

# SOUTH WEST SOUNDINGS 102

The Newsletter of the SOUTH WEST MARITIME HISTORY SOCIETY  
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Edited by Jonathan Seagrave and Ray Fordham

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**WEBSITE.** <http://www.swmaritime.org.uk/>  
( currently unavailable)

**Note: officer personal emails on last page**

**FACEBOOK** [www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/)

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and send to **NEW** membership secretary (see below)

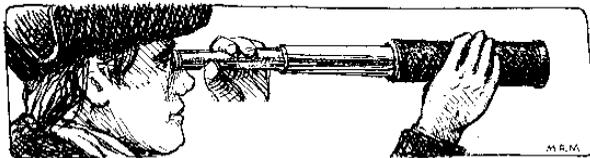
**NOTE : Email sent to all the officers via the website e.g.  
soundings@swmaritime.org.uk are currently not working.  
If we are able to restore the website they will probably become  
available again, but in the meantime use individual addresses.(see  
back cover)**

## **STOP PRESS**

**We have a new Treasurer and Membership Secretary effective 1  
August 2016, long standing member Phil Northcott. His address is:**

**9 Wallaford Road  
Buckfastleigh  
Devon TQ11 0AR  
email: pnorthcott1977@hotmail.com**

## FUTURE MEETINGS AND OTHER EVENTS



*(Italics indicate an event of interest but not organised directly by the Society)*

**Evening talks at Plymouth University, Spring 2017 details the**

**AGM 2017 10 June The Globe Topsham**

**Confirmation of events will be published either in the next edition or in calling notices for bookings, which will be sent to members at the appropriate time.**

**Next copy date: November 14th 2016**

**Website: whilst the website is still down as we go to press, a backup version of the publicly available pages is accessible at the global web backup site web.archive**

<https://web.archive.org/web/20150702020931/http://www.swmaritime.org.uk/index.php>

**STOP PRESS** A petition has been launched to save the *President*, one of 3 WW1 survivors, from scrap. See

**<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/163742>**

## **EDITORIAL AND MEMBERSHIP**

The time has come for me to stand down as Editor of SWS, and also from the Committee. It has been a great privilege to edit this little magazine, rather more than the usual newsletter, not quite a journal, for the last 7 years, well over 1000 pages in all. I have much appreciated, and been much encouraged, by kind words from members. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed in any way, articles, reviews, suggestions, the publishers who send out review copies gratis, the printers who have made my life easier and who have at times sorted out tricky formatting problems.

One major reason for stepping down, apart from increased family commitments, is that the flow of original material has dwindled. I enjoy writing little pieces, and you have the most substantial in this edition, but clearly the magazine shouldn't generally be written by the editors! Similarly, the planned "Photo special" edition sadly can't take place, as the number of contributions just isn't viable. Thanks to the few who offered, and it may still be possible to put a photo article on our Facebook page. This edition has a colour cover. I have covered the cost of this and extra copies for friends and family personally, as the longest article is on the Chugg family maritime business history, (Steve Chugg was my maternal grandfather).

Ray Fordham will continue to hold the fort. (contact details on the back). At the time of writing, the Committee has yet to decide the longer run future of the magazine, which has to be tied in with the ongoing future of MSW, which is undoubtedly the jewel in the crown of the Society.

I will continue to edit reviews, and ensure they appear on the web in some form, and support Ray, who doesn't want to take on the full role. You will find below an account of the discussion at the AGM, and the formal minutes are enclosed. The Society is at a critical point, and desperately needs input with the basic tasks of running the organisation.

Personally, I believe there is a future for the Society publications, if we can get over the immediate difficulties, as we have started to do, and very much hope we can continue to publish researches and hold at least

one full meeting a year, but this is about the limit of our organisational capacity at the moment.

We have also renewed our membership of the Maritime Heritage Trust. The need for advocacy on behalf of all things maritime will surely be even greater as financial squeezes continue, and joining with others is the most effective route, and if we agree on an issue, is quick and costless. The breadth and depth of your collective knowledge and interests makes for a potentially effective voice. Let us make good use of it!

Finally, we now have a new Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Phil Northcott, to whom many thanks, our admin. position has improved greatly, but please try and be accurate and prompt in dealing with your membership, as his services are paid for! Derek Tyrell has very kindly agreed to continue as Independent Examiner free of charge.

Please also return the “refresher” Gift Aid form enclosed if you joined more than 4 years ago, to our new Treasurer, to keep HMRC happy.

The accounts, future strategy, and related admin. material will be mailed mid autumn separately from the magazine.

### **Jonathan Seagrave**



Your editor (centre) and brother with yachts made by grandfather Steve Chugg. They were carved from solid wood. See article below.



## REPORTS OF MEETINGS

### Notes on the AGM 2016

*[Note these aren't a substitute for the official minutes.(enclosed). The account also includes a few post AGM updates.]*

Jonathan Seagrave was asked to take the Chair for the AGM as Martin Hazell was quite unwell and unable to come.

It was proposed that David Clement be appointed to the honorary role of Life President in view of the enormous services he had given to the Society since its inception, being a founder member, editor of MSW for many years, book editor, Chair, meeting organiser, as well as helping innumerable researchers with information and friendly advice. This was agreed by acclamation.

