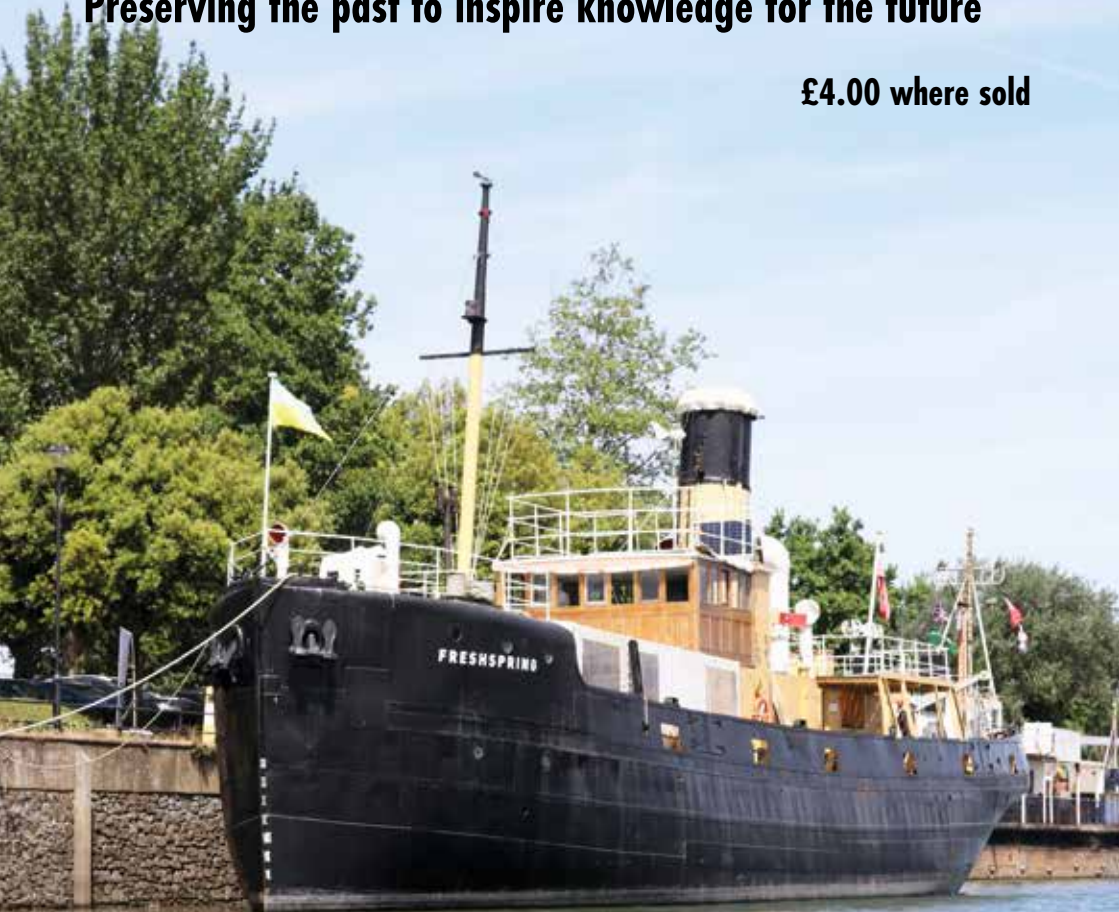


Freshspring Magazine

Preserving the past to inspire knowledge for the future

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Steamship Freshspring Trust

Registered charity, No.1151907.

Objects of the Charity:

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

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

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Captain Kevin Slade CMMar FNI.

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

Website: www.ssfreshspring.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SSFreshspringTrust?fref=ts

Membership Enquiries: Please send an s.a.e. for a form to: Steamship Freshspring Trust, c/o Little Cleave, Lower Cleave, Northam, Devon, EX39 2RH, or you can join online.

Ship Visits & Volunteering on the ship: The ship is open for public visits on Sundays from 9th April. 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).

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FRONT COVER: SS Freshspring pictured from Duet on the high tide during the Bideford Water Festival in June. Brian Gooding

From the Chair

I have just returned from two weeks of adventure. Week one was to steam down the Thames from Lechlade to the Traditional Boat Festival at Henley, almost 80 miles. It was a good trip and the boat performed well. Steam engines are incredibly reliable as long as you treat them well; they love oil and will work without fuss or bother, rewarding the operator with a gentle and regular motion.

The *Quarterly Review of London* in 1830 enthused about steam: "Unlike muscle power, it never tired or slept or refused to obey. Unlike water power, its immediate predecessor, it ran in all seasons and weathers, always the same. Unlike wind, it responded tractably to human will and imagination: turning on and off, modulating smoothly from the finest delicacy to the greatest force – ever under responsive control. It is impossible to contemplate, without feeling exultation, this wonder of modern art". A beautiful and extremely accurate statement.

On a long trip such as my recent one, the world and often the scenery disappear behind the will and joy to keep the engine running – ensuring the fire is bright and sensitively fed with Welsh coal, the water is at optimum level in the boiler for most efficient operation, the steam pressure is maintained at a pressure, which best feeds the engine and revolutions maintained to ensure a good turn of speed without wasting



Duet off Fawley Meadows in Henley-on-Thames during the Traditional Boat Rally.



John Puddy and Duet on the Thames at Henley with the town's 18th century bridge in the distance.

energy. There is no time to dream or dawdle or to enter into intensive conversation as the system needs alertness and consistency. Balance is essential; let the water level drop and efficiency wanes, compounded by the need to inject water at a pace, which reduces pressure; neglect the fire, pile on coal and the pressure drops due to the lack of brightness, when the pressure drops it will take a while to recover requiring even more attention. The secret is to relish the challenge and to maintain the blissful balance that steam engines require.

Steaming on water is totally different to on land. No hills to worry about, either up or down. No rattling along shaking clinker from the grate. There are other challenges though. A lock requires planning or an embarrassing cloud of steam will deafen all and create a mist enshrouding those who are near. Planning starts about a mile or so before the lock: let the water drop on the gauge, leave the fire alone and enter the lock with reduced pressure and a fire needing fuel. During the locking, build the fire, inject water to optimum level. These two actions depress pressure immediately so no blowing of safety valves, but the actions prepare for departure by creating a hot fire in waiting and a good head of water already at optimum pressure. Riddle the grate to remove ash and clinker, then gates open and away with a jolly toot on the whistle!

