
QUARTERDECK

The Friends of HMS Trincomalee

Summer 2023



The Adventures of a Friend

Time-line for HMS Trincomalee/ TS Foudroyant

Plan of Frigate Foudroyant

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2023

Mess Deck Cryptic Crossword

Notice is given of our:

**Annual General Meeting 2023
Wednesday 6th December at 7.30pm
Via the internet “zoom” facility**

AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 7th December 2022
3. Chairman’s report
4. Membership Secretary’s report
5. Treasurer’s report and accounts ending 31st March 2023
6. Appointment of Trustees
7. Appointment of Honorary Auditor
8. Any other business (Notified to the Secretary prior to 1st November 2023)

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The closing date for all nominations to be received by the Secretary is Wednesday 1st November 2023.

Those members wishing to attend the “zoom” meeting on Wednesday 6th December 2023 need to provide a contact email address for their invitation to the “zoom” meeting to be sent, this email address should be notified to:

agm2023@friendsofhmstrincomalee.org.uk

Ruth Turner, Hon. Secretary

EDITORIAL

Three previous Friends have provided material presented in this issue.

'The Adventures of a Friend' is the full article written by Richard Woodman in 2005 and sent to our then editor, Jean Hughes.

The following year, Captain David Smith sent Jean a plan he had made that year of Frigate Foudroyant, this was how it was at Portsmouth from 1932 to 1987 to the best of his memory.

The time-line of our ship is as constructed by Laurie Merrin who was a trainee on board her during the Second World War. All of this material has ended up in my possession as the current editor of the Quarterdeck and it is a pleasure to share it with you.

With the notification of our Annual General Meeting comes the invitation to any Friends, interested in becoming more involved with our charity as a Trustee, to make themselves known to a member of the committee.

Good luck with this year's cryptic crossword.

Hugh Turner

Any correspondence concerning the Friends Association should be sent to:

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The Adventures of a Friend

I have a curious sense of having graduated in my relationship with His Britannic Majesty's frigate *Trincomalee*. I first made the ship's acquaintance when a sixteen year old sea-scout. As one of eighteen boys I had been selected to crew the British sea-scout entry in the Tall Ships Race of 1960. On one of our early summer training weekends we were lying in Portsmouth. In fact, I recall, we manned the side and cheered ship as *Britannia* arrived back from the West Indies, with HRH The Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon on board for their honeymoon cruise. I was rather more fascinated by the cut down, and built up, frigate which lay off the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard, being an ardent fan of all sailing vessels, even those no longer capable of going to sea. *T.S. Foudroyant*, as she then was, was not particularly graceful for she floated too high in the water, had lost all but vestigial spars and her profile had been altered. But she was a fascinating link with the past.

I was next to encounter her when, many years later, I was part of a Trinity House team asked to carry out an audit aboard her. We had lunch in her great cabin before rummaging around the ship armed with pens and clip-boards. I followed her decommissioning as a training ship and transfer to Hartlepool with passing interest and then, somewhere around 1982, I was asked to write an article about her. This was the first time I had taken a serious interest in the history of the ship that lay beneath the overlain identity of '*Foudroyant*'. I knew that the Nelson connection was spurious, and I knew of the intervention of Mr Wheatly Cobb and the loss of the original *Foudroyant* on Blackpool beach. In fact I had long had a picture of the old French line-of-battleship laying forlorn upon the sands off Blackpool, but I had taken little notice of the frigate that lay lurking beneath the coats of paint she had acquired since Wheatly Cobb purchased her as a replacement for his lost French prize.

