

STEAMSHIP

# FRESHSPRING

75TH ANNIVERSARY 1946-2021



## MAGAZINE



No.28 Autumn 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

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

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

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

**Ship Visits & Volunteering on the ship:** The ship is open for public visits on Sundays. For members' visit outside this time, or if you are interested in volunteering, please call Peter Gillett, our Local Ship Manager, on 01237 237 183 (email: peter.gillett@ssfreshspring.co.uk).

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## Editor's Ramblings. . . .

Welcome to the Autumn 2021 magazine, on a rather auspicious anniversary for the ship. Of all the many, many thousands of ships built over the years, it is not that many that survive intact and basically unchanged for more than 50 years, let alone 75. I know there are other ships that have survived much longer than this, but there aren't that many and for what was built as a fairly small run of the mill steamer, one of several of her class, to have survived to be loved by so many, certainly is unusual. It is a credit to Oswald Burgess and John Richards, in particular, that *Freshspring* continues to live another day. Without their vision and hard work over the years, we would not be celebrating the 75th birthday of the sole survivor of her class.



Elsewhere in this magazine you will be reminded of the story of the ship over the last ten or so years and how we managed to save her from being cut up in a scrap yard, which was increasingly likely to be her fate as a rusting steamship is too large an object for one man to look after. John Puddy 'blames' me for kicking this all off and I guess, in a way, I did but if it wasn't for him too, it would never have happened and we would never have met. (I expect John regrets that meeting to this day!)

I well remember visits to the ship at Newnham when she looked very forlorn and the hull was so thin that water could seep in at any time – and did on occasions! We had committee meetings and AGMs nearby and wondered how we were ever going to make any progress, but progress we did, and with the help of grant money, we were able to move her to Bideford, albeit still looking very forlorn indeed.

Inevitably, trustees have come and gone, as have staff and volunteers, but they all had the common aim of doing their best to support the project and contributed positively. In truth, I am immensely proud of everyone who is, or has been, involved with the charity, whether they are actively involved or armchair supporters. You are all making a difference to ensuring this unique vessel has a secure future and for that I thank you all.

We are all looking forward to the special celebratory day at the end of August and hope that you will be able to come along and enjoy the day.

I only wish I lived nearer but I put down routes here on the Surrey/West Sussex border over 50 years ago and am now a bit glued to the spot! However, I do enjoy my periodic visits to Bideford (curtailed since March 2020 by the Covid pandemic) but it has always been interesting to see the progress made in between my visits. I am sure there will be a lot more for me to see when I next head to north Devon. I am looking forward to it.

**Brian Gooding**

## From the Chair

**Where** has the time gone! It seems like almost days ago I was writing the Spring report!

After the intense activity in dry dock, we were straight into preparing the ship for safely opening to the public. We now open every Sunday and it has been remarkable how many people are turning up to have a look around. They do all seem to enjoy the experience. We have engaged a company to deep clean the ship on a regular basis as a Covid precaution and the lady who turns up looks just like a ghost buster with her protective gear and massive spraying machine. I'm sure people appreciate our efforts to have safe access and at present we limit numbers to ten on board at a time.

We have been considering making a charge for visiting the ship as the experience is now much more valuable and informative. Since the filming work for our VR project, the accommodation spaces look very good with crew artefacts and pictures. The wheelhouse is also coming together very well and we have a cabinet maker about to make a start on the chart table and small bench to replicate the original fittings.

We constantly research how our ship might operate and what fuel she might use. It is becoming clear that to ensure a long operational life, we must consider installing a diesel electric hybrid system to supplement steam power. This would mean that the ship can move from place to place very efficiently and only use steam power when it has learning or public benefits. We are very fortunate to have the support of BMT Global to inform us of future possibilities regarding propulsion. It does appear that for heavy machinery, hydrogen has a place in the future and to see *SS Freshspring* operating using this fuel would certainly enhance our environmental credentials.

Our two new staff members are settling in very well and have been very productive. Sam, our Community Learning Officer, engaged with local schools just prior to the holidays and has created a very good link with our local secondary school. Our aim is to provide more STEM lesson resources to secondary as a stepping stone to careers. Becca, our Public Engagement Officer, has been preparing for opening the ship and the endless PR work which has to be done to ensure we maintain a high profile.

I am sure you will have heard about our 75th celebration event on the 30th August. This is nominally to celebrate the ship's 75th year but provides an excellent opportunity for a get together, something which has not been possible for so long. If the day is nice, I plan to give steam engine rides close to the ship and our local Brewery, Clearwater, will be supporting us with beer. I have even twisted my daughter's arm to provide highly skilled aerial performances during the day.

The aim of the trust is to inspire engineering amongst young people. We started with this objective and will continue to do all we can to achieve outcomes. During the pandemic, the world changed considerably and, quite rightly, we have applauded the NHS for the amazing way people have been looked after while in the grips of Covid. However, without engineers, the NHS would not have had the resources to achieve so many positive outcomes. As a single example, I'll focus on one piece of equipment which has been an essential tool in fighting Covid – the ventilator. This is

a device which quickly became essential for saving lives and, as a result, was soon in very short supply.

A small company called Penlon found an innovative way of configuring equipment to produce an ICU ventilator that met the requirements of the NHS but they could only make two a day. The requirement was 200 times this. A consortium called Ventilator Challenge UK (VCUK) was created to bring together the best engineering and manufacturing businesses across the UK. This included aerospace, automotive, motorsport and medical device sectors. The consortium was only as good as the longest lead time for parts and supply. If chipsets were out of production, the team got the data and manufacturing was arranged in Israel and delivered on time. Five new factories were created for ventilator production at Ford, Airbus, McLaren, Penlon and STI. Amazingly this was done in three weeks. An open data system was set up so all could have access to one version of the truth at all times. This initiative enabled lightning responses to problems, unshakable change control and ultimately production.

Within one month, regulatory approval was granted and in just 12 weeks 11,680 units were completed, continuing at 400 per day. This doubled the amount of ventilators available to NHS.

The lessons learnt were: clarity of purpose, real openness, drawing on the right expertise regardless of rank, fit for purpose structures, and of course collaboration. It poses the questions, why can't we work like this all the time? What stops the unleashing of this potential within organisations? The answer is that there is very little to stop this ongoing approach.

What is shown here is what is possible if the right people are given the opportunity to do the right things.

I know we are on the right track in promoting careers in engineering and I hope this nation wakes up to the true value and potential of our engineers. If this Trust can influence just a small number of young people to become engineers of the future, it will have done a good job. Well, at least part of it, as I know we aim to see our ship steaming again to represent engineering of the past.

**John**





# Treasurer's & Trust Report

## Finances

We came to the end of the Recovery Grant on 30th June and by 14th July – the required date – we had submitted our reports and the summary of our expenditure to accompany them. We have not heard back from the Lottery yet – and nor have we received the final 10% payment – but I imagine there are a lot of submissions to be processed!

