



Quarterdeck

The Newsletter of The Friends of HMS Trincomalee

December 1998

FINAL PHASE APPEAL LAUNCHED

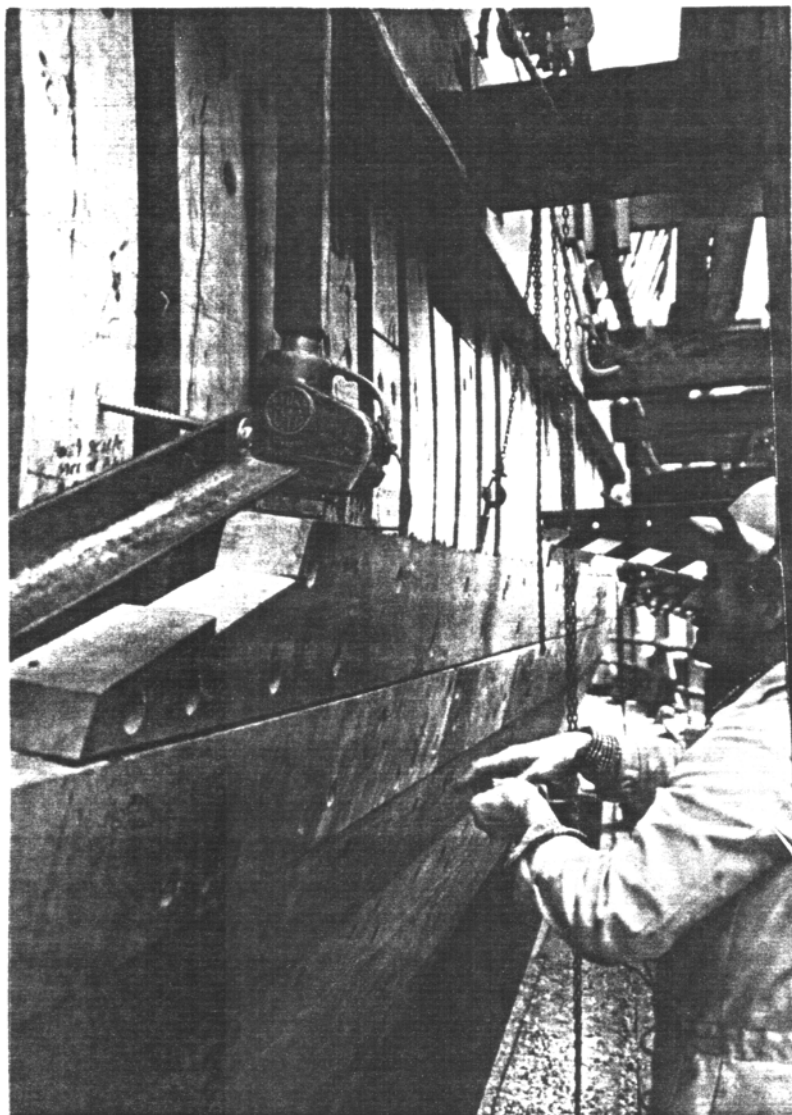
At the end of September 1998, Captain David Smith, Chairman of the Trustees and Governors, launched the HMS Trincomalee Trust's Final Phase Appeal - the target of which is to raise the last £1 million needed to complete the ten year restoration programme and develop the permanent moorings and visitor facilities in Jackson Dock, Hartlepool.

A flying start to the Appeal has come from the Corporation of Trinity House, which has generously pledged £125,000 towards the Trust's target. This sum has already been augmented by gifts from locally based businesses and it is hoped that the strenuous efforts being put into this appeal will ensure that the target is reached before the end of 1999.

