

Freshspring Magazine

Preserving the past to inspire knowledge for the future

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FRESHSPRING



No.34 Spring 2023

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

Objects of the Charity:

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

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

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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: A fine study of ss Freshspring during her time when resident in Bristol.
Courtesy John H Clark

From the Chair

The evenings are getting longer and I, for one, am emerging from hibernation to become active in my workshop again. This year, although my annual boiler inspections went well, as mentioned in the last magazine, I have decided to get an early ten year test on a launch boiler and so it stands in my workshop going through a dismantling process. For those of you not conversant with steam boilers, a major inspection is carried out after a period of a maximum of ten years depending on the condition of the boiler. Once the inspector has scrutinised the structure and measured thicknesses, it all has to be bolted together again for the hydraulic test. This involves filling the boiler with water and hydraulically building up the pressure to 1¹/₃ or 1¹/₂ times working pressure. It has to stay stable for around ten minutes and then the pressure is released. Next the fire is lit and the boiler steamed until safety valves blow, hopefully at the working pressure. They should snap closed when the pressure drops. The inspector will want to see two means of putting water into the boiler and, all being well, he will issue a magic certificate. The boiler then undergoes a dry inspection and a steam test every year until the cycle begins again, probably when I have retired from boating activity.

Sadly, few young people are engaging in steam and so us elderly enthusiasts hang on as long as we can, keeping steam alive. A major factor is that many of us remember the use of steam as mainstream power, from factories to railways and marine. This magic kindled an interest which, for many, lasts for a lifetime. I well remember my father taking me to watch railway engines thundering under a road bridge which we were standing on. They were like living monsters leaping along the track and passing under the bridge like a bullet, leaving us in a dense cloud of steam and the relief to still be alive. At least, that's what I thought!

Steam was also quite natural to me as my father built ¾in. scale locos which we used most weekends hauling passengers on a track in Bristol. I had my own small bench in his workshop where I tinkered away making simple devices. I adopted my father's ¾in. Burrell traction engine and made a water cart for it. I had loads of fun with this little engine and drove it around our garden, often parking it up and sheeting it down, just like the real thing. So having inherited my father's workshop, I continue his interests with a range of steam machinery. Oh, and a 121ft steamship to play with!

Our aim, of course, is to inspire young people into engineering as we all know it is a great career. Engineering training provides transferable skills like no other profession, and you can even mend most things in the house!

One such young person comes along to the ship on a Wednesday with his father who home schools him. Lewis works very hard supervised by Mike, his father. To help Lewis focus on a career path, we arranged a special visit to the Harland & Wolff shipyard at Appledore, where he received VIP treatment and they also joined the team who enjoyed a day out on ss *Shieldhall* last year.

The Team on the ship has been busy all through winter keeping ss *Freshspring* looking her best and progressively chipping and painting new parts of the ship. One

gang has been building a replica of the galley and making a beautiful job of it. This will form a new learning resource for all visitors, showing them just how little space the cook had to prepare meals for the 14 crew. We are also creating a new welfare space in the forepeak along with a composting toilet.



This project is funded by Bideford Bridge Trust, a local charity that has been extremely supportive of the Trust, and includes the upgrading of our wind turbine to provide additional power for hot water and a refrigerator. The ship, of course, is not connected to mains power and so our energy comes from solar and wind. Again, a valuable learning resource.

Our Volunteers were joint first in The Marsh Group Volunteer Award for Historic Vessel Conservation. This much coveted award came with a cash prize and so we decided to hold a bumper Christmas party for our supporters and volunteers. It was a great event and we even had our prestigious ship's band playing, much to the delight of all.

Even though the weather has been bitterly cold, we still have a healthy team on board on a Wednesday and a Sunday. A while ago, John Cooper, a member and past Trustee, funded a replacement coal stove for the crew area forward and this has been a godsend this winter, providing a very warm space for getting together or just warming up between bursts of activity. We have even had all the seating reupholstered to enhance the quality of the accommodation.

In this magazine, Annemarie, a Trustee, will report on our success in gaining substantial funds from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. This is a major stepping stone for the Trust and moves us closer to knowing if our ship can return to operation, an aim we all strive for. Crucially, the grant supports an essential feasibility study to determine the future potential of the ship.

On 21st November, we held a Trust planning day, which was attended by Patrons, Trustees and Volunteers. This was a very valuable brainstorming session to ensure that our objectives remain on track and we, as a team, operate harmoniously. It also informed our successful NLHF application.

I'm afraid there is a gap in my report as we, as a family, went to Australia for a month. During this time, I very much enjoyed meeting volunteers from the Sydney Heritage Fleet. I hope now that we can create a positive link with the group, who have been incredibly successful in saving many heritage vessels.

We all thank our members for being with us, supporting us and for the very valuable donations you make. Just recently we have had a milling machine donated by a member. There are no limits! Our next aim is to acquire a ship's lathe so get your thinking caps on.

John

Richard Ker

We very sadly lost a great friend and Trustee, Richard Ker, at the end of December. Richard was a truly amazing chap, who studied engineering and then went on to travel extensively before becoming a teacher. Richard was our Membership secretary and many of you will know of him in that capacity. He also made education projects for use on the ship and at events. One of these was ropemaking equipment, which is always a favourite with children. We miss Richard very much as he was always so enthusiastic and never stood still for more than a few seconds. His energy and commitment will be difficult to replace.