We re-opened the ship in early June. It was decided not to charge visitors but to ask for donations, as we have always done. Although there has been a constant stream of visitors, because of Covid restrictions, we have had to limit numbers. Donations have been extremely disappointing and we are debating what to do about charging for entry – though, of course, any charge will not apply to members!

In May, *Freshspring* was towed to Harland & Wolff's Appledore Shipyard and into their dry dock. Over the next three weeks both H&W's staff and our volunteers did a

For a ship, reaching the age of 75 is quite an achievement. This year, *SS Freshspring* celebrates 75 years since her launch in 1946, so to mark this anniversary, the Trust will be holding a celebration event on bank holiday Monday 30th August.

The ship will be open to visitors from 11.30am to 4.00pm, with some brilliant attractions to enjoy. We're thrilled to have Em Puddy performing her aerial hoop display as well as Anthony Burt, author of 'The Wish Fish', providing fun workshops and book signings. The Knot Tyers Association will teach their skills, while

John will provide steam engine rides around the car park.

The Way of the Wharves, a valued Bideford heritage resource, is supporting the event and we hope to have the Sea Cadets in attendance.

In the early evening, there will be a celebration event for Members, Volunteers, Trustees and Supporters. It's our opportunity to say thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm.

We're thrilled to be able to offer our evening audience a premier of the VR/360 film. John will give a brief presentation on *SS Freshspring's* progress to date and attendees will also be offered a complimentary bottle of 75th Anniversary Freshspring beer, which I'm sure, will go down a treat.

We look forward to celebrating with you.



great deal of work – no doubt described elsewhere in this magazine – and she returned to Bideford looking extremely smart. From a financial point of view, this was also a very successful visit. We had set aside, to that point, £43,000 towards work but the final cost turned out to be less than £15,000. We have therefore been able to release some of the funding for other purposes.

When we brought the ship to Bideford, we were required, as part of a contractual berthing agreement with Torridge District Council (TDC), to sign up to a Bond. This Bond required us to pay £9,000 in three tranches of £3,000 as a 'guarantee' that, if the ship sank or was abandoned, TDC would have the funds to remove the wreck. We paid the first £3,000 in 2016 but TDC have never asked for the balance.

Once the ship returned from Appledore, we felt it was worth opening a discussion with TDC about this Bond, not least because no other vessel in the harbour is under the same obligation! The Harbour Board unanimously voted to return our money and release the obligation, so it is now up to the Councillors to follow through!

Financially we are in a sound position, though I'm sure there will be bumps in the way ahead. To those members who so generously donate every month / quarter – a big thank you. To those who don't, if you would like to add your support – and ensure we remain in good health – our bank account details are:

Steamship Freshspring Trust, sort code 40-52-40 (CAF Bank), account number 00023232. Thank you in advance!

## Forward Planning

Now that the Recovery Grant has been 'closed' – though the work funded by it continues – we are looking to the next step. The Viability Study is still ongoing and, until there are some conclusions, setting a direction is difficult. We continue to apply for funding for smaller projects.

I am delighted to say that Brian Gooding rejoined us as a Trustee – his input was missed. Discussions about the future shape of the Trust are also ongoing, so there's little more to say at the moment!

**Simon Tattersall**

## New members

We welcome the following new members of the Trust:

Becca Craft	<i>Barnstaple, Devon</i>
David Keel	<i>Downend, Bristol</i>
Dave Price	<i>Torrington, Devon</i>
Sam Roberts	<i>Bideford, Devon</i>
Mike Turpin	<i>Hoylake, Wirral</i>

## Project Manager's Report

**SS Freshspring** returned from dry dock in Appledore on the evening of Wednesday 25th May and she looked amazing. Newly patched and painted, she was welcomed home by several well-wishers. The atmosphere on the quay was one of pride and also relief to have her back home safely.

The ship opened to visitors on the 6th June coinciding neatly with National Lottery Open week. Our team of Volunteer Stewards enabled 76 visitors to enjoy *SS Freshspring* on this first Sunday opening, which is quite an achievement when you consider that we limited numbers on board in order to maintain social distancing. Along with hand sanitising, mask wearing and fortnightly electrostatic spraying, we feel that the Trust is doing all it can to welcome the public safely.

Our Culture Recovery Fund ended on the 14th July so we had to report how we'd spent the £66,100. The lion's share went on the Viability Study, with re-opening costs, digital outputs and overheads absorbing most of the rest of the fund. I find the Completion Report really interesting, as amongst other things, it demonstrates the value of volunteer time as added value to the fund. Although this grant didn't encompass a huge amount of ship maintenance, according to the Lottery's calculations, our volunteers added £2,210 to the value of their investment.

The Lottery fund Awards for All also completed in July. This funded a refit to the ship's galley, helping us to provide suitable hand washing, cooking and rest room



*Freshspring her on her way to Appledore Shipyard earlier this year.*

facilities for our Volunteers, as well as salary costs. We are ever grateful for the Lottery's support.

L&R Consulting recently shared the Viability Interim report with the Trust via a well-attended Zoom meeting. It was interesting to hear their thoughts on ways that the Trust could become more sustainable. Unsurprisingly, the report provoked much debate, which I feel is a healthy response to new ideas and challenges. We look forward to receiving the Viability Final Report shortly.

The Bideford Water Festival, due to take place at the start of July was unfortunately cancelled this year. However, as *SS Freshspring* celebrates 75 years since her launch in



*A superb shot of Freshspring returning from the shipyard at Appledore.*





New First Aiders: Pete Gillett and Sam... ... Peter Harvey, Mike and John.

1946, we're excited to announce that we're holding our own event on bank holiday Monday, 30th August. Details of the celebration event which will involve our Sponsors, Members, Supporters and Volunteers can be found in a separate article.

It's been great having Becca and Sam on the team over the past couple of months. We all work part time, but meet up on board every Wednesday to discuss how we're progressing with our various work areas. It's good to be able to meet face to face and along with John to support each other in our endeavours to do our very best for the Trust.

Five volunteers and one member of staff completed and passed their First Aid training last month. Anne Budd and Richard Ker attended Governance training as part of the Heritage Compass programme. It's good to know that we're in safe hands on both counts!

Martin Kemp has finished filming and first round editing for the VR, so testing is imminent. We're keen to test the VR on a range of ages and abilities before making it available to the public, as the headsets themselves are a whole new world for many of us. We look forward to enjoying this new experience.

**Charlotte Squire**  
Project Manager

## Walking my way through Summer 2021

We caught up with one of our newer recruits, Rebecca Craft (Public Engagement Officer) to find out about her adventures this summer.

Being immersed in the outdoors and hiking are two of my greatest passions. Some may say I have a 'thirst for adventure' and this summer has been no different. At the end of June 2021, I walked the 100km Cotswold challenge; walking 62 miles with no sleep or rest and only stopping for food and refreshments. I completed this feat in just over 23 hours.

This was by far the hardest challenge I have ever faced, both mentally (getting lost twice during the night) and physically (battling over 60+ miles with 2,254m climbing). To put the height into perspective, this is the equivalent to the height of two times Snowdon!

