

# Freshspring Magazine



No.31 Summer 2022

*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

**Secretary, Treasurer**

**& Conservation Manager:**

Stephen Attenborough\* stephen.attenborough@ssfreshspring.co.uk

**Membership & Website:** Richard Ker\* membership@ssfreshspring.co.uk  
01237 422 758

**Learning & Education:** Huw Davies\* huw.davies@ssfreshspring.co.uk

**IT & Social Media Networking**

Anne Budd\* anne.budd@ssfreshspring.co.uk

**Fundraising & Forward Planning**

Annemarie Shillito\* annemarie@ashillito.co.uk

Brian Gooding\* brian@steamheritage.co.uk

**Operations Manager:** Charlotte Squire charlotte.squire@ssfreshspring.co.uk

**Community Learning Officer:** Sam Roberts learning@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 open for public visits on Sundays. For members' visits 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).

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

Design & Production by Steam Heritage Publishing Ltd, Cranleigh, Surrey.

© 2022. Steamship Freshspring Trust.



**FRONT COVER:** *The tide is going out but our ship looks superb in the Spring sunshine on Wednesday 27th April this year.* **Brian Gooding**

## From the Chair

**The summer** has started well for the Trust with a major school activity over a week with 250 12 year olds engaged in maritime related projects. It was so successful that the school have booked again for next year. There will be much more about this in the magazine.

We have put in a great deal of energy to create activity and obtain resources for enhancing what we do for young people and during the school week we were able to bring all of this together which has clearly shown that we are doing the right thing. Young people enjoyed the experiences and were keen to tell us so. It also created a valuable way to learn our favoured STEM subjects. We have several funders who we thank very much for supporting our work in learning and this has been crucial in the level of delivery we are now capable of.

We are very keen to work with other organisations and to this end we invite others to join us at events and to mutually signpost to gain higher footfall. As an example, I was able to speak at the Rolle Canal Society AGM recently and to see the remarkable progress they are making, particularly at Rosemoor Gardens at the top of the cut. This is a site which includes several limekilns and the well preserved remains of a tucking mill. We now work closely with this group.

I am very pleased to be delivering talks again. These help to keep people informed and to bring new groups into Trust activities. Recently I was able to speak to the Bideford Women's Institute. As a result, they knitted Easter chicks and many other lovely items for us to use and give away. I was pleased that they wanted to deliver the items themselves and to look around the ship. In the meantime, I met with a Laurel and Hardy re-enactment group who wanted an opportunity to perform. I was able to bring both groups together on the ship without either knowing. The result was a ship visit that the ladies will not forget. The photos in this magazine support this.

Just this Bank Holiday weekend we attended three events over three days. They were Northam May Fair (pictured), Merton Vintage Rally and Kingsley School Fete. The ship was also open on Saturday. This highlights the commitment of our most remarkable volunteer team, without whom, we would have no project.

As we move forward, our challenges require more skills and, as a team we are up skilling to ensure Trust Governance matches our progress. Our aim has not changed and we continue to strive to achieve an operational ship, one that will provide a valuable maritime heritage experience which will enable us to work in





other areas. Today, I am setting off to attend an event on the *Daniel Adamson*, another steamer, to celebrate six years of continuous operation since her full restoration. The Danny team have been a great inspiration to us as it shows that a derelict ship can be brought back to life and have a successful future in operation. We continue to work closely with the team and our other good friends at SS *Shieldhall*.

Sadly, Terry Barrs passed away in early February. Terry became a volunteer in 2018 and very much enjoyed his times at the ship. He was Royal Navy through and through and enjoyed telling us of his life at sea. He donated his uniform and many very valuable items to the Trust, highlighting elements of his seafaring career. Terry's donations form the basis for bringing real Navy life to the Captain's cabin. In addition, his family donated an excellent book called "Terry's Postcards Home". This is an amazing collection of the cards sent home to his parents while he was away at sea. It resides in the Captain's cabin along with Terry's other treasures. I attended Terry's funeral and then we all returned to SS *Freshspring* for the wake. The ship was a fitting location and towards the end, Terry's wife, Val, dropped a wreath overboard into the river.

We have attended two local school career fairs, both alongside our partners, Harland & Wolff, the new owners of Appledore Shipyard. These are a valuable element of our work to inspire young people into maritime careers. It also gets us out and meeting new people. The relationship with Harland & Wolff is very valuable to the Trust and, hopefully to the company too. They bring much needed employment to our deprived area and are an outward looking company which embraces our local community.

We don't have articles from Matt or Nathaniel this time as they are both very busy. Matt is at sea and is inundated with work and Nathaniel is in the midst of a considerable number of exams for his onward career as an airline pilot. I'm sure they will have lots to tell us next time.

Further to what I wrote previously in this piece, I have just returned from an excellent day at *Daniel Adamson*, [www.thedanny.co.uk](http://www.thedanny.co.uk). She is celebrating her sixth year in heritage service. The Society has been very helpful to us over the years from sharing information to advice and even giving us equipment. Some of our volunteers occasionally go to volunteer on the ship from time to time, including me. It gives us experience of an operating steamship, which is very motivating. It is very reassuring for us to know that a similar size ship to our own can operate sustainably, albeit with some fundraising to support staff and their learning projects. She operates on the River Weaver and has huge support locally as she is bringing the river back to life and use. The next phase is to dredge the river further so the *Daniel Adamson* can reach the quay at Northwich. That will very much transform the organisation as currently she does not operate in a populated area.