John

Thanksgiving Service

**A thanksgiving service for the life of Richard Ker will be held at:
St John the Baptist Church, Instow
On Tuesday 28th March at 2.00pm.**

Donations may be made to: The Steamship Freshspring Trust or the Appledore Maritime Heritage Trust, either at the service or c/o W S Gayton & Son
Picket Meadow
Old School Lane
Fremington
Barnstaple
EX31 3UP.

Award sets us up for success!

A grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund is hard won so we were thrilled to learn we had been successful with our recent bid. We asked for a fraction over £141,000 and were awarded the whole amount to support a project spanning two open seasons running over 18 months. John Puddy, our chair commented “It was an astounding result and enables us to take the next steps in our development. We are extremely grateful to the NLHF for continuing to invest in our future”.

The project encompasses four main areas of activity: planning and development, strengthening our governance, embracing environmental goals and broadening our audience. The bid took us a long time to finalise, with our first project enquiry submitted last March. This was followed up with some advice from the NLHF’s advisory team, which was really useful with some clear pointers. By November, following our strategy planning meeting, we had finalised our thoughts and submitted the bid in December with some tremendous letters of support from a range of organisations including Torridge Council, Appledore dockyard owner’s Harland & Wolff, Bideford Town Council, National Historic Ships, Petroc College, local maritime charity Way of the Wharves and our local CVS.

The overarching focus for the project is increasing our resilience. It spans 18 months and two seasons to give us the maximum opportunity to finalise our plans for the future, develop our visitor audience, learn from any new initiatives and embed new practices.

The first steps will be to commission the next study – our feasibility study looking into what changes must be made to *ss Freshspring* for her to be seagoing and carrying paying passengers. Once we have this in our hands, we will be able to combine what we learn with the range of options for earning our living outlined in the viability study and create a definitive plan for our future development. We’ll know whether it will be possible to steam again, at what cost, the steps we’ll need to go through and over what timescale. Considerations will include the feasibility of a major capital fundraising programme and a long period of static developments, during which we will need to earn income by a range of means for our core costs and to support our social purpose of engaging and inspiring young people.

Alongside this work on our future, we will need to look at reviewing the Trust’s structure and strengthening our capabilities. Our bid gives us some paid support, including a Trust Secretarial role which will help us make the big decisions needed and carry our major plans forward.

We know our development needs to bring people with us and our audience needs to broaden in every way, and this is a key concern of the NLHF. They want more people to engage with heritage, so this element is an essential part of every grant they make. We are especially keen to engage younger people and align with our social purpose. To help us, we’ll be employing an Audience Development Manager for 18 months, enabling us to identify, track, welcome and engage new people, including young people, as visitors, members, as a youth board and volunteers.

Finally, but not least, there is a focus on our environmental credentials. We’ve joined an organisation called ‘Fit for the Future’ which essentially acts as a matching agency. Many the organisations making a bid to the NLHF become members and can then offer each other help and support in achieving environmental goals. We will be looking at our overall carbon footprint as both a static and operational ship and working with agencies such as the RSPB and Petroc College to see how *ss Freshspring* can be used to help survey and sample the river and estuary as part of some wider environmental projects.

Overall, this project sees us take the essential next steps in our development. We’ll be employing two new roles, bringing new people into the organisation and by September 2024, we will have a clear view of our future, a stronger team and will have significantly grown our audience. We’ll be consulting along the way as we develop our plans, with local government and employers, national bodies, visitors and all our members so keep an eye on our social media and emails so you can have your say. It’s going to be a tremendous journey and we’re looking forward to taking you with us!

Annemarie Shillito

Spring 2023 Education

Our 2023 Education offering started with Pilton Secondary School using our STEM school kits in their lunchtime Year 7 STEM club. The kits were used by the Science lead at the college with up to 20 youngsters at a time to encourage the youngsters to think about Science in a different way and to have a hands-on experience different to that in their mainstream Science lessons.

The kits have now been collected and after a quick maintenance and replenishment check, are off to a different education centre, this time an alternative provision for young people being educated in a non-mainstream setting. We are providing five kits for the centre, which the young people will use as part of their Science lessons. The young people will kick off their project with a visit to the ship in March, when they will take part in various ship-based activities and see a real steam engine. Some of our expert volunteers will be on hand to talk the young people through the transformation of the ship to date. The use of the kits in secondary settings is really taking off, and it is exciting to see how schools are adapting the kits to use with their students in their own particular settings.

This year we will continue to work with schools on school visits, taking the learning to schools and also working to provide opportunities for young people to volunteer in various roles. These will include, but not be limited to, meeting and greeting visitors to the ship, helping to sell merchandise and also working with our Wednesday volunteers on different maintenance and creative projects.

Sam Roberts

Matt's Dairy

Matt Wakeham

Back in July 2022 while on leave from my previous vessel *Navigator Ceres*, I contacted my company about the prospects of promotion to 3rd Engineer. I had already completed five contracts as 4th Engineer and had recently received my third recommendation for promotion. My crewing officer accepted my request and organised a phone interview. The interview was conducted by a former Captain and lasted around 20 minutes; it was a relief to learn at the end that I had been successful!