As much as I love walking, I embarked on this to raise all important funds for Breast Cancer Now. Unfortunately, cancer touches most of our lives, in one way or another, so this was my opportunity to 'give something back' and help support future research.

If you would like to make a small donation, please visit <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rebecca-craft-cotswoldchallenge>. I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of my friends, family and colleagues and would like to extend a big thank you to all the support from TeamFreshspring. Your kind words and donations kept me going throughout the walk and I am pleased to be part of such a kind and thoughtful team of people.

Two weeks on from the challenge, I then visited the Lake District to climb Scafell Pike, the highest mountain in England, and enjoyed several cold water swims and cycles. The Lake District will forever hold a place in my heart as I spent many a summer there during my early 20s. The Lake District National Park is famous for its stunning scenery, abundant wildlife and cultural English heritage and yet again it did not disappoint.

I am already planning for my next adventure, camping for several days in Wales with just my walking boots, a rucksack packed with the essentials and OS map in hand...



### Christmas Cards

The Trust will be promoting its Christmas card in the next *Freshspring Magazine*, so please support this if you can. It all helps to keep us going and spread the word.

## Keeping TeamFreshspring up to date with first aid training

Rebecca Craft

**Thank you** to TTVS for organising first aid training for several volunteers and staff in July. As well as refreshing our first aid skills, the one-day course helped prompt a few changes on board (adding signage for the nearest defibrillator) as well as reviewing our current practises; ensuring *Freshspring* is up to date with the current health and safety guidance.

One of our volunteers, Pete Harvey, shared his thoughts with us: *"I found the course very useful and informative. It cleared up several areas of uncertainty I had beforehand, such as where you apply a tourniquet and introduced AED (defibrillator) training which wasn't in existence during my last training."*

*"The part that I found the most useful was the insistence on assessing the situation and making decisions based on that assessment. We were allowed the time to absorb this as we went through the practicalities."*

*"Our trainer Rosie was clear, positive and had an entertaining delivery style. Although they are skills that we never want to have to use, I feel that we could do our best, should the need arise, because of our training."*

Thanks to those who attended the day. If there are any training courses you think we should be attending, then please make John Puddy aware. We are always looking to make sure that TeamFreshspring are as well equipped as possible and would love to hear your suggestions!

## They asked, we listened (and answered!)

We caught up with Brian Bragg, one of our long-standing volunteers, as he shares some of the questions he has been asked while stewarding on board... Did you know the answers to all of these? Let's test your *Freshspring* knowledge...

**Q: What's the deck made of inside the crew quarters?**

**A:** A mixture of concrete and bitumen.

**Q: Why is the ship's wheel facing the wrong way?**

**A:** It isn't. The helmsman would stand to one side of it and steer with his right hand.

**Q: I was in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and the flag on my ship had the anchor upright, why is yours on its side?**

**A:** The design was changed in the 1960s. (I later found out the *Freshspring* never actually worked for the RFA, although most of her predecessors did. *Freshspring* worked for the Port Authority.)

**Q: If the steam engine has three cylinders, why are there four pressure gauges in the engine room?**

**A:** One for each cylinder and one for the boiler pressure.

**Q: (rather grumpily on boarding the *Freshspring*) Two teas please...**

**A:** Er, I think you want the barge next door. *And finally, the best of all...*

**Q: (on looking over the port side into the water) Look, there's a fish down there! How did that get there?**

**A:** Splutter! (I couldn't keep a straight enough face, so my colleague Roy had to answer that one for me!)

The *Freshspring* also attracts people from far and wide, remarks Brian: "As a steward you get to meet some fascinating and interesting people. One young man in particular was visiting his family in Bideford from New Zealand, where he worked as crew on the *Alucia*, the research vessel used by David Attenborough for his Blue Planet II series. He had some wonderful tales about his voyages to the Galapagos Islands, Antarctica and many other remote corners of the earth.

"Another visitor had served as a boy sailor on one of the *Freshspring's* sister ships. Among many other stories, he told of the time when he was travelling from the galley to the crew's mess with a plate of food, went down the ladder facing the wrong way and spilled the lot. Apparently, he was told off in no uncertain terms and was made to clear it all up.

"One elderly gentleman on a mobility scooter was spending a very long time looking at the *Freshspring* from the quayside. I said to him "I'm sorry we can't get you on board". This was when we still had the old gangway, he replied, "Don't worry, I know all about her as I painted her!" Interestingly, his job had been to travel the world assessing the paintwork on all manner of ships.

"You never know who you are going to meet on board and I love knowing that every Sunday is different." Thank you, Brian, for sharing your insight with us.

We want to take this opportunity to say a **big thanks to our dedicated team of Sunday volunteers, who donate time each week to enable us to open to the public.** You are the face of *Freshspring* and are helping to shape the future of her legacy; as we continue to inspire, educate and inform the public about our ship. If you would like to help steward for a few hours on a Sunday and meet like minded volunteers, or have any ideas for the future of *Freshspring*, then please get in touch with Becca Craft ([becca.craft@ssfreshspring.co.uk](mailto:becca.craft@ssfreshspring.co.uk)).







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75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
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## SS Freshspring from 2010 to date

### Brian Gooding & John Puddy

In this 75th anniversary 'special' of our magazine, we thought it appropriate to provide a history of the Trust and information about SS *Freshspring*.

For me (JP), it started in 2010, when I read a short paragraph in the Steam Boat Association's magazine *Funnel*. It stated that a small steamship lying at Newnham on Severn was to be broken up. This galvanised me to get on my motorbike and to see if I could see her. I arrived at the shipbreaking yard of Fred Larkham and luckily found the owner of the ship on board. John Richards was a volunteer for the previous owner and when he died, he left the ship to John. John had tried valiantly to keep the ship in some sort of order and risked his life to raise

John Puddy (left) with John Richards.



funds for materials. He actually walked about Newport in the night collecting money dropped by people.

Having seen SS *Freshspring*, I was determined that she should be saved. John R in the meantime wanted to give me the ship as, if she remained at the yard, she would be broken up. It was impossible for me to take SS *Freshspring* over as the liability would be horrendous and like John, I would make little progress.

It was around this time that I arranged to meet with Brian Gooding, who had also been following the ship and had been in touch with National Historic Ships.

Brian writes:

*In 2011, I travelled to the west bank of the River Severn in Gloucestershire to complete a quest that had begun 20 years or so before. On a visit to a waterways festival in Bristol around 1990, I had picked up a plan drawing of a steamship then based in the city's historic docks. On occasions I had come across the plan and wondered... did she still exist and, if so, where was she?*

*To cut a long story short, I managed to find out that she did indeed still exist and was on the register of the National Historic Ships who were able to put me in touch with the owner, John Richards, via a strong supporter and friend, John Puddy, and we soon arranged a visit. Probably fortunately, the ship is not normally visible from the main road but I soon found her and there she was, all 285 tons of her, resting alongside on the mud at low tide. At 121ft in length, with a beam of 24ft 6ins, she is not a huge ship but has a real character nonetheless. Access was interesting at that time: crossing the abyss between shore and ship on a plank, one's mind was focussed by the uninviting River Severn mud ten feet below!*

Brian and I met at the ship as he describes and afterwards went for lunch at a nearby café to plan. Fortunately, Brian was involved with national magazines focusing on steam heritage.

