

# Freshspring Magazine

*Preserving the past to inspire knowledge for the future*

£4.00 where sold



No.33 Winter 2022

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

**Objects of the Charity:**

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

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

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

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

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**FRONT COVER:** This painting of ss Freshspring in service was painted by David Radford. We are grateful to him for the use of the painting.

## From the Chair

**At the** end of October, we closed to the public for the winter. This means Volunteers have a free run of the ship now until Easter. It also means they don't have to clear up at the end of each workday.

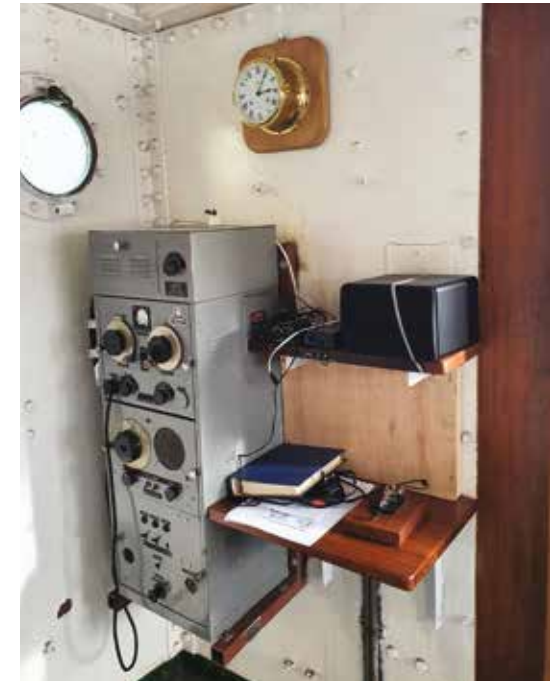
My 1/3rd scale engine has been busy over the summer giving rides to many children and adults. The last trip of the season was the longest, when we supported the Tarka Valley Railway Gala event by steaming from Torrington to Bideford and back along the old railway track (some 20 miles) which is now a cycle way. We finished the weekend by providing rides around the Torrington station area. We are always keen to support local heritage organisations as it works well for all of us.

Boats and engine are now laid up for the winter after having boilers surveyed for the 2023 season. The test day is a seriously busy time with the inspector looking inside boilers and testing thicknesses, after which he expects to see everything in steam, demonstrating pumps and safety valves. I'm pleased to say, we have a clean bill of health for next year.

A highlight for August was that our local BBC news programme, 'Spotlight' staged the 30 minute evening news programme on the 10th aboard ss Freshspring. It was a great event for us and provided excellent PR. They very much enjoyed the visit and said they would like to do more with us.

Our engineers kept asking me to get them a pillar drill and so we put an appeal out to Members. Typically, they, or should I say you, rose to the occasion providing funds and four actual drilling machines. This was an astounding response. In addition, one member provided a clock which chimes the watches. A photo of the clock shows it in place in the wheelhouse. It really looks the part!

You might recall that I visited ss Shieldhall during the summer. I thought it was such a motivational experience and should be shared with Volunteers. Thus, we arranged to send Volunteers for a day out on the ship. We chose the last sailing of the year, which turned out to be a splendid day and a group went to Southampton in two cars. They were extremely well looked after by the



The donated ship's clock in the wheelhouse.



Shieldhall crew and were able to experience a steamship in action. This galvanised our team no end and made them more determined than ever to see SS Freshspring in steam. Lou, our famous artistic Volunteer, was even allowed to steer the ship. We collaborate very closely with Shieldhall in an increasing number of ways, from monthly forum discussions to sharing our mainstream school STEM project with them.

Our engineering team has been focused on restoring the Wallsend Howden fuel system, which provided pressurised oil to the furnace burners. They have done an amazing job and we have displayed the finished unit on the main deck to interest visitors. They saw the exact same equipment in operation on SS Shieldhall, which was a considerable inspiration to them. They have now started work on the anchor windlass, which we hope to run on air when possible.

For a long time we planned to set up an engineering Pod, for use around schools and other venues. We first came across one of these when we borrowed one from Seafarers UK. It is a trailer set up with engineering experiences, such as an engine cut open to show components and other engineering items. It helps to inspire young people to become our engineers of the future. We now have the trailer, which has been donated, and are working to populate the Pod for use. It might be that you have items which could be of value in demonstrating engineering in a practical way. If you do or think you can help, please let me know.

I am so busy now with talks and have four just this week. It really helps the Trust and increases awareness. It also creates new members and some revenue, which is a very positive outcome.



