

VIC 96

Report No 25

Chatham

Julian & Joanna Swift
(27th April 2011)

Tuesday 19th April

Tony and Steve arrived to finish preparing for firing up for the boiler test and by great effort were ready for an early start next morning.

Wednesday 20th April

As can be seen by the brilliant videos on U Tube and on our website (ably shot and edited by our film crew Jean and Louise) first firing this year went well and steam was building up by the arrival of the coaling gang who set about taking the hold sheet off and hatch boards out and setting up ramps to the bunkers. We had decided to try an easier method of coaling using barrows and so removed the port side steps handrail (which is now in the process of being rebuilt, being somewhat rusted away, so be careful up the steps!). By lunchtime steam was up and the winch warmed through so after the usual feed up courtesy of the ladies we started. The video (titled 'The VIC96 Team', by Louise and leading to much discussion as to which characters were which) shows us on the second bag, by the finish of which we had the hang of it despite the lack of space for such an enthusiastic team. We moved 15 bags to the bunkers and left one on deck for Barking, mostly in around two hours and had plenty of time, and steam, to wash the ship (and the workers) with the welcome power of the fire hose before the lads left for home and we relaxed while waiting for Andrew, the inspector to turn up for the steam check. So the method change was a success, cutting coaling time by more than half, and making the safety zones much smaller with just hoisting up with the derrick simple and safe. Maybe a handrail by the open hold next time, and certainly face masks for those in the dust!

The steam inspection went well with a quick wood fire flashing the steam back up for lifting the safety valve and once more we were congratulated for a well maintained and run ship and boiler, thanks to Tony and his team. Relaxing did not last long however, with Derek saying "all we need now is to get those water tanks stowed and filled , and we can trim the ship. COME ON!" Thankfully Claire had come after work so we did that too, along with some fun transferring our high speed filling hose (fire hose and water from the forepeak) from tank to tank. All in all a very good day, and no steam wasted!

Present Derek and Louise and Jason, Tony and Jean, Julian and Joanna and Luke and Logan, Adrian and Isaac and Bob Vine and Ruth and Claire, Andrew Reen inspecting.

Friday 22nd April

Derek and Ian started work on the Barking. (I hope I have not missed anyone)

Saturday 23rd April

A group of us arrived with Tony getting steam up for the derrick and Ian and Derek getting steam up in Barking by crawling into the bunkers searching for coal, couldn't have chosen a better person for it myself Derek! The tug was brought out and circled and whistled and curtsied to the watchers while we waited for their lines and then came alongside for coaling up which happened really quickly despite some nameless person dropping the bunker lid into the bunker. That Ian has a wicked sense of humour to set it up like that. The bunkers were really empty so we pulled another bag up out of the hold and put in the other bunker. A clean up and a few phone calls and cups of tea and we all set off for a jolly up the river for a few hours while Claire held the fort and then some of us retired to the Ship and Trades for a well earned meal. Present were Arthur and Gladys, Julian and Joanna, Derek and Louise, Tony and Jean, Bob Vine and Ian and Ruth with a friend of ours Tony Lloyd from the Sunbeam Club (veteran motorcycles), Steve Pettett came in the afternoon as well. Very pleasant steaming and even with the tide in we just fitted under Rochester bridge.

Sunday 24th April

I am not too sure who made it but quite a group steamed down river to Stangate for a relaxing day out on the Barking. Derek and Louise and Arthur and Gladys and Ian and Jim and other friends had a good time by all accounts.

Monday 25th April

Joanna and I decided on a peaceful day painting on the ship to get a bit more of the hold coaming done and ended up finishing the first coat and getting half of it recoated so we are now getting low on cream paint. Ron and family came to catch up after a hard winter with their business premises move and Josh helped Joanna wash the paintwork. Seeing how we were getting on Ron reassured us more paint will be ready as we need it and said that both cream and deck paint are waiting to be mixed. Thanks Ron, next week OK? Martin Stephens came as well and as usual was very encouraging and we had several other visitors.

Louise, the web site is definitely bringing people to us, within days of those videos going on we get people coming to see the ship and its characters!

Forthcoming dates

Saturday 30th April, ashing out and tube cleaning, both ships. General maintenance and painting in the foc'stle Help appreciated! Not much more than 3 weeks to Ostende!

Regards

Julian and Joanna