Brian writes:

*The ship is the former RFA water tanker, SS Freshspring, the last of the Fresh class of fourteen ships built for the Admiralty between 1940 and 1946 and used primarily to carry fresh water to Royal Navy*



Brian's first view of the ship at Newnham back in October 2010. Note the access – a scaffold board on a ladder, balanced on a tyre and some pallets!



warships. They were built by the Lytham Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. of Lytham St Annes, who also built the main engine and boiler.

After commissioning, she sailed to Malta where she operated until 1960 when she sailed back to the UK. Freshspring was then used on the south coast until 1975 at which time she had a final refit in Portsmouth Dockyard which included a boiler overhaul and a rebuild of the main engine. After this, she was towed to the Clyde to spend her final years with the Navy on standby for the resident water carrier.

She was paid off in the 1970s and awaited her fate in Gairloch until sold in July 1979 to a Bristol businessman, Oswald Burgess, who passed away in the early 1990s, leaving her in his will to a stalwart volunteer, John Richards.

Mr Burgess initially planned to steam the ship to Bristol but her classification had expired so he had her towed by tug. It was here that sadly she was robbed of all the valuable fittings from the wheelhouse, as well as bronze deck valves and some electrical wiring.



A grainy picture of Freshspring when based in Bristol.



The view of SS Freshspring at Newnham as seen from the east bank of the Severn.

Around 1990, with the docking fees at Bristol becoming prohibitive, Freshspring was towed to Gloucester Docks but she was not here long before being forced to move on. She was under tow again, this time to Newnham on Severn where she was laid up for 20 years or so. On the tidal Severn, she inevitably deteriorated despite John Richard's best efforts, but a survey carried out by the newly formed Trust showed that, while the hull has deteriorated, it is still in repairable condition.

Starting at the bow, there is accommodation for the crew, as well as stores space and the anchor chain locker. Working back along the deck, there are four hatches over each of the forward fresh water tanks, two of which held 88 tons each, the others 102 tons each. Behind the forward tanks is the wheelhouse and master's accommodation, though the former was boarded up following deterioration of the original.

Immediately behind the wheelhouse is the funnel which sits atop the boiler room. Access to this was past a large forced-draft fan, this driven by a single cylinder Sissons steam engine. The air is forced down to the furnaces via a multi-tubular air heater positioned below the funnel base. There are almost 200 tubes which will need replacing. The three furnace Scotch boiler is 13ft in diameter and 10ft 6ins long, with a working pressure of 180psi. The boiler was converted from coal to oil firing in 1961, and was last steamed in 1990.

Access to the boiler room is via a vertical ladder to climb down to the boiler front. Here is the oil firing system made by Wallsend Howden, as well as the former coal bunkers, some of which have been converted to oil bunkers. The coal holes on deck for filling the bunkers are still visible.





Aft of the boiler room is the spacious engine room with a 450hp triple expansion steam propulsion engine with cylinders of 8, 18 & 30ins bore with a 22ins stroke. The main engine also drives an air pump and two boiler feed pumps by rocking levers as well as two bilge pumps. Reversing is by a single cylinder steam engine and the engine can be barred over by hand. Exhaust is to a surface condenser which is cooled by sea water pumped around by another small steam engine.

Electricity is supplied by a Clarke Chapman generator driven by a single cylinder Robey steam engine. Nearby is a steam-driven centrifugal pump which can be used for fire fighting or salvage duties. Forward is a vertical cargo pump by Dawson & Downie which can pump around 100 tons of water per hour off the ship. On the other side of the engine room is a general service pump which also acts as a boiler feed pump. The machinery and boiler are in superb condition having only had few hours' use since refit.

Aft of the engine room are two more water tanks, of 46 tons capacity each, behind which is the accommodation for three engineers. At each end of the ship is a ballast tank.

Although built 75 years ago, Freshspring is a absolute classic of a bygone age. Her design is more akin to a ship over 100 years old and all her machinery is steam-driven. She is one of very few coastal steamers left, and certainly the last one in the world with the potential to go to sea again.

The upshot was a desire to do something positive and after a lot of work, a charitable trust was formed with John Puddy as Chairman. I was pleased to hear that



The initial trustees of the charity after a meeting at the Hollycombe museum in West Sussex.

progress was being made in an email from John, and I was honoured to be asked if I would become a trustee. It didn't take long to say 'yes', for it was as a direct result of my article in a magazine that matters had progressed.

Some time went by. However, as a direct result of subsequent articles Brian wrote in a couple of magazines, a group of interested people met in Newnham to discuss whether there was a way forward. I soon met Stephen Attenborough in a pub near Usk. Stephen is an engineer and has experience of heritage charity projects. He joined us as a Trustee and we both focused on raising funds. Indeed, we must be grateful to Stephen as he dedicated a whole year, working virtually full time to ensure we had a good chance of saving the ship.

With a potential group of Trustees put together, in early 2013 we set up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The charity made good progress in the first year and emergency repairs were done

to keep the ship watertight from both above and below. Regular working parties were held with a group of enthusiastic volunteers. These volunteers must be commended as they had the worst time. They had the formidable task of trying to keep the water out of a rusting hull on the tidal banks of the river Severn. I would sometimes visit to find them deep in the mud both inside and outside of the ship. Key to this small group were Stephen Attenborough (who is still a much valued Trustee) Mark Roselaar and John Austin. A preliminary, cursory boiler inspection was undertaken, which showed hope for the future of the boiler. Thanks to the work done over the years by John Richards, the main engine and auxiliaries were all in good condition, and await the return of steam to power them.



The Trust was able to acquire a excellent working model of Freshspring which is used at promotional events, such as the Boat Show at the Excel in London's dockland.



To support our new team, I moved forward by contacting National Historic Ships and as a result, we arranged a ship visit for a representative who came along and took lots of photographs. This was to record the ship in case she was lost. But no further action was taken. I also engaged with everyone I could to find out more about how we could use the ship and to understand how we could support careers in maritime. This activity took me across the country and many friendships were formed, which have proved very beneficial to the Trust over the years. It also enabled us to build learning projects with partners such as The University of the West of England and Whiteland Engineering Ltd. We joined the National Maritime Development Group and I attended all the meetings I could as this group are very instrumental in careers at sea. I also started giving talks to a huge range of people including Universities as far away as Nottingham. We must be very grateful for our early supporters, particularly as, without exception, they are all still with us and great friends to boot.

