

# Freshspring Magazine



No.32 Autumn 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.

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**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.

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**FRONT COVER:** An impressive view of the ship's funnel and boiler room ventilators from a photograph taken by a member of the Bideford District Photography Group.

## From the Chair

I can't believe I am writing the Autumn report, while outside the temperature is very unlike Britain. These unusual weather patterns bring home the fact that global warming is part of our lives and an incredibly serious issue for us all.

This is the first summer since 2019 when we have behaved in a relatively normal way and the ship has been consistently open since Easter. We started by opening on Saturdays and, due to low numbers, reverted to Sundays. Even by doing this, we have not achieved previous numbers on board. This year for the first time we are charging a small fee of £2.50 for access and still free for children. This may put some off but it is a good value experience; those who do come aboard tell us it is very good value for money. It may be that due to the summer weather, most people spend the days on the beach.

We aim that each year we have made changes to the ship to improve the experience. The crew accommodation looks as though the crew has just left and we now offer Virtual Reality experiences along with Morse code practices for school groups. We do need to keep planning and it would be ideal to offer some sort of steam experience, maybe with a package boiler to operate some machinery. It would change the visitor experience and the ship would feel alive. This won't detract from our operational goal but could be a stepping stone.

Another project we are working on is to gain access to the water tanks, as this would give us valuable new space for activity. Interestingly, *Shieldhall* has done this and created a maintenance workshop and stores. Our aim would be something similar to offer quality work experience for young people. This is something colleges are asking us for. The good thing about this would be that our volunteers can carry on working even when the ship is open. It's an expensive project though and we have started fundraising for this. It is likely that we will have to access the tanks through the forward crew accommodation with a discreet door.

We recently asked Members for support in getting a bench pillar drill for use on the ship. The response was astounding: we have three drilling machines, funds for a full set of drills and a machine vice. We also have some extra cash to buy associated tools. In addition, we have been donated a beautiful marine clock which chimes the 4 hour watches. This is a typical demonstration of the generosity of our Members for which we are very grateful.

Work on the ship has continued and we have some valued new volunteers on board. It's good to see new people and, of course, they bring a range of skills. Patrick, a relatively new member, decided to clear weed and debris from the footpath next to the ship. This was so successful that our local authority cleared the whole of the riverfront path. Well done, Patrick!

Since April we have engaged in digital workshops to help us understand the importance of digital in our future. I have to say, I was not over enthusiastic to start with

but once we got into it, I realised it is essential for our future in so many ways. I'll never be an expert, but I do understand a lot more than I did.

By April we were busy with events, the first being Northam Mayfair. This is always a good event and this year it was even better. I think people are just glad to be out. I did steam engine rides all day and we had a busy stand. The very next day we were at the Merton Vintage Rally, where it rained most of the day. I did steam rides again and, even though it was wet, we kept going all day. We were very pleased to be visited by Lord Clinton and his family. We showed him pictures of the ship's mast as he gave us the tree. He was certainly pleased to see the result and to meet Pete who crafted the mast. The next day was Bank Holiday Monday and we were out again at Kingsley School Fete. It was a lovely day and we were extremely busy showing off our Primary school project and providing steam engine rides yet again. The outcome is that we now have a productive relationship with the school which bodes well for the future.



*John running steam engine-hauled rides during Northam Mayfair.*

We have been working quite closely with Appledore school and after they had used our STEM project, we thought it would be good to give the participating children steam engine rides in the playground. It was planned for about 30 children but children were watching from every window so in the end we gave the whole school rides except a very few. We have also raised the funds to take a class to visit Bristol to see the SS *Great Britain* and have a trip on the *Matthew*. This is totally inclusive as there will be no cost to the children.

I gave quite a few talks during the period and we also hosted quite a few groups on the ship. This is so much easier now we have the awning. Interestingly, one of the groups was Bideford Camera Club. This was a good visit and now several members regularly come along to take pictures, which is very helpful to us.

On Spring Bank Holiday we attended the Bideford Fair in the park next to the ship. This is always a busy day with a stand in the park, the usual steam engine rides and the ship open for visitors. The following Sunday we were in Barnstaple for a similar event. It was worth attending except the weather was not so good.

Our next event was our Volunteers' belated Christmas Party. This was held on board the ship and was very successful. We had capacity numbers on board. As a special treat, our own ship's band played a few numbers composed by themselves. This, of course' was a huge hit with all. They aim to be main stage at Glastonbury in 2029!