This all sounds like great fun, and it is, but, remember how many hours it took to prepare for the trip – the making of new bushes, the refurbishment of the air pump; oh, and the endless polishing. Also remember the time spent during and after the trip – the ash, the soot, the dirty tubes, the major clean up at home and all those extra little jobs to be done to prepare for next time.

The scenery on the upper Thames is stunning as the river meanders its way to the city. Wildlife abounds and there is an air of peacefulness that only exists on a river. As the river progresses, it enters urban areas like Oxford and Reading, where the tranquillity turns to noise and bustle. Henley was reached without incident but in the rain. We had a great berth but Friday was a washout with some stall holders packing up before they started; however, we were in for the duration.

Sleeping on the boat was OK as it was always warm and dry. Saturday was better with a good turn out. I did the mandatory parade of steam and that was it for the day. Sunday was pack up day and steam was raised to reach the slip several miles up river, actually a most pleasant trip in bright sunshine, accompanied by my son who had come on leave from his ship, thus I felt safe with a "real" engineer on board!



Approaching Henley's five arch bridge, built in 1786.

Straight afterwards, I embarked on a 1,200 mile motorcycle trip with my son and a friend. We took in much of Wales, the Peak District, Manchester and Newcastle. It was a tough week and utterly the opposite of the week before. However, we have to do these things, don't we!

The summer so far has been very busy for us with a range of events and another sell out Pluckateer evening on the ship. A highlight was the Volunteer thank you evening. This was great fun with Volunteer Mick providing an excellent Paella and we were entertained by our own ship's band, "The Bar Boys".

Visitor numbers have been disappointing this year so far with a reduction in holiday



Two pictures from John's motorcycle trip with son Tom and friends.



makers in the area. Our aim is to move the ship this autumn or early spring, so we are more visible from the town centre and quay. This requires careful planning as we need to move two vessels into new berths.

We had the BMT team along recently to discuss the feasibility study, which they are carrying out and to have a look around the ship. It was a valuable meeting, and it appears that so far, it looks as though the ship could be suitable for passenger carrying. However, I'll say no more as Catherine Ingram, The Lead Naval Architect, has written about the project in this magazine.

We have attended several events this summer, with more to go. Whenever possible, I provided steam engine rides which now seem to be expected at most local events and it creates a children magnet, keeping me busy all day. On 11th June, we had our regular water festival in Bideford. This is always a highlight event. It features

cardboard boat racing among the many activities. I was busy with the steam launch providing trips and kept going until the tide went out, almost leaving me high and dry!

We held another event on board on 30th June and, as before, it was a sellout. We are planning to hold more events on board as they are clearly popular and generate funds for the Trust. The steam engine was out again for Littleham Fete on 1st July. It was a proper country event with the usual dog activities and even ferret racing. The rides were, as usual, popular.

Following the sudden and sad death of Richard Ker, who was the Membership Secretary for many years, we may have missed reminding those members who do not currently pay via an automatic renewal method (that is people who pay by bank transfer, cheque, cash) that their membership may be overdue for renewal. We will be in touch in the coming weeks to notify members who need to renew their membership. Many members are paying the old rate of membership and we need to bring all members up to date with the membership fee of £25 per year. In the meantime, thank you for your patience and understanding. Also, I would like to thank all those generous members who make monthly donations to the Trust. This is a much valued source of funds.

We have been debating the AGM this year and, ideally, we would like to have it in person here in Bideford. This gives members an opportunity to spend time at the ship and for us all to have time to chat. We will provide a Zoom link for those who just cannot make it. The date decided upon is Saturday 30th September.

-



Mike Teare with the ss Freshspring stand at the Bideford Water Festival. Brian Gooding

New members

We welcome the following new members of the Trust:

Mr Tim Coles	Devizes, Wiltshire
Mr Brian Burke	Sheerness, Kent
Mr Mike Bennett	Weston-super-Mare, Somerset
Mr Richard Slack	Bideford, Devon

Freshspring Feasibility Study

BMT are delighted to be supporting the Steamship Freshspring Trust in their ambition to bring the vessel into a condition that allows it to carry passengers. Along with the challenges of refitting and refurbishing the material state of the ship to allow this, there are also challenges to obtaining the certification required to allow operation with passengers, which demonstrates that the required safety standards are met.

With over 100 professional Naval Architects and Naval Engineers, primarily located in the South West, BMT are thrilled to support the Trust in this project. Over the past few months we have undertaken a study of regulations appropriate to potential modes of operation for *Freshspring* in the future. This has looked at the feasibility of compliance with the relevant regulations and therefore potential to achieve the required certification for future operations. This has also involved preliminary engagement with the Maritime Coastguard Agency, who will need to be satisfied that the appropriate requirements are met before they issue the certification required to operate.

As you'd expect, there are challenges associated with a ship of *Freshspring's* vintage obtaining passenger certification to meet modern standards. However, we are optimistic that the challenges can be overcome without compromising the historic value of the vessel. Alongside requirements to make sure the structure of the ship is sound and watertight (where required!), it will also be necessary to make sure the equipment fitted and processes around the equipment (for example, control and communication between the wheelhouse and engine room) meet modern standards, as well as creating a physical space that is appropriate for the carriage of passengers. We are also pleased to engage in discussions about how *Freshspring* can incorporate developing technologies to operate in a more environmentally friendly manner, preserving both our maritime heritage and our planet for future generations to enjoy.

The team and I are delighted to have a part to play in the project and are excited to see what the future holds for *Freshspring*. We very much value the partnership we have with the Trust, and enjoy working together, in particular on collaborating to engage young people in exciting STEM activities. We are also very much looking forward to using our BMT sponsored "volunteer day" to spend another day supporting *Freshspring*.

