brass plates marked 'Ahead' and 'Astern' were riveted on, 180 degrees apart. To manoeuvre the engine, it was necessary to start the reversing engine running until the appropriate brass plate lined up with a steel pointer and then stop it, at which position the engine was set to run in the direction indicated.

Unlike turbine plant, reciprocating engines could be reversed very quickly – no more than a few seconds being required to go from ahead to astern. This rapid manoeuvring capability made the steam reciprocating engine the popular choice for tug boats and small ferries up until the 1960s, when controllable pitch propellers became commonplace, thereby allowing the all conquering diesel engine to take over this last bastion of the 'up and downer'.

While the engine was warming itself up, the other main job I had to attend to was the lubrication. Unlike turbine ships, where oil is pressure fed to all the bearings, triple expansion steam engines are lubricated by hand in the same way as railway locomotives or traction engines. There was a small mechanical pump that provided minute amounts of thick steam oil to the high pressure cylinder – this used about two pints every watch. The more important bearings were supplied by brass oil boxes with copper pipes leading down to wherever the oil was required. Each of these copper pipes terminated inside the boxes just below the top and the oil was siphoned down them by worsted wicks twisted into pieces of soft iron wire – the more strands of worsted there were in these 'trimmings' the faster the oil would siphon out. Every time we were getting ready to put to sea, the boxes would be filled and the trimmings inserted into the pipes to start the oil flow; at 'Finished with Engines' they would be taken out again to save wasting oil. All the lesser bearings and pin joints were supplied

from oil cups or even simple oil holes, which would get a squirt from an oil can once or twice a watch. I was amazed that this large engine would happily run all day on just a couple of gallons of lubricating oil applied in this rather haphazard fashion without any bearing ever running hot – at least none ever did when I was there.

Just before the appointed time for departure, the bridge phoned down to ask if I was ready and having received my affirmative answer, the telegraph was tested by ringing round to each position in turn before coming to rest on 'Stand-by'. It wasn't a very long wait before I got the first movement which was for 'Slow Astern'. I duly started the reversing engine running and then neatly stopped it when the appropriate brass plate was lined up with the pointer, before giving the main throttle a quick half turn, which caused the engine to ease smoothly and silently into motion. There was no rev counter to tell me how fast the engine was going but the HP steam chest pressure gauge was marked in red at the pressures that corresponded to the required speeds, so all I had to do was to adjust the throttle until I got the right pressure. The engine was really delightful to handle and although the movements were coming down every few seconds until we cleared the berth, I was managing to keep up with them quite easily; in fact, the hardest part was finding the time to record them all in the movement book, which finished up looking a bit untidy as a result.

Occasionally the engine might stop with the HP piston on top or bottom dead centre, from which position it could develop zero torque and the engine would not therefore start. To get round this problem, the IP cylinder (whose crank was set at 120 degrees round from the HP) could be given steam directly via an additional control called the 'simpling valve' which by-passed the HP cylinder; one puff of steam applied in this way would be enough to start the engine moving after which the main throttle could be opened in the normal way.

After around ten minutes of shunting back and forth, the telegraph settled on 'Full Ahead' and I guessed that we had swung round and were now on our way back down river. The fireman meanwhile had been busy adjusting the fuel and feed pumps and had by now got all three furnaces lit up in each boiler, so we were generally in good order and gave each other an encouraging 'thumbs up'.

It was now getting on for 8 o'clock and the friendly figure of the 3rd Engineer came down the ladders to take over. Normally, the 3rd would have had the 12 to 4 watch but on the 'Preston' he had swapped with the 4th who, for some unknown reason, didn't seem to mind it. Seeing that I was on my own he remarked: "It didn't take that idle bastard long to get you trained up then?" referring of course to the 2nd. I replied that he was usually in such a foul mood every morning that I was a lot happier that way. We had a bit of a chat about him then, which was when I learned the bit about him being a Cunard steward. The 2nd himself finally appeared just after 8 o'clock looking rather bleary eyed. I would imagine that most people might think that a word of thanks would be in order, seeing as I had covered his job for the entire watch: they would be mistaken, however, for he walked past us both without a word – not even 'Good morning'. He then spent a minute or two examining the log before coming up to me and remarking what a mess I'd made in the movement book and why hadn't I swabbed the plates!

Freshspring Steam Beer!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ESTABLISHED 1998
CLEARWATER

Leaving a legacy to the SS Freshspring Trust

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

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

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

CODICIL

I (full name).....

of (full address).....

.....

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

I give, free of Inheritance Tax, the sum of

£..... (.....pounds) to the SS Freshspring Trust of Little Cleave, Lower Cleave, Northam, Devon EX39 2RH (Registered Charity Number 1151907), absolutely for its general charitable purposes. In all other respects I confirm my said Will.

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

Signed in the presence of:

First witness	Second Witness
Signature	Signature
.....	.....
Full name	Full name
.....	.....
Address	Address
.....	.....
.....	.....
Occupation	Occupation
.....	.....

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

Freshspring's Sponsors

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

Alco Engineering (Manufacturing) Co.
Awards for All
Bideford Town Council
BMT Defence Services
Boatsharefinder
Braddicks Leisure
Braunton Rotary Club
Clearwater Brewery
Daniel Adamson Preservation Society
Dawson Downie Lamont
DM Scaffolding Bideford
Evans Transport
Impact Fundraising
Jewsons
Jotun
Keynvor Morlift
Knighthood
National Heritage Memorial Fund
National Historic Ships UK
National Maritime Development Group
National Transport Trust
Nautilus International
Nick Sampson Haulage
Northam Town Council
OSD-IMT
RT Marke
Sky High Media
Steam Heritage Publishing Ltd/ Vintage Spirit Magazine
Tesco plc
The Balsdon Trust
The Bideford Bridge Trust
The Charles Dunstone Charitable Trust
The Headley Trust
The Heritage Lottery Fund
The Marsh Christian Trust
The Pilgrim Trust
Torridge District Council
Trinity House
University of the West of England
West Buckland School
Whitelands Engineering
Woods Group
Worshipful Company of Shipwrights