We were busy again in mid July with Annemarie and Martin attending the Henley Classic Boat event delivering our VR experience and Wendy and I, the Bristol Water Festival. There were some 15 steam boats at the event and it was good to meet them and to share notes. We were provided with e-coal made from olive stones. As far as I was concerned, it was very successful, and the boat steamed well throughout. It was clean to use, no clinker and the inside of the funnel was white. Some other boats struggled with the new fuel so perhaps it does not work for all. Both events were very successful and I was kept busy providing steam boat trips around the harbour. All good PR. One of our Patrons, Captain Kevin Slade, lives right on the waterfront and provided a most excellent barbeque which was very enjoyable. I was able to provide virtually all the guests with a trip.

On the 24th July, we had our own Bideford Water Festival. The ship was open and again I provided steamboat trips on the river. As always, these events provide good connections and we meet new and inspiring people.

It was very sad to say goodbye to Charlotte at the end of the month. She has moved on to a new role and we wish her well. Charlotte was with us for 3½ years and majorly contributed to the development of the Trust from education to project Management.



*The steamboat Duet attending the Bristol Water Festival.*



Stephen Attenborough, one of our long term Trustees, is due to get married next month and so, as a stag do activity, we went to Portsmouth and Southampton for a weekend. It was very enjoyable spending time at the Portsmouth museums and then on Sunday enjoying a trip on SS *Shieldhall*.

The Historic Dockyard visit gave us plenty of ideas regarding interpretation and presentation. I have to say, it made me realise what a great experience visiting SS *Freshspring* is, and for only £2.50.

On *Shieldhall*, I spent some time in the engine and boiler rooms and to experience steamship machinery underway at full speed is something that very few people will see. The gentle motion of the machinery and the lack of noise has a magnetic appeal such as poetry in motion. Our *Freshspring* engine is similar in size to one of *Shieldhall's* and the trip provided inspiration to make sure we achieve a similar outcome.

Our AGM will be held on Saturday 1st October at 1100 as a hybrid meeting, so members will be able to attend in person or join via Zoom. For those who attend in person, it will be a good time to come along and visit the ship so I hope we will see some of you then. Details, including the venue, will be sent by email, or if you are not on email, please contact the Membership Secretary for the relevant papers.

Thank you also for the support we get from you all.

## John



Where it all started, the birthplace of Freshspring. Liggard Brook, Lytham, the site of Lytham Engineering and Shipbuilding.

## From Charlotte

I remember being offered the position of Project Manager with The Steamship Freshspring Society (as it was at the time). I'd been working with Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Community Safety Team that day and received a phone call offering me the job on a one year fixed term contract. I remember feeling completely elated.

My role, starting in January 2018, was to project manage the Heritage Lottery funded project that was already well underway. Thankfully Hayley Buscombe, a former member of staff, had a good handle on what had been happening, so was able to help me understand the work required.

Over the last three and a half years I've managed a variety of projects, helped to run events, presented at an Industrial Heritage Network Cornwall & Devon event and a Maritime Heritage Trust webinar. I've helped to prepare the ship for visitors as Covid restrictions started to lift, recruited brilliant new staff and supported various events to promote The Steamship Freshspring Trust across Devon.

Despite all these wonderful opportunities, that I'm extremely grateful for, my favourite aspect of the role has been the people. I've loved going to the ship on Wednesdays, when our volunteers are full of banter and enthusiasm; pursuing Pete with my list of questions and taking photos for Malcolm, so that he can weave his words into wonderful phrases to explain the work taking place and post it on Facebook.

I went into the crew's accommodation today and had a quiet moment to wonder how many people's lives had grown and evolved while they lived in that space. It's my favourite place on board, somewhere I will miss, along with the colleagues and volunteers that have shared the last three and a half years with me.



**Charlotte Squire**  
Project Manager

## Bideford District Photography Group Visit

On Tuesday 24th May, five members of the Bideford District Photography Group visited the SS *Freshspring*. On a beautiful May morning, the group were cordially greeted by chairman John Puddy. In a welcome cooperation, the group will assist with recording the impressive restoration progress achieved by the *Freshspring* volunteers. After a highly informative tour of the ship including a potted history of its career, the group was let loose to capture the essence of the vessel, although with so much history and atmosphere around every corner this was never going to be achieved in just one visit.

“The historic ship was a real challenge to photograph. But once we had viewed the triple expansion engine and the steam auxiliary equipment, it was very apparent that this was going to be a really worthwhile exercise,” group member Richard Smith said. “Really I can only capture these cramped quarters with a ‘stitched pano’ photograph.” A stitched pano is where multiple photographs are taken, each overlapping the previous one by about a third and then they are processed with specialist software to combine them into a



The caption with this picture is: “it was this big!” What can we say?



single image. We await Richard's final images with interest.