Catherine Ingram
Principal Naval Architect
BMT



Kelly Taylor

Unfortunately things didn't quite work out with our previously appointed person in the audience development role but we worked with Shine Recruitment – a local charity recruitment agency – to quickly re-recruit. We interviewed three excellent candidates and although the decision was a tough one, we were very pleased to appoint Kelly who is already making a great positive impact. **Annemarie**

I am Kelly Taylor and I have been appointed as the Audience Development Manager for SS Freshspring Trust. I have lived in Devon for the last five years as I moved here to be closer to my parents. Since living in Devon, I have been working as the Deputy Harbour Master for Torridge District Council and prior to that role I owned and ran an IT company.

Through my role at the council, I have had the pleasure of seeing the amazing work that the *Freshspring* team has been doing over the last few years. I am thrilled to now be a part of the team and I can't wait to help increase awareness of the Trust and recruit more volunteers and members to help to continue the preservation of the ship for the younger generation to enjoy.

SS *Freshspring* is a valuable part of the tourism for the town and it is my aim to encourage as many people as I can to come on board and learn about the history of the vessel. We already have a great team of people working with us and some amazing members supporting us but there is so much more work to do and I am determined to help get the ship back out on the water under its own steam. I hope to see more members supporting our work and crowds of visitors enjoying the ship and all it has to offer.

I have two daughters who are both enrolled with Sea Cadets and I was the unit admin assistant for two years and volunteered with the parent supporter group for their fund raising events. I brought my girls to visit the *Freshspring* when I first started working in the harbour and they now volunteer on the ship on Sundays. They are both passionate about the maritime sector and I want to encourage more students to consider a career in the maritime sector.



Kelly, our new Audience Development manager with our Chair John Puddy offering steam rides for children at the Bideford Transport Fair on 13 August

The Paddle Steamer 'Caledonia'

Brian Gooding

The ps *Caledonia* was built by Denny Bros. of Dumbarton, for the Caledonian Steam Packet Company, and was launched in 1934. The engine, also built by Denny's, was commissioned as Machinery No.1023, a triple expansion diagonal, with a low pressure cylinder of over 4ft diameter. Indicated hp was 1,750.

Caledonia was built to provide an upper Clyde ferry service. During the Second World War, she served as an anti-aircraft ship under the name HMS *Goatfell* and was credited with at least two enemy aircraft during the D-Day operations.

She was returned to the Clyde in 1946 and served until 1969. She served as an excursion vessel, operating from Ayr from 1954, before moving to Criagendoran in 1965, cruising around Bute for a few more years.

She was withdrawn in 1969 and sold for scrap but was subsequently sold to Bass Charrington as a floating restaurant, named *Old Caledonia*, and was moored in London by Waterloo Bridge (in the same spot now occupied by the ex-Humber River paddle ferry *Tattershall Castle*). Sadly she caught fire in 1980 and was declared a total loss, being scrapped in Kent.

However, that was not completely the end, for her engines and some auxiliaries were acquired by the late Cdr John Baldock RN who started the steam collection at Hollycombe



The Old Caledonia moored on the Thames in London as a floating pub.



The burnt out Old Caledonia being towed down the Thames for scrapping.

House, near Liphook on the Hampshire /West Sussex border. Auxiliary machinery included the reversing engine, bilge pump, condenser and circulating pump, air pump, electricity generator and boiler room fan.

I can remember these various items arriving at Hollycombe and them being gradually assembled in a specially dug pit on the edge of the car park, all in the open air. The assembly was done more or less single handedly by Cdr Baldock's full time steam fitter, Eric Purver, the intention being to try to turn the engine over on steam if possible. Adjacent to the pit was a large Robey & Co. semi-portable steam engine which would provide the steam for the engine.

The first (and only one of very few) public steamings took place on August Bank Holiday 1984 and was semi-successful. The problem with trying to run an engine of this size is that it needs a lot of steam to just warm it through and the lack of paddles (to act as a flywheel) meant that there would be no smooth movement of the engine if it did move at all.

Warming through took several hours and the



Waiting for the engine of the Caledonia to be run. The driver of the Burrell steam tractor is none other than the author!

Robey struggled to maintain the pressure, the boiler being smaller than was really needed. However, by mid-afternoon, enough had been done to attempt a run. The main steam valve was opened more and with a rush of steam through the open cylinder drains and exhausting to atmosphere straight from the engine, eventually the engine moved, albeit reluctantly and only one partial stroke. After a long pregnant pause, it moved again; and then again... But now the Robey was running out of steam and water, so that had to be attended to, but the big engine had run and did run again that day. It was all very dramatic and drew a large crowd of onlookers.

In time, a building was erected over the engine so it is now enclosed and protected from the elements, but there are no plans to try to run the engine again, but it sits in a building, the inside of which resemble's a paddle steamer's engine room. Currently the engine is not on display to the public, though that will change in time but at least the Caledonia legacy lives on and is not lost.



A colour picture of the engine of the Caledonia being run at Hollycombe for the first time.



The engine of the Caledonia being run at Hollycombe for the first time. Cdr Baldock is on the right on the driving platform.



On the driving platform is Jim Adie who was the last Chief Engineer of the Caledonia during a visit to Hollycombe in the 1980s.

Volunteer in exile – Dr John Pook

John has been a long term volunteer on SS *Freshspring* and is known for his kindness and engaging personality. John was a lead member of the painting team and took his work very seriously. He was often seen touching up areas with his artist's brush. He is very sorely missed by us all. It's like a family member leaving. John promises to come back to see us in January.

Here is John's note to us all after a month in Aussie:

Shopping list:

Marigold Gloves (long sleeve)

Omelette Pan

Front brake disc replacements

Warm sweater

Beer glass size converter guide

Great-Grandfather self-congratulatory certificate

Greetings from the Great Big Continent to the south. We've been here many times before and much is familiar. Some surprises though.

Our No.2 daughter fixed up a house-sit. Missing from the brochure was the presence of eleven cows, all of which need feeding and some of which are pregnant with a delivery date 8th August onwards or 'could be anytime'. My skills stop at an epidural or a 'crash' Caesarean Section. Maybe wandering around with a pair of Marigolds will impress the locals? The locals? The nearest is a kilometre away, so I guess we're on our own. Success? – or a freezer full of beef?