Work on her had hardly started as I clambered over her early one morning. It was a timely meeting with the old ship for I had already written the first two of my Drinkwater stories, *An Eye of the Fleet* and *A King's Cutter*. In the first, my hero had been sent a midshipman aboard the frigate *Cyclops* in 1779, rather earlier than the first of the *Leda*-class's lines had first been laid down in a mould-loft and indeed three years before the capture of the *Hebe* from which they were cribbed. Nevertheless I was aware of a strong sense of atmosphere as I poked around the empty ship and I felt the hairs on the back of my neck straighten. It is a curious conceit, but I have always believed that Nathaniel Drinkwater actually existed, an unknown sea-officer, whose biography was necessarily 'retransmitted' through my own imagination. He is in stark contrast with Jack Aubrey, whose life has been pinched wholesale from the real lives of real people, a point I once mildly suggested to Patrick O'Brian.

I was not to see *Trincomalee* for some years which, in its way, was a good thing,

for by the time I next visited Hartlepool she was like a thing reborn. I am not a practical man in the sense that I can fashion a piece of wood in anything other than the crudest sense, so the change impressed me enormously. This was hardly the same vessel; in fact it was almost impossible to imagine she had once been the rather forlorn, superannuated inhabitant of Portsmouth harbour. Hitherto she had been living under an alias; *Foudroyant* was not really her name at all. Now here was a ship worthy of the name of a frigate with all that it conjures up in the imagination. Nelson might never have seen her, but he had set eyes on plenty of men-of-war of her ilk.

Now I found myself being asked by a film company to appear as a talking head in a television programme about Lord Cochrane. *Trincomalee* lay vivid in the background. Consequently my sense of identity with the ship increased and I became a Friend; it did not seem right to take advantage of her in so shamelessly commercial a way without putting a mite or two back into her.

Last year I was back on board with a film team from Dallas. Chip Richie of Richie Film Productions wanted to make a documentary for the American home



Richard Woodman being dressed for the part

video market about the Royal Navy in the age of sail, tying history in with the genre of novels it had produced, from those of Captain Frederick Marryat, himself a midshipman under Lord Cochrane in the *Imperieuse*, by way of the books of C.S. Forrester, Alexander Kent, Dudley Pope, Patrick O'Brian, Julian Stockwin and myself. Richie had picked up my name owing to a book I had written called *The Sea Warriors*.

Having written fourteen novels about Nathaniel Drinkwater, I had branched out into non-fiction and *The Sea Warriors* was intended to take a look at the reality of cruiser warfare – by which I mean the employment of frigates – between 1793 and 1815. Strictly speaking *Trincomalee* lies outside this time-frame, but she is well able to provide the ideal location for such a project as Richie had conceived. It was not long before I found myself presenting, direct to camera, a succinct précis of the many duties of a frigate during the long struggle with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. In this I was helped by the marvellous



enthusiasm of the Historic Maritime Society. The deep and arcane knowledge the Society's members have of detailed aspects of life aboard men-of-war in this period is staggering impressive. From surgery to diet, from navigation to intricate seamanship, these people are wonderfully knowledgeable. Their ability to assume the characters of Georgian Britons goes far beyond the mere donning of period costume; one is almost persuaded that they are reincarnations of our predecessors. I found myself wondering how they coped with modern life until I watched them pack their gear and drive off in their cars at the end of filming.

During an eventful weekend we fired cannon and muskets, ate salt-pork in the berth deck, amputated an arm, planned a raid on the enemy's coast and, of course, flogged a seaman.

Trincomalee was only one of the locations where Richie's small team worked. From Hartlepool we filmed street scenes in Whitby. We travelled down to Charlestown in Cornwall, where some shots of several square riggers gave an extension of our period atmosphere and allowed some mast climbing; we visited the New Forest where a few examples of Quercus Roba were impressively splendid, before passing to Buckler's Hard and recalled *Agamemnon* and *Indefatigable*. From the New Forest we filmed one morning aboard *Victory* before morning colours were hoisted, ending the day at Chatham Dockyard, a prodigious feat of driving for an Englishman, but small beer to Texans. Perhaps most moving were the hours we spent in the Old Admiralty Boardroom where we filmed Tom Pocock and Andrew Lambert before we set up our camera in Douglas Reeman's house, whereupon he generously turned himself into Alexander Kent for the purpose of our visit. Julian Stockwin was interviewed on the quay at Falmouth with the *Endeavour Replica* as his backdrop, and the following day Richie and his team sailed in the bark to get some shots under sail. It was a frantic and busy week, enormously enjoyable and the finished product, aptly named *The Sea Warriors* is available from the *Trincomalee's* shop in video or DVD form.

