

# Off the Beaten Track



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*David Lyall  
&  
The entry signpost to his birthplace*

An interest that has developed since we started looking into the history of HMS Trincomalee and of the people associated with her, is that of visiting places linked with this history. In 2009 we started out by making a detour during a holiday in Scotland. After having visited the Frigate Unicorn at Dundee we were on our way to Aberdeen, and planned into the trip was a visit to the village of Auchenblae in Aberdeenshire. Why Auchenblae?

Dr David Lyall, surgeon with the Royal Navy, was given a home appointment to HMS Trincomalee in 1868 followed by the same to HMS Daedalus until 1873. He was born in Auchenblae on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1817, in the same year that our ship was launched. After being granted a Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh he finished his medical training in Aberdeen, and then acted as the surgeon on a whaling ship before joining the Royal Navy in 1839, when he was soon able to develop his skills as a naturalist. He worked with the botanist Joseph Hooker on a scientific expedition to the Antarctic led by Sir James Ross. An article about David Lyall appeared in the Autumn 2008 issue of the Quarterdeck.

It was pouring with rain on the day in May 2009 when we reached Auchenblae, but this isolated village had a charm of its own. The church is on the wooded hillside above the stream and the unspoilt village buildings of the Victorian era. Unfortunately we were unable to find a source of refreshments here.





*Auchenblae Church*

More luck though when we visited Kirkharle in Northumbria, ancestral home of Lambton Loraine, midshipman on HMS Trincomalee 1853 to 1857 during her second commission. Lambton was born on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1838, and in his autobiography he recalls how his first schoolmaster, Dr Watts, “had a house near a piece of the old Roman wall, at Newcastle”. It was whilst visiting Hadrian's wall that we decided to visit Kirkharle, a few miles north of Newcastle.



*Kirkharle Hall*



Sir William Loraine, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet of Kirkharle (1658 – 1743) built Kirkharle Hall with his gardener, Lancelot “Capability” Brown being entrusted with the landscaping of the grounds. In Lambton Loraine's memoirs he gives his opinion that this was probably the first landscape work which Capability Brown was paid to do. These original gardens were removed by the 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet after 1770. In 1836 the family were forced to sell their estate, and the hall was largely demolished and renamed Kirkharle farmhouse.

Presently the hall remains a private residence, however the outbuildings have been converted into workrooms, gift and antique shops, there is also a café/restaurant of which we availed ourselves.



*Lambton Loraine & St. Wilfrid's Church, Kirkharle*

The grounds of Kirkharle have been recently landscaped in a manner sympathetic with Capability Brown's original plans, with a short walk provided around the ornamental lake. In the church, many memorials to the Loraine family can be seen, and a lone memorial stone stands between the hall and church commemorating Robert Loraine who was “barbarously murdered” by Scottish raiders in 1483, “as he was returning home from church alone, where he had been at his private devotions.”

On the death of his father in 1852 Lambton Loraine became 11<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Kirkharle, and so when he joined HMS Trincomalee it was as a midshipman with a title. Sir Lambton Loraine went on to a distinguished career in the Royal Navy (article in Autumn 2009 issue of Quarterdeck), and he died on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1917 as a retired Rear-Admiral.

Our most recent visit to a place associated with HMS Trincomalee, with refreshment possibilities, was made this summer when we were at Portsmouth Harbour. Tucked away behind The Hard, next to the entrance to the Naval Dockyard Museum site is Hawke Street. Eliza Bunt was a passenger on the maiden voyage of HMS Trincomalee from Trincomalee to Portsea, when she and her children were returned to England after the death of her husband, John Bunt, boatswain at the Trincomalee dockyard in Ceylon - modern day Sri Lanka. (Ref: From Trincomalee to Portsea, the Diary of Eliza Bunt transcribed by Mary Hope Monnery)

In Eliza's diary she records in her idiosyncratic writing style that on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1819 "... we are with all our things packed and in the Boat now standing on the Quarter Deck bidding adieus to our ship friends who are all assembled for that purpose with palpating Hearts and smiling Countance we descend to the Boat in the Chair of State from whence we procede to Portsmouth Beach and after An Absence of two years and nine months we again set our foot on English Ground the luggage is landed put into a Cart and taking to the Custom House where they are examined passed and taking into Hawk Street ...". It is thought that Eliza stayed at number 22 Hawke Street.



*The George Hotel in Portsea*

Today there are very few buildings in Portsea that Eliza would recognise. However we did find the George Hotel, built in 1781, at the corner of Hawke Street which served us good food and real ale. Not far away is St George's Church, Portsea, the Shipwrights' Church built in 1754 which Eliza must have known.



*St. George's Church  
Portsea*

Perhaps other Friends of HMS Trincomalee know of similar places to add to our growing list, nearby tearooms or inns an advantage.

**Hugh & Ruth Turner**

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