



Quarterdeck

The Newsletter of The Friends of HMS Trincomalee

July 1998

COPPER BOTTOMED!

The last remains of the coppering on HMS Trincomalee's hull have now been removed, and it has become quite clear from an examination of the nails in the hull and the remnants of the felt behind the copper plating, that this was the original coppering applied to the hull when HMS Trincomalee was first built. It had been assumed that during her many drydockings the ship must have had new coppering applied, but it appears that whilst some areas had been patched and repaired, the major portion of the hull still bore its original copper sheets.

The process of re-caulking and applying new felt and copper sheet to the hull has now begun. The rudder was the first area to be completed, but steady progress is now being made over the lower hull. In total over a quarter of a million copper nails will be used to secure the sheeting to the

lower hull.

For further information on the fate of the *first* consignment of copper sheet intended for the ship, see the article on page 3.

Frames and Planking

Nearly two hundred frames in the lower hull where serious deterioration could be seen have had new sections fitted, and about a thousand running feet of internal planking in the same area has been replaced. Outside, the work of replacing the outer planking continues, with significant progress now visible. Work has now begun on the restoration of the frames and cladding of the bread room and powder magazine, which are, unfortunately, "out of bounds" as a result. Visitors crossing the caisson gates at the end of the drydock will notice that the carving of the ship's name is now gracing her stern.



*(Left):
Craftsmen
finish the
job of cop-
pering the
ship's
rudder.
The entire
hull below
the water-
line will
eventually
be com-
pletely
sheathed
in copper.*

*Photo by
Joe Cor-
nish*

NEW MAN AT THE HELM

HMS Trincomalee Trust has recruited Mr Bryn Hughes as Project General Manager.

Bryn took up his post in Hartlepool in February and has already begun to make his mark on the project. He comes to us from Denbighshire where he was County Heritage Officer and Director of the Bodelwyddan Castle Trust. For those unfamiliar with the name, Bodelwyddan is not just a historic castle, but also a conference centre and entertainment complex, and was Museum of the Year in 1989 (significantly, a year after Bryn took control).

Although he was born in Surrey, Bryn has strong family connec-

tions with Wales, and until he finds somewhere to live in the North East is still commuting back and forth from his home in Conwy at weekends. Bryn is directly responsible to the Board of Governors and Trustees through the Chairman and Chief Executive, Captain David Smith. His experience, energy and obvious enthusiasm for the project are bound to be of great benefit to the Trust.

We also extend a warm welcome Mrs Brenda Forstad, the Trust's new Administration Manager, who was appointed in January and has already demonstrated her considerable organisational abilities in the Trust Offices.

ON THE MOVE AGAIN.....

The Trust's offices and workshop will be moving again before the end of the year.

The site which they now occupy is scheduled for development and building work is due to start there in early 1999.

The Trust has secured a long lease on the quayside site where *Trincomalee* was berthed until she went into drydock, and it is there that the shoreside facilities for visitors and the workshop will be built. Until work can start on the new site, however, the collection of portable buildings which have served the Trust and the restoration team for so long will have to be moved once again to some other suitable location. Watch this space for further news towards the end of the year!