A few months later I received my next assignment, a LPG Tanker named *Navigator Pluto*. I didn't know much about this ship, only that it was 23 years old, making it over double the age of any other ship that I had sailed on! At first, I was a little apprehensive with the prospect of being a newly promoted 3rd Engineer on a potentially challenging ship. With some trepidation, I decided to take a roll of the dice and accepted the assignment.

I embarked on to the ship in Houston, Texas by service boat, while it was at anchor waiting for a berth to open.

The first crew member I met was the Chief Mate. He gave me a brief description of the vessel and that we would be loading ethylene in Houston and discharging it in China after a six week voyage. He informed me that we would require all three Auxiliary Engines (or Generators) running constantly *The 'Navigator Pluto'*. to keep the ethylene below boiling point, -169.2°C . This was new to me as previous ships I had sailed on only required one generator on load during sea passage and two during manoeuvring or cargo operations, but never all three!

I was a little concerned with this as one of my new responsibilities as 3rd Engineer was generator maintenance. However,



Landing in Houston.

during the six week voyage, I would not be able to perform any planned maintenance on the generators and if a breakdown was to occur, I would have to resolve it swiftly or we would have problems with the cargo!

My next move was straight to the engine control room to meet the team. The 3rd Engineer that I was relieving was a Russian called Aleksei. He was an experienced 3rd Engineer who already had his 2nd's ticket. He showed me around the engine room, which felt a lot different to what I was accustomed. I had never even heard of some of the company names on the machinery, let alone seen them before; the ones that I did recognise were dated models. The main point of interest for me of course was the generators and I was shocked to see a partially dismantled Generator No.2. Aleksei explained to me that there had been a problem with the High Temperature Fresh Water Pump. Unfortunately, they did not have the spare parts on board to repair it and we were waiting for a delivery.

We received the necessary spare parts a few days later. As a result, one day before entering port we began reassembling Generator No.2. At around 16.00, we were just about finished when we heard a noise from Generator No.1. Upon investigation, we found that a bolt on the exhaust manifold had sheared due to the generator running on a higher load to make up for the absence of Generator No.2. From there, Generator No.2 was tested and then put on load, and work began on No.1. We managed to remove and replace the sheared bolt by midnight just as the pilot arrived, we were eventually at berth at Morgan's point by 02.00. Talk about a baptism of fire for my first week!

Once in Houston, we loaded ethylene and prepared for the voyage to China. We sailed across the Gulf of Mexico and through the Caribbean Sea to the port of Colon in order to transit the Panama Canal. The Panama Canal is an 82km long artificial waterway that connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean. It is a shortcut for ships to prevent them having to sail around South America in order to reach the Pacific Ocean, or vice versa to reach the Atlantic Ocean. This was my first time transiting the Panama Canal and I learnt that it is slightly different to the other



Two views of the diesel generators on the ship.



widely known artificial waterway, the Suez Canal. Unlike the Suez Canal, which is at sea level, the Panama Canal has canal locks at each end, which lift the ship up to Gatun Lake, an artificial lake 26 meters above sea level, created to reduce the amount of excavation work that would have been required to create an 82km long canal. The



The locks on the Panama Canal.



Matt on deck.



Matt's cabin.

ships transit through the Gatun Lake before they reach more locks, which lower them back to sea level once again.

During our voyage to China, I expected some problems but everything seemed to calm down. From the beginning, I knew the crew was good, as we had already worked together under pressure repairing the generators. This allowed us to relax a little bit and I was able to begin familiarising myself with my new position. During our passage to China, the only maintenance I was able to perform on the generators was performance tests. The rest of my jobs I had to plan for our voyage back to Houston when we would have no cargo so only one generator would be on load, allowing me to work on the other two. Besides the generators, I also had to take care of my other

machinery. This was boiler maintenance, which involved burner inspections, furnace inspections, soot blowing and boiler water treatment. Once a week, usually on a Saturday, I inspect and test the engines associated with the emergency diesel generator, lifeboat and rescue boat. The rest of my responsibilities involve general watch keeping activities such as completing the logbook and taking rounds of the engine room machinery space.



Tianjin Port in China.

After six weeks, we arrived at China for discharging. We were in port at Tianjin for approximately two days where we also collected spare parts and provisions for our trip back to Houston. We then sailed out to meet a bunker barge to bunker fuel and began our voyage back to Houston. I was now able to perform the list of jobs that I had accumulated for the generators during the voyage to China. This included fuel injector opening pressure adjustments, inlet and exhaust valve clearance adjustments, crankshaft deflections, camshaft inspections, rotator cap inspections and high temperature fresh water pump overhauls.

During our voyage back to Houston, we also celebrated Christmas and New Year. Usually this involves a buffet and non-alcoholic beers, but as we had a Filipino crew, we also took part in Karaoke and Horse Racing, two popular pastimes for Filipino seafarers.

On arrival to Houston, we had a visit from immigration and the US Coast Guard. I was lucky enough to go ashore. Unfortunately, the Russian officers on board were prohibited shore leave due to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, so I had a shopping list from them.