Jonathan then moved to the great difficulties the Society still faces in its administration and long term future. Gillian is standing down as Membership Secretary. She has been unhappy with the ongoing, time wasting, seemingly endless problems with the bank which still cannot produce ordinary statements on a regular monthly basis to her, which are essential for the job, and also the most unhelpful attitude of the bank towards her deafness. She had submitted a membership report. Around half the membership are unresponsive to any communication whatsoever.

Membership is still above 300, though edging down. Some new members are being recruited, though often they don't renew. The key feature is that for 127 members the absence of proper bank statements meant that payees couldn't be identified, so it was impossible to say for them who is paid up and who isn't, nor was it possible to produce accounts. She will continue up to end August, writing handover notes

and briefing a successor. (Note: since the meeting the last batch of transaction logs has arrived so the data is available, but still no regular statements on the old account). A new account with a competent bank is essential.

It was stated that the actual cash balance is very sound, with sufficient in the cheque account for the large payment for MSW 2016, and about £10,000 of reserves including the Dave Hill legacy. The Society is run very economically, the problems are purely administrative.

Jonathan then moved to his own position as editor of SWS. He wishes to stand down, but will continue to work with Ray on the September edition. He is also happy to continue as Reviews editor ongoing. Apart from growing grandparental responsibilities, the main reason is the dwindling of submissions and the feeling that there is little point recycling material available elsewhere. Ray does not wish to take on full responsibility for SWS but will continue as acting Editor. It was also felt that, given circumstances, the role of SWS needed to be reviewed. The obvious solution of an exclusively e- version was unrealistic because only 25 members were receiving the e-version voluntarily, and the non- responsive half usually don't have working email addresses. We need some means of ongoing communication with the membership, possibly a very short simple newsletter.

**If you haven't let us have a valid email address, do send it to Phil Northcott**

There was no Treasurer's report, and the Treasurer wasn't present. There has been no communication with him for some time. He was thanked for preparing the accounts free of charge for the last two years, but it was felt the time had come to pay for a Treasurer, who could also sort out the bank and open a new account elsewhere, which was supported from the floor. Discussions were in hand to this end. At this point there was no estimate of cost.( since the meeting an initial figure of £60 pm has been agreed) It was suggested that in the short term a Treasurer might also take on membership, there are clear practical advantages, but in the longer run we still need volunteer members to keep costs down, so **volunteers are still very much needed for Membership secretary, SWS editor, and of course Chair and Vice chair.**

It was stated that levels of gift aid in future were problematic, as we only hold recent mandates for a small number. Older mandates may be open to challenge. (especially since the rise in tax threshold). It may even be some of the “silent subs” have crossed the bar, and we get the sub unnoticed from a joint account. These would not be eligible for gift aid!

**Please renew your gift aid mandate, see enclosed, unless you joined or renewed in the last 4 years.**

Jonathan had distributed a draft recovery plan to aid thinking, which envisaged the use of payment for admin services, though this had not yet been discussed by the Committee.

The long term Editorship of MSW was raised. Everyone wishes David to continue to do as much as he can for as long he wishes. David has material for 2017, and some material for 2018 was to hand. Mike Bender has offered to help with it. David does all the work on MSW, all the production and layout as well as the normal editor role, a major task needing multiple skills. It would be possible to pay for the production side (layout, photo editing etc) which doesn't need maritime history knowledge. Suggestions were for a gradual handover, a paid editor for part or all of the in hand editions, or creation of an editorial board to take the Journal forward. It was said that there needed to be clearly at least two officers on the bridge, both fully engaged, or we would lose submissions to others. Some costs could be met by a page limit on MSW.

It was said we can cover the cost of paid admin. for a short time, but it wasn't viable long term to pay for everything, it would take most if not all the sub. Raising the sub would leave us with contacting the unresponsive half; this would be a nightmare, and would be self-defeating if time to do this was paid for.

Sarah Parsons is standing down as Facebook/twitter editor. Many thanks to her for her input. Jo Thomas has volunteered to take it on. Peter Holt is looking at reviving the website, but is currently abroad.

Discussion included concern at the loss of “all volunteer” status, and the suggestion that the Charity Commission might offer help, but met with scepticism from others with recent experience of them. There was some

feeling that “silent subs” might have to be dropped. It was suggested retiring officers recruit successors.

It was **agreed** the committee should produce an agreed recovery plan and circulate as soon as possible. (see below)

## **Chair**

There were no volunteers for Chair. Several approaches had been made without success. Martin has indicated he will soldier on for a few months, but he is now in his- fifth year, which is outside our constitution. He has indicated if someone else took the Chair he could take on membership, subject to health.

## **Chair’s comments**

I am sorry I couldn’t make the AGM due to ill health. It is good to report that founder member David Clement has been made Life President of our society. In addition to over 25 years service as Journal editor - the 2017 edition is almost complete! - David works tirelessly to smooth out admin problems. The Society owe him a great debt of gratitude for all his work.