If you know of anyone who may be willing to help, please spread the word! Further supplies of the Appeal brochure are available from The Friends, PO Box 1817, Hartlepool TS24 7YE. ❖

RESTORATION GOING WELL

Restoration of the lower hull of the ship is proceeding apace, and in spite of the difficult and time-consuming work involved in the removal and replacement of rotten timbers in the frames and planking, the workforce has made exceptionally good progress. The fitting of the outer hull planking should now be completed within the next few months, and the re-caulking, felting and coppering is following close

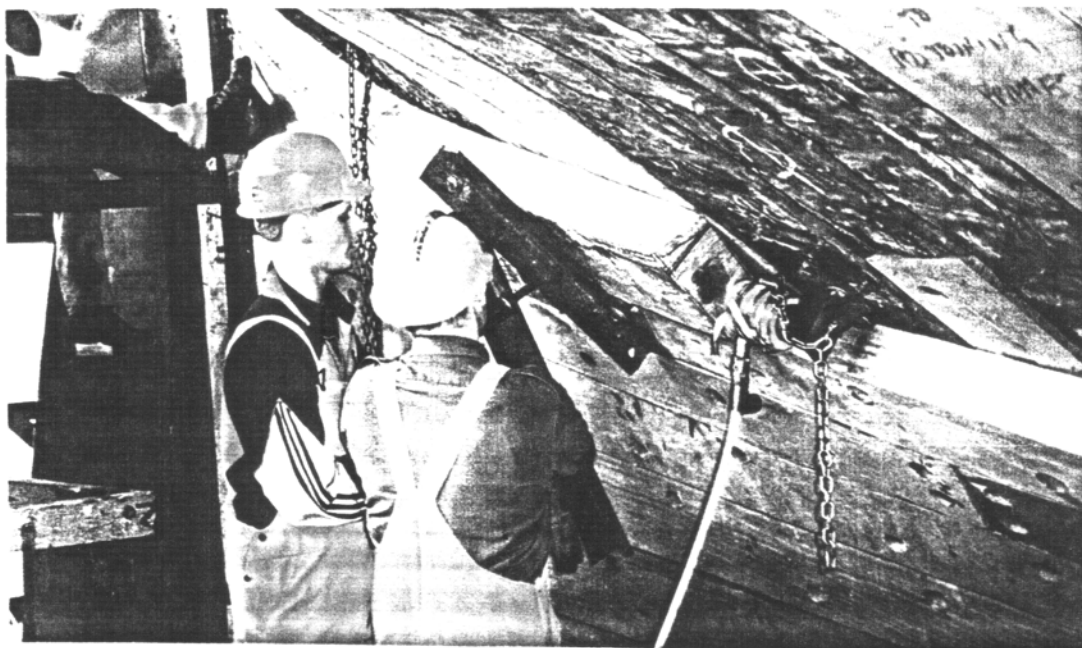


Refitting side planking, 1998 (photo HMS Trincomalee Trust)

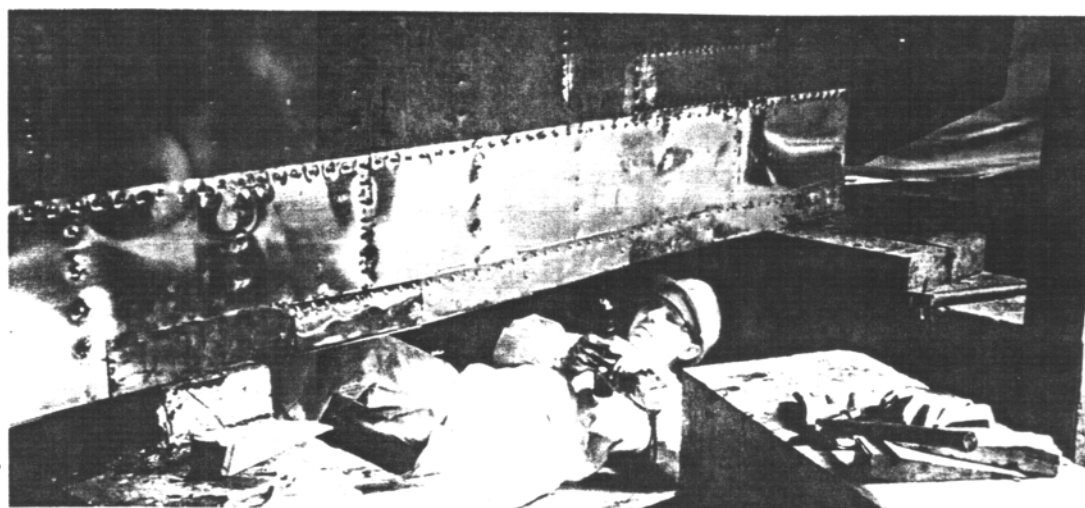
behind, as recent visitors to the ship will have noticed. It has been the aim of the restoration team throughout their work to leave as much of the sound timber as possible in place. This policy has often required carefully thought out and ingenious planning, followed by painstaking work to remove only those areas actually affected by rot whilst maintaining the structural integrity of the hull.