I had, I felt, climbed about as high as I could get aboard the old ship, but I was wrong. A few months later BBC Radio Scotland asked if I would take part in a programme cleverly called *Cooking the Books*. It sought to recreate memorable meals from a number of books which varied from those written by authors as disparate as Jane Austen and Ian Fleming. For our part, we would re-invent an early 19th Century meal out of one of O'Brian's novels and ate it in Trinco's cabin. This was social elevation of a high order. With me were Jean and David, the former an expert foodie of the period who cooked for us, amongst other delights, lobscouse and wim-wams, and supplied us with a head-nailing brew of shrub. David meanwhile expounded on the dangers of scurvy and the measures found to combat it by the Royal Navy. I was largely employed to grunt – in period style, of course – at the excellence of the provender. Surely, I now

thought as my stomach coped with its unusual lading, a man can progress no further? It had wanted only Nelson himself to ask me to pass the salt, to be a perfect climax to my association with the old ship.



Tony Robinson and Bryn Hughes

Again I was wrong. A few weeks ago I was asked to take part in another filming session. Tony Robinson was making a series called the Worst Jobs in History and the Historic Maritime Society was again taking part. They had mentioned my name and I was asked to turn up, only to find myself pressed into period costume and instructed to play the part of the ship's captain. With stick and sword I paced the quarterdeck in near freezing conditions, lost on a fantasy world of total make-believe so that it came as rather a nasty shock to be filmed telling Mr Robinson that he was no damned good to me on my ship as he was no sailor and would therefore serve as a loblolly-boy. This, of course, was one of the worst jobs in history. Later Tony struggled in the stygian gloom below, helping Mr Surgeon Harrison dig a musket ball out of a marine's back. I don't think he had half the fun that I did, for all the icy blasts and the hail that from time-to-time swept across the quarterdeck, causing the ship to heel in the gusts.

Devil take it, sir, it was just like the real thing!


Richard Woodman

friendsofhmstrincomalee.org.uk

The website for the Friends of HMS Trincomalee is freely accessible to all, and has an extensive archive relating to the ship's history and people associated with her over her 206 year history.

The Friends of HMS Trincomalee


HOME	MAGAZINE	EVENTS	NEWS	EBOOKS	GALLERY
ARCHIVE	LINKS	CONTACT	OVERSEAS MEMBERSHIP		
PUZZLES	JOIN US / DONATE		PAST TALKS		



Welcome to the website of the Friends of HMS Trincomalee.

There is plenty of information relating to our ship's history on our [ARCHIVE](#) page which is free to download, please credit the Friends should you use this material elsewhere.

The [PUZZLES](#) page may entertain you for a while, and if you are interested in joining us please look at the [JOIN US](#) section.