*Lou Boulter takes the helm of SS Shieldhall.*



*The Wallsend Howden fuel system before...*

During Covid, we became digital, with many of us attending digital training courses. It very much changed our view of the future and what we can do. For example, we are now capable of monitoring visitors and gaining views of their experiences on the ship in a digital way; no more pencils and paper. The ship even has Wi-Fi. From being a

digital dinosaur, my view now is “No digital, no Charity” Indeed, we now have nine Oculus headsets for use in providing our VR experience.

Recently, with the support of our Professional Documentary Maker, Martin Kemp, we have been working on a project with our local Petroc College. They have digitally mapped the ship using remarkable scanning equipment. This creates a 3D matrix plan of the ship, which can be used for renovation purposes and for augmented reality to expand on our existing VR experiences. I have seen some of the outcomes and using the information, we could build a new ship, or even a 3D printed model.

Recently we held a play on board. It was called ‘Every Brilliant Thing’ and was about issues around suicide. We did this in conjunction with the Samaritans and raised funds for both charities. It was a sell out and the ticket price included wine and food. It highlights just how valuable our awning is and our ship is clearly a popular local venue.

Now we have closed for the winter, our team has continued the work on the project to convert the forward shower room into a welfare space. This will have a sink, wash facilities and basic food preparation space. The next space is a redundant toilet area and we are fitting this out with a composting toilet.



*... and after restoration.*



*The new compostion toilet on the ship.*



Another group has been working on the Galley space and this is being restored to as near original as possible to show how food was prepared on the ship. Ideally we would like to fit a working coal-fired cooking stove so if you have one in the shed, let us know.

Stephen, one of our Founding Trustees was married to Ellen on 3rd September. The wedding was a very memorable occasion and very much enjoyed by all. Stephen's input to the Trust has been a major factor in our progress and we all wish him and Ellen well for their future. You will see that 'Scuttlebutt' attended looking smarter than I have ever see him. Maybe it was because of the free food!

On 10th November, I attended the Shipshape Network South West Hub Event at SS Great Britain in Bristol. The idea is to bring heritage organisations closer together and for us to work collaboratively. It was a very successful day, and I was very pleased to be invited to speak about Volunteering. We have a great band of Volunteers, and I was pleased to be able to highlight the achievements of this amazing team. We also had a very special tour of SS Great Britain, which was a considerable bonus. These events will become more regular now and we will keep in touch by Zoom in the meantime. I came away with both ideas and new contacts, which is always a positive outcome.

I sincerely hope you have a great Christmas and New Year. We are so lucky to have our dedicated and loyal Membership. It makes us, as a team, feel we are doing something worthwhile.

**John**



*Stephen & Ellen on their wedding day.*



*'Scuttlebutt' looking very dapper at Stephen and Ellen's wedding.*



*A new timeline banner has been made for the landward side of the ship highlighting her life over the past 75 years.*



*A fine panoramic shot of Freshspring's bridge looking very smart and spacious. The photo was taken by a member of the local camera club during a visit to the ship earlier this year.*

## The 'Idle fleet' in the Torridge

Peter Christie

The Northam Cause was awarded in 1716 by the Lord of the Manor of Northam to the residents of Northam. It covers the areas in the River Torridge that lay within the Manor of Northam having some unusual local historic legislation. In theory, vessels can moor in the river Torridge outside of the current port limits at no cost. This led to the appearance of the "Idle Fleet" in the inter-war years (1920-39), where up to 30 large merchant vessels were anchored in the river Torridge, exploiting the "free river" loophole apparently offered by the Northam Cause.

Arrivals and departures of these ships were often noted in the local newspapers and a search of the North Devon Journal between the years 1919-39 has revealed the names of most of these vessels along with some details of their crews.

One unexpected find was that there were two distinct periods for this phenomenon – 1921-24 and 1930-39. The first vessels to arrive, in April 1921, were three unnamed 4,000 ton ships. They were joined a month later by three ships belonging to John Cory & Sons Ltd – the ss Hocking, Redruth and Lady Kirk – with the newspaper report on their arrival noting that they brought the total of 'mothballed' vessels to eight. Two weeks later, the Cory company sent 100 guineas to the Bideford Hospital Rebuilding Fund, they then having six vessels in the Torridge.