Also missing from the brochure was chickens. I'm not a big fan of eggs. I've tried shouting (and starving the buggers) but they keep coming. I thought 'egg-bound' related to our feathered friends but I'm fearful it's beginning to apply to me too.

Then there's the car. We bought a Mazda CX-9 (snazzy?) at auction online unseen. £3.7k. 7 seats, electric boot lid (can't stop pressing its buttons), door mirrors sweep



John Pook and 'the girls'.

down when you go backwards – the whole nine yards. It would be good if 'nine yards' was any multiple of the stopping distance. Tap the brakes and it went into shuddery Magmix mode – tricky at 110km/hr on the freeway. A spell in the street among the gumnuts, ring-pulls and lizards did the trick – now silky smooth and progressive.

Chilly? Goodness – to the bone. A Large Hot Place with Beer? – you must be joking. Single digits at night, today was a proud 16 °C and windy.

Refreshments are still a challenge. "G'Day, can I have a....." Jug? Pint or Imperial Pint? Schooner or Pint? Middy/Pot/Schooner/Ten or Handle? The terminology varies with where you are and how thirsty? V'baffling.

Meanwhile – Grand-daughter No.2 delivers great-grand-child No.1 on 24th July. Crikey – it's time for the wicker bathchair and a visit from nurse.

Actually, it's all running to plan. I'm writing this with a gin and the heating on and ON. Miss you all – love and best wishes.

John



The ship is looking very smart these days. (Sunday 11th June 2023). Brian Gooding

Bark

*Heart of Oak are our ships, jolly Tars are our men,
We always are ready: Steady, boys, Steady!*

As the words to the official march of the Royal Navy testify, the exploitation of oak trees in UK for boat construction, as well as buildings and bridges, is well known. Admiral Nelson led a series of tours around the country to encourage the planting of new woods and forests to ensure there would be sufficient timber for future shipbuilding. Of course, he didn't foresee the impact of iron and steel on the future of shipbuilding but the New Forest is a living legacy to his efforts.

In a similar but smaller scale, the Britannia Sailing Trust, currently restoring the 104 year old fishing vessel *Britannia* in Winkleigh, North Devon has created an initiative with the National Trust to secure a site for planting trees that can be used in future restoration projects.

This Boatbuilders' Woodland initiative (officially called Britannia Wood) has succeeded in securing



English oak leaves and seeds. GNU Free Documentation Licence



Clarence Wharf, East the Water. North Devon Maritime Museum, Appledore

Peel, 187

TO JOHN TEARE & SON,
Ship Chandlers, &c.

Account of Bark

Wm. Teare & Son £ 322 5 ..
Provisioning 467 8 ..
 £ 275 5 4 ..
 £ 132 12 8 ..

Bills

<i>J. Teare & Son</i>	£ 02 " 15 " 0
<i>W. Teare</i>	12 " 16 " 8
<i>J. Watson</i>	4 " 18 " 10
<i>J. Mearns</i>	" " 14 " 4
<i>W. Radcliffe</i>	3 " 19 " 11
<i>W. Clives</i>	3 " 19 " "
<i>Bark bills 9% to Amble</i>	5 " 3 " 2
<i>Master's Commission</i>	1 " 0 " 0
<i>Storage & Insurance</i>	1 " 3 " 0
<i>do Ropes</i>	" " 5 " 0
<i>Monday M. 4 1/2 Mts 9%</i>	13 " 3 " 0 114 1/2
	£ 516 ..

all quantal

Fishing boat Sarah accounts showing bark bills. Kinsale Manx National Heritage

a site, on the west coast of Exmoor, that will be planted in 2024 and managed for the purpose of growing timbers for the use of boatbuilders and other traditional craftsmen, both present and future. The woodland will be a natural mix of native trees of varying ages. All felling will simultaneously serve to improve the health of the woodland, while also yielding materials to support the future of endangered traditional skills.

The significance of this endeavour becomes evident when we consider the time line. In approximately 400 years, far beyond the natural lifespan of any wooden vessel, this forest could provide the timber from 50 trees necessary to construct a sailing vessel akin to *Britannia*.

The restored *Britannia* will shortly be leaving her temporary garage home in Winkleigh to be re-launched in Port of Exeter Heritage Harbour. <https://britanniasailingtrust.org>

Less well known is the story of another tree-based product that, at the time, was extremely important as part of an industrial process. The exploitation of this resource also had an important impact on the environment. This product was bark.

The acid from the bark of oak trees was essential to the production of leather in a process called tanning. This changes the chemical structure of the hide, making it more durable and less susceptible to decomposition, while at the same time colouring it.

During the Industrial Revolution, a process using chrome superseded the use of bark, but, at the turn of the 18th century, during the Napoleonic Wars, the army needed leather for boots and equipment. So, the demand for tree bark increased. At times, during the French wars, the value of bark exceeded that of timber.

Devon's oak trees were an important source of shipbuilding timber, but profiteering on the sale of bark meant young immature trees were felled, raising concern for the future timber supply. Local historian John Watkins, writing in 1792, commented on the quantity of bark being collected locally and expressed concern that this practice was killing too many trees, so depriving shipbuilders of their timber. In 1805 the average stock length of 6,000 trees auctioned in Barnstaple was twenty feet per stock. Two years later, according to the General View of the Agriculture of the County of Devon, it was reported to have reduced by five feet per stock as a result of the 'number of young trees improvidently felled and taken to market'.

In the late 1700s, Thomas Tapp at East-the-Water, Bideford allegedly made one of the early fortunes through exploiting this demand. A newspaper report, many years after the event, stated that Thomas, a bark merchant, made over £18,000. His flourishing bark business led to the development of Clarence Wharf, from where it is likely that he exported bark to the tanning industry in Ireland, only a hundred sea miles across the Irish Sea.

The value of this timber trade was illustrated when Clarence Wharf, by then occupied by Henry Tucker, was offered at auction in 1836. The sale prospectus stated: *'The Wharf is substantially built, measuring 113 feet broad, by about 150 feet deep, having the advantage of deep water. This is decidedly the best situation for a Steam Packet station on the Torridge*



Fishing vessel *Britannia* restoration in Winkleigh.