As my contract was only three months, I was actually due to sign off in Houston; however, I decided to extend my contract for another three months. I did this for a few reasons: firstly, I felt that the experience that I had gained so far had been far greater than I had gained on any other vessel so I wanted to make the most of this opportunity. Secondly, there is a major overhaul coming up for Generator No.3 that I would like to be present



Horse racing on deck.

for, and thirdly if I stay on board now, I will be home for summer! So back to China we go.

Presently we are waiting authorisation to enter Tianjin port for the second time to discharge and take on spare parts and provision for our return trip back to Houston. With any luck we should get their around the beginning of April and then I should be returning home for a few months.



The New Year buffet.



An interesting picture of HMS Ark Royal off Malta with a Fairey Gannett taking off from the flight deck while a recovery helicopter stands by. Alongside the carrier is none other than our own Freshspring!

The Fabulous Flotilla

I was very pleased to be asked to review a new book, 'The Fabulous Flotilla' by Paul Strachan.

The book, which details Scotland's remarkable activities on the Burma rivers, is a fascinating read. Almost all transport in Burma was by water until the late 20th century and the book details the rise of the Irawaddy Flotilla Company, which operated several hundred boats for many years, some carrying up to 5,000 passengers in channels, presenting the world's greatest challenge to navigation.

Behind all of this were people from Scotland. Even most craft were built and transported from Scotland and a chapter is dedicated to the steamers, numbering over 1,200 and some of the biggest in the world. Interestingly, a Lytham-built ship also joined the flotilla, a direct relation to ss *Freshspring*. Flats were often attached to the steamers to increase capacity, with cargoes from people to oil. In order to navigate the shallow areas, some steamers had a draft of as little as two feet.

The book covers in detail the business of running the fleet both in times of peace and war. It sets out the people who travelled on the boats, which in all the years of operation never lost a soul, and fascinatingly, those who commanded and worked on them. What I found particularly interesting was the detailed history of Burma, its architecture, its conflicts, its people, its religions and its development.

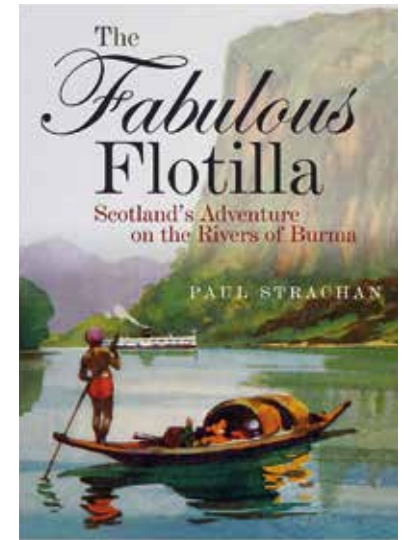
Later in the book, the author takes us on a fascinating 1,000 mile trip up river exploring and detailing the upper Irawaddy regions, some still showing Scottish connections.

This is a must read book, which tells us the story of Burma, somewhere we have all heard of but most know little about.

John

The Fabulous Flotilla' by Paul Strachan is available from Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath, Caithness, Scotland, KW6 6EG. Price £18.99. ISBN 978-184995-532-4. 240x170mm, around 208 pages. Liberally illustrated with c.200 photos, including maps and paintings, colour throughout.

Order online at <https://www.whittlespublishing.com> or phone 01593 731 333.



Torrige Estuary 'Idle fleet' 1922-1939

Following Peter Christie's excellent article in Freshspring Magazine No.33, Winter 2022, with the pictures of the 'Idle Fleet' of Merchant Navy ships moored in the River Torrige estuary during the 1920s and '30s economic Depression, I was prompted to look through my HMSO volume 'British Vessels Lost at Sea 1939-1945' and find out how many of the Idle Fleet survived the Second World War.

Below are ten of the 72 ships shown on pages 10-11, which were sadly lost at sea by enemy action, and whose crews will be remembered on Armistice Day. Although now living in North Staffordshire, my wife Sarah and I lived originally in Southampton, and those of you readers who know the city, will be familiar with the ruined Holyrood Church in Below Bar, with its Memorial to the 29,994 Merchant Navy personnel who died in the 1939-1945 Second World War, and the 14,879 Merchant Navy personnel who died in the 1914-1918 First World War, serving on the high seas.

Jon Honeysett MBE, BA (Modern & International History)

NAME	TONNAGE	DATE SUNK AND POSITION	CAUSE
BOMA	5,408	05/08/1940 57.08N 16.43W	TORPEDO U-56
DUMFRIES	5,149	23/12/1944 50.23N 01.43W	" U-322
ENA DE LARRINAGA	5,200	05/04/1941 01.10N 26.00W	" U-105
JOSE DE LARRINAGA	5,303	07/09/1940 58.30N 16.10W	" U-47
MINNIE DE LARRINAGA	5,049	09/09/1940 PORT OF LONDON	BOMBED
RAMILLES	4,553	08/05/1941 48.05N 32.26W	TORPEDO U-97
ROTHLEY	4,996	19/10/1942 13.34N 53.34W	" U-332
SCOTTISH CHIEF (TANKER)	7,006	19/11/1942 30.39N 34.31E	" U-177
" "	7,006	14/03/1941 LIVERPOOL DOCKS	BOMBED/REPAIRED
SCOTTISH MINSTREL	6,998	16/07/1940 56.10N 10.20W	TORPEDO U61
TELESFORA DE LARRINAGA	5,780	19/03/1941 VICTORIA DOCKS*,	BOMBED

*LONDON

Upcoming event – Stop Press!!