Please try to come and see us this year; you will be very surprised to see how much work has been done on the ship by our very committed volunteer team. You can also experience a virtual passage of *Freshspring* from Lytham to Malta. This has been masterminded by Martin Kemp who is a professional film maker who dedicates very considerable time to the Trust.

John



**KNIGHTHOOD**  
part of ethos broking

## dedicated marine insurance solutions

Our specialists have been bringing confidence and security to maritime businesses for over 45 years. We will work closely with you to thoroughly understand your business's risks and requirements to arrange the cover you need.

want to find out more?

Call today on 01342 327111 or email  
[enquiries@knighthoodcorporate.com](mailto:enquiries@knighthoodcorporate.com)

[www.knighthoodcorporate.com](http://www.knighthoodcorporate.com)

## Operations Manager's Report

The ship is now open for the 2022 season, welcoming visitors on board from 11am-4pm every Saturday. Our first open day saw over 40 visitors who enjoyed the new signage, VR, merchandise and, of course, the beautifully presented ship c/o our hard working volunteers.

I must extend thanks to Mike Greener and Patrick Spiers for their work on the content and design of our magnetic signs. We currently have five signs in situ and will be adding to these as the season progresses thanks to the generosity of Councillor Peter Christie who supported the Trust to the tune of £750 for our ship interpretation materials.

Thanks must also go out to Barnstaple Museum for loaning us the mannequin stoker that can be found with shovel in hand down in the boiler room. Lou Boulter has kindly provided the artwork for our *Freshspring* postcard, enabling the ship's image to be sent all over the country and beyond. Bideford WI also deserves recognition, as they have provided some gorgeous knitted items for sale and as well as little chocolate goody bags for our younger visitors.

In early February, Annemarie, Sam and I enjoyed a visit to *SS Great Britain*, kindly organised by one of our Patrons, Captain Kevin Slade. We enjoyed some dedicated time with their team's development and marketing professionals and came away brimming with ideas that we can build into our opening plans for the future.

In mid-February, Sam and I attended Park School careers fair in Barnstaple. It's always interesting to talk with young people about their career aspirations. The majority of students had never considered a maritime career, so we provided them with some food for thought.

During the week commencing 21st March, we welcomed close to 250 Year 8 students to the ship. Sam will elaborate on the activities and achievements in her article, but as a result of Sam's meticulous organisation, the event was an enormous success.

The Maritime Heritage Trust held a webinar in March, looking into the topic of attracting new audiences to heritage vessels. I was asked to be one of the contributors



*Dave & Bill preparing the engine for the ship's opening.*



*SS Great Britain 'selfie' space.*



*SS Great Britain mannequin cook.*

and really enjoyed the experience. If you're interested, the presentations can be found on the following link: <https://youtu.be/fRIQM3kZO88>

Our application to Awards for All earlier this year was unsuccessful, so we haven't received funding for our youth board and work experience programme. I am, however, involved in the Innovation for Youth & Community project that is looking at a best practice model of providing placements for hard to reach young people. This project has enabled us to partner with organisations that could benefit from using the Trust as a work experience provider, so we may achieve some of our Awards for All objectives by other means.

I'm currently involved in a funded training programme called Technology Transfer.

The course runs for twelve weeks and involves virtual attendance of the sessions every Wednesday where we learn about digital collaboration. This means that I can't visit the ship when the volunteers are working and I've really missed it. My absence has made me realise that the Trust is fuelled by the hard work and enthusiasm of our volunteers. Without them there would be no *SS Freshspring*.

**Charlotte Squire**



*Bideford College thank you card.*



## A week of Bideford College students

Over the course of a week in March, 250 Year 8 students from Bideford College spent a day on the SS *Freshspring* moored on Bideford Quay as part of their enrichment week. Students walked down to Victoria Park from the college and split their day between activities in the park and on board the ship. The weather was glorious and the week was a fantastic success, with students taking it in turn to learn about different aspects of life at sea.

'Morse Mike', a retired radio operator, demonstrated the use of a Morse key, giving the students an introduction to how Morse was developed and used. Students had the chance to make up their own messages and send them to friends in a different part of the ship. Needless to say, this provoked much hilarity and several misunderstandings. We were very glad not to be relying on Morse messages to communicate our location today, as it may have led to some of us being left stranded for some time!

*'Mike is so fast at sending Morse. He is awesome!'*

Laurence set up a climbing activity for the students, who took it in turns to haul each other up the mast. This was a fantastic opportunity for team building and an exercise in trust. Several students who were adamant that they would not go up decided to have a go, with some continuing right to the top and others testing their own limits by lifting a short distance off the floor and coming back down again. All attempts were applauded and the students encouraged and supported each other to



Mike introduced Morse code to the students. Aimee being hoisted up the mast.

stretch their comfort zones as far as they felt able on the day. 'I'm not afraid of heights anymore' was the comment from one Year 8 student.