By June 1921, there were ten vessels altogether and Bideford town council



A postcard showing some 21 vessels laid up either side of the Torridge.

discussed whether they could levy mooring dues or not, to be told by the Mayor that 'the only person interested was the owner of the foreshore on which the ships were now laid up.' A month after this the Northam Manor Court also discussed the question of mooring fees with the Manorial Steward, W Seldon, saying "Up to 1838 dues were levied on vessels using the port of Appledore and harbour of Northam. In view of the number of vessels, ordinarily strangers to the port, now laid up there, and, as far as he knew, paying no dues for the privilege at all, a condition of affairs probably without parallel in the West of England, Mr Seldon said he should be glad of any information as to the limits of the harbour and why the collection of the dues ceased." Evidently no information was forthcoming as the matter does not seem to have been followed up.

New ships must have continued to arrive fairly regularly as when the ss Lady Kirk left in January 1921, it was noted that nineteen still remained in the river. Within a year, however, more than half had hoisted anchor and sailed – and more must have similarly left as when a Spanish ship the ss Jose Taya arrived in July 1923. She joined only three other ships, though within a few weeks four others steamed in. This first phase ended in February 1924 when the ss Nirose was the only ship remaining, though when she left is unstated.

The cycle of laying up unwanted ships began again in late 1930 when eight vessels arrived between October and December to be joined by many others within a few months. Over the next eight years, some sixty other vessels came and went – often carrying cargoes for a few trips and then returning to the river. These are shown in Table 1.

Summarising the main changes shows the following. In June 1932, the Journal notes that some 26 ships were then laid up while in August of that year, under the heading 'Idle fleet in the Torridge' the thirty then present are named.

By January 1933, this total had fallen to twenty with only nine still being present in August 1934. By July 1935, the total was three with just a single vessel being left in April 1939.

**IDLE FLEET IN THE TORRIDGE.**  
**Shipping's Sad Plight.**

With the arrival of the s.s. "Maplegrove" on Saturday morning, there are now exactly thirty ships laid up in the river Torridge through the adverse state of affairs in the shipping world. The "Maplegrove," which came from Dublin, after discharging a cargo of grain brought from Argentine, has a gross tonnage of 3,795. She belongs to Messrs. David Alexander and Son, of Glasgow.

The vessels berthed in the Torridge and their gross tonnages are:—Biafra, 5,405; Barracoo, 5,234; Eboe, 4,866; Egori, 4,908; Pomaron, 1,743; Rothley, 3,959; Maplegrove, 3,795; Coniscliffe, 5,329; Newaater, 3,114; Rocio, 3,729; Northborough, 3,298; Dumfries, 3,650; New Brooklyn, 6,546; Ardenhall, 5,074; Scottish Minstrel, 6,998; Scottish Chief, 7,006; Scottish American, 6,999; Ramilies, 4,553; Elmsgarth, 2,092; Lady Lewis, 4,997; Ravenshoe, 4,129; Reading, 3,801; Marchioness of Bute, 4,385; Peraat, 3,859; Podmladak, 3,862; Enfield, 2,077; Sea Valour, 1,950; Sea Rambler, 2,327; Glenfinlas, 3,095; Eakbridge, 3,409.

From the Bideford Gazette  
25th August 1932.

**VIEW THE "FLEET" FOR 6d.**  
**NOVEL TORRIDGE ATTRACTION.**

Of numerous attractions available to visitors in the Torridge district, not the least interesting is the opportunity now available of viewing the "fleet" of large steamers laid up off Westleigh and Instow. The charge for this is only 6d. all of which will go towards the funds of Bideford Hospital, as a result of the enterprise of the Hospital Carnival Committee. The steamers are kept in condition and are gaily decorated with flags to mark their special invitation.

The vessels open to inspection (by kind permission of the owners Messrs. Tankers Ltd., and Messrs. Elder Dempster, Ltd.), are s.s. Scottish Minstrel, s.s. Baracco, s.s. Egorie, s.s. Scottish American, s.s. Eboe and s.s. Byaffa.

Dates and times are:—Wednesday, Aug. 3rd, from 12 noon to 6 p.m.; Wednesday, Aug. 10th, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Wednesday, Aug. 17th, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The ss Byaffa is probably the Biafra.