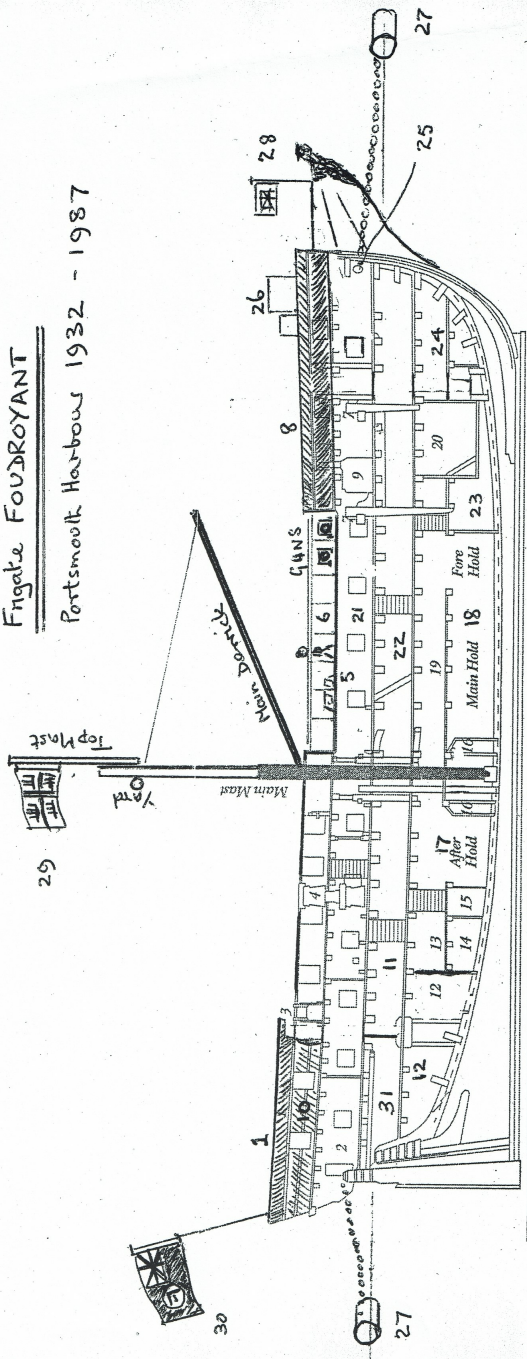
Mess Deck Crossword

Spring 2023

Solution:

	D		B		A		C		S		R		G	
T	E	L	L	A	L	I	E		U	T	O	P	I	A
	L	U			I	N	C		P		G			
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Frigate FOUAROYANT
 Portsmouth Harbour 1932 - 1987



Key for Plan of Frigate Foudroyant at Portsmouth Harbour 1932 - 1987

1. False Poop deck
2. The Captains cabin
3. Wheel
4. Capstan
5. Skylight
6. Waist
7. Riding bits
8. False Forecastle deck
9. Galley
10. Wardroom Mess
11. Cabins for Officers and Instructional Staff
12. Void space
13. Cockpit
14. Fish Room
15. Spirit room
16. Shot Lockers
17. Fresh Water Tanks
18. Main Hold and Fore Hold
19. Cable tier
20. Fore Magazine
21. Gun Deck
22. Lower Deck
23. Coal bunker
24. Void
25. Electric Power Supply
26. Domestic Water Tanks
27. Ship secured to mooring buoys
28. Pilot Jack
29. Flag of Elder Brother Trinity House
30. Defaced Blue Ensign of HM Fleet
31. Tiller Flat

Plan and Key by Captain David Smith in 2006

Time-line for HMS Trincomalee / TS Foudroyant

1812 Order issued by the Admiralty for two frigates to be built in Bombay. Plans were sent out on board HMS Java (38)

30 Dec HMS Java was intercepted by the USS Constitution (44) off the coast of Brazil, after a hard fought fight HMS Java hauled down her colours. Next day, being severely damaged, USS Constitution set fire to and sank the Java together with the plans.