If the space constraints were a challenge to photography, it was quite enlightening to learn that the simple and basic crew accommodation and the working conditions were typical of those experienced on a ship of this type.

Even more eye opening for the group was the quality of work and the extent of restoration achieved by the *Freshspring* volunteers. Having viewed pictures of the ship at the time of its acquisition, the progress is quite awe inspiring.

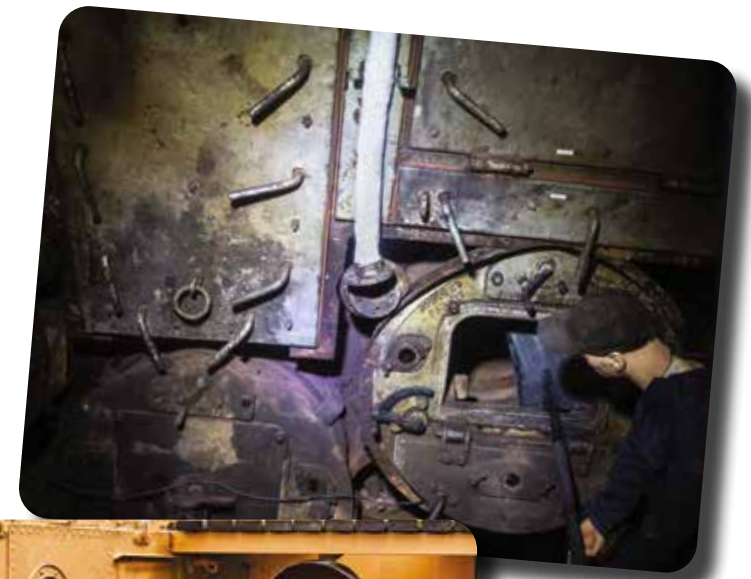
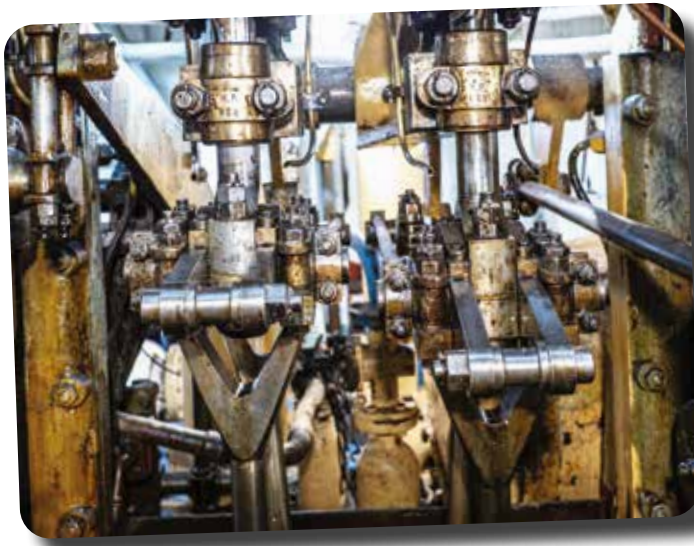
A spokesman for the camera group said: “It was a wonderful opportunity to get aboard and photograph this evocative vessel and the spectacular views from its





upper decks. John and Pete were massively informative and fascinatingly entertaining in showing us around.”

• *Included here are a selection of the photos taken by members of the photography group which give an idea of the detail of the ship that can be easily missed and perhaps not appreciated as much as they should be. – Ed.*





## Hotting things up at Henley!

The Thames Traditional Boat Festival is a great opportunity for boat enthusiasts to get together and the SS Freshspring Trust was very pleased to be invited to attend this July's event. Trustee Annemarie Shillito and Martin Kemp, our VR experience creator, packed up and headed for Henley with their camping kit, the Trust's gazebo, banners, leaflets and... our secret weapon, the Oculus headsets!

While it was the hottest weekend of the year, it didn't stop the event, the visitors or our team! From Friday to Sunday, they showed the VR experience to 99 people aged from 4 to 84 years, and received some wonderful comments and donations of over £200. People came from as far afield



*The SS Freshspring Trust gazebo at Henley.*



*The Dunkirk Little Ships always put on a good display.*



*A Ukrainian family try out the VR.*

as Australia, L.A. and Norway and on Friday the experts were circulating. These included Dr Raul Scott Pereira, Vice President of the Maritime Heritage Trust and his wife Hilary who chatted about their experiences of owning, running and living on one of the earliest built diesel-powered yachts and the challenges we might face. (Take

a look at his talk for the MHT, curated on YouTube by Henry Cleary if you'd like to hear more <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7yhLrh3xM4>). Richard Norton of the Transport Trust 'came aboard' and thought the VR experience was excellent. Someone local to us in Devon, who has experience of new energy technology, was very excited to hear that *Freshspring* has plans to embrace alternative energy sources in the future and is already 'grid-free'. He's pledged to help us!