My thanks also go to Paul Wright of Plymouth University who has been able to obtain a link with the School of Navigation there. As a result our first annual lecture delivered by the son of Alan Villiers on the subject of his father's research into the life and times of Joseph Conrad was a great success. We have been invited to hold a similar event in 2017, hopefully with good notice to SWMHS members beforehand. This lecture will be held early evening during university term time. I have some ideas as to the 2017 speaker and topic but do please send me your ideas as nothing is finalised yet. Perhaps a member could deliver such a presentation? We may well be able to have the MP for Devonport, Oliver Colville, in attendance. A relative of his was a young officer at the Battle of Jutland, 1916, and he has a letter written by his ancestor immediately after this event.

**Martin Hazell**, Chair

## Basic finances

Given we need to consider the long run future, it seems worth setting out the basic long run income and expenditure in very round figures, at current levels. These are *not* accounts.

### Income

300 subs @ £15 \*                      £4500

Gift Aid                      100 members      £300

(recent mandates or ones likely to be renewed on request)

Donations                                      £100

**Total ongoing                                      £4900**

### Outgoings

MSW at current length (317 pp) £3500

SWS \* 2 @ £600 32 pp                      £1200

(these costs include pack ,despatch and postage)

Miscellaneous                                      £150

**Total    £4850**

**Net cashflow    +£50**

\*There are around 260 fully paid up members and some 70 who pay £12.

**Note:** meetings have little effect on the overall position as we have always been pretty successful in making them self financing.

## MEETINGS

### AGM, Globe Hotel, Topsham, June 11, 2016

It was good to be wandering around a rather damp, but still very pretty, Topsham again. The turnout of 48 members at the AGM was the best for some years, which was heartening. It was good to see Dale Thomas, ex-chair, come down from Wales for the day, after an absence of three years; and Maria Fusaro and her students.

Mike Duffy opened proceedings, discussing the complexities of making sense of Jutland, especially as it had been something of a propaganda war between the advocates of Beatty and those for Jellicoe. He explained the confusions and lack of information that made decision making very difficult.

Joanna Thomas then gave an outline of her thesis, as it looked at the end of her first year. It is a major piece of work on the maritime labour force in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, so large that, as she says, the risk is a set of rather bland conclusions. One wonders if it has to be narrowed down to one type of trade or voyage. As she is well aware, including the working lives of those engaged in the Welsh slate carriers with those on tea clippers is not likely to be rewarding.

She was followed by another student from Exeter History Department, James Villaralard, both a resident of Jersey, and a student of its role in the Napoleonic wars, as its sailors were privateers, information gatherers, and spies among the Breton-speaking, Paris-hating inhabitants of St Malo. It is a puzzle why France never successfully invaded the Channel Islands, given their closeness to the French coast and the nearness of the great naval base of Cherbourg.

In the afternoon, Maria Fusaro described her major study of maritime employment in the Med. in the seventeenth century, with ships and sailors from so many nations. Clearly, her research is casting new light on their occupations and the context of their activities.

Commander Charles Crichton then gave an illustrated talk on 500 years of the Navy in Plymouth. He has a light touch, but is clearly an ardent advocate of retaining that history and its mementoes, and also trying to give them a living relevance.

Marion Hardy then pondered on whether there was a Mariners' Way, as is written on some signposts across Dartmoor. There were certainly many sailors making their way home both from the South Coast ports and less frequently, the North Devon ports, after shipwrecks, missing the time of sailing etc.

At this point, we had over-run our time and were evicted, leaving Ray Fordham to talk another day on 'The Ketch *Haldon*'.

Over and above the papers, the day gave multiple opportunities to catch up with other members and their doings. And once again, our thanks to David Clement for organising the day.

## **Mike Bender**

### **Daysail on *Kaskelot***

Gill and I were lucky to be able to sail for the day from Falmouth on 20<sup>th</sup> June. *Kaskelot* is still in superb condition since her refit at Nielsen's 3 years ago, a beautiful sight. Rigged as a barque, she has a crew of 14, a cheery lot. She came over for the Falmouth Classics, but solely for daysails. There were 25 or so on board on the day we sailed, but the afternoon sail on Sunday was cancelled, so we were lucky! The refit was apparently part of a plan to market cognac worldwide, so let us hope the owners' pockets are deep enough to keep her on the festival circuit, she has already done several this year.

It was fascinating to see the sail handling on a square rigger close to, the afternoon turned sunny and it was a glorious afternoon.

The festival was over, but were able to look over *Barnabas* and noted *Mascotte* and *Eve of St Mawes* close by.

*Kaskelot* will be back in Bristol this autumn and winter, but of course she is at her best out there in the bay, sailing.

## **Jonathan Seagrave**

## ARTICLES

### “We’re bound for South Australia”

The familiar words of this old sea shanty will go through your mind if you visit the *City of Adelaide* in her new berth in Port Adelaide. I was a recent visitor to Adelaide for family reasons and had the good fortune to see over the ship with Peter Christopher, one of the original pioneers who helped bring her to Port Adelaide.

In South West Soundings 93 and 94 I described how this important ship, the oldest surviving clipper in the world, has been rescued from oblivion in Scotland by a group of South Australian volunteers, including maritime enthusiasts, engineers and businessmen. The ship is now open to visitors every day with guided tours cleverly designed to let your imagination bring the decks to life.