1813 A duplicate set of plans were then sent to India on HMS Stirling Castle (74)

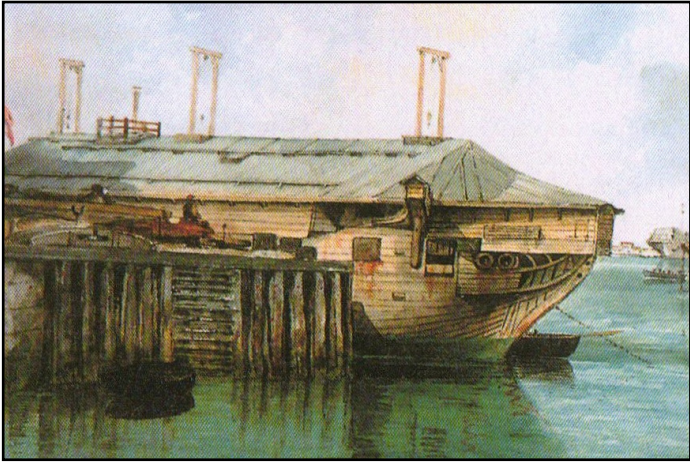
1814 **22 May** HMS Amphitrite laid down in Upper Old Bombay Dock
11 Aug HMS Amphitrite Silver Nail ceremony

1815 End of War with France

1816 **14 Apr** Amphitrite (38) 5th rate of 1064 tons – launched.
25 Apr HMS Trincomalee laid down
29 May HMS Trincomalee Silver Nail ceremony

1817 **12 Oct** HMS Trincomalee launched

Total cost of building - £ 2,405 to Dockyard
£23,642 to Contractors
£ 6,681 to Victualling & Stores for
journey to U.K.



In Ordinary

1819 HMS Trincomalee (38) sailed for U.K. escorted by HMS Fowey.
30 Apr Arrived Portsmouth and 'Placed in Ordinary' (masts and rigging removed and whole of upper deck area tented).

Armament:-

Upper/Main or Gun deck	28x 9 pounder guns
Quarter deck	8x 9 pounder guns
	6x 32 pounder carronades
Forecastle deck	2x 9 pounder guns
	2x 32 pounder carronades

Shortly after launching, the Ship came under the new system of rating and officially credited as a 46 gun frigate.

1835 Stern altered from square to elliptical (improving arc of fire).

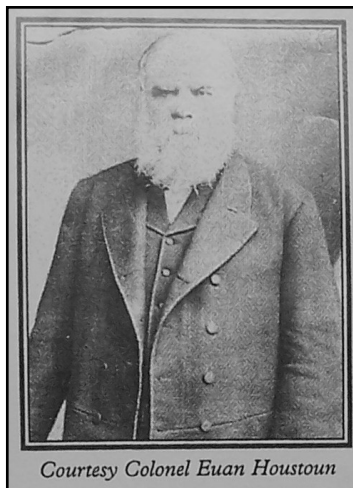
1845 After 25 years in 'Reserve' the ship was reduced to a 'Flushdeck Frigate' (24), to an 'All-Big-Gun' system costing £ 10,000.

1847 Jul Commissioned at Portsmouth under Capt. Robert Warren and saw service in West Indies and North America. Complement 240.

1850 Returned to U.K. and Plymouth. "Paid Off".



Captain Warren



Courtesy Colonel Euan Houston

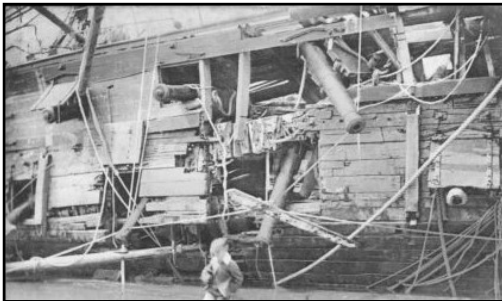
Captain Houston

- 1852** After a refit.
- 20 Jun** Commissioned under Capt. Wallace Houston for service in the Pacific. To South and North American ports – Tahiti, Honolulu and up to Alaska and the Bering Straits – sailing some 110,000 miles.
- 1857** **15 Sep** Ship returned to the Medway. “Paid Off”.
- 1860** HMS Trincomalee reduced to T/S – as an RNR Drill Ship. Towed to Sunderland. Served as a Drill Ship for about 30 years.
- 1862** Towed to Hartlepool
- 1870** Refitting at Hartlepool
- 1873** Recommissioned
- 1874** Sister ship HMS Amphitrite sold to breakers.
- 1877** HMS Trincomalee towed to Southampton Waters by HMS Valorous.
- 1881** Refit – New upper deck, galley etc.
- 1890** Ceased service as a Training Ship.
- 1895** Reduced to “Reserve”.