Saturday's highlight was some visitors from Reading – but recently arrived from Ukraine. Two wonderful families – mums and sons – said “We are very grateful for such an amazing opportunity to see a day in the life of that crew. Greetings from Ukraine! Thank you!” They were even more thrilled to see a photo of *SS Freshspring* flying the Ukrainian flag. It was a hectic day with 42 people trying out the headsets with comments ranging from “Brilliant” to 4 year old Flora telling us “I want to do that again!”.

Sunday saw even more interesting people drop by. Isobel, a teacher in nearby Marlow, was fascinated and wants to know if we can create some links with her school, as were several other teachers. Michele, involved in university education, said “Incredible venture. Very interested in your links with higher education.” What's more, her three children took part twice and then pulled their Dad in to have a go. Even he was wowed, and he already uses Oculus in his work training pilots and MOD staff so this was a really major compliment.

Finally, as the team was about to pack up, a Dad, his two sons and grandparents came along. At only just four years old, one son was the youngest customer, and he held his dad's hand and his toy rabbit throughout but declared at the end 'It's the best!' We like to think so too.

Huge thanks to the organisers including Peter and Sue Harris for their kindness and welcome.



## Puffing A Wey

Brian Gooding

**It's funny** how changing plans can lead to a different kind of day out. On a Saturday morning in July, I was sitting in the garden at home pondering what to do later that day. It was a cloudy morning and I had wondered about popping down to the Sussex Steam Club's annual rally which had relocated this year to the grounds of Parham House in West Sussex. The site had hosted the well known Parham Rally for many years back in the 1990s, an event that I visited several times over the years, and I was thus quite keen to go back again. My other choice was to stay at home and get on with that never-ending long list of jobs that need doing in the house or garden.

While thinking about this over a cuppa, I thought Parham wasn't going to be that good for photography due to the cloud cover, so that was a non-starter. I then remember that the weekend was the date of 'Puffing a Wey', a steamboat gathering put on by my good friend Mark Rudall at the National Trust's historic Dapdune Wharf on the River Wey in the middle of Guildford. Mark is a former Chairman of the Steam Boat Association, as well as being a retired priest (not that they ever really retire).

Having decided not to go to Parham because of the weather, of course it then broke and the sun came out. It was going to be a hot afternoon, so some time spent by the river would be quite pleasant.

With a hastily cobbled together picnic lunch, we set off into Guildford, about 20 minutes away from home. On crossing the river on the one-way system, we spied my friend and *Vintage Spirit* magazine contributor Peter Hammond on the bridge



*A general view of Dapdune Wharf with a former river barge in the dock to the left.*



*Another view of Dapdune Wharf with steamboats alongside the quay.*

taking pictures of boats on the river below. When we got to the wharf, I phoned Peter: "I see you're in Guildford." "How do you know?" "I've just passed you on the bridge; are you coming to 'Puffing a Wey'?" "Yes, I am, he said." Eventually Peter joined us – he had to follow the path along the river, cross over a footbridge and walk back to the wharf.

On arrival at the wharf (tucked away behind Guildford Cricket Club's ground), we were ushered into a parking space and set off for the ticket office, National Trust

membership card in hand. As you enter the wharf area, there is a large river barge on the left and out of the water so visitors can have a look inside. The old sheds are still very much in situ, with a couple of cottages behind (still very much family homes). The river is to the left; a brick railway bridge in the



*Dapdune Wharf seen from the river.*



distance carries the Guildford to London Waterloo via Cobham line across the river, so we had a half hourly backdrop of trains rumbling across the bridge.

There was a lot of activity on the river with students from the University of Surrey enjoying time on paddle boards or similar, not always keeping to the right as you are meant to do on a river. Incidentally, the River Wey Navigation carries a commemorative National Transport Trust Red Wheel plaque which states: "Opened 1653: one



Kevin & Gillie Slater prepare for another trip on the river with Zara Finn, built in 1990.



Guildford's ornate Town Bridge. We were following the NT's electric trip boat at this time.



The National Transport Trust commemorative Red Wheel plaque.

of the first rivers to be successfully improved for commercial traffic and a prototype for many subsequent navigations." The navigation links Guildford with the Thames at Weybridge, and a further stretch south to Godalming was opened in 1763. The whole is now owned by the National Trust.