If you want to know what life was like for the willing emigrants travelling on the midships deck, it is still just an open space over 150 feet long where the second class passengers camped amid their piles of luggage, separated from their neighbours by blankets used as screens. On one of her voyages it was recorded there were 320 people on board, of whom the crew would have numbered about 40, and the first class passengers perhaps 20. Thus there were more than 200 living on the midships deck, no doubt taking it in turns to have their food cooked in the ship’s galley. The first class passengers lived on the main deck above the others, enjoyed separate two-berth cabins, and had the use of a comfortable state room for meals and social life.

The policy for showing off the ship is to preserve what is already there, but not to try and create modern reconstructions of all the accommodation. In the first class accommodation the organisers may build just one or two cabins to illustrate their size and facilities.

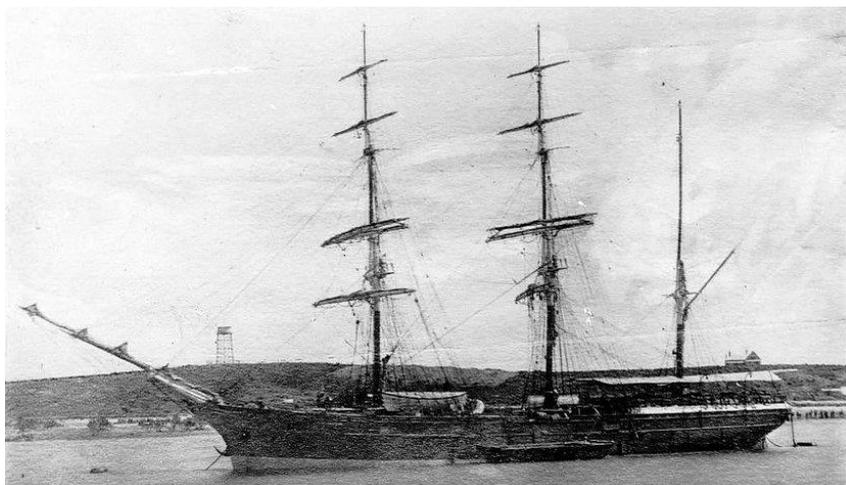
The wooden hull is generally in very good condition and is being left as it is to show the strength of her construction. The iron frames have lasted well thanks to the many coats of paint received in their lifetime. It is hoped one day to have the funds to ship three masts and a 40 ft bowsprit to give visitors a much better impression of how she looked making her 23 passenger-carrying voyages between England and South

Australia between 1864 and 1886. The journey time varied between 76 and 104 days to reach South Australia, and between 87 and 135 days for the return . Wool and copper were important cargoes for the return voyages.

It has been estimated that from the 23 voyages approximately quarter of a million Australians can trace their ancestry back to the passengers and crew of *City of Adelaide* . She has quickly become an iconic treasure for the State of South Australia and attracts a steady flow of visitors for her thrice daily tours.

There is an attractive DVD telling the history of the ship and a number of publications available through the website [www.cityofadelaide.org.au](http://www.cityofadelaide.org.au). For any further information contact Peter Christopher at [peterchristopher@internode.on.net](mailto:peterchristopher@internode.on.net)

### **Michael Pentreath**



Courtesy City of Adelaide website

## **The Chugg family, its shipping business, a wreck mystery, and the *Dido C***

Many members have written about the history of a family maritime business. This is a rather sketchy account of my grandfather Steve Chugg's business sailing ketches out of Bideford. As no documentary material remains in the family, this is pieced together from a variety of sources, plus family anecdotes and a fair amount of guesswork.

He seems to have been pretty successful before WW1. He was born in 1872 from a line of master mariners. His father, George Chugg (snr), was known as a tough man. When he died aged 89 in 1931, the North Devon Journal (NDJ) described him as a "man of sterling character, strictest integrity, and with an insatiable appetite for hard work", who had only given up the sea 4 years earlier. Steve was mate on father George's boat the *Bessie Gould* in the 1891 census. In May 1898, George snr., then captain of the *Fishguard Lass* was off Morte Point when he slipped and fell, breaking his leg. The 15 year old son George jr., the only crew, brought the boat safely into Ilfracombe. *Fishguard Lass* was owned by C Chugg, and was lost in 1908 off of Lynmouth in a gale.

I was curious as to where the funding for Steve's first boat came from. The first vessel he captained and had a stake in, appears to have been the ketch *Rosetta*. My mother said she was his first boat after his marriage to Ruth in June 1896 at Plymouth. The records show that in 1907 she was owned 32/32 by Steve and Ruth. I have a rather nice painting of her at Bude by G. G. Branscombe dated 1912.<sup>(1)</sup> Steve sold her in 1919 and she was lost off Barry in 1944.

In February 1912, *Rosetta* suffered badly in a storm in the Irish Sea, causing damage reported in the NDJ as being some hundreds of pounds. It was reported a steamer towed her into Holyhead, where she became the defendant in a salvage action brought by the owners of *Sunlight*. The surviving papers available online unfortunately are all solicitors' letters to do with fixing a date for the hearing, without any mention of the actual incident! Lever Bros. owned a barque named *Sunlight*, which would certainly have traded to their works, it may have been her, but we can't be sure<sup>(2)</sup> The case may have been settled out of court, the legal papers talk of this. More research might reveal more detail of what

happened. Was the legal action simply because Steve didn't have the money? Or did he resist payment because in the world of the Devon ketches, you offered a tow to a distressed fellow ketch without expecting anything like salvage money in return, as he himself did in an incident off Lydney recalled in W.J. Slade's "Out of Appledore"?