On Saturday 1st April, The Pluckateers will be holding a Sea Shanty fundraising event for the Trust. This will be held on the ship in Bideford and will include a locally-baked pasty supper. Tickets will be on sale over the next couple of weeks, so watch this space!

The Pluckateers are a South West based ukulele playing shanty band. The ukulele has a rich history with shanty songs. It was originally a Portuguese instrument taken on board ship when

Portuguese explorers sailed the world discovering new lands. The ukulele was ideal for long voyages as it was a portable, easily stowed instrument which was used primarily to help with keeping rhythm for the crew when working in a team, singing shanty work songs.

The group formed the years ago and have played at many shanty festivals across the South West including Padstow, Mevagissey, Yeovil and Weston Super Mare. There are currently four members in the group:

Beverley: Bass ukulele
 Dave: Baritone ukulele
 Matthew: Percussion
 Steve: Banjolele.



New members

We welcome the following new members of the Trust:

Mr David Frisby

Ms Clare Ferguson

Bideford, Devon

London

On the Medway

Brian Gooding



Britain's large rivers often have areas which are home to interesting marine artefacts and the Medway in Kent is no exception. Near the town of Hoo St Werburgh (whose church is the resting place of Thomas Aveling, the father of the steam traction engine) is a marina with an eclectic mix of old vessels, as well as a smattering of beautifully restored Thames sailing barges, this particular marina specialising in their restoration.

However, the marina is also home to vessels which have been converted to houseboats, some of which are no more than wartime concrete barges with wood superstructures. Indeed, the 'pier' is a row of sunken concrete barges with an open mesh metal walkway on top, which was interesting to follow to its end where two Thames barges were tied up.

It was not all houseboats, though, for close in shore is the former Admiralty steam tug TID172, built in 1946 by H Scarr Ltd, Hessle, Yorkshire.



The Thames barge Niagara was built in 1898.

Close by under a makeshift shed is former RAF high speed rescue launch 1255 under restoration. Named *Mistra*, she was built in 1942 by Herbert Woods of Potter Heigham with 3x130hp Perkins diesel engines and a wooden hard chine hull. Both these vessels are on the National Historic Ships Register.

The highlight of the visit was to be able to go on board the Thames barge *Marjorie*, which has been beautifully restored at the marina. She was built in 1902 in Ipswich for R&W Paul Ltd and is based either at St Katherine Dock in London (in the winter) or at Hoo.



A rear view of TID172 at Hoo.



Former RAF Launch 1255, *Mistra*, under long term restoration.



Thames Barge *Marjorie* at the end of the marina.



The beautiful interior of *Marjorie*. She was repaired at Hoo after being sunk in a collision.

Henry's first Flash Up

Terry Barrs

The scene: Nagasaki, the ship, HMS *Barrosa*, a late Battle Class Destroyer, converted to an Aircraft Direction Ship.

When on duty alongside, you were informed when boilers were required for sailing and when, so the day before it was in one's interest to make sure that everything was prepared beforehand as it usually involved an early start. This involved correct water levels, water supply checked and inspecting the furnace being the main items to be checked.

The stoker who was on my watch was called Henry, which was not his real name, but having three stokers with the same surname, they obtained nicknames. He was the one who had to put me on the shake at 0330 in the morning. Right on time, I was woken, got changed and then, a wash and shave and down below I went.



HMS Barrosa, photographed during the Torrey Canyon episode in 1967, and shows the ship at high speed.

We had two Boiler Rooms, an Engine Room and a Gear Room. We were to get the forward boiler up and running by 0800 hours. The boiler was an Admiralty Three Drum with nine burners, each capable of burning a ton an hour at full pressure. We had an auxiliary boiler which supplied domestics and worked at about 100psi on diesel. The fuel for the boilers was Furnace Fuel Oil which had to be heated to 220 degrees Fahrenheit for it to burn.

I thought that, as a change, I would get Henry to do the job, with my guidance and see how it went. The first thing to do was to get the fuel heated. Our fuel pumps were reciprocating ones of which we had two. The problem we had was that the steam available could supply the heater for the fuel or the fuel pump to operate slowly. We were able to circulate the fuel when it had heated up, alternating with the pump. This took a good while but we eventually got there, and were ready to light up. No matches or lighter, so off went Henry to get matches from the Quartermasters on the gangway. To supply air to the furnace, we had a small electric fan which could be rigged for blowing into the furnace and for ignition, a broomstick with rags tied on, liberally soaked with diesel. Using low pressure on the fuel pump, we waited for our steam to materialise.

The first sign of success was steam out of the vents on the boiler so after closing them, all eyes watched the steam gauge as it slowly rose up to its working pressure of 400psi. The next thing was getting the main fan going and after warming through, we were in business. The small fan was disconnected and the escape hatch and air Jock secured to enable the Boiler Room to be pressurised. We were then able to warm through the Auxiliary Feed Pumps of which we had two reciprocating types, the main feed pump being in the engine room. The Boiler Room fans were steam turbine and could also so be warmed through and we were well and truly in business. When near full pressure, I got Henry to ring the engine room to inform them that we were ready to open up the main stop valve. This valve had a wheel about two feet in diameter and was a real work up especially in the Tropics and was a real test of one's fortitude.