A riverside view of Guildford's old Town Mill. It is now the costume store for the adjacent Yvonne Arnaud Theatre (to the right). To the left is Guildford's former Debenhams store, now awaiting a new future.



On the way back to the wharf, we pass Mark Rudall's Emerald going the other way. Note the students enjoying the river too...

affirmative answer, he took us off to meet our prospective host who turned out to be none other than Kevin Slater, a *Freshspring* Trust member, and the SBA's current magazine editor, so that was good. After chatting for a bit, Kevin said to go to the lowest point on the wharf edge and he and wife Gillie would bring the boat, *Zara Finn*, to collect us. Somehow I ended up in the front in the sunshine as we made our way very quietly along the river towards Guildford Town Mill and the Yvonne Arnaud

Walking on, we soon met up with Mark and he immediately offered us some seats in the shade of the wharf's bookshop (a corrugated iron shed), which was very welcome. As well as being a priest, Mark is a talented musician, and he would be performing that evening along with some friends for the party for other members of the Steam Boat Association who were supporting the event. Gradually the other members of the band arrived and settled down on adjacent chairs and we were occasionally serenaded by bluegrass music while enjoying the shade.

On the river, steamboats were coming and going and after a while, Mark asked if we would like a trip on the river. With an



Theatre before retracing our route back to Dapdune Wharf. We managed to startle some of the students on the river when Kevin blew the whistle to encourage them out of the way. How some didn't fall in, I don't know!

When we returned, Mark asked if we would like a trip on his electric boat, *Emerald*. The hull of this environmentally friendly boat was built in the 1890s so it was not a modern boat by any means, though when it was converted I don't know. I was expecting Mark to come with us but somehow I was 'volunteered' to drive the boat. By now we had acquired a local family who lived down river from the wharf, so with six of us on board, I was into an interesting learning curve! That lasted less than a minute as it was really very easy once I had got the hang of the response to the throttle.

We decided to head down river, so in the opposite direction to our trip on Kevin's steamboat. We passed under the railway bridge, then between industrial parks before passing beneath the A25 road bridge built on curved concrete arches, so I had to ensure we had sufficient headroom to pass underneath. Very soon we then went under the A3 Guildford bypass before emerging onto a stretch of river with houses whose gardens ran down to the river, and fields on the other bank. Our



*More activity at Dapdune Wharf.*



*Music for the soul. The band rehearses; Mark Rudall is playing the double bass.*



*The family who came with us on Emerald own this stern wheel narrowboat and are seen heading home from Dapdune Wharf.*

time to head back as we were in need of some refreshments from the NT's cafe, and I felt we had been out in Mark's boat for long enough. Eventually we returned to the wharf, having made more students jump on their plastic 'canoes'. Creeping silently up behind them and then ringing the warning bell had to be classed as fun. We returned Mark's boat to him with thanks, and a few minutes later another hapless group was off in it along the river.

Suffice to say, we had an enjoyable time 'messaging about on boats' on the river.

new companions apparently lived in one of these houses and so were able to chat and wave to their neighbours as we passed. We continued on, dodging more students, until we came to a suitable turning point, not far from the Row Barge pub (should have gone on that bit further...) and Stoke Lock which lowers the river on its journey to the north. It was

The September edition of *Vintage Spirit* magazine carries an excellent article on north Devon's Rolle Canal. Copies of the magazine are available online at: [www.steamheritage.co.uk](http://www.steamheritage.co.uk), price £6 including UK p&p.

## New members

We welcome the following new members of the Trust:

Mr Martin Cridford	<i>Exeter, Devon</i>
Mr Daniel Callender	<i>Waverton, NSW, Australia</i>
Ms Maggie Reid	<i>Westward Ho! Devon</i>
Mr Richard Cooksley	<i>Portbury, N. Somerset</i>
Mr Stuart Ribton	<i>Gilgarron, Cumbria</i>
Mr Mike Mills	<i>Appledore, Devon</i>



# The 'Spapool' salvage operation

Mombasa, Kenya – January 1984

## Kevin Patience

The **Spapool** was one of six Spa Class coastal water carriers built to supply ships of the Royal Navy shortly after the end of the Second World War. They were named *Spa A192*, *Spabeck A227*, *Spabrook A224*, *Spaburn A257*, *Spalake A260* and *Spapool A222*, the A suffix denoting auxiliary. They had a length of 172ft, 30ft beam and were powered by a triple expansion steam engine supplied from a large Scotch boiler giving a speed of nine knots.