My main focus was to raise the profile of the ship and to raise funds. Also crucially, to find somewhere for her to go. I arranged to meet the late Martyn Heighton, Director of National Historic Ships, who was hugely inspirational and remained a positive supporter for his remaining life. It was Martyn who believed that the ship was of National importance and he worked alongside us to support our fundraising efforts with advice and guidance. The weakness was no permanent berth. I tried all around the country to find a secure berth for the ship but with no luck. We almost made it with Bristol but the supportive Harbour Master retired just as we agreed terms. I even joined the Bristol Ships Board, which advised the City Council but with little luck. The result was a change of policy by the Council and *SS Freshspring* was rejected. On one occasion, I took a friend from Bideford to see the ship and he casually said "What about Bideford?" Quite frankly, I had not even thought of it. However, this was to be a turning point and with support from a Councillor and much lobbying, a berth was agreed and we gained a letter offering a long term berth from the Harbour Master. The Trust was now able to confidently apply for funds in the knowledge that we had a berth for the ship.

By this time, I had met high profile fundraiser, Victoria Symes and with her support and that of Martyn Heighton, we applied to the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) to dock the ship, carry out repairs and take her to Bideford. A pivotal element in the application was the support offered by Anthony Glover, who runs KML, a towing company. Anthony offered free tows to the dock and then on to Bideford. This very substantial offer acted as match funding for the application to NHMF. A while later, I received a call from NHMF telling me that we were successful and £155,000 was to be awarded to the Trust. Ironically, the call came just days before a Gala Dinner that we had arranged in Bideford to gain local support. It was a ridiculously extravagant affair for a charity with a ship in a scrap yard and with no money, but we wanted to show we meant business. This was the idea of Victoria, who mentors and supports us to date. The dinner was a huge success and we sold out at £55 per head. The great and the good attended along with our new Patron, Earl Attlee, who has been an inspiration to us throughout. We had Tom Cunliffe

as guest speaker and our dear friend Martyn Heighton came along to speak about the importance of the ship to maritime heritage. Now, with our news of funds, the dinner became a celebration and Martyn announced that we had raised the funds and that the ship WAS coming to Bideford later in the year.

During the early years, the trust was lucky to have been given valuable help and advice by the late Barry Smith, a ship broker whose firm had some years previously sold another of the class to a Dutch firm for scrapping. He donated a number of artefacts to the society. Sadly Barry, who was made a Patron of the Society, died of bowel cancer in December 2013.

The aim of the Trust is to return the ship to sailing condition and to use her to educate would-be engineers of the future by providing school and educational trips, as well as converting part of the cargo space to passenger accommodation so by providing holiday trips, she can generate enough funds to be a viable operation.

With a restoration bill of around £2.5 million to complete hull repairs and to



As part of the gala dinner at the Royal Hotel in Bideford, steam enthusiast and professional auctioneer John Wakeham came along to try to extract more of people's hard earned cash. **INSET:** John Puddy and Earl Attlee give the thumbs up to the good news.



bring her back to steaming condition, it is clear that very substantial grant aid will be needed, and we have gained ongoing support from The Heritage Lottery Fund, for example.

With NHMF funding in place, the ship was towed to Sharpness Shipyard for repairs to the hull to make her seaworthy. The hull was blasted and when works were complete, painted in black. Some 105 sq. metres of steel were added to the hull, which is less than we estimated by 45 sq. metres. Indeed, we left the shipyard almost exactly on budget. An unheard of outcome, very much achieved by the excellent yard Manager who did all he could to ensure a positive outcome.

With the ship surveyed and ready for sea, her new life began. She was collected by *Severn Sea*, the KML tug and towed majestically to Bideford. She arrived to a warm welcome and over the past five years since she has been here has attracted thousands of visitors and a very large and highly valued volunteer team who seem to be able to do anything.

During the five years, we have gained two new Patrons and Trustees local to the



*Freshspring looked very careworn as she waited in the sea lock at Sharpness after arrival from Newnham on Severn.*



*Not many weeks later, and she is looking much better in the dry dock at Sharpness preparing her for her trip to Bideford.*

area. The energy of this team has ensured that *SS Freshspring* has a real future and I thank them all for committing to the Trust.

As you know, the ship was docked in May, just under five years after initial docking and she was found to still be in very good order. Currently the Trust is undertaking a viability study to determine the most sustainable future for the ship. This will lead us to the next study which will be to assess the feasibility of converting *SS Freshspring* to carry passengers.

The Trust is increasingly confident that its hard work will pay off and in a few years time, the *SS Freshspring* will once again have a fire in her boiler and steam in her engine and set to sea once more.



*The timber for the new mast arrives on board.*



*A picture of Freshspring at Bideford some time before her latest dry docking at Appledore. Even so, she looks smart with her new wheelhouse.*

# A Life At Sea 50 Years Ago – My First Voyages

Tim Gibbs

By mid-1964, I came to the end of my engineering cadetship and reached the dizzy heights of Junior Engineer (J/E). My first trip was on the *City of Worcester* with a trip to America when we loaded a cargo mainly of sports cars and whisky, of which the dockers in Glasgow managed to consume a huge amount while it was being loaded. The Atlantic crossing was awful, taking about 17 days to get to Philadelphia as, try as he might, the Captain couldn't avoid the storm as it seemed to follow us wherever we went. At one stage I found it was quite good to try to sleep in the engine room wedged up against the starting air bottles as this was near the centre of motion of the ship where the movement was relatively small. However, we did eventually manage to spend a very pleasant Christmas in Houston before returning to the UK via a lot of ports in the Southern States.

During my early years at sea, I was fortunate to sail with some really good engineers who passed on lots of knowledge and gave me much really useful practical experience. I particularly remember Chief Engineer (C/E) "Thumper" Harrison with whom I sailed on a number of occasions. He gave me the responsibility for doing many things which were well above my very modest pay grade at that time. Then there was C/E "Lenny" Newton who I initially thought was bit of an East End spiv but he was actually a great guy and he kept my nose to the grindstone by ensuring I studied for at least two hours a day in addition to keeping two four hour watches when we were at sea. There could have been the opportunity for some resentment from the traditionally trained engineers that we, as engineer cadets, were effectively getting a short cut to our Certificates of Competency with our sandwich course but I never detected any sign of that. In fact, they seemed to enjoy having us around – maybe because, not having experienced the rough and tumble of traditional shipyard training, we were too naïve to avoid some of the tricks they played on us.

After the trip on the 'Worcester', I did the maiden voyage of the *City of Glasgow* where the C/E, Matt Pallett, provided us with some ongoing amusement. Early in the voyage he fell asleep

in a deck chair and got quite badly sunburnt. Unfortunately, he was wearing a string vest at the time and its shadow became boldly imprinted on his chest and no amount of sunbathing during the next couple of months removed the pattern.