**TABLE 1. Vessels identified as either arriving and/or leaving**

	Arrived	Left
ss Ardenhall	August 1932	October 1932
ss Apsley Hall	May 1932	July 1932
ss Bakar	April 1932	July 1932
ss Barracoo	September 1931	November 1931
"	January 1932	Here August 1932
ss Bereby	?	August 1936
"	?	November 1938
ss Biafra	February 1932	August 1934
"	?	October 1938
ss Bodnant	March 1935	?
"	April 1938	?
ss Boma	August 1935	?
"	June 1936	?
ss Caldly Light	October 1930	March 1932
ss Calcaria	?	October 1932
ss Conniscliff	February 1931	December 1932
"	?	January 1933
ss Dumfries	October 1931	Here August 1932
ss Ebani	February 1933	November 1934
"	?	November 1938
ss Eboe	February 1932	November 1932
"	?	October 1934
"	?	June 1935
"	?	October 1936
ss Egba	Here April 1939	?
ss Egori	September 1931	November 1934
"	?	October 1936
"	?	November 1938
ss Egrin	May 1936	?
ss Elmsgarth	Before August 1932	February 1933
ss Ena de Larrinaga	?	August 1934
ss Enfield	November 1930	November 1932
ss Ensign	August 1931	November 1931
"	December 1931	?
ss Eskbridge	April 1932	?
ss Estridge	April 1932	April 1934
ss Glenardle	?	July 1932
ss Glenargyll	July 1932	?
ss Glanbrydan	October 1932	April 1933
ss Glenfinlass	July 1932	?
ss Glynymel	October 1932	?
ss Haggsgate	Here February 1930 (Hull buckled in an inappropriate berth)*	
ss Holmewood	July 1932	August 1932

ss Ilytown	?	October 1932
ss Jameson	May 1933	April 1934
ss Jose de Larrinaga	?	April 1935
ss Lady Charlotte	November 1930	May 1931
ss Ladykirk	December 1930	?
ss Lady Lewis	February 1931	January 1933
ss Loyal Devonian	January 1931	June 1931
ss Lundy Light	February 1931	May 1932
ss Maplegrove	August 1932	April 1933
ss Marchioness		
of Bute	December 1930	October 1932
ss Marietta	Here October 1936	?
ss Minnie de Larrinaga	?	June 1935
ss Neath Abbey	October 1931	May 1932
"	November 1932	?
"	October 1933	?
ss Newaster	February 1931	?
ss New Brooklyn	June 1932	January 1935
"	April 1935	July 1935
ss Northborough	July 1931	September 1933
ss Pentrent	August 1931	?
ss Perast	April 1932	November 1932
ss Pomaron	August 1931	?
ss Podmladak	June 1932	?
ss Raisdale	December 1931	February 1932
ss Ramillies	August 1932	?
ss Ravenstone	July 1932	December 1932
"	April 1933	July 1934
ss Reading	December 1930	April 1931
"	August 1932	?
"	March 1933	?
ss Relillio	September 1931	?
ss Rhio	November 1930	?
ss Rocio	January 1931	May 1931
"	January 1932	March 1932
"	June 1932	January 1933
ss Rothley	September 1931	December 1933
ss Ruperva	April 1933	November 1933
ss Scottish American	February 1932	Here December 1935
ss Scottish Chief	October 1931	Here August 1932
ss Scottish Minstrel	September 1931	March 1937
ss Sea Rambler	April 1932	October 1932
ss Sea Valour	?	Here August 1932
ss Telesfora de Larrimaga	?	July 1934
ss Tuskar Light	November 1930	May 1932
ss Wyncote	August 1931	September 1931
ss Wirral	July 1934	August 1934



*Instow, N Devon showing Marine Hotel. 69.*

*Two vessels lying close to Instow jetty.*

Only 'skeleton' crews manned these vessels but occasional news items throw a little light on these men. In April 1931, for example, an unfortunate cadet on the ss Conniscliff was fined 5/- (25p) after being caught walking along the railway line to get some milk from Instow. Fourteen months later in June 1932, the Chief Engineer of the ss Apsley Hall died on board and an inquest was held. In August of the same year the



*Another view of laid up vessels, possibly taken from Instow sea front.*



*The ss Dumfries and Northborough pictured in 1932.*

masters of the ss Scottish Minstrel, Scottish American, Barraco, Egorie, Eboe and Biafra opened their ships to the public with the entrance fees given to the Bideford Hospital Carnival.



*Unidentified vessels laid up along the Westleigh Straight.*

Another inquest was held in November 1932 when one of the crew of the ss Newaster committed suicide – an event followed a month later by the Port Sanitary Authority checking on the cleanliness of the laid-up vessels. In May 1933, with local unemployment reaching a high level, thirty local men were set to work painting the ships in the river.

They would have gone out to work along the various walkways constructed at the time, the remains of which are still just visible at low tide today – one of the last reminders, along with some photographs, of when the estuary was thronged with ocean-going vessels going nowhere. Given the size of most commercial freighters today, it is a sight that is very unlikely to be recreated.

In January 1932 Captain Fishwick of Appledore dies – he is reported to have been in charge of three unnamed Danish sailing vessels laid up in the estuary – see NDJ 28.1.1932 7ft.