The progress made by the restoration workforce is all the more remarkable when one remembers that no cranes of any sort are allowed within the Historic Quay site, so that all the materials

Fitting shaped timbers on the starboard side close to the stern. Note the rudder in the background.



Right: Coppering the underside of the keel. Not a job for the claustrophobic.



Photos: HMS Trincomalee Trust

including the largest timbers have to be manhandled to their final site - as indeed they would have been in Bombay 180 years ago. Observers of this work have been greatly impressed by the ingenious use of Les Gilfoyle's hand barrow, which has proved to be worth its weight in gold as awkward pieces of frame and planking are heaved around the working platforms.

The restoration team's technical officers are now planning the completion of the main structural work inside the ship, which has included the replacement of a number of knees, bulkheads and decking as well as planking in the orlop deck and elsewhere.

Scaffolding now surrounds the beak and figurehead, and following the repairs to the area in the way of the "knee of the head" the condition of the figurehead under its many coats of glossy

paintwork will be assessed.

Very shortly it will be necessary to remove all the equipment and materials from the existing workshop to a new location, as the land on which the Trust has been allowed to operate for the past few years has been sold for redevelopment and we have to move once more. The new site will be within the former builders' merchants premises, close to the railway crossing in Mainsforth Terrace. This is slightly further from the ship than the present facilities, but under the circumstances should provide a good base from which to work.

The building has not been in use for some time, and will need some work to prepare it for its new purpose. As far as possible this work will be carried out by the Trust's own workforce, subject to the priority of restoration work on the ship. We can only hope that the "offices" (as the assorted interconnected portakabins are known) will survive the journey....❖

Weapons of HMS Trincomalee

THE NAVAL OFFICER'S SWORD

Until the early years of the 19th century there were no particular regulations as to how an officer in the British Navy should arm himself. Officers chose for themselves swords and other weapons which suited them for use aboard ship and for the type of fighting for which they were required. Fighting swords developed for land use tended to be of two distinct types - those with long slender blades using the point of the sword for stabbing and those designed for cutting or slashing, using the edge of the blade. For naval use the long-bladed rapier could be cumbersome and difficult to use at close quarters on a heaving

deck, as well as being awkward to wear in the confined spaces aboard a ship such as Trincomalee. Most officers therefore preferred a short, handy, cutting blade which would allow them to slash at an opponent but recover the blade quickly in case of a response. Hunting swords, with their short curved blades, appealed to many naval officers in the 17th and early 18th century. This type of sword was often known as a "hanger" - broadly speaking a short sword with a curved or straight blade which was hung from the belt - and was widely used ashore by the infantry as well as by civilians for personal protection.