1897 19 May Sold for breaking up to Reeds, Portsmouth Camber for £1,323. Saved when purchased by Mr Joseph Cobb (a Barrister of Caldicot Castle near Chepstow) and his son Mr Geoffrey Wheatly Cobb, to replace his previous ship – Nelson’s flagship HMS Foudroyant – wrecked at Blackpool in a gale earlier that year. The new purchase was renamed Foudroyant and the ship underwent extensive repairs at Cowes – some recoppering, but mainly upper-works. A Poop deck was added at this time (?).



Nelson’s Flagship HMS Foudroyant wrecked at Blackpool



6 Dec JR Cobb died (1821 to 1897)

1902 17 Sep Foudroyant towed to Falmouth.

1904 12 Jun Towed to Pembroke Dock and dry docked.

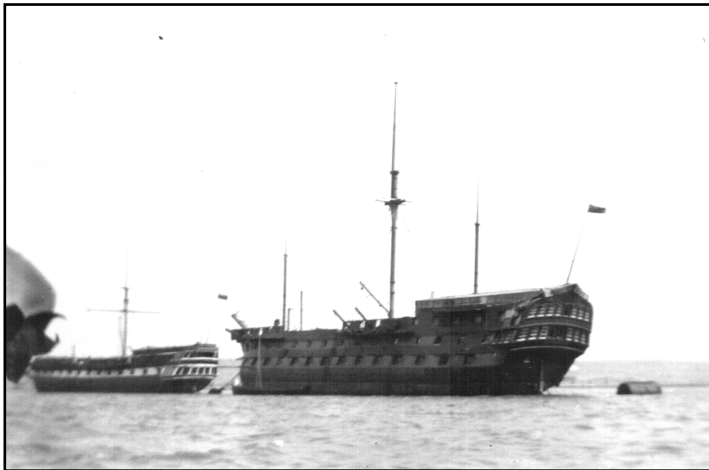
1907 Sep Towed back to Falmouth.

1921 GW Cobb married Anna Beach in London.

1930 9 Sep Foudroyant towed to Milford Haven.

1931 Good Fri Mr G Wheatly Cobb died and was buried at Caldicot Castle (1858 to 1931). Mrs Cobb hands Foudroyant over to the "Implacable Trust".

1932 26 Jul Foudroyant was towed to Portsmouth harbour and moored astern of HMS Implacable on the Gosport side of the harbour.



Foudroyant with HMS Implacable at Portsmouth in the 1930s

1939 3 Sep Britain at war with Germany.

1940 HMS Foudroyant and HMS Implacable were commandeered by the Admiralty for war service.

1943 Both ships moved from their Gosport moorings and moored near the head of Portchester Creek and alongside each other. From June 1943 until 1947 the ships were used for the "Y" or "Bounty" scheme which provided direct entry by suitably qualified members of the Sea cadet Corps into the Communications Branches of the Royal Navy.

1947 Jan Both ships decommissioned by the Admiralty, ownership returning to the "Implacable Trust".

1949 2 Dec HMS Implacable having been declared “beyond repair” and stripped of items / parts of value or interest, was towed out of Portsmouth Harbour with explosive charges in her hull and scuttled off Isle of Wight.

End of “Implacable Trust” and start of “Foudroyant Trust”.

1953 HMS Foudroyant ‘dressed overall’ when the Royal Yacht steamed past at the Coronation Naval Review.

1954 Ship receives an underwater examination of the hull.

1971 Ship making water. £11,000 required for urgent repairs.

1972 Five cannons sold at Christies for 2,040 gns.
Ship towed to and dry docked at Southampton. Some repairs carried out, but cost now exceeds £25,000, so only most urgent work carried out.