\* As reported in 'From Ship's Cook to Baronet: Sir William Reardon Smith's Life in Shipping' by David Jenkins

- It should be noted that a complete search of the Bideford Gazette files has not been attempted but if done would probably reveal more names.



A bus passes some laid up vessels – with Instow in the background.

## National Transport Trust Restoration Award for East Coast Smack Britannia

The National Transport Trust is the only national charity established to promote and encourage the preservation of Britain's unique transport heritage in all its forms – air, land and water. On 5th October, trustees, members and preservation heroes and their families gathered to receive awards for their efforts in keeping the nation's mobile heritage alive and in the public eye.

Each year the National Transport Trust invites nominations for awards to assist individuals and groups who are working hard to preserve items of importance to the nation's transport heritage. Awards generally come with a substantial financial lump sum which it is hoped will assist with making good restorations great.

Once again the ceremony took place in the amazing museum building at Fawley Hill, thanks to the wonderful hospitality of Judy, Lady McAlpine, widow of the late Sir William McAlpine, to recognise the awards for both 2020 and 2021, with award certificate presentations being handled by Ed China, TV celebrity and restoration guru.

One of the 2021 National Transport Trust Restoration Awards was The Britannia

Sailing Trust, based in Winkleigh, Devon for the restoration of the 1915 East Coast Sailing Smack Britannia, the award coming with a £1,500 cheque to help with work towards the completion of restoration.

Not only was the Trust awarded a Restoration Award, they were also awarded the Peter Allen Award, named after Sir Peter Allen, who was the particularly influential first President of the (then) Transport Trust, founded in 1965. An article on the Britannia appeared in the Winter 2021 edition of this magazine. For more information, visit: <https://britanniasailingtrust.org>



Vicki Samuels of the Britannia Sailing Trust receives the Sir Peter Allen Award from Ed China.



The East Coast Smack Britannia when she arrived at Winkleigh in Devon in 2015.



**Hidria Segundo**

**Spain's Only Operational Steam Ship!**

**Phil Barnes**





During a recent visit to Vigo in Galicia, north-west Spain, the author 'found' the museum ship Hidria Segundo (Hidria the Second) moored in the basin near the town's cruise ship terminal.

Today this significant ship is preserved, having undergone a nine year restoration which started in 1997 and included upgrades to encompass modern maritime standards. In its working life, Hidria Segundo was a 'cistern', or water tanker, carrying spring water from a local spring to service merchant and passenger ships which visited the Vigo estuary, as well as the local fishing fleet. As a 'cistern', its hold was a large water tank with a capacity of 240 tons, but today, as a museum, hostel and passenger ship, this large space can be used for functions and can also serve as a dining room.

Hidria Segundo was built between 1963 and 1966 at the now defunct José Roberto shipyard as a replacement for the first



Hidria which sank in 1959; however, it was salvaged and scrapped, giving up all its steam machinery for 'recycling'! The original Hidria started working for the Aljibes de Vigo company in 1922 and Hidria Segundo finished in the early 1990s when the company went bankrupt. The ship then languished in the port of Vigo in a degenerating state until 1997, when it sank at its moorings! It was

subsequently raised and taken to the Punta Lagoa scrapyard in the June, but was rescued from scrapping by De Ella Jacobo Costas and Sesè Otero who then started the process of bringing this 'wreck' back to life.

With regards to its specification, Hidria Segundo has a length of 30.5 metres, beam of 7.64 metres and a maximum draught of three metres. Its 'recycled' triple expansion engine, complete with Stephenson's link motion, dates from 1901 and is powered by an oil-fired boiler; this combination develops 177 horsepower which can drive this 165 ton ship at a cruising speed of seven knots with a payload of 120 passengers. As an economy measure, Hidria Segundo can use its sails to reduce the use of fossil fuel, but does need four or five crew when out on the water.

The ship's registration number is: MMSI 224142720 and with plenty of 'film footage' on the internet, it's a good way of seeing the ship in action; unless, of course, you are lucky enough to sail on this historic ship for real!!



## A challenge answered

**Mike Greener**

As the refurbishment journey of the ship progresses, the volunteers are finding themselves working on projects that require more and more fabrication of steel, a good example being the mild steel angle support brackets that are welded to the stanchions for the steering rod supports that run down both sides of the ship. The originals were heavily corroded and required replacement.

The project was to fabricate eight 2in. x 2in. x 8in. angle brackets with a series of fairly close tolerance holes in them.