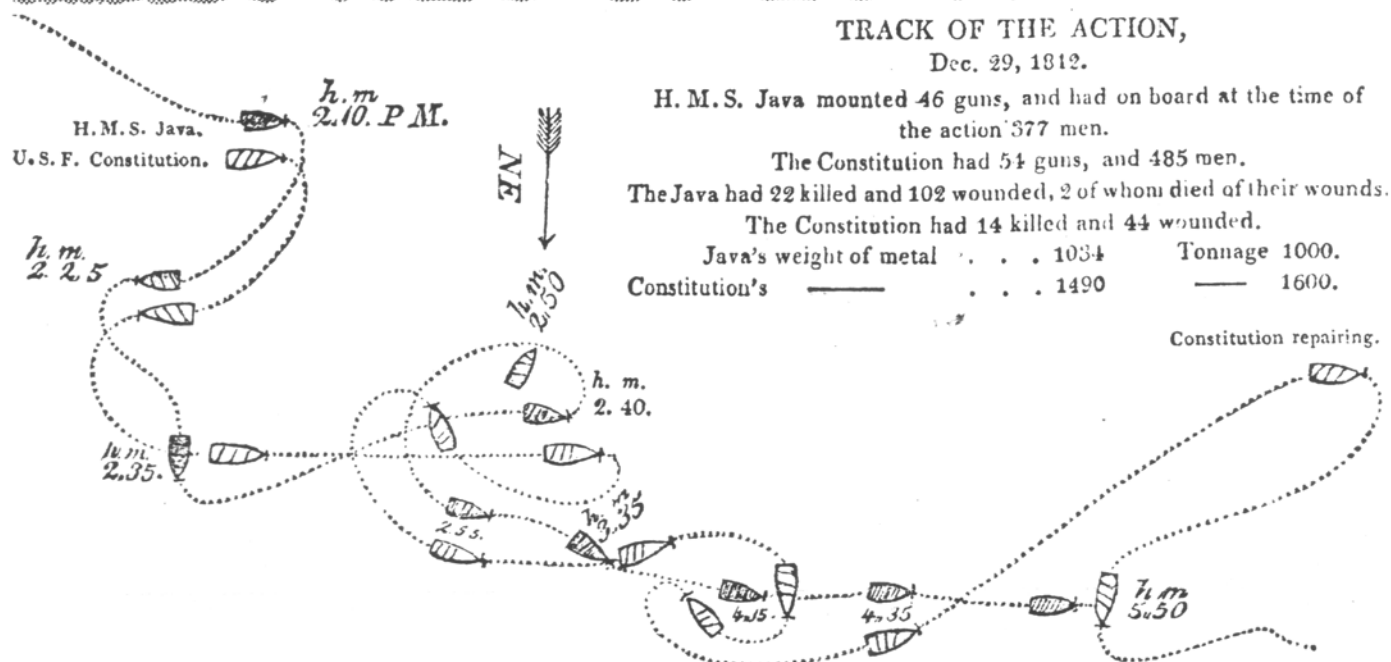
Below: The elegant carved decoration is re-applied to the stern above the ship's name. Visitors can obtain an excellent view of the fine quality of this workmanship from the walkway across the top of the drydock gates.

Photo: Joe Cornish



HMS JAVA AND USS CONSTITUTION

History relates that the original plans for the frigates HMS Trincomalee and HMS Amphitrite were sent out to Bombay in 1812 by The Admiralty with another frigate, HMS Java, which was lost after an engagement with USS Constitution, thus establishing a curious link between the oldest and second oldest wooden warships still afloat. Laurie Merrin has unearthed some of the details of what happened on that ill-starred day.



HM S Java, a 38 gun frigate, had originally been a French ship, captured by the British in the Indian Ocean in 1810. A fast vessel, she had been refitted and re-equipped for her voyage to Bombay. In addition to her usual crew, she had aboard close to 100 naval officers and men bound for India and a VIP in the shape of Lt General Thomas Hislop, the newly-appointed Governor of Bombay. Her captain, Henry Lambert, had been entrusted with the plans of the two frigates to be built by the Wadia shipyard. Down below she was carrying a substantial quantity of valuable stores, including copper sheet intended for the

hulls of *Trincomalee* and *Amphitrite*.

Shortly before her encounter with *Constitution*, the *Java* (which seemed to be taking a somewhat roundabout route to Bombay) had successfully stopped and captured an American merchant ship, the *William*, which was now being escorted, in the care of a prize crew, to a neutral port in Brazil.

Chance Encounter

It was during the morning of December 29th 1812, a fine, sunny day in those latitudes, with light winds, that Captain Lambert sighted the American's sail off Cabo Frio. Sending the *William* towards the Brazilian coast, Lambert hoisted more sail

and set a course toward the enemy.