*City of Glasgow (Photoship).*

My next trip was the *City of Hereford* to West Africa, returning with a cargo of 7,000 tonnes of foul smelling fishmeal from Walvis Bay for Rotterdam. The following trip on the 'Hereford' was much more interesting as the vessel got caught up in the Indo-Pakistan War and was arrested and interned in Karachi. Although the war lasted less than three weeks, we were there much longer. That turned out to be my longest trip and I was away for over eight months and I often wondered, after the event, how much the munitions we took to Karachi from Canada helped to precipitate the war. We had a great time there with all sorts of crazy things happening. On arrival the authorities arrested all our Indian crew and took them away to lock them up to the accompaniment of much wailing and gnashing of teeth. However, there were a great many ships in port with Indian crews who suffered the same fate and by this time they couldn't find anywhere to put ours so they were soon returned with naval guards placed over them for the duration.

Soon after this, a naval officer, covered in gold braid, turned up and demanded to know how he could immobilise our engine. We showed him a length of pipe which we told him supplied the starting air to the engine but in fact was a drain pipe that served no great purpose. Happy with this, he sent some fitters from the naval dockyard to remove the pipe and they left with it over their shoulder confident that we couldn't make a run for it. A few days later we were told that we had to move along the dock but almost got caught out because we forgot, until the very last moment, to ask them to come and put the pipe back so we could start the engine. We were made to move a number of times after this so this pipe game had to be repeated each time.

We managed to get the customs officials to play cricket with us regularly on the dockside and this was a great relief from the boredom until one day the ball went into the water and the Second Mate jumped into the water to retrieve it. A passing naval patrol boat spotted him and started shooting. Fortunately, they missed but that was the end of our cricket and I think, also, the Second Mate's underpants. Not long after we arrived we ran out of our staple drink, Tennent's Lager. However, the beer store was full of Export Guinness which no one really liked until, that is, we also found many



*City of Hereford (harwichanddovertcourt.co.uk).*

cases of tonic water. We soon settled into the delights of Guinness and tonic and, not unsurprisingly, everyone put on a lot of weight over the next few weeks.

At one point we had a Russian ship moored alongside us and after a couple of days, their Kommissar asked for a meeting. It transpired that they were very worried about having to use residual fuel,

the rubbish stuff we always used, because they had only ever used diesel oil. Nice work if you can afford it. They couldn't get enough diesel to get back to their Black Sea base so were going to have to use residual fuel, the difference being that with diesel fuel you more or less put it straight into the engine whereas residual fuel has to be processed and heated before it could be used. Their ship was only a couple of years old and when we went into the engine room, it was clear that they had all the necessary equipment but didn't seem to know how to use it, or perhaps it was just a lack of confidence. It was not possible to work that out.

Language could have been a bit of a problem but there are many things to point at in an engine room so communication turned out to be not too great an issue after all. We spent a day familiarising ourselves with their system and on the second morning prepared everything for an engine trial in the afternoon. It was interesting to see that they had no problem getting permission from the authorities for the trial and they obviously hadn't had their engine immobilised as ours, supposedly, was. Their engine and systems were fairly similar to ours so it was a doddle to us but the Russians appeared to think it was some form of black magic and seemed totally amazed when the engine started first time and responded normally to the controls. There followed much vodka drinking that evening in their C/E's cabin but before things got too blurred, we noticed that although it was, in most respects a very modern well fitted vessel, the baths were huge cast iron affairs with scrolled feet, and toilets were flushed with a high level cast iron cistern and chain. I seem to recall that the vessel was built in Poland or perhaps it was only the Sulzer main engine?

We were eventually moved down the dock, quite near the entrance, and had started to get problems with the hot shrapnel from the anti-aircraft guns falling on the ship resulting, one night, in a lifeboat cover and some deck planking being set on fire. This prompted the Captain to think that making a run for it might not be such a stupid idea so one night we were all excited and set to go and then we collectively got cold feet. This turned out to be no bad thing as, when we were eventually released, we discovered that the underwater surfaces were so badly fouled with tropical weed and shell fish that our speed was reduced from 14.5 to 9 knots so it wouldn't have turned out to be much of a run. Sad to say, over 50 years after these events, there is still conflict between India and Pakistan.

My first few trips had been technically quite uneventful but life became decidedly more exciting when I joined the *City of Poona*, a 1948-built Doxford-engined vessel, for a six month trip as 4/E. The company had decided to realign the main engine despite the fact that it had previously given no



*City of Poona (Charlie Hill).*

trouble and it was well settled into its current state. However, when we set off, it was obvious that was not the smartest idea they had ever had as we started to have a number of main engine bearing failures caused by the new alignment of the engine. These requiring extended stays in port to get them re-metalled as we had quickly used all our spare bearings, but after that was sorted, things settled down for a while as we headed to the Far East.

When we first got to Borneo a vitamin C "poisoning" incident occurred. A few cases of bottles of rosehip syrup from the cargo had been over-carried and the Chief Officer asked whether we wanted some. Some bright spark wondered what gin and rosehip syrup tasted like and so scientific tests were instigated. After some initial difficulty getting the two to mix, the full scale test went ahead, resulting in some very sore heads the following morning. But it wasn't only heads as we all had upset stomachs and red blotches on our skin. After some questioning by the doctor, he concluded we were suffering from an overdose of vitamin C. So, it is definitely true after all; you can have too much of a good thing.

While approaching Tawau in Borneo, I was attempting to start another generator, which on this ship was always a bit of a lottery, when there was a huge explosion. The explosion was in the starting air system for the generator engines and most of the pipework was wrecked and I was thrown across the engine room with my eyes full of debris. Fortunately, there was a British Army base in Tawau at the time where they patched me up and then somehow I ended up in a French eye clinic in Bangkok while the ship went on to, I think, Japan. I rejoined the ship on its way back and I considered that I was very fortunate not to lose my eyesight and surprisingly suffered no permanent damage other than having quite bloodshot eyes ever since.

There was soon more excitement as we headed to Singapore. As you looked at the three generators from the main engine control position, they were numbered the opposite way around from their switchboard controls. This had been causing confusion and the odd mishap in the 18 years since the vessel was built but was just accepted as one of those things. I was on watch one night about 2am when I smelt something electrical burning and it didn't take long to spot smoke coming from the electrical end



*City of Worcester (shipspotting.com).*

of No.1 generator. This was caused by a water leak on No.2 spraying on top of it. By chance, I had just started No.3 generator so I was quickly able to transfer the electrical load from the burning No.1 machine. Well, that would have been the case if, in my haste, I hadn't forgotten about



the switchboard numbering issue and instead transferred all the electrical load onto the failing machine. There was a bang, the lights went out and the main engine slowed to a stop. The whole ship was now in darkness, except that a good bit of the engine room was illuminated by a Catherine wheel of sparks and molten solder and copper flying from the armature of No.1 generator. In the event, my error didn't make things much worse as the armature was already going to be a write-off. However, the C/E, Matt Pallett, he of string vest fame, thought it provided some unnecessary excitement on this already eventful trip. Well, that was my benign interpretation of what he said.