Visiting the engine room was a highlight for some students. They were fascinated to see inside an engine room and to be able to find out how the engineer and the captain were able to communicate using the telegraph. For the more technically minded, finding out how a triple expansion steam engine worked kept them interested and our tour guides on their toes. Seeing how the captain lived was an eye opener too – no luxurious cabins on the *Freshspring*!

*'The engine is so cool!'*

The *Freshspring* VR film was a big hit with all visitors over the week. The students enjoyed the experience of using the Oculus headsets to explore what life would have been like on the ship in the '50s and to 'embark' on a journey to Malta in the company of members of the crew. Some students recognised our resident stoker/mast shaper/ship manager as a star of the film and requested an autograph...

As part of the week's events, students were completing a textile project in school and this involved making a bag from recycled sails. We combined this project with an on board rope making activity. Students were able to work together to make pieces of rope which they then took back to school to use as handles for their tote bags. Finding out about the history of rope making and linking this to Rope Walk in Bideford added to the relevance of this activity. The expressions of the students as the magic happened and the twine became rope was worth all the twisted twine and balls of frayed string!

*'I thought making rope would be boring, but it was really cool.'*

Teachers, students and volunteers were all delighted with how the week went. The students were a pleasure to have on board and volunteers were happy to have the opportunity to introduce the *Freshspring* and ship based activities to the young visitors. Jon Hardy, the assistant principal of Bideford College, emailed after the visit: 'The children haven't stopped talking about the ship since the trip' and one student summed it up as he left the ship: 'This is the best school trip ever!'

**Sam Roberts**  
Community Learning Officer



Sully holding the rope.

## A cracking start!

A **cracking** start to the season with the Easter holiday opening!

We were delighted to have had over 40 visitors join us on the Easter Bank holiday weekend. This was our opening weekend of the year and we were lucky to be greeted by sunshine, bird song and the joy that Spring has finally arrived!

Visitors enjoyed looking around the ship and learning all about her history, with children partaking in our dedicated Easter challenge, hunting out the mischievous teddies and their Easter friends hiding around the ship, and being rewarded with a small knitted, chocolate surprise. These beautiful, handcrafted goods were kindly produced and donated by Bideford WI, so a BIG thank you again to all the ladies for their efforts; they were well received and added a personal touch to the challenge.

The 360° film experience (with headsets), new for 2022, were well received! Visitors enjoyed entering the virtual realm and stepping back in time to learn more about what it was like to 'live at sea' and explore our ship in greater detail. The film experience is available to the public every Saturday throughout the season (11am-4pm) and is included in the admission cost.

Thank you also to CressidaCards for supporting *Freshspring* with beautifully designed lino print cards. We will be selling a wide range of *Freshspring* merchandise on the ship, from bespoke cards to hats, pens and other stationery items. If there are any other gifts you would like to see, then please send us your suggestion(s)!



Visitors enjoying the new 360° film experience with headsets.



Our new range of Freshspring gifts for sale.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the opening day, selflessly donating your time and energy to our charity. We are only here thanks to each and every one of you, so a big thank you from all of us at TeamFreshspring.

## Delightful duo, Laurel and Hardy, entertain our volunteers

It is not every day that Laurel and Hardy come to work on board Steamship *Freshspring*! The *Freshspring* team were joined by the distinguished duo last month, who not only entertained our volunteers but also the lovely ladies from Bideford WI as they paid their first visit to the steamship (and a memorable one at that!). Don't worry we didn't let Laurel or Hardy near any maintenance or repair jobs...

The duo are working with heritage groups and organisations in the local area, bringing joy, laughter and comedy to the public! We will hopefully be working with the act over the coming summer months and will look to offer some memorable events on board.

Passers-by also enjoyed the spectacle with one lady remarking "It is like stepping back in time, with the heritage of the ship and seeing the comedy duo reciting their classic lines!"

"We are always grateful to organisations and individuals who approach us with an idea on how we can work together. No two days are ever the same at *Freshspring* and it is a pleasure to be able to work with such creative people. It makes the steamship more than just a charity or maritime resource; we achieve so much more when we work together!" exclaims Becca Craft, Marketing & Communication Officer for *Freshspring*.



Laurel and Hardy make a guest appearance on board Freshspring!



John Puddy aka 'the boss' sets Laurel and Hardy to work for the day.



## Looking back – a year on board with Freshspring

"It has been a varied year on board that is for sure! I started back in May 2021 and I feel that so much has happened in the last 12 months, the charity has grown from strength to strength with new volunteers, events and work to the ship itself.

Within this time we have re-opened to the public (during an ongoing pandemic), continued to support our brilliant team of volunteers who have been working on her come rain or shine, held successful events to the public (including the August bank holiday event and seafood and sea shanties), plus a dedicated volunteer evening celebrating the charity and everyone involved in making it such a success. We have also continued to work on building relationships with local partner organisations such as The Burton at Bideford and community groups such as Bideford and Barnstaple WI.