By this time, the rest of the crew arrived and it was coffee time, the water being boiled up courtesy of the polished drains on the feed pumps.

I congratulated Henry on his efforts and hoped that he had enjoyed the experience. I found that the blokes I worked with, if they learned each others jobs, including my own, it maintained interest and also helped when doing evolutions and exercises.

Main engines: Two Shaft Parsons Geared Turbines 50,000shp.

2x Admiralty Three Drum 400psi.

Speed 30 plus knots.

3,235 Tons, full load.

The steamship La Palma tied up alongside in Tenerife.



La Palma

Phil Barnes

These days, the steamship *La Palma* can be found moored by the cruise terminal building on the Muelle Sur (south mole) in Santa Cruz on Tenerife and is the subject of a restoration project headed by Fundacion Canaria Correillo La Palma.

The ship was built by W Harkness & Son of Middlesbrough as yard/hull number 192 and launched in February 1912, not long before



Detail of the ss La Palma.

the *Titanic* disaster, and the same year as TSS *Earnslaw* was assembled and launched on Lake Wakatipu in New Zealand (more on this next time). *La Palma* entered service in April 1912 working for the Elder Demster Company and was classified as “Correillo Maritimo” (maritime mail), which gave her a special status; in 1930 she changed owners to the state Spanish Company of Trasmediterranea, but still performing the same role. This involved carrying mail, freight and passengers between the Canary Islands and Spanish West Africa and performed this role until March 1976, when one of the two boilers failed and the ship limped into La Palma on Gran Canaria to be laid up pending its future. During its long career, circa 1950, the ship was modified to run on oil (it was originally coal fired) and was also fitted with a closed in wooden bridge.

Over the years and with no use, the elements took their toll and also bits were stripped out of *La Palma*, making it even more derelict. Ultimately it needed a decision



A stern view of the ss La Palma.

on the ship's future (which looked like a trip to the scrap yard!), but in 2003 and with the realisation of this ship's historic significance, a Restoration Trust/Foundation was formed to preserve this classic steamer. Restoration has been backed by several Canary Island governments and restoration groups and so far several million Euros have been spent.

Around 2007, *La Palma* was placed on a slipway at Santa Cruz to provide access to the ‘wet hull’ for major hull replating and a repaint below the water line, prior to it being re-floated in 2008. The aim is to make the ship into an operational museum doing cruises between the Canary Islands in classic style, carrying the likes of tourists and school parties, etc. It is planned to make the rear hold into a library/museum; the front hold will be converted into an exhibition room and there will



Another view of the ss La Palma.

be both a restaurant and cafeteria on board. In recent years, the masts/derricks have been refitted, but in contrast, the bridge is very empty, so a lot of new equipment needs sourcing and fitting as well as the replacement of a lot of timber panelling, etc. due to it being eaten by insects! On the subject of wood, *La Palma* once had a sweeping staircase, luxury cabins and a lot of Chippendale style furniture which is either being repaired or replaced.



A general view of the ss La Palma from the other side of the harbour.

As part of its restoration, the 700hp MacColl & Pollock triple expansion engine has been dismantled and removed for rebuilding 'off ship', prior to its reinstallation. In addition, the old boiler(s) were cut up in situ and removed and with these items removed, is the reason for *La Palma* riding high in the water (see photos).

As the ship doesn't comply with existing maritime law, the Foundation is working closely with the Spanish Authorities on a new Historical Ship Regulation, in order to ensure compliance to modern standards.

On the practical side and in order to facilitate this, the work will involve the installation of new maritime aids and new wiring and an auxiliary diesel generator set (similar to PS *Waverley's* set up) to power all the modern systems needed. In effect, the repaired engine will only be for propulsion and of course will need a modern boiler to supply it with steam.

This restoration is ongoing, so it will be interesting to see how things change for this once very stylish ship.

Some of its original specification is as follows:-

Length 67.09 metres.

Beam 9.1 metres.

Draught 3.68 metres.

Gross Tonnage 893.

Maximum Speed 11 knots.

La Palma can only be visited by prior arrangement and their contact email address is:-

correillolopalma@tenerife.es

Middle East Salvage Tales

Kevin Patience

The story begins in 1980 when three of us teamed up in Bahrain in the Arabian Gulf to form a marine company capable of undertaking small towing jobs, diving and salvage and marine repairs. Mike, who was a Master Mariner, was responsible for the marine towage and general brokering of contracts while Jan owned a 1,200hp tug and I was the salvage master responsible for ships in trouble. The first job on forming the company was a call from an American oil company whose tanker had lost its anchor in the anchorage at Ras Tanura in Saudi Arabia. Could we locate and mark it for future recovery? We agreed a price and on receipt of the US dollars, Mike and I located a suitable survey vessel fitted with sidescan sonar and set off for the anchorage. It took four days of running survey lines across the anchorage with yards of paper running out of the printer until suddenly the operator pointed to what looked like a cowpat on the seabed in 120 feet. A cross check and we were sure this was it. What we were looking at was a huge pile of chain with an anchor buried in the middle.