River. It has also a capital Bark Cellar, and Timber Warehouse, each measuring 52 feet long, by 24 feet broad; covered Saw Pits, Sheds, Gig House, Stables, and Office, with good carriage entrance. The whole admirably adapted for an extensive Timber Trade.'

So, the Devon landscape we see today is, at least in some part, less densely forested not only because of agricultural clearance and for ploughing but also as a result of the exploitation of oak trees for bark. This meant more younger, smaller trees being ringed to remove the bark and would have killed the trees before they reached maturity.

Bark was also used in much more obviously maritime applications. Soaking in bark solution was used to help preserve cotton fishing nets and sails from the degrading impact of salt water. On the Isle of Man accounts from fishing vessels and ships chandlers in Peel show regular costs for 'barking' fishing nets for both the local herring fishery and the mackerel fishery off the coast of Ireland. The red brown colour of canvas sails comes originally from soaking them in bark solutions, which would have helped give them a longer life as well as imparting the traditional colour.

Bideford-based charity Way of the Wharves has been working with The Burton at Bideford, Art Gallery & Museum to produce a webpage and display on the importance of bark and the local leather trade. More at: <https://www.burtonartgallery.co.uk/exhibitions-activities/industrial-bideford-the-wharves-and-the-leather-trade-in-bideford/>

Michael Teare
Way of the Wharves



Manx Nobby White Heather, built Neakle & Watterson, Peel 1904.



Meeting Peter Herbert

Henry Cleary

In 1998, on a visit to Bideford, I had the good fortune to meet with Captain Peter Herbert, local seafarer, coastal skipper, shipowner and vessel broker, through whose hands many historic small craft had passed. Peter had a good sense of the historical importance of many of these vessels and, when opportunity allowed, tried to find a suitable home. He also did much to promote the use of waterways, particularly the Bude Canal and Harbour where some of his craft were berthed.

Although no longer with us, there are examples where Peter's efforts have proved worthwhile. If you visit the Scottish Maritime Museum (SMM) at Irvine, you will see the oldest cargo coaster in British waters, and the oldest Clyde-built of any type, the motor vessel *Kyles*, built as a steamer in 1872 and now



restored to her 1953 condition. Peter acquired her at the end of her commercial life and kept her, looking for a sympathetic restorer and in 1984 sold her to the West of Scotland Boat Museum, precursors of the SMM.

More of a preservation challenge but still (mostly) in existence at Bideford is the *John Adams*, built in 1934 by Dunston's of Thorne for the Admiralty as a 85ft length, diesel engined naval tender and supply vessel. What makes her remarkable is that she was intended for service in Cork Harbour where, as part of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty (which created the self-governing Irish Free State), Britain retained naval facilities and the forts protecting them. These were primarily intended as a resource to be called on in the event of a future war but two destroyers were stationed at Cobh in the lower part of Cork Harbour, which also included the naval dockyard at Haulbowline and the fort at Spike Island. Transport and ferry services were required and the *John Adams* was intended for this. In 1938 the naval facilities and forts were handed back to the Irish Government as envisaged by the Treaty, and the *John Adams* (among other assets) with them. The vessel then continued in service until 1981 as part of the Boat Transport Unit of the Irish Defence Forces before coming to Bideford where Peter aimed to put together a preservation effort. The *John Adams* may have had mundane duties but is the only surviving vessel of the Royal Navy's Irish operations and the only survivor to have worked for both Governments!

Peter had worked with coastal sail such as the *Kathleen and May* in its trading days but it was his experience in dealing in surplus Government vessels after World War 2 that I was particularly keen to hear about. As is well known, during the war, the Government requisitioned large numbers of coastal and estuarial craft as part of naval supply but these were not enough.



To provide more capacity, 98 VIC steam coasting lighters were built, the majority based on the classic 66ft Scottish puffer, and the remainder 85ft length and more cargo, larger crew accommodation and better boilers. Of the total, 16 were in fact completed as motor vessels but the predominant use of steam was due to wartime capacity and supply issues. In the decades after the war, as the size of the Royal Navy reduced, many were put up for disposal.

With many coastal craft badly damaged or lost, any surplus Government vessels were eagerly sought post war, even those with steam engines requiring more crew and costlier fuel. Over time these aspects became more of a problem and many of the small steamers were converted to motor. From the 1960s numerous VIC vessels passed through Peter's hands, some sold on and others scrapped.

One of the longest lived was the *Arran Monarch*, a steamer and a well known visitor to Watchet Harbour in the 1950s bringing small coal from Cardiff to power the local paper mill. However, the paper mill converted to oil and Peter acquired the steamer in 1961, steamed it to Bude (where the local community were able to take a short trip on the canal)



and began the conversion to motor operation. This was completed in 1964 at Appledore, and the vessel was lengthened by some 20ft to increase cargo capacity. Sold to a South Wales aggregates business, she became a sand suction dredger in 1965 and was renamed *Coedmor*. When this role was no longer viable, Peter acquired her again in 1976 and resold her for further sand dredging in Cornwall, finally at Hayle until scrapping in 2002 – a commercial life of 54 years was certainly good value!

Throughout these operations Peter seems to have enthused many in the community and those he worked with and would surely have been pleased to see the revival of quayside and maritime heritage at Bideford in which *Freshspring* plays such an important role.

- The photos of the *Arran Monarch* were given to Henry Cleary by Peter Herbert.

BILL OF SALE (Body Corporate)

Serial Number	Name of Ship	Number and part of register	Whether a sailing vessel or motor ship	Short name or initials of ship
180665	COEDMOR	180665 IN 1945 (S.A. 180665)	MOTORSHIP	AG

Length from fore part of stem to the aft side of the mast or position of the mast on the main deck to the main deck
103 2 6

Max breadth to widest part of hull
20 0 6

Depth to the lowest part of the hull
8 2 5

1871-31

91-36

WITNESSES:
 I, Isaac Cleary (Director)
 I, Royden Jones (Director)



The *John Adams* photographed at Bideford by Henry Cleary some years ago.