While we have a great selection of powered hand tools, the successful fabrication of the angle iron brackets with these tools was a real challenge. This project brought home the urgent need for a pillar drill to be sourced to assist our volunteers and was brought to the attention of our chairman at one of our group meetings.

John Puddy kindly put a call out to the membership to see if anyone had an old pillar drill that they no longer had a use for or to assist with the purchase of a new one.

We were overwhelmed by the generosity of the membership; we had the donation of three pillar drills along with enough funds that have allowing us to purchase good quality machine vices and high speed drill sets.

Ken Thompson, our technical director, had a heavyweight bench pillar drill that was surplus to his requirements. This drill is capable of tackling the more heavyweight projects as it has a taper chuck for large drills and has a table that can be wound up and down.

Ken kindly refurbished the drill and transported it to the ship from his home in Wales.



Stephen with the large drill.

Geoff Hocking delivers the lightweight drill.

The Bosch pillar drill that can wander around the ship.

This robust tool has been located in the aft storeroom where we are in the process of turning the area into a dedicated workshop and store.

During a discussion I had with Ken a couple of weeks back, he told me that he hadn't used the drill in 30 years. After the drill was transported to the ship, a garden planter project that his wife had given to him required the use of the pillar drill; I think we have all experienced that before.

Geoff Hocking had a lightweight pillar drill which he kindly donated to the ship. This pillar drill has been fitted to the bench in the engine room allowing the engineers to use the drill on smaller jobs in situ rather than having to take items down to the aft store room and use the large drill. This drill finds itself in use most weeks as can be seen from the state of the bench.

Our third drill, a pristine Bosch PBD40, was kindly donated by Roger Haynes.

This lightweight drill is very portable and allows it to be easily transported anywhere on the ship, taking the drill to the job rather than the job to the drill. This pillar drill is ideal for woodworking jobs as the speed can be easily adjusted just by turning the knob rather than altering the belt. It is also planned to be used with work experience students when they visit the ship.

Bob Friendship donated a heavy duty drill which hadn't been used for quite a while. It needed a block and tackle to lift it off the bench and trucks to wheel it out of his workshop, then a ramp to wheel it into the back of Richard Ker's car. Richard told Bob that it was too big for what was needed on Freshspring, but that it might be useful for Chris Frisby (article in the summer magazine). Bob was very happy with this – "so long as it goes to a good home". Chris was delighted with the idea, so Richard drove down to Kelhelland, near Camborne, and delivered the drill, which was used the next day.



Geoff Hocking's lightweight drill installed in the engine room.

The drill from Bob Friendship that has been passed on to Chris Frisby.

Chris Frisby who was given the fourth drill.

## Community Education News

**Sam Roberts**  
Community Learning Officer

**October 2022** started with a community event – Fun Palaces! As part of this nationwide initiative, SS Freshspring offered to organise and run a Fun Palace on board. Fun Palaces are venues where different community groups get together to offer free activities to the local community over a weekend in October. They are centrally organised through Libraries Unlimited as a way of encouraging people from the community to come and try an activity they may not have thought of, or to kick start a new hobby or skill. Our Community Learning Officer ran rope making activities in Bideford Library on Saturday morning, and different volunteers and participants came to the ship on Sunday 2nd October.

Our volunteers for the day on board ranged in age from 14 to 92! Members of the public who visited took part in Morse Code messaging, dowsing (for chocolate coins!) rope making and fabulous art activities, making rubbings of the fascinating and often overlooked patterns and words all around the ship.

The event was well attended and Sadie, from Libraries Unlimited, said, “Congratulations on organising and running your very first Fun Palace on Sunday. I really enjoyed coming along and seeing what you are up to and having a go at your activities. What a lovely lot of volunteers you have!” I can only echo her remarks. Our volunteers make our charity.

Also this month it has been wonderful to welcome a new Wednesday volunteer to the ship. A young man has joined us and he will be working on different projects under the guidance of the regular ship’s team. So far he has been sanding down and preparing woodwork for its annual spruce up.



*A Fun Palace activity..*



*Two lads try their hand at dowsing.*



*More dowsing...*



*Our new Wednesday volunteer.*

A local Beaver group visited the ship and enjoyed finding out about life at sea. The challenge for some of the youngsters was climbing down into the crew quarters. The delight when they finally overcame their nerves and went up and down the ladder, then managed to get into the engine room too, was wonderful to see.

Our STEM boxes are off to a new home for the second half of the Autumn term – a local secondary school is excited to be using them for their lunchtime STEM club with Year 7 and 8. This is a link which we will be developing further, with a possible longer term project involving science-themed visits to the ship and a project around renewable energy with the students.