My own job role has also changed, from my initial employment as 'Public Engagement Officer' to now overseeing marketing and communications one day a week for the Trust. I am pleased to be part of an enthusiastic and dedicated team and to help raise awareness in the local area and beyond. Sam Roberts, our community learning officer, has been pivotal in connecting schools and educational groups with our steamship. It was great to see this in action the other week when we



*Bideford WI meet and greet Laurel and Hardy.*



*Bideford WI donating their knitted Easter crafts to Freshspring.*

had over 200+ pupils visit and take part in activities such as climbing the mast, rope making and learning Morse code.

I am really looking forward to the summer season, as we continue to grow and attract new visitors to the area and to learn all about the maritime history here in North Devon.

We will be gathering feedback throughout the summer to find out how visitors enjoy their visit. This year we have implemented a new pricing strategy to ensure our steamship is sustainable, while also remaining accessible to all!

It is amazing how quickly the previous year has gone but I definitely feel 'part of the furniture' and family at *Freshspring* and have high hopes for 2022-23.

**Rebecca Craft**  
**Marketing & Communications Officer**



*Bideford WI knitted us these special Easter prizes for our opening weekend!*



*Charlotte Squire, Lou Boulter and Rebecca Craft enjoying the successful August Bank Holiday event back in 2021.*

## New members

We welcome the following new members of the Trust:

Mr L J Barrs	Sheringham, Norfolk
Mr Anthony Barrs	Cambridge
Mr David Hunter	Bideford, Devon

# Almost a Kiss, which could have been expensive

Roger Francis

I was in command of a 150,000 tonne, fully loaded bulk carrier recently, and I was heading into the berth when it all went wrong and I had to go full astern, as I was heading for a moored dinghy on another berth! The ship pulled up just before it touched the dinghy, the only reason being that I was approaching at an appropriate speed.

This all happened, when I was doing my retirement job, of Marine Consultant for a company which is planning to fit sails to ships in order to save fuel. The bulk carrier in question was a vessel called *Endurance*, and is one of various ships that make up the fleet, operated by Warsash Maritime Academy's Ship Handling Centre at Timsbury Lake outside Romsey. These ships are far more than big boy's toys; they are models of the real thing. The people who attend the centre are all senior officers who are either close to, or in command. In the times I have been there testing the sails, I have met Mississippi River Pilots, Thames River Pilots, and masters of Shell tankers, who were changing over from single screw tankers, to run twin screw gas carriers. The centre had just received delivery of a model of a 14,000 teu container ship, and another larger bulk carrier.

The lake is laid out with berths and harbours, with a length of canal, and a river section based on the Mississippi River, also an open area, where our trial runs could be carried out, provided we avoided the odd tanker anchored in the area, awaiting a ship to ship transfer operation! There are even scale model tugs available, should a master or pilot request one, as berthing such large ships without the help of tugs, is highly unusual. I only saw a tug being used once, and for this manoeuvre, the instructor sat



facing aft, on top of the ship's funnel, radio controlling the tug's movements, to the verbal commands of the trainee. Some ships can also use anchors and some have bow thrusters. *Endurance* is a right handed propeller ship, with no bow thrust, and no anchoring facility.

It was around four years or more ago that I last handled a 150,000 tonne ship, and it was with some trepidation that I sat in the instructor's position, ahead of the trainee's position, whose eye level is the same as the view he or she, would get from the bridge. Like riding a bicycle, however, I soon discovered that my 30 odd years of ship handling skills had not deserted me, and once I had overcome the realisation that this 7.6 metre, 3.8 tonne model performed exactly as the full sized counterpart, I was away.

So how did I nearly hit the dinghy? I forgot the first rule of a berthing manoeuvre, that of planning your approach. Sitting behind me on that occasion, was a representative of Lloyds Register, on a personal visit, and I was in two minds as to whether we should do another wing sail run, or head for the berth. I decided on the latter and as such, I was not in a sensible position to approach the berth but thought it would be ok!

The first part of the approach was going well and the ship was swinging in towards the berth nicely, but then a slight increase of wind blew across the berth and I quickly realised that the bow was no longer swinging so fast, so I stopped the engine and put it full astern, stopping the ship just in time to avoid the "kiss" before resuming a normal approach and berthing without further mishap.

On this occasion, only my pride was dented but it served as a gentle reminder that no matter how many times you have done a manoeuvre, always plan it and always do it at an appropriate speed.

## Can you volunteer?

24th July is a big day in Bideford and for the Trust. It is the Bideford Water Festival, the town's biggest annual event.

SS *Freshspring* will be open all day and we will be doing steamboat rides. The Trust is one of the beneficiaries of the event and so we need to put on a good show. The day starts at midday and finishes at 5.30pm. It will be great fun for all who volunteer as it is all quite spectacular.

If you are able to volunteer, please let us know as we need all the help we can get.

John



## A long overdue visit

Brian Gooding



*With the quayside in front of the Royal Hotel having been cleared for redevelopment, I couldn't resist taking this early morning picture of a view that will sadly soon disappear behind new housing, so it was a short-lived opportunity.*

Living on the Surrey/West Sussex borders, my last visit to Bideford was back in March 2020, returning home just before the first national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Prior to that, as a trustee of the Steamship Freshspring Trust, I tried to travel to Bideford every three months for trustees' meetings. Little did I know at the time that it would be over two years before I was able to head west again...