The ship had lost the chain and anchor when the windlass brake failed and the chain ran out at ever increasing speed, by which time the crew had left the foc'sle and taken cover. The chain ran out until with an enormous bang it tightened on the padeye in the chain locker and wrenched it and part of the steel bulkhead and



in a split second it had all disappeared out on deck and down the hawse pipe. A week later, having taken coordinates of its location, we returned with a diving vessel and having located the chain, anchored up stream and put a diver with helmet and video camera down with a rope and a wire to tie off a buoy. The dive took all of ten minutes to secure the buoy. Three months later Mike chartered a large tug with a substantial after deck winch and we recovered the end of the chain to the surface. The padeye and damaged steel was cut off and two days later the tanker returned and we passed the end back to the ship and they recovered what was a very expensive length of chain and ten ton anchor.

Two weeks after the anchor job, Jan mentioned he had a half share in a derelict ship named *Monte Cristo* in the anchorage at Dammam in Saudi Arabia. Would I take a small supply boat *Mars II* with some divers and bring the ship back to Bahrain? Jan had contacted a potential buyer and agreed a price per ton for the ship delivered to

Karachi. Once the ship was ready, this would be around a thousand mile tow from Bahrain. According to Lloyds Register, the ship was built in 1948 for Iino Kaiun Shipping of Tokyo, Japan as the *Toho Maru* by Hitachi Zosen, Japan with a registered tonnage of 1,996 and a length of 296 feet. She was powered by a three cylinder triple expansion steam engine giving a speed of ten knots. In 1960 the owners changed the name to *Umishima Maru* and re-engined the ship with a six cylinder 1,500bhp diesel built by Haishin of Kobe. In 1971 the ship was sold to Nam Fong Shipping of Somalia and renamed *Sea Phoenix* and in 1979 the name changed to *Monte Cristo* registered in Panama.

The ship appears to have been abandoned some time in the late 1970s having discharged her last cargo and been left to swing round the anchor. There it lay until May 1980 when purchased by my partner and I was detailed to collect the ship. The *Mars II*, captained by a British skipper Pat, had seen better days but it would serve the purpose. We loaded four electric submersible pumps and three portable diesel pumps and the usual sheets of quarter inch ply, threaded bar, nuts and washers and epoxy putty for sealing cracks and holes. We sailed that evening and arrived off Dammam the following morning, where I called port control for clearance and advised we were here to tow the *Monte Cristo* to Bahrain. There was a silence for a while then the port called us and advised the ship wasn't in the anchorage and that during a recent sand storm, had dragged its anchor and was now some seven miles down the coast and aground.

I spoke to Mike in the office on the radio with an update and was told to proceed to site. Pat checked the radar and found a speck on the screen at around seven miles which was the ship. We sailed slowly down the coast and looking at the chart found the *Cristo* was on the reef in very shallow water. As we closed in to the ship on the rising tide, there was about a metre of water under the keel. The Indian chief engineer arrived on the bridge and pointed out there was a lot of sand coming out the back of the ship. 'Yes', said Pat 'and I am driving, not you'. We were now about two hundred yards off the ship and Pat found a large rock pool and anchored. The Zodiac inflatable boat was launched with diving gear and tools and as we closed into the wreck, it was obvious it was aground and in a bad way with holes in the hull and very little paint anywhere. The name *Monte Cristo* could be read on the bows and stern with the port of registry Panama. The remains of a gangway hung down and we were able to scramble aboard. The ship had an unusual layout with two hatches accessing two holds forward and a single hold with two hatches aft. Having made our way up to the foc'sle, I peered over



the bow and noticed both anchors had been let go and over a period of time the ship had swung round and round gathering the chains and anchors into a huge knotted lump on the seabed beneath the bow. When the storm blew up

the anchors were useless and the ship dragged the whole lot down the coast until coming to rest.

It was now time to look around the engine room. The smell of stale diesel fuel and lube oil was overpowering as we made our way down the ladders and catwalks into the darkness. The ship's six cylinder diesel engine loomed over us and I



wondered when it had last run. It was eerily quiet and pitch black. The rear engine room bulkhead had a door leading into the propeller shaft tunnel and in the silence we could hear water pouring into the ship at the far end. The tunnel was partly flooded and as we made our way aft, the water rose up to our waist and there at the end in the light of our torches was the source of the noise. The stern gland bronze collar around the shaft compressed a greased packing material to keep the water out but the material had rotted and the shaft had obviously been disturbed when the ship grounded and water poured in around the shaft. There was nothing we could do on the collar as the bolts were corroded solid.

One of the tricks of salvage was to always take plastic bin bags and duct tape as well as epoxy putty and thin plywood. Back in the boat, I kitted up with another diver and having scraped all the barnacles and coral off the rope guard in front of the propeller, we wrapped the bin bags around the prop boss, taped it and the water stopped. Our next task was to pump out the water from the hold and shaft tunnel.