The ship actually carried a spare armature. It was in a large lead-lined wooden box but it was fixed in a seemingly inaccessible place in the top of the engine room casing and we had previously joked that we didn't fancy the job of ever having to extract it. Well, we may not have fancied it but now we didn't have a choice. It required the rigging of some unlikely looking, and probably very unsafe, skyhooks to get it down to the bottom of the engine room. When we came to fit it and couple it to the generator engine, we heard strange knocking noise coming from inside as it was being turned round. Peering through the commutator risers, we could see a screwdriver and a small pipe wrench that some kind person had left inside when it was built. There followed a very tricky job of unsoldering the risers from the copper bars, prizing them apart, extracting the offending items and then straightening everything up and re-soldering the risers.

We weren't done then as we had considerable difficulty getting the alignment correct between engine and generator and eventually gave up trying to get the generator pedestal bearing to run cool. We rigged a cooling system that just about managed to keep the temperature under control. We had to use it for the rest of the voyage whenever we ran the machine which we did as little as possible. Unfortunately, we had to have all three generators on for entering and leaving port so that just added to the excitement each time. The ship did, however, sort of redeem itself as it managed to get us back to London with about 20 minutes to spare in time for the 1966 World Cup Final.

Twelve hour days were the norm on the 'Poona' for what seemed to be weeks on end and, in port, when it was normal to work tropical hours from 4am 'till noon, we were often working 4am 'till 4 or sometimes even 6pm. She was a real workhouse but did illustrate the adage that the harder working the ship, the happier it was as there was no time to mope around and complain.

A year later I was back on the *City of Hereford* and we were within an hour of getting caught in the Suez Canal at the start of the Six Day War. A number of ships weren't as lucky and got trapped in the Canal and a few were sunk, resulting in the Canal being blocked for many years. Having escaped that fate, we turned around and headed home via South Africa, stopping at Mombasa for more fuel, but the trip didn't end well for me. When we were entering the Thames, I got both legs scalded when the cover joint on a boiler stop valve blew out, resulting in me being taken off the ship and spending a few days in hospital in Tilbury. Within six weeks I was able to get back to work and complete my qualifying sea time with a short trip on the *City of Gloucester*. That allowed me to go back to college and obtain my Second Class Certificate of Competency and start a new phase of my career.

## Tales Too Ticklish To Tell *Part 1*

**John Boxall**

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

### **The Great Hall of Technology (AKA The Engine & Boiler Rooms)**

With Instructions on How to Make the (Insert Profanity of Choice) Ship Go.

So, let's start in the boiler room. Walking into the boiler room, my eyes fell upon a notice 'Instructions for Engineers and Others using the Wallsend Howden Oil Fuel System'. Basically what happens is that fuel is pressurised by steam-driven oil pumps, then heated to its flash point by steam oil heaters before passing into a burner in the furnace. Air for combustion is provided by a steam fan at the base of the funnel.

It went on to list all the things we should know about the system, starting with the flash point of the fuel. Well, there was some sort of flammable liquid in the tanks but what it was, let alone what the flash point was, was unknown. More importantly, however, there wasn't a temperature gauge in the system anyway.

Now you may well have spotted a complication from my description of the system – all the boiler services were powered by steam. In the old days, starting a ship would probably mean getting a tug alongside to provide a steam supply or as she was an Admiralty vessel, get a stationary boiler alongside. Now in 1980s Bristol, no such facilities existed so we had to resort to an auxiliary heater worked by a paraffin blowlamp and a hand-operated pump. Later, an electric pump was added to help things, but it wasn't



*Freshspring in the Floating Harbour in Bristol.*

always there. With 45 tons of water to be raised to about 40psi before any of the main systems would start, that's quite a job.

The other issue with *Freshspring's* boiler is that Scotch boilers have fairly poor circulation. This means that you have to heat them through slowly, otherwise you can find that you have 180psi of steam 'on the clock' and the bottom is stone cold. This means, of course, part of the boiler has expanded but the rest of it hasn't so there are significant expansion stresses set up. One Friday evening, I turned up to help raise steam only to find that we had 80psi on the clock already, steam heat and electricity was on. Basically the boiler crew had just 'got on with it' and Oswald had just given birth to a large litter of kittens.

Anyway one day it fell to me to help raise steam. Climb into boiler room and nearly blow myself up lighting the blow torch. Open the suction valve from the bunkers and the return to suction on the port side – basically to allow the fuel to circulate as it warms up. With the heater on, start the electric pump and heat the fuel through. After ten minutes or so, shut return to suction, light my torch – rag wrapped around a heavy gauge wire, dipped in paraffin and lit, open the inspection port, oil on and ignite. Bang, fuel ignites, remove torch and flame goes out. I'm about to reinsert the torch when the fuel ignites from burning fuel on the furnace wall, Bang!! Smoke billows out around the smokebox doors. Burner then goes out, re-ignites, etc., etc. – and the furnace is between me and the exit.

Anyway this goes on and on, clouds of black smoke emerge from *Freshspring's* funnel. The wind carried it all the way up St Augustines Reach, across the Centre and as far as Electricity House on the far side of the Centre. The following day I was away on the Steam Specials for the 150th Anniversary of the GWR, but it seems that someone called the Fire Brigade. Later the oil burners were removed from the Port Furnace and replaced by a rudimentary grate with angle iron firebars. This allowed steam to be raised using coal which is much simpler, possibly something that might be considered for the future.

One rather interesting exchange I had with Oswald was that when we were packing up after a move, he said "I hope you went easy on the starboard furnace, John; there's a mark on the furnace and we don't know if it's a crack or a tooling mark." "Thanks, Oz, so I could have been sharing the stokehold with 45 tons of boiling water..."

This, of course, makes me wonder, did the ship possess a boiler certificate in her Bristol days? I was certainly never aware that the necessary work for an inspection had been done.

But when steam was up and the oil burners running, there wasn't a lot to do in the boiler room, just have an occasional look at the water level and pressure gauges. Given the size of boiler and the fairly modest demands placed on it, it could easily cope with the demands from the engine. If only the generator and auxiliaries were running, once pressure had got to 80psi or so, they could run for an hour or so before the burner needed re-lighting.

Certainly compared with the engine room, once steam was up, the boiler room could be a quite peaceful place as you just kept an eye on everything and listened to the distinctive thump of the main engine.

One tip I must give though is make sure the gauge glasses are drained over the winter; one winter they froze and smashed, flooding the boiler room.

So having got 40psi on the clock, what next? Well, one day, admittedly we were only running the machinery at our berth but Oswald asked me to take charge of the machinery so I can go through the procedure from start to finish. Before you start touching the machinery, make sure that all the vents are open and facing into wind, also open the Engine Room skylights – once it gets hot, you will never manage to cool the place down so best to stop it getting hot in the first place.

To start with everything needs to be oiled. In a car engine, it's fairly straightforward, as there is no water running around. (OK, in theory, inspection of the crankcase of a Morris Minor once suggests otherwise!) In a steam engine, however, the lubricating oil has to deal with water flying everywhere.