When Steve married Ruth I suspect she may also have brought some money to the union, because as well as her share in *Rosetta*, in 1915, they bought Franklyn, a large property on the hill above Braunton, which included the then well known landmark the Peel Tower, built to celebrate the repeal of the Corn Laws. The NDJ reported Capt. Chichester bid on Ruth's behalf at auction and he secured the property for £ 750. Ninety years later it was on the market for exactly 1,000 times that price! It became the family home till he died. Clearly at that point there was cash in the bank. My mother recalled how they climbed the hill behind Franklyn to watch for his boat coming home, especially at Christmas which he always tried to make. In 1936 Chugg gave the Peel tower and some land to the Parish Council, which may have been a shrewd move as it was in a poor state.

Some of the money must have originated from Kitty Ann Chugg (ne Clarke), father George Chugg's mother, who died in 1911 aged 91. There doesn't appear to be a probate record or will surviving, but the NDJ reported her executors sold land and property totalling £1685 at auction, which was a huge sum. It is also interesting it was in her name. Her husband, Steve's grandfather, had been a corn merchant. George snr. also seems to have had a coal merchant business.

NDJ says George snr. was "building two commodious residences" in 1892. It seems that whilst the maritime business was the bread and butter, a lot of the family capital was tied up in property. It seems very likely it was this family money that helped Steve acquire *Rosetta*. There is nothing new in the bank of Mum, Dad and Grandma!

Perhaps the most interesting episode was in 1917, when *Rosetta* was chartered to salvage silver from a wreck off the coast of Ireland. The salvage is described in some detail in Sam Ellacott's book, "Braunton Ships and Seamen",<sup>(3)</sup> but it doesn't actually name the wreck. My mother thought it was the *Lusitania*, but it certainly wasn't her. The wreck that seems to best fit the location outside Kerry harbour, where it

lay according to Ellacott, is the *Quebra*, a classic 3 island 4,538 grt ton tramp, built in 1912, which ran onto the Blasketts, on 23rd August 1916, and then sank. She was carrying 7000 tons of mixed cargo, including munitions, from New York to Liverpool. There don't seem to be any photos of her except one showing her fitting out. She is now a popular dive site, with some of the boiler and steelwork still surviving. There is no mention of silver in the web dive sites, but I don't think he left any behind! The Irish navy removed the remaining munitions in the 1990's.

She was not listed as a war loss, because she wasn't torpedoed, but in some accounts claimed to run aground running from a suspected submarine. The board of enquiry was scathing about the captain's navigation and claim of sabotage of the compass, and made no mention of a submarine sighting. The captain was sailing by dead reckoning and didn't take soundings. The court found:-

*12 The ship was prematurely abandoned.*

*13. The vessel stranded and was lost through the master's error of judgement in not making sufficient allowance for the set due to the wind and sea, and his default in not taking soundings when approaching a dangerous coast upon a course based entirely upon dead reckoning.*

*14. The ship was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.*

*And more....*

*The Court wishes to add a few words upon what it considers a matter of public importance. A theory was offered by the master to explain the ship's striking at a spot about forty-four miles north of her supposed position. It was that some enemy agent had tampered with the compass, by placing a magnet or a piece of steel in such a position as to deflect the needle. The Court has made a careful investigation into this matter, and is satisfied that no such act took place. It is unfortunate that, at the present time, when to ordinary marine risks are added the special dangers of war, some more or less preposterous theory should be put forward in explanation of casualties which patently require no explanation not valid for times of peace.....in, the present case, a master loses his ship through careless navigation, and, rather than believe in his own fallibility, introduces an enemy plot as the explanation of the*

*casualty. The danger of foul play may be real enough. But responsible people ought not to unsettle the minds and increase the anxieties of seafaring men by propagating rumours which have no foundation. Dated this 25th day of October, 1916.*<sup>(4)</sup>

The captain had his certificate suspended for six months. An aside is that the owners paid £46,750 for the ship in 1912, and claimed at the court of enquiry she was worth £ 150,000, such was the inflation caused by war losses.

An aside from family memories is that Steve Chugg kept a bar of silver and used it as a doorstop! until WW2 when he handed it in for the war effort. The salvage was highly lucrative, it was on commission, he was making £70 a week according to Ellacott. This was a huge amount, more than the gross income from ordinary prewar trading in six months.<sup>(5)</sup>

I have not found any documentary mention of silver other than in the Ellacott book. Richard Larn has kindly scoured his archives and can't find any mention either, and is indeed sceptical of its existence, but I have no reason to doubt my mother's tale, she lived at Franklyn throughout, and mentioned it more than once. Whether it was from the *Quebra*, or another vessel, is less certain. (see Appendix)

A less cheerful aside is that my mother recounted him saying the saddest thing he ever had to do was recover the bodies of two boys of 6 or 8, quite possibly from the *Lusitania*. Apparently he was in the area at the time she went down. There was a reward out from some Americans though I have no reason to believe these victims were the relevant children.