Climbing down from the deck into the hold, we became aware of an odd sour smell. The aft hold had the shaft tunnel running through it from the engine room with heavy timber boards to support the cargo. Piled at one end of the hold was the cause of the smell. Thousands of rusted empty condensed milk tins that one assumes had been part of the cargo destined for Saudi Arabia and never off loaded. The contents had leaked out and congealed into a stinking mess. The other end of the hold was flooded with the water that had come through the stern gland and through holes in the shaft tunnel wall. The following morning on the high water, Pat brought *Mars II* alongside and we transferred two electric pumps into the aft hold and having cut a hole in the ship's side, fed the hoses out and started discharging the water. We had about an hour to pump before the falling



tide would mean Pat taking the tug back into deeper water. The pump's capacity soon drained the hold and we quickly had them back on *Mars II* and it left to anchor off. We then set about patching some of the holes near the waterline with epoxy putty pasted on to cut pieces of thin plywood. Once hardened, the combination of epoxy and ply was in many cases stronger than the surrounding steel.

A couple of years previously I had been asked to fit a five foot by three foot patch under a tanker on an engine room sea intake so that the crew could replace the valve on the inside of the ship. We cut the three quarter inch thick ply to size, adding six inches all round and glued two layers of one inch thick neoprene sheet around the edge of the patch on the inside and fitted an eye bolt in the centre to hook scrap on to sink the buoyant patch under the hull. On arrival, the chief engineer arrived to see how we were going to do the job, and immediately started arguing that plywood was not strong enough for the job and I could flood the engine room. It took some explaining exactly how the patch would work and that if he cared to take an axe to the ply it would withstand considerable punishment. As it happened the patch was on the underside for over a week before we removed it and he had to admit that perhaps he was wrong.

We were now on a ship that was empty but still aground at the stern with a large pile of chain and two anchors at the bow. A diving inspection on the high water showed the ship was only aground on the last fifteen feet of the hull and skeg. That evening I proposed we rig the tow rope to the bow and on the high tide cut the two chains and *Mars II* would pull the ship at right angles to its current position into deep water. All was ready that afternoon and with gas cylinders and torch ready to cut the chains, I made one last dive along the aft end to discover the ship was afloat with about half an inch of clearance under the rudder. It was now or never. Back on the foc'sle, the chains were cut and *Mars II* took the strain. The ship began to swing then as the wind caught it, swung faster right over the top of the chains on the seabed. The noise of the ship scraping across the pile on the seabed had every one peering into the forward



hold expecting to see a fountain of water, but it stopped and we were afloat. As it was late afternoon, we towed the ship and tied up alongside the *Sophia*, another abandoned wreck, off Dammam overnight while checking for leaks.

That night we rigged the spare anchor to the cut chain with a shackle. Rather than run the chain down the hawse pipe, we dragged the chain



across the deck using a hand winch to the anchor and with the cutting torch burnt out a section of the ships railing and prepared the anchor for dropping when we arrived in Bahrain. The following afternoon we arrived in the anchorage and using hand winches and crow bars, levered the anchor to the deck edge and overboard. With an almighty clatter the chain shot out of the locker and across the deck in an enormous rusty dust cloud. As we were lying in about forty feet, it quickly stopped and we secured the chain. The harbour master arrived to see what we had dragged in and was not amused. 'This', he declared, 'is not coming into the harbour'.

Over the next ten days we sealed the doors and portholes and patched the hull with epoxy and plywood until it was finally ready for its towing certificate. Having emptied all the water out of the double bottom and ballast tanks, we called in the surveyor. He spent most of the day checking every tank and recording the fuel levels in the remaining tanks. Fuel that had been in the tanks this long was unusable and would be probably used for fires at the other end. Having completed his calculations, we received a telex with the final light weight tonnage of the ship and a certificate to tow the vessel for demolition. The tonnage was relayed to the buyer in Karachi who had been in Bahrain to inspect his purchase and agreed. The state of the steel in the ship due to corrosion affected the final price received but we came out smiling. A suitable tug was hired for the tow to Karachi and off she went. The end of a fortnight's hard work and it was all over. Two weeks later *Monte Cristo* ground to a halt on the beach at Gadani, the ship breaking area in Pakistan north of Karachi. Some time later I was in Karachi and met the ship's master responsible for beaching ships. The *Monte Cristo* he remembered well as it broke its back on hitting the beach. A little embarrassing as it makes the task of cutting up the ship much more difficult, and I quickly changed the subject. Two months after it beached, the last of the *Monte Cristo* was dragged ashore and cut into pieces for the smelter.

Freshspring in Bristol

In addition to the excellent cover picture, here is a further quartet of photos from John Clark of *Freshspring* during her early days in Bristol's Floating Harbour.

The ship was showing signs of wear; note the ventilator with the hole in the top in the first picture, for example, and the rust marks on the bow, etc.

These pictures just show the transformation between then and how she now looks in Bideford, a real credit to our excellent team of volunteers.



Leaving a legacy to the SS Freshspring Trust

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

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

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

CODICIL

I (full name).....

of (full address).....

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

I give, free of Inheritance Tax, the sum of

£..... (.....pounds)

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

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

Signed in the presence of:

First witness
 Signature

Second Witness
 Signature

.....
 Full name

.....
 Full name

.....
 Address

.....
 Address

.....
 Occupation

.....
 Occupation

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

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