The Al Rashediya

Bahrain – 1981

Kevin Patience

In the early 1970s, the Arabian Gulf was in the throes of a massive building programme and the backlog of ships awaiting discharge in the region had increased dramatically. There was a dire shortage of cement and cargo ships were arriving from all over the world with bagged cement. This is not the best way of transporting this valuable material as cement bags in the lower part of the hold tend to solidify under the weight of those on top and discharging results in bags breaking and a massive mess. In the late 1960s, Southern Line of Mombasa, who transported thousands of tons of bagged cement around the Indian Ocean, bought a cargo ship that after modification became the world's first bulk cement carrier named *Southern Baobab* capable of loading and discharging cement using compressed air in pipes.

However in other parts of the world, bagged cement was the only option. One enterprising gentleman bought an ex-World War 2 Landing Ship Tank, LST-1097, in the Far East in 1975 and having a large cargo space originally designed to carry tanks and Jeeps, had it modified with a conveyor belt running along under the deck to load and unload bagged cement. Renamed *Al Rashediya*, fully loaded the LST arrived in Bahrain and discharged its cargo of bagged cement, but the idea of using this to off load cement from other ships in the anchorage came to nought and the ship was anchored awaiting charter. By 1978 the ship had been abandoned on the beach at Muhurraq in Bahrain but with a new road being built along the shore, the ship was refloated and moored in shallow water across the bay in Manama. As the ship was unmanned, no one noticed the vessel slowly sinking by the bows until one morning the bows sat on the seabed while the aft end was high and dry.

A salvage operation began with a local group attempting to refloat the vessel using compressed air. I, meantime, was involved with a sub-sea cable survey close by and watched the



Southern Baobab, the world's first bulk cement carrier.



LST – General arrangement drawing.

proceedings with interest. With the corrosion and numerous holes in the hull and deck, this was doomed to failure and within a month those involved had disappeared leaving a large outstanding bill. The weeks went by and the ship lay there until it became apparent that it was right in the middle of a proposed dredging operation for a new yacht marina. A local businessman bought the ship and contacted the Dutch salvage company Smit International, agreed a fee and a salvage survey of the wreck began. My phone rang and Smit's MD called me for a meeting. Would I head a diving team to help refloat the ship with Smit supplying the floating crane *Magnus III* that could lift 400 tons and all the pumps and equipment.

LST-1097 was laid down by the Jeffersonville Bridge & Machinery Co., Indiana, in November 1944 and was launched in January 1945, one of over a thousand of these landing craft designed and built to a British directive following the fiasco of the abandoned vehicles at Dunkirk in May 1940. The design called for a vessel capable of carrying tanks, men and equipment and landing them on a beach. Having a flat bottom and shallow draft, the vessel would be prone to rolling and this was overcome by incorporating large ballast tanks to be filled on voyage, increasing the draft but pumping out before beaching. She was 328ft long, powered by twin General Motors V12 900hp diesel engines with a speed of 11 knots and a displacement of 3,960 tons. The ramp and bow doors were 14ft wide, enough to take the largest armoured vehicles at the time. The ship's armament was usually twin 40mm Oerlikons and twelve 20mm cannons. LSTs were often nicknamed 'Large Slow Targets' which was the unfortunate case in April 1944 when the practice landing at Slapton



Al Rashediya prior to the salvage – 1980.

Sands in Devon in preparation for D-Day, went badly wrong when two were torpedoed by German Schnellboots, or E Boats as we called them, and 700 men drowned.



LST 1097 off loading equipment in Japan 1945.

Al Rashediya was commissioned in February 1945 and served in the Pacific at Okinawa and Japan, receiving one battle star for service in the war. After WW2, the ship was reclassified as a cargo / stores vessel with the number AG-149 and named *League Island*. After service in the Korean War, the ship was sold for scrap in April 1961. What happened to it between 1961 and the mid-70s is unknown except the ship ended up in Singapore in 1975.

The *Magnus III* barge was based in Bahrain and used for heavy lift contract work around the Gulf and two days after our meeting the vessel was alongside and we carried out the first underwater inspection. There was extensive corrosion on the hull with dozens of small holes letting in water. However, in salvage, it is easier to pump water out and stop leaks below the water line than stop air leaking out all over the ship. The main issue was the two open bow doors and the loading ramp down in the mud. Our first job was to lift the ramp and secure it in position and close the bow doors when required. The ramp was the key to the refloating operation and had to be made water tight. The rubber door seal was covered in barnacles and two divers scraped it clean while two of us freed the door's locking bolts and rigged the ramp for lifting with a wire through the open bow doors from the inside. Having the massive lift of the *Magnus* soon had the door pulled tightly into place and secured using the dog clips around the door edge we had freed.

In the meantime, the barge crew had rigged a number of electric submersible pumps and pumping began on the low water. With over 500 tons an hour being discharged, we watched and waited. The water was not going down, in fact as the tide rose so did the level in the ship. 'We have a problem,' said the man from Smit. With the pumps still running, it was time to see where the water was coming from. An LST has compartments on two decks all interconnected with water tight doors either side of the cargo space for accommodation and stores. The accommodation deck also has ventilation provided by small hatches with covers that can be closed and locked between compartments.

Starting at the shallow end closest to the engine room, we entered the flooded darkness and in the light of torches closed every door and vent and worked our way down towards



Magnus III alongside the Al Rashediya.



Kevin discusses the salvage progress with Smit colleagues.

the bow and the last compartment that accessed the main bow door opening ram. As we pushed the door open, the rush of water stopped us going further. Stop the pumps and the flow stopped and there was part of our problem. There was a large oval hatch with a cover rusted open that accessed the hydraulic door ram for repair and maintenance. Using a crowbar and spanners, we closed and dogged the hatch and repeated the operation on the opposite side; we were now ready to pump again.

This time the water fell rapidly and the bow slowly rose out the water. By the following morning, the cargo space was dry and it only remained to empty the double bottom ballast tanks and close the external bow doors. This time it was simply cutting the hydraulic feed pipes to the two huge rams with an oxy acetylene torch and with the pressure released, the crane pulled the doors closed and we secured them. The job was done.



The bow rises with the pumping.

The high tide next morning saw the tug *Argus* pull the ship off the beach and later that morning we berthed the hulk alongside and handed the ship over to its new owner. It had been an interesting few days but little did we realise that in a matter of weeks we would be working with Smit salvaging the ship a second time after she sank stern first alongside the jetty.