After the war, trade was of course, much worse. He sold *Rosetta* in 1919 and bought two ships which were financial disasters. He probably realized that in the post war world, only larger vessels would be viable long term. The first was the *Reine de Provoyance*, which he chose, so it was said in the family, because Ruth liked a ship with a poop! She was bought in 1918, 32/32 with his father. She caught fire in the Solent in 1920, and was a total loss.

The *Elsie*, which he acquired in 1921, was larger than the ketches, an elderly 3 masted schooner of 137 net tons, built in 1876 in Denmark as

the *Thusnelda*. She leaked badly, and I suspect he never sailed her for profit.

According to Bob D'Arcy Andrew who knew the family well, the problem was the bad chocking of the bottom planking, so when she was loaded, she leaked. However she had sailed for many years, so there must have been more to it than that. She was laid up at Velator where she was eventually broken up for firewood and must have been a huge embarrassment. I believe he wasn't part of the mutual assurance society, so these losses must have eaten up his capital considerably.

His next and last purchase was the *Dido C*, ex. *Jules Claes*, in 1924. She was named for my aunt Ruth, the eldest child, always known as Dido. She was quite new, built in 1921 in Lysekil, Sweden for the Scandia Engine Company as a demonstrator for their diesel engine, so she was powered from the beginning. She was a typical Baltic trader, with a rounded prow and square stern, designed for Baltic chop rather than Atlantic swell. Many very similar vessels survive in Denmark and the Baltic. He bought her in Belgium, I have no idea how he came to know of her there. By 1924 he had a mortgage on her, so money was getting tight, with 7 children, it was hardly surprising. He traded in her till he retired in 1940 and sold her to Scottish owners. Her hulk was eventually fired in Strangford Lough, Northern Ireland in the 1960's.



(c) North Devon Maritime Museum

Photos of her managed to feature widely when she went aground at an acute angle on Morte Stone in 1936. Apparently the well known photographer R L Knight flew over to photo her, and some of the published shots are his aerials. Chugg had a severe telling off from the harbourmaster. The “boy” at the wheel was probably my uncle Clary who had learning disabilities. My children claim I have inherited the “bad parking” gene!

*Dido C's* history has been described in detail in member Charmian Astbury's admirable little book “**The Story of the "Dido C" -The last of the West Country Ketches**, which is still available. <sup>(6)</sup>

My mother and aunts had a few stories to tell that paint a picture of the pleasures and uncertainties of a Devon maritime family. The family sometimes sailed on *Dido C*. My mother once went to France, quite an adventure for its time, and aunts Dido and Marie to Ireland and Manchester. On these trips, they were allowed to paddle round the harbour in the ship's boat, but the boat was attached with a line and they had to pull themselves back if another boat came in.

One story of Irish trade was of Steve being shot at and tipped off to leave urgently during the uprisings in the 20's. This was probably in the Cork area. More cheerful was the occasion he brought a pony back from Ireland for his daughters. Sometimes he brought back silks or cloth, but later, nothing.

Another item in the NDJ for 1916, mentions *Rosetta* being holed by her anchor whilst carrying a party of children, as well as a cargo of coal, upriver to Barnstaple. The children were offloaded into a dinghy, and *Rosetta* repaired on the tide.

The survival trade in the 1930's seems to have been coal from Lydney to places like Lundy and the Scillies, unloaded on the beaches, no port dues required, and no records kept, as far as I know. Frequent beaching probably explains the poor state *Dido C* was in when sold to Scotland, barely 20 years old. Commercially, it was hard and downhill after the silver salvage.

Another family tale to add to the story, is that in the 20s, my uncle Frank, who went on her as a mechanic/mate after finishing his garage apprenticeship, and working largely unpaid, added to his income by taking old cars across to the Scillies on deck, skipped a trip, and repaired them there. Probably she was the only car ferry in the history of West Country sailing boats! I'd love to trace a picture.

There was a tradition in Braunton of seamen making and racing model yachts, and NDJ has an account of a race in 1894. One personal recollection is of a model Steve made for myself (and one for my brother). It was carved from solid wood, and was very heavy, almost no ballast required. When I was about 10 I was sailing this heirloom on a large park lake at Eastbourne. When I reached the far side to retrieve her, she had gone, a loss I will always regret.

Whilst the written records tend to relate to disasters and conflicts, there are odd references to Steve Chugg's concern for others. In a brief clip of a TV programme from the late 70's or early 80's called "A Good Weekend", aired in the late 1970's I think, he is described in an interview with an old boy at Lydney as being "someone else" who wouldn't pass someone in trouble. Bob d'Arcy Andrew who wrote *Braunton: Home of the Last Sailing Coasters*, lived next door to Franklyn as a teenager, and recalled Steve helping him build a dinghy, around 1945.

Ruth died in the late 20's. One amusing aside from researching him is that the very useful Braunton museum computerised records of the North Devon Journal appear to show him remarrying a woman in Manchester. Briefly I was quite excited by the idea that teetotal upright Grandad had an affair that no-one in the family knew about! On closer inspection it was clear that the marriage referred to a different, younger Stephen Chugg, not closely related, which had been incorrectly linked. Do not put all your faith in computers.....I am however, most grateful for the work of the volunteers who transcribed the NDJ, giving some human detail to the record of ships.