In the meantime, I had a lot going on in my life, including trying to keep my own business viable despite a loss of advertising revenue from heritage events which were normally included in our publications, as well as a drop in sales as people couldn't visit their local newsagents. The first year was a tough time and, to some extent, I lost touch with the Trust and actually stood down as a trustee for a while.

It was tough for the rest of the team too and we all learned to hold meetings via computer video links, far from ideal but at least we could discuss plans and



*The view down river hasn't changed but is always worth looking at and a picture.*

make decisions. My own commitments at the time meant that I could not plug into all the trustees' meetings, and so I became out of touch with a project that I had been in at the beginning of, and one that was dear to my heart, but my own business had to take priority. However, I did continue to produce this magazine to ensure continuity for members who are remote like me but still want to support the charity.



*Life under the awning. What a great addition this has been to activities on board the ship.*

As life returned to some kind of normality this year, I was thinking about heading over to Bideford again to see what progress had been made with the ship, as well as I needed a break from my own routine, having not really been anywhere in the intervening two years, most unusual for someone who used to travel a lot with the job. An email from our Finance Manager Simon prompted me to arrange a visit and so during the last week of April, I booked myself into the Royal Hotel for a couple of nights and headed west. It was good to be on the road again and see the beautiful countryside in the Spring, with the trees coming into leaf and cowslips on the verges, and good weather too!

On arrival, I was straight into a meeting with Simon and John, who brought me up to date on our finances and what the future could hold. We discussed a number of options over a couple of hours, and I felt part of the team again, something I had not felt for some time. On the following day, with John and Richard, I was able to meet Sam for the first time, when we discussed the educational side of the Trust at some



*The Bridge, an area that needs development in time, but it is gradually happening.*



*The Captain's cabin; more atmosphere here than when I was last on board.*



*The forward crew quarters with bunks now made up and little people in residence.*



*The Mate's cabin has also had a makeover.*

length. Becca popped in briefly to say hello, and it was good for me to meet her too.

Following that meeting, John, Richard and I were joined by Annemarie for another meeting – I think sometimes the world revolves around meetings! – but I hadn't met Annemarie before either, and it was so good to be able to sit around a table and discuss important matters which were then later taken to the Trust as a whole. From this, we have set up a finance sub-committee which will meet regularly remotely. It is essential for any charity to keep an eye on its finances, especially one as ambitious as ours, and to not miss any opportunity for grant funding which is so important to our future plans. The more we earn as a charity, the more we can do, which is why donations and legacies are so important to keep us moving forward.

Following a long morning of meetings, it was time to visit the ship. I had parked next to the ship in the morning and the first person I met on the quay was Pete Gillett who was somewhat aghast when he saw me; sorry, Pete! I think it was more



*The engine room looks smart too. Hopefully one day we will see all this complex machinery working again. Imagine the smell and the noise!*

that he hadn't expected to see me more than anything, but it was good to see him again.

I spent some time on the ship, having a look around and a lot had changed in the intervening two years, not least the installation of the mast and the deck awning, and she looked really smart, both outside and inside. A lot of work has clearly been done – and still is – and the profusion of teddy bears in odd places adds life to the ship. I had forgotten just what a real gem she is; so much atmosphere even if she is not alive at present, in the true sense of the word. Hopefully one day...

I was keen to update my photo library so took quite a few pictures, some of which I will share here to keep the more remote members up to date with how the ship looks.

Sadly I could only have a short time in Bideford as I had other people to see on my way home, including the amazing 91 year old Barry Finch who took hundreds of photographs of traction engines back in the late 1950s/early 1960s, some of which we have published in a short series of books which are popular with enthusiasts. I would like to think I would be as fit as Barry at his age...

I came away from Bideford much more in tune with what is going on and I am keen to help ensure that the Trust and *Freshspring* have a viable future, and I look forward to coming down again before too long.



*Sometimes paint chipping is carried out in awkward places, such as this area of the engine room. The work never stops.*



*The top of the triple expansion engine looks really smart these days. She really is a special ship...*



# Boat building – an unexpected career

Chris Frisby

I'm pretty sure a younger me wouldn't have entertained the idea of becoming a boatbuilder. In a roundabout way that is what I've ended up doing though, having just started my own business.

I was brought up in Bideford. As a youngster, I was always interested in machines of all sorts. It's fair to say wooden boats were probably the sort of machines I was less intrigued by; aircraft and flying were always my main love and I was lucky enough to do a reasonable amount of flying through the Air Cadets.

There was a definite maritime interest though. My late father was an artist and signwriter, so was always painting a variety of subjects. He took much interest in the comings and goings on the River Torridge. We often ran down to the quay to see a clay boat coming in or would wait for a launching from Appledore Shipyard, something I hope we'll see plenty more of in years to come! In the days before Google images, we often went out on trips to photograph subjects for his paintings. I particularly remember several unsuccessful trips to Ilfracombe to try and capture the vessel *Datchet*, which my dad had been commissioned to paint.