1986 Late in year, HMS Foudroyant ceased operating as a Youth Training Ship.

1987 Jul Ship transported to Hartlepool on a submersible barge, to be restored as constructed in 1817, with some important 1845 improvements.



1989 Ship moved to present Basin.

1990 1 Jan The first stage of restoration commenced – to remove vast



amounts of equipment, additions etc. that had accumulated over nearly 200 years. Only then could the restoration team begin to assess some of the damage and deterioration.

1992 Apr The “Foudroyant Trust” became the HMS “Trincomalee Trust”.

1995 Much of the hull above the waterline restored or replaced, lower Main and Fore Masts and Bowsprit installed.

1996 27 Feb Mizzen mast stepped.

30 Aug Ship moved into Dry Dock for below waterline restoration.

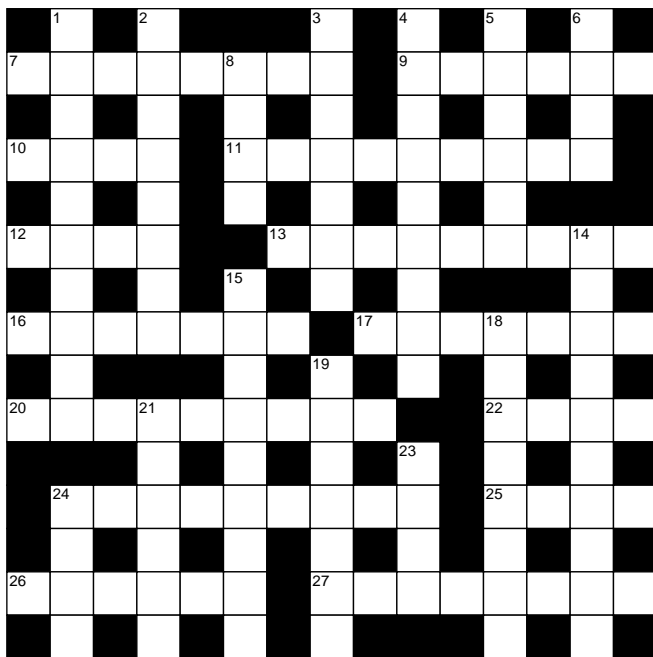
1999 Hull restored and fully copper plated.
New Figure Head fitted.

21 Oct A Silver Nail Ceremony.



Mess Deck Crossword

Summer 2023 - Cryptic



HDT

ACROSS

- 7 Shortened notice about Captain's platform (8)
- 9 Sheltered side route may be made up (6)
- 10 Stagger along the bottom of a ship (4)
- 11 In disarray lag far behind tar at sea battle (9)
- 12 That woman has nothing on the champion (4)
- 13 Fish below pitch by ship's conveniences (9)
- 16 Lighters found at Arbroath (7)
- 17 Piercing type of heat (7)
- 20 Den is rude about bottom (9)
- 22 Blue ships at sea (4)
- 24 An escalator may be good for the soul (9)
- 25 Bird left Noah's boat (4)
- 26 Smaller ship caught in a sidelong glance (6)
- 27 Anteater finds a way into Bible, with Noah's vessel (8)

DOWN

- 1 Sailors start lashing in a beam seen slipping (4,6)
- 2 Invoice pirate captain for gardening tool (8)
- 3 In theory lay idle at sea (7)
- 4 Tool factory gives off a sense of smell (9)
- 5 Black bird of prey alights on Darwin's ship (6)
- 6 Locks not for ships (4)
- 8 In battle the frigate found an opening (4)
- 14 Midwives and postmen may free you from evil (10)
- 15 Go through flames, shooting on both sides (9)
- 18 A secret meeting with learner in an arch (8)
- 19 A mad girl, not good, bashed officer (7)
- 21 Join up, strangely silent (6)
- 23 Seaweed substance used in a garden (4)
- 24 One who makes a charge loses account for client (4)



TS Foudroyant at Portsmouth in 1958