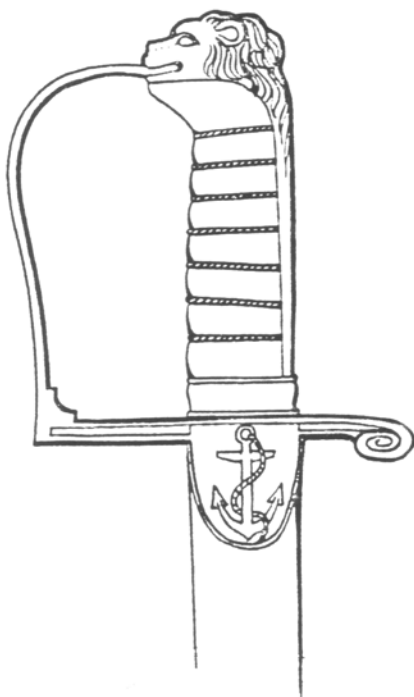
Most naval officers would possess more than one sword, however, and contemporary illustrations show that they tended to follow the fashions current ashore in terms of hilt decoration and blade types for "full dress" occasions and excursions ashore.

In 1786, infantry officers were

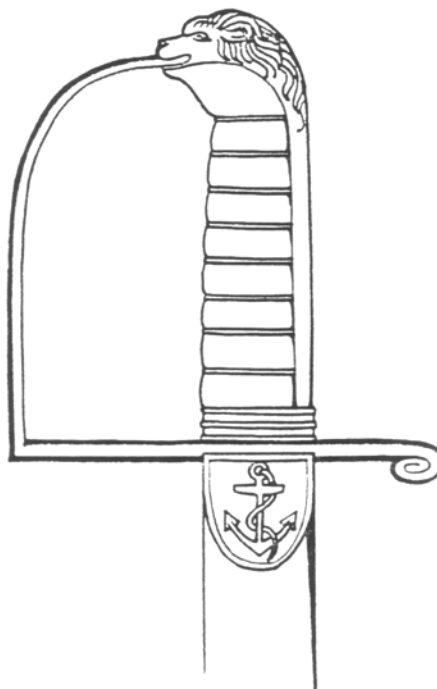
required to wear swords with straight, 32 inch "cut and thrust" blades with hilts of steel or gilt (to match the regiment's buttons) and within a few years naval officers were adopting swords of a similar style, though with a crown and anchor replacing the regimental badge. These swords, and the variations which followed thick and fast in the British army proved to be the basis for the first pattern sword produced for the Royal Navy around 1805.

This sword combined the cut-and-thrust blade of the infantry sword with the "stirrup" guard of the cavalry sabre and the lion's head pommel of the grenadiers' sidearm. Senior officers' swords were distinguished by having ivory grips, whereas lieutenants' grips were bound in black fishskin or shagreen and midshipmen's and warrant officers' had a stepped pommel instead of the lion's head. No doubt the first officers engaged

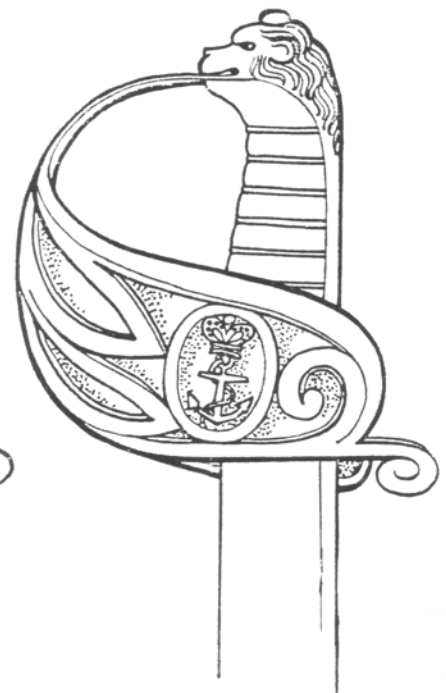
First stirrup hilt of 1805



Straight stirrup hilt of 1825



Solid half-basket hilt of 1827



aboard HMS Trincomalee would have carried this pattern of sword.