*Spapool* was laid down as yard No.337 on 13th August 1945 by Charles Hill & Sons of Bristol, launched on 28th February 1946, and commissioned on 14th June 1946 at a cost of £76,000. She was fitted with a steam engine built by C D Holmes & Co. Ltd of Hull and rated at 675 indicated horsepower with six water tanks holding around 100 tons in each.

A year after commissioning, there was a debate as to the future of the class. Two, including *Spapool*, were chartered to the War Office for service as water boats in the Mediterranean and Far East and the *Spapool* supported Operation Musketeer, the Suez Crisis until 22nd December 1956 when the entire crew qualified for the Naval General Service Medal with the 'Near East' bar. In February 1965, the ship left Malta under the tow of the RFA tug *Bustler* for Singapore where she remained until 24th September 1967 when, commissioned as a Royal Navy vessel, she sailed for Mombasa. During the next nine years the ship took part in the replenishment of ships, including operating on the Beira Patrol off the coast of Mozambique. In the early 1970s, the ship was laid up in Mombasa and in July 1976 sold out of service by tender and bought by a local firm.

In late 1976, *Spapool* was chartered by Divecon Ltd, Mombasa as the salvage vessel for the recovery of the sunken tanker *Southern Pioneer* at Tanga, Tanzania. The *Pioneer* had been discharging petroleum in January when a gas explosion followed by a fire destroyed and sank the ship in shallow water with the loss of two lives. *Pioneer* was subsequently raised on 23rd November 1976 and disposed of at sea three days later. *Spapool* returned to Mombasa where the Scotch boiler was later condemned as uneconomical to repair and the vessel became a bunker barge being towed around the port to refuel ships until laid up in the early 1980s. On 25th December 1983, the ship was berthed at the premises of Messrs Southern Engineering and sank alongside in forty feet on her port side. The author, who was Managing Director of Divecon Ltd, a diving / salvage company based in Mombasa, was tasked with raising the ship for scrapping.

The initial diving inspection showed the ship lying in the mud on its port side with all the hatches and doors open. With a steam vessel there was little likelihood we would obtain any lift from either the boiler or engine room due to the large number of openings

in the deck from sky lights and ventilators. As it was a water carrier, my attention turned to the forward four water tanks. These would be filled with air and give roughly 400 tons of lift. Two of us entered each tank and inspected the bulkheads for damage and corrosion and fortunately found none. The first task was to cut an eight inch square hole in the bottom aft corner of each tank which when pressurised and the bow rose, the water would drain out through the bottom corner. These were cut using thermic rods that burnt the steel away in a jagged cut. With all holes cut, the four access hatches were sealed and made airtight with epoxy. Holes in the deck were repaired using plywood kettle patches with rubber seals and threaded bars welded with a T end to lock inside the hull.

In the meantime, all the available air lift bags were laid out and checked for leaks and the dump valves cleaned and lubricated. Two weeks later and a large road drill compressor was brought to site and four hoses connected to the tanks and pumping began. For most of that day there was nothing to see and periodic checks showed water gushing out of the four holes. There were, of course, the usual doubting Thomases insisting it would not work. Around four that afternoon a piece of the starboard railing slowly appeared above the surface causing great interest in the ship yard. Over the next two hours the bow gradually emerged above the surface until all four tanks were now empty and air was bubbling out the holes. The compressor was switched off and four plywood patches fitted to prevent the water entering the tanks when the pressure dropped.

The following day we noted a major air leak from the tanks exhausting into the engine room. As this would flood the empty tanks it would require sealing. Two of us linked together with a safety rope and signal line to the surface entered the engine room



Spapool in Divecon livery.

through a sky light and made our way along the catwalks and under the lower side of the main engine to the floor plates. The visibility was zero and silt and dirt clouded the water in the torchlight. The bubbling air could be heard escaping into the engine room and we eventually found a pipe had been cut and the cause of the leak. We returned with the cutting torch, cut the pipe and hammered in a wooden plug and sealed the end.

The bows of the ship were off the bottom but the vessel was still on its side and we needed it upright. The question was where to fit the air bags, as we required at least thirty tons of lift in order to roll the ship through ninety degrees. There were a number of sharp edges around the bridge area where we could develop maximum lift but these could puncture the bags once inflated.

In order to get the twenty ton lift bag to operate, we cut off part of the bridge wing and bolted a wooden former in place to prevent chafing. The twenty and ten ton bags were shackled to steel strops secured to deck fittings and slowly inflated and as we watched, the top of the funnel began to appear and stopped when the bags had surfaced. Reshacking the bags closer to the deck finally had the ship almost upright.