Steve Chugg is buried with his family in the chapel (now URC) cemetery at Braunton, of which he was a staunch supporter. Among the last of a long line of Braunton master mariners, I never knew him, I was a babe in arms when he died.

Having explored a little of his history, I have huge respect for the man, and sadness that the little maritime business that had served him and the community well in his younger days, was doomed to extinction.

## **Jonathan Seagrave 2016**

### **Appendix**

**Which ship had the silver ?** The Ellacott book refers to the ship being outside Kerry harbour, and gives detailed descriptions of the salvage of the silver. On the other hand, Steve's daughter Marie (Marion) wrote to my children when they were doing a primary school project, talking of salvage outside Cork " *During the 1914/18 war my father did salvage work on a very large merchant vessel in Ireland not far from Cape Clear and Cork, it consisted of a very mixed cargo from Army lorries to silk stockings (black) & shoes typewriters and adding machines ( I had one of the typewriters and used it for many years). During this time my father was very ill, my mother and I travelled to Cork, was met by someone Dad knew, and between us nursed him, then mother went home and I stayed on to look after him until he was quite fit again. During this time I went in Dad's boat to the large merchant ship before she sank completely, and then they had divers taking up the cargo "*

Marie was sharp, I am sure her visit took place as described, but the Ellacott description is also very specific, and very similar as to cargo. My mother though, thought the silver was on the West coast.

I don't know either coast. There is only one possible inshore wreck listed outside Cork Harbour, the *Westwick*, 5694 grt, mined on 7.3.17 now 1 m south of Roche point and listed as part salvaged in the 1930's. Another report say "SS *Westwick* struck a mine off Cork Harbour. The crew abandoned ship, but it did not sink, and drifted ashore at Fish Point near Ringabella. The wreck was scrapped on the spot ". She was carrying maize from Galveston to Hull. There isn't a B.o.T wreck report presumably because she was sunk by a mine. The second candidate, the *Nestorian* which ran aground on Cape Clear island, broke in two on 2.1.1917. She was carrying steel ingots and empty shell cases from Galveston to Liverpool.

On balance I think the silver was a fairly small consignment in the *Quebra*. New York seems a more likely loading point for silver than Galveston, and the mixed cargo more worthwhile salvaging promptly. Empty shell cases and steel bars would surely have less value and priority, indeed it is hard to imagine divers in the gear of the time being able to handle really heavy items. But it is very possible that both took place, and the Cork vessels were salvaged for items other than the main cargo, such as the typewriters. Marie didn't mention silver in her letter, but she is unlikely to have forgotten the trip itself, and the vessel she described seeing was initially ashore, whereas the *Quebra* went down on the day, so it was probably either of the Cork/Cape Clear vessels, or maybe another candidate, that she recalled visiting.

Richard Larn points out that much silver was used to pay for the war effort, such as the large amount recently salvaged from *Garsoppa* in deep water, which would normally be on outgoing ships. But that wouldn't always be the case. The coins on *City of Cairo* were coming from India. Relatively small amounts of silver being traded commercially could still have come in with bulk cargo on any ship; as well as bullion, silver had important industrial uses for photography and solder, so small incoming amounts would not be surprising. The presence of the guardship (with brother George aboard) suggests that it was seen as of some significance.

Brother George, who dived himself, recalled 300 bars being brought up in 24 hours. This also suggests the bars weren't full size bullion ingots, but smaller, which would also be consistent with the doorstep story.

It does not appear in the war loss insurance records. This again suggests it was the *Quebra*, as she wasn't a war loss; or an uninsured government shipment. A trawl of commercial insurance records might possibly reveal something more. Another lead would be to try and track the guardship, and maybe even the log, via [oldweather.com](http://oldweather.com).

## References

(1) Sadly, I have no idea how this came to be painted, though it has come down through the family. ( My thanks to my cousin Elizabeth for passing it on to me). He wasn't a regular pierhead painter. It is pure speculation, but I suspect it might have been a thank you for help of

some kind, it doesn't seem the sort of thing Steve would have paid for in cash, but he was known for helping people. A local auctioneer commented *George G Branscombe was the son of Charles H Branscombe, both lived near Bude around the turn of the 19/20<sup>th</sup> century. Charles had also lived in Scotland & Sussex, he was the better artist of the two. George was well known in the Hosteleries in Bude & district and would quite often dash off a painting for the price of a pint.*

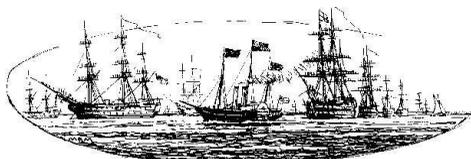
(2) Gwynedd archives revised ref. XCV / XD3 243. Thanks to David Clement and Martin Benn for help in trying to tease this out.

(3) S.E. Ellacott "Braunton Ships and Seamen" Quest Western publications, p 20. (NB the book has been reprinted by the Braunton Museum). Note that Ellacott isn't always accurate e.g. he implies the grounding of *Dido C* on Morte Stone was in 1917/18, when in fact it was in 1936. The date of the silver salvage, if it was indeed the *Rosetta* he used, (my mother thought it was) must have been before he sold her in 1920, unless he chartered her back which seems unlikely. It was almost certainly during the war, and Steve took on the obvious risk from U boats, a sitting duck, though Ellacott mentions his brother George was on a guardship. The references to salvaging silk stockings put it as very shortly after sinking (not much use with barnacles on them!) although Ellacott says it was after the war. Ellacott 's book is oral history, recounting George's recollections many years later, so details may well be inaccurate in places.