After so many years without regulating the type of sword their officers wore, the Admiralty then followed the army's habit of regular

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changes in the specifications, although the basic design was to remain in use for many years. In 1825 the design of the stirrup hilt was changed to become straight, and two years later a new, solid half-basket hilt was introduced, with a pipe-backed blade. This was dropped in favour of a flat-backed blade in 1847 but this design, retaining the lion's head pommel, survived more or less unchanged through a number of minor variations until the present day.

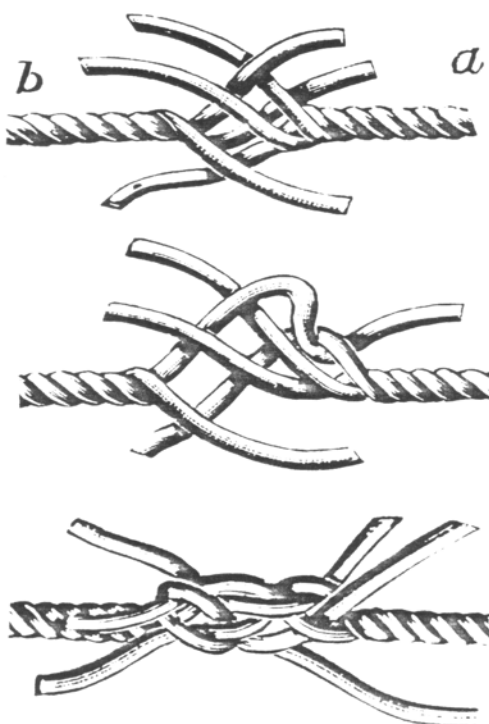
It should be noted that many types of sword continued to be worn by naval officers long after they became "obsolete", sometimes being handed down from father to son, sometimes for sentimental reasons or even to avoid the considerable expense of purchasing a new sword. In addition many preferred a different type of sword for active service, and there are plenty of examples to be seen in collections including cutlass blades fitted to the standard naval hilt, claymores, broadswords, backswords and brass-hilted hangers. Flag officers were entitled at one stage to carry a type of mameluke-hilted scimitar, similar to those adopted by field marshals and generals ashore, and Admirals often exhibited their individuality in wearing non-standard patterns of sword.

Scabbard fittings would often be engraved and decorated according to the owner's whim, and blades were often blued and elaborately etched with stands of arms, suns-in-splendour and so on. The study of naval officers swords is a fascinating subject and interested readers are encouraged to view the magnificent collection at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. ♦

DRYDOCKING IN SOUTHAMPTON - 1972

Early in 1972 TS Foudroyant (as HMS Trincomalee was then known) was drydocked at the Harland and Wolff yard in Southampton, the facilities offered by HM Dockyard Portsmouth having proved to be too costly. This drydocking was undertaken to repair a leak in the hull and to make good any other underwater damage found as well as to carry out a condition survey. This revealed that the hull was in surprisingly good condition, bearing in mind that the ship had not been drydocked for 67 years. The leak was plugged, repairs were made to the rudder, a section of the keel sole was replaced, and some rotten planking replaced. One or two bad seams were re-caulked, and new copper patches were put on in the areas where work had been done. The cost of this work, including one or two other essential jobs such as strengthening the ship's one and only mast, amounted to some £10,000. It was noted that the copper sheathing (which we now know to be original) was "thin and pitted through" and should ideally be replaced "in about five years time". Twenty five years on, the work is at last almost done! ♦

GETTING SPLICED?



Looking for somewhere unusual to tie the knot? As from 1999, HMS Trincomalee has a licence for civil marriage ceremonies! Contact the Trust for details on 01429 223193 ♦

APOLOGY

The Hon. Editor apologises sincerely for the fact that your December Quarterdeck has only reached you in January. This was due to the usual interruptions of work, family and other spare-time commitments, aggravated by the sudden and unexpected arrival of Christmas.



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