With the successful completion of the salvage, Smit took the entire team out to dinner in one of the large hotels in Manama. It was a great evening and the following day it was back to routine tasks. A client phoned and needed 36 5kg sacrificial zinc anodes welded on a barge, a straight forward job with special wax coated welding rods. The main point was to ensure that the polarity using DC voltage was correct or else your fillings tended to tingle.

Another required some sheets of Frodingham steel piling cut off just below the seabed. This was a job I loved. Settling down on the seabed with an oxy-arc cutting torch and a box of thermic rods to start burning through the three-quarter inch thick pile. In the good old days when divers used hard hats and canvas suits, the prime way of cutting steel underwater was using an oxy-hydrogen torch similar to the present day oxy acetylene torch but with an added nozzle with oxygen to keep the water away from the flame. I only used it in a test tank and not in anger as they say. The oxy-arc system uses a thin steel rod 3/8 inch diameter 18 inches long, filled with lengths of steel wire and crimped to stop them falling out. Fitting this to an oxy-arc torch released high pressure oxygen down the rod when the trigger was pressed and with the addition of DC voltage, one struck an arc on the job at which point it burst into life and self consumed. However, it would simultaneously melt steel and leave a jagged cut. We have all seen thermic rods in action when the baddies are cutting a safe open with sparks flying everywhere. It was an all day job in twenty feet of water but very rewarding when each pile was cut and craned out the way and one started on the next one.

Then there were ships' hull inspections and sea intakes and propellers to be cleaned of a variety of marine growth. We were fortunate to have a contract with the United States Navy and that kept



Kevin preparing to weld repairs to the hull.

us extremely busy looking after Destroyers, Frigates and when the first Gulf War was in preparation, we were called to work under the battleship *USS Wisconsin*. In another case, a laden tanker with 80,000 tons of crude oil had just left the jetty when all the cooling pumps began to overheat and the main engine had to be shut down and the ship anchored. We discovered enormous sheets of polythene stuck to the sea water intakes. Where they came from who knows but it was a nice little earner when the ship is on a time charter.

Three months later Smit called, could we have a meeting? The *Al Rashediya* had sunk stern first with a list to one side alongside the jetty and required immediate salvage as she was blocking the berth. The *Magnus III* was first alongside later that morning and we arrived on board shortly after. Standing on deck with the crew looking at the ship at this odd angle, we decided the first task was to close all the open doors and portholes in the aft



Magnus III alongside for the second time.



Al Rashediya awaits disposal 1981.

end accommodation and around the superstructure. Pairing up, we entered the flooded accommodation below the main deck with the only light coming through the open portholes. With one diver holding the torches and myself carrying a ring spanner, hammer and crowbar, we systematically closed each glass porthole and the aluminium dead light



Kevin and Mike on weekly maintenance.

cover turning everything pitch black in an instant. Some portholes had glass missing so the deadlight was important to seal the opening. One cabin door had been locked and we broke the door off its hinges with the crowbar. Entering the cabin I reached for the porthole clip to close it when suddenly a cupboard fell on me trapping me on the floor. In the torch light my buddy diver reached for the crowbar and hammer and began breaking up the cupboard. It was a remarkably resilient piece of furniture considering it was nearly forty years old. To me lying on the floor it sounded like all hell was breaking loose but he did a great job holding the torch in one hand and breaking the cupboard with the other. Finally I was free and we met the other pair of divers in an alleyway, having completed closing the portholes on the other side.

Back on the surface we checked the general arrangement drawings and found a couple of water discharge points from the engine room that needed plugging in the hull. The Magnus crane's twin hooks were lowered and wires passed under the hull for safety and stability and with everything secure, the pumps in the engine room and cargo hold were started and slowly the ship began to reappear. By the next morning she was afloat and only required the double bottoms pumped out. The job was over, but that wasn't the end as the owners asked me to keep an eye on the ship for the next three months after it had been moved to the anchorage. The ship was due to be sold and towed to the Emirates but no dates had been fixed. Once a week, Mike (my co-diver) and I boarded the ship and pumped out and sealed any leaks in each double bottom tank and patched the small holes we found in the hull above the waterline using thin plywood and epoxy putty. Later that year the ship was sold and towed to Sharjah in the Emirates and a section of deck and hull cut out, the engines and ancillaries removed and the ship turned into a barge. What happened after that we are not sure but after being used as a cargo / storage barge, it probably went for scrap in Pakistan.

Book Reviews & more

Magnetism of Antarctica

This is a fascinating read and documents a remarkable expedition in two ponderous sailing craft some 180 years ago that sailed on a mission to explore the waters of Antarctica.

Under the command of James Clarke Ross and Francis Crozier, in 1839 two ships embarked on a four year scientific mission to study the Earth's magnetic field, which took them deep into pack ice. One of the ships, HMS *Terror*, was built in Bideford and HMS *Erebus*, the largest ship at 105 feet, at Pembroke dock. Both were bomb ships and designed to carry mortars.

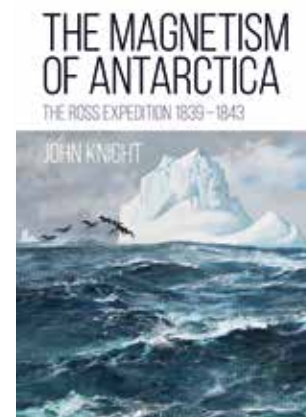
The book provides a remarkable insight into life at sea at the time: the extreme hardships, the bravery and resilience of sailors and the elation of discovery. The narrative takes the reader into the reality of life aboard an early 19th century sailing ship as told by the seafarer, something we struggle to comprehend today.

It concludes with fascinating sailors' stories and a section on ships and their sailors.

This book, in my opinion, is a must to read and one which will not be forgotten.

John Puddy

The book can be ordered from Whittles Publishing, www.whittlespublishing.com
Tel: 01593 731 333, any good bookshop or the usual online retailers.