All in all, a very successful and varied month for the Freshspring Education team and volunteers!



*The local Beaver group enjoying their 'hands on' visit to the ship.*





## A young volunteer

CC is a young person (20 years old) affected by anxiety and depression who is unemployed and being supported by Young Devon. He had previously expressed an interest in history, past engineering and local heritage.

His Young Devon mentor Bob Mullen had heard about the Freshspring Project and contacted Learning Officer Sam to arrange a possible visit to the project to see the work that they were doing and if it might be of interest to CC.

The first arranged visit did not take place due to CC not feeling up to it on the day. However, the subsequent visit arranged for 17th August took place as scheduled.

CC and Bob were welcomed by Sam on the quay, went below and were shown around the engine room and boiler rooms of the ship by engineer Mike who explained in interesting detail how the ship was powered by a steam engine. CC was also informed what the plans were for the future restoration and development to enable the ship to take to sea. At this stage CC started to ask questions about the ship and its workings and became more and more interested in the history of the ship and the project plans to get her afloat.

CC was enthralled with the



story of how the mast was fashioned from a large tree supplied by local land owner Lord Clinton when talking with Pete Gillett.

CC was then shown around the remaining sections of the ship including the crew's quarters and galley by Sam. He was very interested in the wheelhouse and how the ship was steered and how the communications between the wheelhouse and the engine room took place using the

ship's telegraph system.

At this point CC was able to try his hand at spinning rope which he picked up very quickly and was very impressed with his sample that he took away with him. CC was impressed with the master's cabin saying that it was bigger and better equipped than he thought. He was able to try on an officer's uniform and was quite happy to be photographed wearing it.

CC was able to spend a few minutes hearing from chairman John Puddy on how he purchased the ship for a £1 and his vision for the restoration and beyond when it is planned to be a self-financing education facility and tourist attraction.

CC thoroughly enjoyed his trip to the SS Freshspring and is keen to volunteer and to contribute to the restoration project.

### New members

We welcome the following new members of the Trust:

Mr Nigel Phillips

Sevenoaks, Kent

Mr Andrew Laugherne

Bideford, Devon

Ms Patricia Bromley

Ilfracombe, Devon

# My Big Adventure

**Mike Mills**

**I remember** that it was a very dismal, cold and wet afternoon when I arrived at the King George V dock gates in London to find my 'first ship'. It was November 1952, I was 16 years old.

The journey to get this far had taken just over 12 months after having decided that I would like to go to sea and that being a Radio Officer sounded a great idea. With the help of my teacher and a careers officer, I found a school in Stockwell Park, London, that offered a course for beginners to become Radio Officers in the Merchant Navy. So that's how it all started. I registered with the school and found some 'digs' and that was that. The course, from what I remember, was quite pressurised and it really kept me on my toes. I was very lucky with learning Morse Code – it was like a duck to water. Why I do not know! The theory was a bit tortuous and you would laugh at it nowadays... we had valves, huge resistors, coils, condensers and lots of books to pour over in the evenings.

However, the time came to take my exams and on passing out, I was accepted as being proficient in Radio Telegraphy & Telephony for being employed as a sea-going Radio Officer. The fun started now as I had to find a job! The Marconi company was at this time the biggest employer of budding Radio Officers so I applied and was invited to attend an interview. At the same time I heard from a friend that the P&OSN Co. was starting to employ their own



Radio Officers so I also wrote to them. After yet another interview, I was accepted and I joined that well known company. I was advanced £200 (a lot of money in those days) to kit myself out and I then started a relationship with the famous gents outfitter Gieves & Hawkes in London... Blues full uniform, whites, evening dress, caps, shorts... everything a young man need for life on board a P&O passenger ship!

My orders arrived – to join the RMS Carthage, a passenger ship, in King George V Docks, East Ham, London and that is how I arrived outside the dock gates that dark, miserable afternoon.

The dock policemen were extremely helpful: "Number 20, I believe. Over there, Mate, behind the big crane". As there were hundreds of knocking donkey cranes everywhere, this information was of no great help. However, after what seemed hours I arrived at a gangway which said 'Carthage' and it was so BIG!

I had never been on board a vessel of this size and to me this "all white monster" looked bigger than the Queen Mary! I climbed the gangway to be greeted by a young,

very smartly dressed young man (Cadet Officer) who just said "Welcome Aboard" and follow me! Eventually, high up on the bridge area I was shown my home for the next few months – a steel box 12ft x 8ft – a bunk, washbasin, an armchair, a cupboard and that was it! Oh, and a window, not a porthole.