On leaving school, I went to university in Aberystwyth to study Geography, where I think it is fair to say I applied myself more to mountain biking than Geography. University was over quite quickly and I came back to North Devon afterwards. I continued working for Hocking's Ice Cream, where I'd been working on and off for a number of years. I'd always enjoyed working there so didn't see any reason to hurry into anything else. It could be hard work doing long hours in the summer but the good atmosphere in the family business made it worthwhile.

I often went out sailing on Geoff Hocking's lovely French Gaff Cutter *St Melaine*. There was something about sailing I loved. I was bitten by the bug so borrowed a Mirror dinghy for a summer, joined North Devon Yacht Club and taught myself a bit of dinghy sailing, largely by trial and error! I bought my own 16ft Falmouth bass



*Sailing my Falmouth bass boat Mollusc on the Torridge.*



*Posing with my favourite ice cream van.*

boat after this and converted her to gaff rig. I found I quite enjoyed fettling with boats and aspired to get into boat building but couldn't see an obvious way into it.

Fast forward a few years and, newly engaged, I found myself making the big move to Ilfracombe which, being a staunch Bidefordian, seemed ludicrous but love hides many faults! My years at

Hockings came to an end as the long summer hours and living in Ilfracombe weren't an ideal combination. After a short search, I was taken on to work in quarrying, running an asphalt plant. This job involved long hours sat in front of a computer combined with frequent machinery breakdowns and before long I'd decided it wasn't for me long term.

My interest in boats and sailing had been growing in the background and I was keen to pick up a trade. I saw an advert for an open day at Falmouth Marine School so went down and had a look. Before I knew it, I'd been accepted on the boat building course starting in four months time. Thankfully Dawn, my very supportive and understanding wife, was happy for me to pack my job in and start the course. During this time I would live in Falmouth for the week and then drive back to North Devon for the weekends, which made married life interesting! Over the course of the year it slowly became apparent that to have any prospect of pursuing a career in traditional boat building, Falmouth was going to have to become home in the long term. Dawn once again was incredibly supportive, handed in her notice and we both started living full time in Falmouth.

I was fortunate enough at the grand old age of 28 to be taken on as an apprentice shipwright by Ashley Butler at his yard in Penpol, on a delightful Cornish Creek. Ashley has been working on boats since his early teens and has built himself quite a reputation as a traditional shipwright and designer, having designed and built several yachts in the 30-50ft range, as well as many impressive restorations.

I was chuffed to be working for Ashley. There was a lot to learn for someone pretty green like myself. Not long after I started, two significant orders came in. One was for a new 40ft wooden ferry to work out of Tenby and the other was the wheelhouse for

*Freshspring.* One of the more interesting days at the yard was when we had to move the wheelhouse out of the workshop. It wouldn't quite fit through the door so had to be moved out at an angle; we were relieved when it was out!

The ferry build was the first new build I'd been involved in. It was amazing to see an artic. load of timber arrive and watch as it steadily became frames, planks, ribs and morphed into a boat.

The workload was quite intense as there were only five of us on the build but we got it done in approximately six months. There were some late nights towards the end! Her launch day was a welcome release for all of us and her sea trials involved a tour of many of the watering holes on the banks of the Carrick roads.

Most of the work undertaken at the yard is refit and restoration work. Some of these projects are quite in depth undertakings. For one client, we rebuilt their beloved sailing dinghy for them. We took apart the original dinghy and salvaged as many usable structural pieces before rebuilding it again with new materials where necessary.

Some vessels in the Butler & Co. yard are from some notable names in the classic yacht world. A William



*Freshspring's wheelhouse starting her journey to Bideford.*



*Launch of Tenby ferry Ila.*



*A new teak deck for motor sailer, Tunnag.*

deck on the motor sailer *Tunnag*. This isn't an unusual job; however, these days to relay a teak deck in solid teak is pretty much impossible and usually prohibitively expensive due its limited availability. For this reason it will probably be the first and last time I get to relay a solid teak deck. For *Tunnag*, much of the teak was reclaimed from a London railway station, recycling at its best! These days layers of plywood topped with a thin layer of teak is the preferred option when replacing a deck.

The owner of *Amokura*, a 1936 Fred Shepherd yawl, wanted to strengthen his boat for two-handed ocean racing. This involved massive structural modifications on the inside, so a complete interior strip out was necessary. Sturdy laminated frames and bronze bracing were put in to give her plenty of strength. *Amokura* successfully completed the Fastnet race last year.

See [butlerboatyards.co.uk](http://butlerboatyards.co.uk) for more information on Ashley's work.

A few years further on down the line and I've recently gone self-employed. The opportunity to build a small boat meant that I had a good starting point for a business. I've taken on a workshop in the village of Kehelland where I live. The 200 yard commute is quite advantageous in these times of high fuel prices.

I'm currently building a boat for a North Devon customer. She is a small 11½ft open boat based on a Bucks Ledge Lugger, a small rugged fishing boat that would have worked off the beach at Bucks Mills from the 19th century onwards. I'm fortunate to have the last of the Bucks Mills boats in my workshop at present while I undertake a survey of her. She's a fascinating boat in that she is incredibly heavily built for an 11½ft boat, with half inch thick oak planks. When you see the size of the pebbles at Bucks Mills, you can understand why.