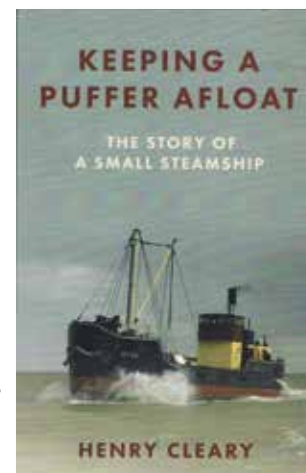


Keeping a Puffer Afloat

By Henry Cleary

From the heart of Rosyth naval base in 1978 five volunteers set out on VIC 56, an elderly steamer snatched from a scrapyard fate. With only a basic radio and a compass made usable by one of the crew, they set out down the North Sea. Turned away by some ports and welcomed in others, she began a new life on the London river just as Docklands was being reborn.

This was the first of many challenges to keep the steamer going and family, friends, work colleagues and sympathetic visitors were ruthlessly enlisted to help. A rare survivor of wartime shipping, the Puffer attracted interest around the Thames estuary and in 1989 sailed across the North Sea to Flushing in Holland. VIC 56 appeared in arts events and in the Queen's



Diamond Jubilee Pageant in 2012 before being donated to Portsmouth Boathouse 4 in 2019 where she is a popular exhibit. Trips were only possible through the heavy work programme of the engineers to keep the engine, boiler and other machinery in good order.

This book looks at the challenges for small historic vessel owners and how to stay ahead.

66 pages. A5. Price £9.99. Available from:
www.troubador.co.uk/bookshop/sport-hobbies/keeping-a-puffer-afloat/

A History of East-the-Water, Bideford

By Michael Teare, Bob Kirby, Anthony Burt with line drawings by Lou Boulter.

Despite the long history of the wharves and commercial importance to the local area, this is the first book to focus on their history.

After introducing East-the-Water, the wharves and their place on the Torridge Estuary, the book concentrates on the strands that make up this history.

This was not just a local story; ships built here voyaged all over the world, at different times tobacco and timber arrived from North America and local families emigrated taking with them traditions and local pottery. Coal mining and gravel extraction, fisheries, agriculture, energy and enterprise as well as the changes brought about by steamships, railways and tourism all helped shape the local community.

Profits from book sales support the work of the Way of the Wharves Charity – researching and promoting the maritime history of Bideford, East-the-Water and the Torridge Estuary.

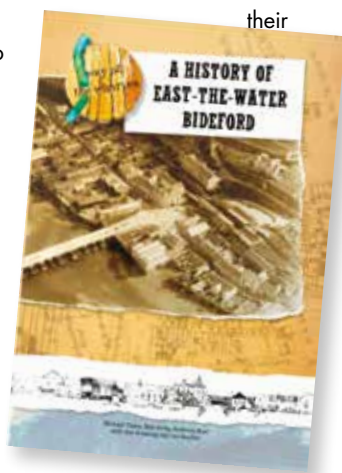
'A History of East-the-Water, Bideford' received the 2022 Local History Society Award in the Devon History Society Book of the Year. The charity was delighted to have received this award and acknowledgement of the teamwork that went into collecting and putting together these stories about the maritime and industrial history of East-the-Water and Bideford, and hopes, as a result, to get these stories to an even wider audience.

Orders

Way of the Wharves website: <https://thewharves.org/product/a-history-of-east-the-water-bideford/>. In Bideford from Walter Henry's and The Burton and Barnstaple from Waterstones.

Book Details

A History of East-the-Water, Bideford. By Michael Teare, Bob Kirby, Anthony Burt with line drawings by Lou Boulter. Price £10. Published: Peterhouse Press. December 2021. ISBN: 978-0-946312-20-7. Paperback: 154 pages. Size: 240 x 170mm, spine 9mm.



2023 Annual General Meeting

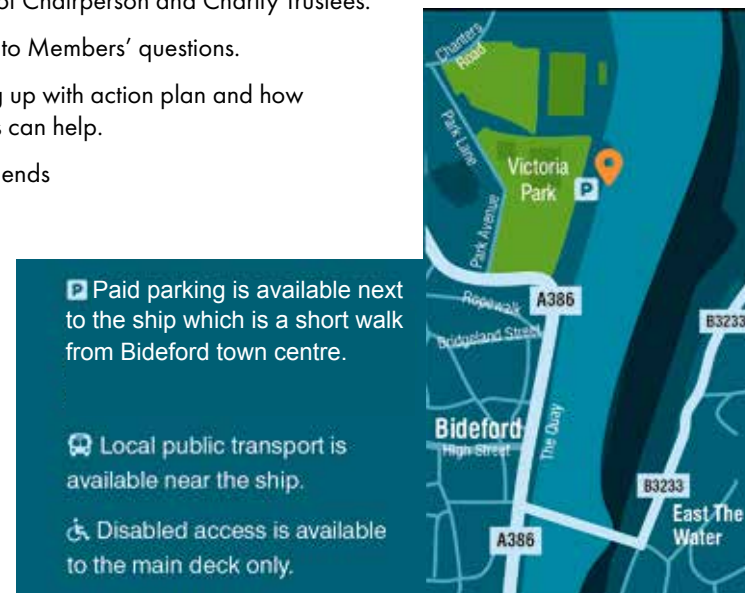
Notice is hereby given that the 2023 Annual General Meeting of the Steamship Freshspring Trust will be held at 11.30am on Saturday 30th September 2023 as a hybrid event by Zoom and in person on board SS Freshspring, Landivisiau Walk, Bideford, EX39 2BX.

The AGM to be held as a formality dealt with in 30 minutes. This will be followed by an engaging event on board with lunch, the opportunity to meet Volunteers and learn about the forward plans for the Trust. Entertainment will be provided by the ship's own band.

Meeting documents and details on how to join online will be distributed via email to those for whom we hold email addresses and in the post to all others before the meeting.

Agenda

- Welcome and apologies. (Chair)
- Acceptance of minutes of the 2022 AGM (Chair)
- Chairman's report: Background of the Trust, aims and achievements in the year. (Chair)
- Forward plan and general activity updates. (Chair)
- Financial report and acceptance of accounts. (Treasurer)
- Election of Chairperson and Charity Trustees.
- Answers to Members' questions.
- Summing up with action plan and how members can help.
- Meeting ends



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