It was now time to see how many bags



*The sequence of raising the Spapool at Mombasa.*



we had and where we could fit them to maximise lift. The twenty, ten and five ton bags needed to be fitted as deep as possible to effect a lift that would bring the propeller and rudder out of the mud. An inspection of the after deck showed we could attach the two ton bags to deck fittings but the larger ones would require shackling over the stern and the only possible places were the portholes of the crews quarters and steering gear.

Making hooks to fit the portholes turned out easier than first thought. A length of anchor chain was found and individual links were cut out in a G shape and these locked in to the porthole opening. Once the bag was inflated, the link held fast. In total we fitted over 120 tons of lift bags to the aft end of the ship and inflated each to its maximum. My inspection of the rudder in the mud showed the ship was moving and suddenly without warning the aft end rose out the mud and the air bags surfaced. The ship was afloat on four cargo tanks and the airbags. A tug was hurriedly summoned, connected to *Spapool* and pushed the ship up the beach.

The operation was finally over and we could now look forward to cleaning all the



equipment that was covered in a film of black oil while the ship was cut up by the shipyard. In the end the only section remaining was a part of the cargo tanks that became a storage unit for fuel.





# Matt's Diary

**Matthew Wakeham**

**My last** diary entry was in August 2021 while I was on leave from my previous vessel *Stena Penguin*. It was my first leave out of lockdown so I decided to extend, to catch up with my friends and do things that I have not been able to do for quite some time. I was actually at home for a total of six months between August and February. This was a little longer than I intended, as I wanted to go back at the beginning of January. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to join a ship at will; there are now many factors to address. Before Covid, we would just have to wait until our designated ship was berthing; now the ship needs to be berthing in a port that allows crew changes, in a country that allow us to fly to and which allows flights out for our relievers. I also have to test negative for Covid before I leave, when I arrive and after a few days of isolation. Oh the joys of Covid!

Around the middle of January, I received notice that I was to join a vessel called *Navigator Ceres* and I was thrilled because I knew that this was a gas tanker. I had wanted to move from oil to gas for quite some time. My very first contract was on a LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) tanker called *Stena Crystal Sky*, so right from the very beginning of my career I have had my gas endorsement. There are two types of gas tankers in my company, which are LNG tankers, and LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) tankers; *Navigator Ceres* is a LPG tanker. The main difference between LPG and LNG tankers is the temperature in which they store their cargo; LPG tankers usually carry propane, which is stored at  $-42^{\circ}\text{C}$  whereas LNG tankers carry methane, which is stored at  $-162^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

My flights were booked to Tokyo, Japan for 26th January. Three days before I had to have a Covid PCR test which needed to be negative. I filled in so many forms just to board the plane. When I eventually landed in Tokyo, the local agent met us. He remained with us through immigration and yet more Covid tests. Even with all the correct paperwork this took five hours.



The Navigator Ceres.

We collected our bags and went to the hotel to isolate before we joined the ship. We had more Covid tests on day three. During the hotel isolation, I met the chief mate who was also joining the ship with me. We stayed in the hotel for around five days, during which time we had our meals delivered to our rooms, some of which were a bit questionable (fries for breakfast!).

On 1st February, we were finally able to board the vessel. Due to the flights that were booked for the relievers, we were only able to perform a gangway handover where I learned that I was actually relieving the 3rd Engineer and not the 4th Engineer. Unfortunately, as it was my first contract as an officer on a gas ship, they didn't promote me so we had two 4th Engineers! This turned out to be a little bit frustrating at first as there were two people trying to perform one job but after a couple of days we decided to split the responsibilities in half so that we wouldn't end up doing the same jobs twice.

From Japan, we sailed to Yeosu, South Korea for discharging of cargo and then headed across the North Pacific, glancing in to the Bering Sea and along the edge of Alaska on course to Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada for loading. This contract was completely different to all my other contracts as it was a fixed route. We would always load in Prince Rupert at the beginning of the month, set sail to Yeosu and arrive around the 20th for unloading; then we would drop anchor for bunkering of fuel, provisions and spares before heading back to Prince Rupert again for loading. I imagine this sounds very repetitive but as there is currently still no shore leave due to Covid, this was a perfect route.



Landing in Tokyo.

We were mostly at sea so I was able to maintain a routine and as long as I had a reliever, I knew exactly when and where I would be going home. The only downside to this was when we sailed towards Yeosu we had to retard nine hours and when we sailed to Prince Rupert we had to advance nine hours. Most of the crew would find themselves awake for most of the night during the advancing. You could often go to the galley for a cup of tea at 4am to find a group of people there to chat with.