Most of the parts will need lubricating with 'Steam Oil'. The old saying 'Oil and water don't mix' was clearly written by someone who had never eaten mayonnaise. Steam oil, like mayonnaise forms an emulsion, i.e. oil and water mix, which retains its lubricating properties which other oils won't. Look on the Morris Lubricants website for more details.

From memory, the Duplex (up and down) pumps are an 'oil can' job. The rotary auxiliaries need steam oil in the cylinder lubricator (the little thing driven by a belt), and a crankcase oil – in the crankcase – there is a dip stick to check.

There is no cylinder lubrication on the main engine. The steam is saturated so lubrication is provided by the water condensed from the steam. If you use superheated steam, like a railway locomotive, you have to lubricate the cylinders. On a ship this causes a major problem: as the steam is condensed then reused in the boiler, you have to get the oil out again.

On the top platform there are a number of small oil reservoirs. These feed into oil pipes via worsted wicks. You will need to fish these out of the reservoir and put one in each pipe before filling the reservoir up.

The oil pipes lead down either to bearings, in the case of the crankshaft bearings, or drip into various oil cups on the wiggly bits.

I suggest that you need to spend a bit of time filling up all these little cups, squirt oil onto the crosshead slippers, valve and piston glands, etc. Also I have been told that you should turn the engine over at some stage; there is gear to do it by hand, and at the bottom of each crank stroke, check that you can get your hand under the Big End. In the good old days, junior engineers were expected to check the temperature of the bearings by putting their hand on them – while the engine was running. If there wasn't enough clearance you could lose your fingers.

Lubricating an engine like this is called 'total loss' lubrication. Having stood between the main engines of *Shieldhall* in her working days as she headed towards the dumping grounds at full speed and experienced the joys of being showered in what looks like watery mayonnaise, I can fill you in on where the 'total loss' goes.

# A life in the Royal Navy and beyond...

## Stuart McQueen

I was born on 24th April 1949 in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, and moved about east and south England due to my father's work. For two years we lived in Winchester where, having visited the Navy Days in Portsmouth, I decided that the Royal Navy was for me. We then lived near Witney in Oxfordshire where I went to the Grammar School.

On 3rd October 1966, I joined the Royal Navy at HMS *Raleigh* in Torpoint in Cornwall. After four months training, I joined HMS *Maidstone*, the submarine depot ship in Faslane, Scotland. I was with the *Maidstone* for one year during which time I was employed in several engineering tasks, among which were general duties on the floating dock. At the tender age of 18, I went to Greenock to join HMS *Barrington* for a month as extra for watchkeeping duties. The ship's machinery was identical, albeit larger and burning coal, to *Freshspring*.

It was during my time on *Maidstone* that I was attracted to serving in the Submarine Service. In fact the first submarine I went to sea on was HMS *Tiptoe*, built in the 1940s and saw war service.

In February 1968, I joined a frigate, HMS *Leander* in Portsmouth, as a watchkeeper and maintaining auxiliary machinery. I stayed on *Leander* until I joined HMS *Dolphin* in Gosport in August 1970. After completing my submarine training, I joined HMS *Valiant* in Chatham Dockyard as a nuclear watchkeeper. On completion of refit, *Valiant* was based in Devonport. As I was still single at the time, this was ideal as my parents had moved to Instow as my father was promoted as manager of the Nat West Bank on the quay at Bideford.

In early 1974, I left *Valiant* and joined HMS *Forth*, the depot ship in Devonport working in the Nuclear Repair Section. During this time, *Freshspring* used to bring demineralised water to the *Forth*. (Yes, I have actually seen her steaming.)

In 1975, I joined HMS *Conqueror* in Scotland. In 1978 I completed another course in HMS *Dolphin*. I then went to HMS *Raleigh* for two years instructing new entry trainees. This was inter-spaced with working in the boat workshop on the River Lynher, and as engineer on the sea training ship HMS *Dittisham*.

In April 1980 I got the posting I really wanted – HMS *Superb*, as the ship's systems Chief. *Superb* was based in Devonport. The first four months we were dry docked in the new Submarine Refit Complex. We then went on to carry out Cold War Patrols, and also a spell in the Falklands in 1982. In mid 1985, I joined HMS *Defiance*, the new base within the dockyard.

I was Ship Manager to HMS *Sovereign*. This task was to manage the submarine's maintenance programme and be the contact between the submarine and shore support services. I also supported French, German, Dutch, American, Canadian,

Norwegian, and English visiting submarines. During this time, I qualified as a Yachtmaster and sailed many hours instructing on Service yachts, and also my own 32ft yacht.

I left the Navy in 1989 and was offered a job in the Dockside Test Organisation, as a test engineer in the Nuclear Submarine refitting section. While awaiting taking up the position, I worked in a wet fish shop and HGV driving. After a year the work dried up due to operational reasons.

I then joined the Merchant Navy and served for two years as a third engineer. I was then invited to take up my old position in the dockyard. In late 2001, the Royal Navy was desperately short of experienced man power and I re-joined the RN. I went to sea and re-qualified on HMS *Torbay*, I then joined HMS *Talant* as head of section for the refit in Devonport, on completion of which I joined HMS *Spartan* as head of section for her lay up for disposal. After this I was appointed to HMS *Raleigh* to run the Fire School.

In May 2010 I retired from the Royal Navy to be employed by Babcock in Keynsham in the Submarine Support Management Group which involved investigating submarine system equipment defects and advising on remedial action.

Because of health problems, in 2011 I was transferred to Devonport and was employed in the Nuclear Facilities Department investigating defects and maintenance planning. In 2014 I was appointed as an engineer in the office which carried out control of work on a Nuclear Submarine which was in dockyard hands. In 2017 at the age of 68, I was retired on health grounds.

In July 2019 I was visiting Instow and on returning through Bideford, I saw the *Freshspring* and decided to join the team. After several visits, I have some 1,500 photos of the machinery and am building a database of all the machinery on the ship and all the work carried out. I have many thoughts on the way ahead for the ship.

Apart from my above interests, I am a co-director of the Worcester Locomotive Society which own two locomotives at the South Devon Railway, also an active member of the Royal British Legion. My other passions are photography (mostly technical) my extensive model railway.

During the last several months, the submarine HMS *Courageous* which is the museum in Devonport has been in a docking period and I have been involved in giving assistance into various procedures.

My wife and I have two dogs, a German Shepherd and a Labrador, both rescued, which we enjoy walking. As our son and grandchildren live in Australia, these are our children.

I am desperate to be able to get back on the ship as I have more research and recording work to do. I was depressed on being informed that I was being retired as I thought that I would be bored; far from it, I am fully employed!



## Freshspring Steam Beer!

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



## Leaving a legacy to the SS Freshspring Trust

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

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

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

### CODICIL

I (full name).....

of (full address).....

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

I give, free of Inheritance Tax, the sum of

£..... (.....pounds)

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

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

Signed in the presence of:

First witness  
Signature

Second Witness  
Signature

.....  
Full name

.....  
Full name

.....  
Address

.....  
Address

.....  
Occupation

.....  
Occupation

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

# Freshspring's Sponsors

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



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