(4) Port cities website:  
[plimsoll.org/resources/SCCLibraries/WreckReports2002/21277a.asp](http://plimsoll.org/resources/SCCLibraries/WreckReports2002/21277a.asp)  
Board of Trade report 1916

(5) An idea of the economics of pre WW1 ketch trading can be gleaned from Michael Bouquet's article in *Country Life* September 4<sup>th</sup>. 1958, "Account Book of a Devon Ketch". He reproduces a page of the *Yeo*'s book, for 1896. A load of 70 tons of S. Wales coal to N Devon ports paid around £10 a trip, and *Yeo* did 6-7 trips in each half year.

(6) Published by Sappho Publications, 43 North Street, Northam, Devon EX39 1DH. priced £ 5.00 inc. postage. Still available June 2016.



## REVIEWS

**The Ocean Queen** Links between Canada and North Devon  
Barry Hughes, illustrations by Mark Myers. North Devon Maritime  
Museum, Odun House, Odun Road, Appledore. EX39 1PT 2011.  
£4.00 58pp.

This little book by the late Barry Hughes, briefly describes the history of Bideford and Appledore and the Canadian connection, with timber in and emigrants out being a key trade. It then continues with the log of William Gliddon, an emigrant on the *Ocean Queen* in 1855, under the command of Captain Dart.

I was surprised at the sheer number of ships built in Canada taking advantage of cheap timber, and then used to bring timber to N. Devon and then be sold on.

The North Devon emigrants, despite being in small vessels, were better looked after than those on larger ships. No doubt this owed a good deal to the strong family connections with established immigrants in Canada which would doubtless make owners mindful of their reputation.

The book is very well produced and illustrated with attractive colour reproductions of paintings by member Mark Myers. There are several appendices covering ship's crew, kit, and the sad fate of Captain Dart.

My only criticism is there is a little repetition, but it is an interesting read at a very modest price thanks to sponsorship by J G Gibson, a descendant of Captain Dart.

**Jonathan Seagrave**

## LETTERS NOTES AND NEWS

The Underfall yard in Bristol has gone a long way with its development programme, and plans a big splash for the Harbour Festival. RB Boatbuilding, one of the tenants “has kindly let us install a camera in the big shed to share the whole process of building their latest Pilot Cutter with you.

Part One: <https://vimeo.com/171208201>

Part Two: <https://vimeo.com/171208417>

Part Three: <https://vimeo.com/1712084>

**Martin Hazell** writes :-

In my article in the Journal 26 (2013) about the diary of Joseph Allison on board of the frigate HMS *Calliope*, the second of that name and commissioned in 1837 I quoted from an entry in March 1841. It reads, '... we run aground in the afternoon and lay hard and fast 24 hours. We started all our water and got our anchors and shot out into a junk to light us...we hove her off and returned back....she (*Calliope*) had been wounded in many places in her body and breast.'

David Pulvertaft told me that this refers to the vessel's figurehead, and that it can still be seen in the RN South Yard Heritage centre in Devonport. Doubtless therefore if the paint of years be removed one might discover the damage inflicted by Chinese shore batteries near Canton! ( see back cover)



We have the sad news of the passing of Adam Kerr, Chair of the Cornish Maritime Trust, owners of the *Barnabas* and other craft, whose trip reports we have featured. Also Barry Hughes leading light of the North Devon Maritime Trust whose books we have reviewed. We are poorer for their passing.

**Maritime history lesson for the day** - received from Pat Worman of the South African Ship Society via David Clement

"The passenger steamer SS *Warrimoo* was quietly knifing its way through the waters of the mid-Pacific on its way from Vancouver to Australia. The navigator had just finished working out a star fix and brought the master, Captain John Phillips, the result. The *Warrimoo's* position was latitude 0 degrees x 31 minutes north and longitude 179 degrees x 30 minutes west.

The date was 31 December 1899. "Know what this means?" First Mate Payton broke in, "We're only a few miles from the intersection of the Equator and the International Date Line".

Captain Phillips was prankish enough to take full advantage of the opportunity for achieving the navigational freak of a lifetime. He called his navigators to the bridge to check and double check the ships position. He changed course slightly so as to bear directly on his mark. Then he adjusted the engine speed. The calm weather and clear night worked in his favour.

At midnight the "*Warrimoo*" lay on the Equator at exactly the point where it crossed the International Date Line! The consequences of this bizarre position were many. The forward part of the ship was in the Southern Hemisphere and the middle of summer. The stern was in the Northern Hemisphere and in the middle of winter. The date in the aft part of the ship was 31 December 1899. Forward it was 1 January 1900. This ship was therefore not only in two different days, two different months, two different seasons and two different years but in two different centuries, all at the same time."

The picture of *Warrimoo* on the cover is courtesy Company of Master Mariners of Australia. She was sunk in May 1917 in collision with a French destroyer, *Catapulte*, whilst on war service.

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