Fife sloop *Rosemary* had much of her more recent fit out removed. This was replaced with an interior as close as possible to her fit out from 1925 when she was built. This included removing her modern diesel engine and replacing it with a much earlier Stuart Turner petrol engine.

Teak decks are very fashionable on classic yachts and I was fortunate enough to be involved in replacing a solid teak



The new build will differ in several ways. She will be much more lightly built to make her a bit more user friendly and will be clinker built (clinker meaning the planks overlap slightly). The original vessels were Carvel built (meaning the planks don't overlap) so with their smooth planking, the boats were less vulnerable when being dragged up the beach.



*The new build taking shape alongside the original Bucks Ledge Lugger.*

I also have a 22ft motor launch in my workshop built in 1960 by legendary Cornish boatbuilder, Percy Mitchell. She is in the process of being restored and is up for sale; she will make an eye catching classic day boat for someone.

At present I'm looking to take on more restoration projects as well as new builds. If you'd like to see what I'm up to, take a look at my website 'cfrisbyboats.co.uk', C.Frisby Traditional Boats facebook page or Instagram.

Despite living in Cornwall these days, largely because work has brought us here, I'm often back 'home' in North Devon. I'm very much interested in the maritime history of North Devon, particularly because of the variety of vessels that operated from our coast over the years. It is great to see that there are projects such as *Freshspring* and the lifeboat restoration which are renewing interest in the maritime scene in North Devon.



*Fred Shepherd Yawl Amokura ready to take on the Fastnet race.*

# Steam Heritage

## MUSEUMS, RAILWAYS & EVENTS

# GUIDE 2022

AVAILABLE NOW!

ONLY  
£8.99  
+ £1.50 p&p (UK)\*



WE WILL DONATE £2.00 FROM EVERY PURCHASE TO THE STEAMSHIP FRESHSPRING TRUST

Please put 'freshspring' in the address line if ordering online, or mention 'freshspring' when calling.

ORDER YOUR COPY NOW AT  
**STEAMHERITAGE.CO.UK**  
OR CALL **01403 588 360**

\*Please add £5 per item for Europe and £8 per item for Rest of World.

1000s  
OF GREAT IDEAS FOR  
FANTASTIC  
DAYS OUT!

THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO BRITAIN'S  
TRANSPORT & INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE



# Lt William Atherton Bell RNR

## Kenneth Weston

William Atherton Bell was born in Liverpool and was the son of John Bell, a County Court clerk, and his wife Elizabeth.

In the 1891 census, he is to be found living with his parents and older brother at 33 Beresford Road, Toxteth Park, Liverpool.

In the 1901 census, they are living at 24 Osbourne Road, Walton on the Hill, Liverpool with the addition of Reginald, aged nine.

In October 1906, William commenced a seagoing apprenticeship and spent the next four years aboard SS *Inverclyde*. He was discharged in New York as 4th Mate.

On 7th December 1906 he passed for 2nd Mate.

On 12th December 1912 he passed for 1st Mate.

On 4th June 1915 he passed for Master of foreign going steamships.

His last voyage was as 2nd Mate of the SS *Wabana* which terminated on 15th March 1915 after which, on 12th July 1915, he was appointed a Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve.

He was immediately appointed to Europa for service aboard HM Water Tank *Provider*, a purpose-built vessel not dissimilar to a drifter of that era.

*Provider* was built by Bow McLachlan & Company of Greenock and was launched on 10th February 1903. She had an overall length of 120ft and was 115x21x9ft. She had a 300 horsepower engine and could make 9 knots. She was under naval control from 1915 to 1918.

*Provider* was employed at that time ferrying water supplies between Mudros and the Dardanelles, not an envious task I would surmise.

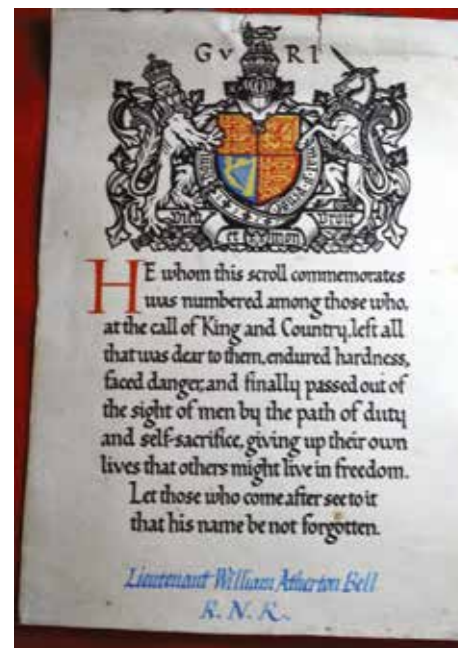
On 30th September 1915 he was appointed temporary acting Lieutenant.

On 31st May 1916 he was Mentioned in Dispatches for good service on transport duties at the Dardanelles.

On 11th September 1916 word was received by his father that his son had died on war service. When he inquired further, it was revealed that William had shot himself following a nervous breakdown.