Java's greater speed soon closed the gap between the two ships, and by noon both vessels were cleared for action in anticipation of the fight to come. Two hours later, the ships were less than half a mile apart, heading east on the port tack and at ten past two *Constitution* opened fire, receiving an immediate response from *Java's* guns. After several exchanges of broadsides, both ships sustaining damage, Capt Lambert attempted to use his greater speed to bring *Java* across *Constitution's* bows to rake her with a full broadside, only to be foiled by the American turning with him and

keeping the two ships broadside on. By this time, *Constitution's* heavier guns (she mounted 24-pounders in comparison with the 18-pounders of *Java*) were beginning to cause serious damage to the British frigate, and she was becoming difficult to control. Attempting to tack upwind with her sails in tatters, she was raked by *Constitution* cutting across her bow with two devastating broadsides which brought down both her bowsprit and jib boom. Her momentum however brought her bow up fast against *Constitution's* side, and Lambert attempted to lead a party of boarders over the foc'sle in a desperate attempt to turn the tide of the battle. The boarding party was repelled by the Americans, Lambert being seriously wounded in the fight, and as the *Constitution* broke free, *Java's* foremast crashed to

the deck in a tangle of splintering wood and tangled rope.

Java Fights On

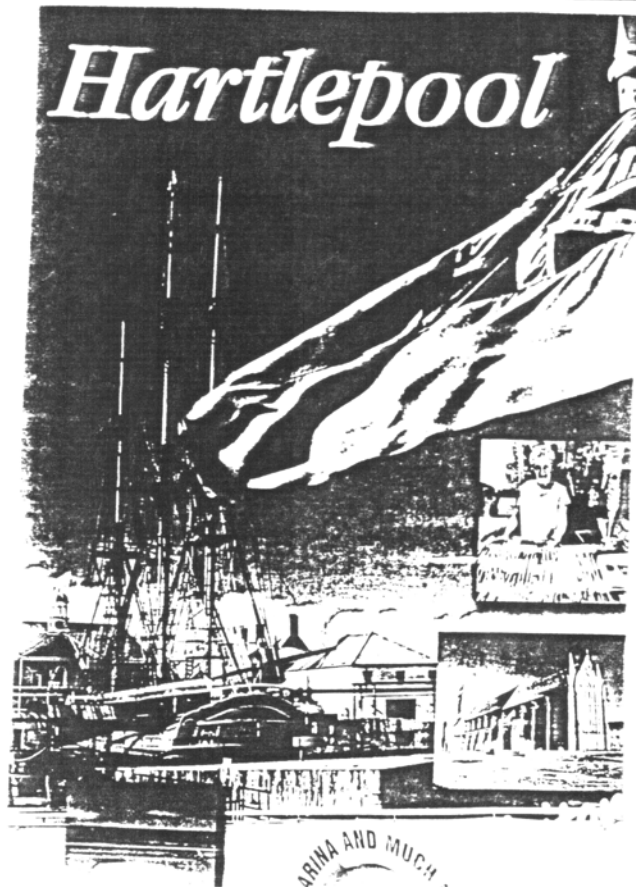
Lambert's Lieutenant, Henry Chads, took command while the injured captain was taken below, and his officers and crew desperately attempted to clear the decks of the fallen masts, spars and rigging whilst continuing to return the Americans' fire. At four o'clock *Java's* entire foremast was brought down, and fire broke out among the wreckage littering the decks. Even so, Chad's men rigged a jury staysail from the stump of the foremast and did their best to wear the crippled ship into a position where they could rake *Constitution*. All was in vain, however. By half past five it was clear that the badly damaged *Java* would not last long, and as

Constitution bore down on her in a position to deliver the *coup de grace*, Chads surrendered.

Death of Captain Lambert

The survivors of the *Java's* complement, including over 100 wounded men (22 had been killed during the action) were taken prisoner by *Constitution's* Captain, William Bainbridge, who reluctantly abandoned the sinking *Java* and her valuable contents. The prisoners were landed at the port of Bahia (now known as Salvador), where Captain Lambert later died of his wounds.

News of this unhappy defeat did not reach England for several months and it was in the spring of 1813 that the Admiralty learned the fate of *Java* and the loss of the plans of their two new teak frigates.



FRONT PAGE FEATURE

HMS Trincomalee features in full colour on the front of the new *Hartlepool Visitor Guide* (see left) produced by Hartlepool Borough Council.

Hartlepool Council have been committed supporters of the Project from the very beginning, and see *HMS Trincomalee* as a very important central feature of the newly developed Marina area. The emergence of the ship from drydock and the completion of her restoration are also significant events in the town's Millennium Calendar

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