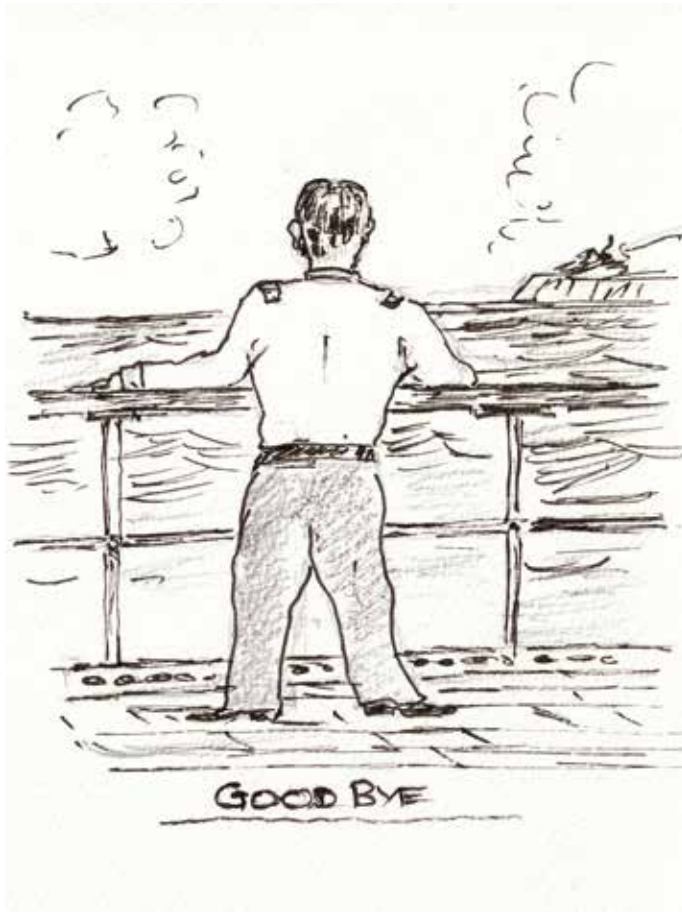
I reported to the Chief Radio Officer and the 2nd and 3rd... I was the 4th! I was shown the Radio Room and noticed that some of the equipment was familiar and that I informed that I was taking the 8-12 watch. (0800-1200 (noon) and 2000- 0000 (Midnight).



The next two or three days were spent with the 3rd Radio Officer, who I think took pity on me. He explained what my duties were, where we ate, uniforms to wear, etc., etc. In those days, sailing on a P&O passenger liner meant that there was a very strict dress code and being a very junior officer, only certain areas on the ship where we were allowed to go and mixing with the passengers was reserved for the senior officers and not the lowly juniors. Meals were taken in the 1st Class Dining Room – a special area for officers! And the food was fantastic... and the menus absolute “gobbledegook” to a young country lad!!

Sailing day arrived and at 2000 hours, we cast off and headed down to Tilbury and out into the Thames Estuary bound for Southampton, our first port of call, to take on our passengers and a further amount of special cargo. My first watch was not quite a disaster as the Chief Radio Officer decided to sit by my side and instruct me; terrifying – he was Irish, very large and very OLD, with an accent I just couldn’t understand. Midnight couldn’t come fast enough!!

Bed just after midnight! Very lonely and wondering what on earth I had got myself into. But that is another story!



## Jane Hannah MacDonald III

Tucked away on an industrial estate in Bideford is the former Appledore lifeboat the Jane Hannah MacDonald III which arrived in Bideford in 1910. She served at Appledore until 1922 when replaced, having saved 23 lives.

Many years later, she was tracked down to a boatyard on a canal in France, and in 2019 the Appledore Maritime Heritage Trust was offered the lifeboat and she returned to Bideford in June 2020.

Two of our Trustees, John Puddy and Richard Ker, are both Trustees of the AMHT and so are deeply involved with the project and your editor was given the chance to have a look at the boat back earlier this year. These are a few of the photographs he took at the time.

A feature on the Jane Hannah MacDonald III will appear in the next magazine. Meanwhile, for more information see: <https://www.amhtrust.org>



## Leaving a legacy to the SS Freshspring Trust

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

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

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

### CODICIL

I (full name).....

of (full address).....

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

I give, free of Inheritance Tax, the sum of

£..... (.....pounds)

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

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

Signed in the presence of:

First witness  
 Signature

Second Witness  
 Signature

.....  
 Full name

.....  
 Full name

.....  
 Address

.....  
 Address

.....  
 Occupation

.....  
 Occupation

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

## Freshspring's Sponsors

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

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