The Bell brothers.



Lt William Atherton Bell memorial scroll.



Lt William Atherton Bell's medals.

A court of inquiry had determined that William shot himself aboard *Provider* at 06.05 hours on the 11th September at Port Iero, had died of his injuries at 10.15 and was buried at sea at 16.00 hours the same day.

Mr Bell Snr asked that the cause of death be not made known to his mother, hence the cause of death was given as a brain haemorrhage.

William Atherton Bell is remembered with honour on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

Mrs Elizabeth Bell died at the young age of 49 on 26th September 1918.

Both of her other sons also served in the Great War, both with the Liverpool Regiment.

John Bell was promoted from the ranks to Lieutenant in 1917.



HM Water Tank Ripple alongside Brisbane.



# On patrol in HMS Superb

Stuart McQueen

I am often asked what it is like to go to sea on a Nuclear Submarine. I hope the following text will put some light on the subject. I have spent some time as a volunteer guide on HMS *Courageous*, the Nuclear Submarine museum in Devonport Dockyard so I know what people want to know.

As a submariner you have two families, the one at home and the one on board.

The last week of the period in port is the “getting ready to go away” time.

The week is taken up with “fast Cruising” which involves watch bill proving and emergency evolutions as if at sea. Also during this week the following events take place – all submarine systems valves are checked in the correct position and systems checked fully operational. All fluid levels to be at working level and reserves full. The trim system is set up to allow correct stability and balance when the submarine dives. Final stores are brought on board.

In the final 18 hours, the reactor is brought to “critical” and the propulsion system is readied for sea, watchkeepers in “sea watches”.

In this final week, apart from my duty commitments, I brought my personal belongings on board and started transferring my life from home to the submarine (boat).



*HMS Courageous on the step.*

On the day of sailing, my wife drove me from home to the boat. Without too many goodbyes, I boarded my new home. All was hectic on board; people doing last minutes tasks. An hour before sailing, the general alarm sounded and we went to our “Harbour Stations”.

My Harbour Station was at the Ship System Control Panel in the Control Room which operated all Ship Systems (non propulsion).

An hour later, after all reports have been proved correct and apart from berthing lines, all shore supplies have been removed. Tugs are secured, mooring lines slipped and we are pulled sideways from the berth. When out in the Tamar, the tugs slip and we propel ahead (to quote the US Navy “underway on Nuclear Power”). The tugs follow us down river and into Plymouth Sound. All the time the command team are taking navigation bearings on the search periscope to check our correct position. We then stop for a while to have a sonar array fitted and drop the pilot off, after which we proceed to sea out to the Eddystone and down the channel. As soon we have water to dive, the bridge is cleared and the dive is commenced. Main vents are opened and the boat starts to submerge, this takes approx. 30 mins, the boat is then taken to 100ft and back to 58ft which ensures that all trapped air is expelled. Long post diving checks are now carried out which includes hatches, hull valves and all systems. Sonar systems are all checked. When all is complete, we continue at Periscope Depth at “watch diving”. I at last get a relief from the “panel” and have a welcome cup of tea.

Up to now, I have covered general watching duties. Now for the living side of things. On first coming on board, it seems hot and crowded, this soon gets stabilised, ambient temp approx. 72°F and all persons settled down. I have a top bunk in one of the bunk spaces, all very good and a little bigger than a coffin with three small lockers, a light, fresh air vent and curtains. It’s an unwritten rule that this place is private unless you are urgently required. On sailing, the main lights go out in the bunk space until arriving home. Just by the bunk space is the bathroom for 60 persons, four washbasins, two showers, three toilets. Washing is controlled as water is usually rationed.

The lockers under the washbasins belong to me for storage of spares. Up on One Deck by the main access hatch is a laundry with a heavy duty washing machine and a drier. This laundry was primarily for washing specialist clothing but was used for general crew clothing; my lads and I ran the laundry.

The laundry was also my department office.

The recreational accommodation was divided into three – the wardroom WR for the officers, Senior Rates SR mess, Junior Rates JR mess.

The mess was a lounge, diner, office, emergency centre. There was a bar but alcohol was not consumed at sea. Films were shown at sea; also games nights and quizzes were held.

FOOD

This was the topic that kept the crew together, it was free and lots of it. There were three meals a day with an extra at midnight.

**Breakfast:** standard with a daily extra. e.g. kippers, devilled kidneys, smoked haddock, grapefruit segments.

**Lunch:** Standard with a sweet.

**Dinner:** Standard with a daily extra.

**Midnight:** What was left over from the day.



Accommodation was a bit tight in HMS Courageous.

As when you got up for your watch it could be AM or PM, breakfast had an extra dish every day according to the day, which never changed so you knew the day of the week, same with dinner. The ventilation was so efficient that cooking could not be smelled.

The other subject that kept morale together was the boat's canteen which sold sweets and cigarettes.

On the subject of morale, we are totally cut off from the world so no BBC. Command would send a signal when airspace was available, a "doctored" version of world news. We are allowed one "family gram" a month from home just to say all was well.



Farewell: HMS Trenchant Paying off Devonport.

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 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.



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