This contract was my most successful so far. I was able to manage my workload with ease, any problems I faced with my machinery I was able to solve quickly. I tried to spend as much time as possible with the 3rd Engineer to learn about his job ready for when I receive a promotion. My knowledge of the ship's generators has improved, as I had more hands-on experience with them. One of the jobs I enjoyed the most and I am glad that I saw was overhauling the generators' fuel pumps. I don't think I would have been able to do this by reading the manual alone! The entire crew was great this time too, everyone worked together very professionally; the atmosphere remained relaxed. The Superintendent even said it was the best crew he had seen so far.

After four months, my contract was complete. I was scheduled to sign off in Prince Rupert at the beginning of June. My reliever was from Taunton. It was his second contract but he was very competent. I signed off with the Electrician and 2nd Engineer both of whom I had been sailing with for almost the entire contract. We flew from Prince Rupert to Vancouver where we had a night in a hotel; this is where I learned that I had left my passport on the plane. I had to rush back to the airport praying that before



Breakfast in Tokyo.



The two 4th Engineers, myself and Doruk.



The Alaskan coast.

the plane left on its return journey it had been found. Luckily, the cabin crew found not only my passport but also a Canadian passport plus numerous jumpers and coats when cleaning the plane. I am blaming this mistake on all of the time changes we had gone through sailing back and forth between Korea and Canada for four months!

Upon my return home, I was lucky enough to attend the *Freshspring* get together; it is always a pleasure to visit and see the progress being made. I am now home for a few months enjoying my leave with my friends and family until duty calls again in October.



My cabin.



Away for my birthday.



# Education

## Work experience – Kingsley

**Titouan from** Kingsley School came to the ship for a day's work experience with our volunteers. He helped to strip down and prepare components of a water pump ready for re-assembly the following week. As part of his time with the volunteers on board, Titouan chatted to volunteers about their careers and talked about his plans to become an engineer – either in the maritime or aircraft industry. This is the first in what will hopefully become regular work experience placements for local schools developed by the Trust, to continue to engage with young people from the local area and beyond. Titouan was interested in plans for *Freshspring*, and said that he would like to follow progress from France, suggesting an international crowdfunding appeal which could well be something for us to explore in the future...



## Work experience lad – HE with his dad.

We now have a father and son team volunteering on the ship! Every Wednesday, a student who is being home educated is coming to the *Freshspring* to work on different projects with his dad, to introduce him to a real working environment in a supportive and informal setting. This student works alongside his father, scraping, painting and carrying out general maintenance tasks as part of larger ongoing projects on board. As a Trust, we are delighted to be able to support this activity for young people who may not be able to access placements through traditional routes.

Quote from Pete Gillett, Ship Manager: “Mike is a signed up volunteer who is home schooling his 12 year old son. So far they have painted a ladder board and cleaned and oiled half of the boat deck. They work as a team and I’m trying to find them something different each week. They are an excellent addition to the crew.”

## 27th July 2022

On 27th July we welcomed on board a group of Cubs, Scouts and Leaders who were on a camping trip to Somerset from Staffordshire. The group spent a couple of hours on the ship learning to send messages using Morse equipment, led by our very own Morse



expert, Mike. They were also each able to make and take away a length of rope – the visitors decided that the rope made perfect moustaches!

In total, there were 21 young people and six adults on the trip and they had a great day for it – warm but not too hot, which was a blessing as they had lots of questions to ask in the engine room! One adult commented that she would make a good stoker as she is ‘nesh’ (Northern speak for ‘soft’, I believe!).

The young people engaged enthusiastically with all the activities, asking lots of questions about the ship and maritime history more generally. As always, starting off in the crew



quarters makes the captain's cabin appear very luxurious – one young man lay on a bunk and did not want to get up, commenting that it “is much more comfortable than a roll mat”. Sleeping in a tent for a week has made the *Freshspring* accommodation appear even more appealing!

The group was also able to see how fast the tide rises in the estuary while moving around the ship, taking the opportunity to find out about how best to keep safe in this area when by the sea.

A special bonus at the end of the afternoon was having a group photo taken by Graham Hobbs, a local photographer, which makes a change from the usual smartphone snaps we normally include!

Many thanks to Mike Mills, Mike Greener and Richard Ker for helping with the visit today, and of course to Pete Gillett for opening up the ship. These visits could not happen without the generous help of our volunteers.

**Samantha Roberts**  
**Community Learning Officer**



## 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

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 Address

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



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