



Quarterdeck

The Newsletter of The Friends of HMS Trincomalee

December 2000

ROYAL PATRON VISITS SHIP



HRH the Duke of Edinburgh shares a joke with Captain David Smith RN, President of the Trust, in the captain's cabin at the end of his tour of inspection.

Photo: Keith Johnson, HMS Trincomalee Trust

HRH the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, visited HMS Trincomalee on November 1st to see for himself the final stages of the ship's restoration. During his tour of the ship, accompanied by Trust President Captain David Smith, His Royal Highness was introduced to Trustees, ship's guides and members of the restoration team. Capt Smith presented Prince Philip with a small casket made of teak from the ship's hull as a memento of his visit.

The Duke of Edinburgh has shown a keen interest in the preservation and restoration of HMS Trincomalee from the outset, and as Patron of the Trust has always been willing to lend his support to the project. A personal message from our Patron appears inside the New Millennium Appeal brochure enclosed with this newsletter.

Funds are now urgently needed to finance the fitting out of the ship and the development of permanent moorings with shoreside facilities. If any member would like further copies of the New Millennium Appeal brochure to pass on to likely donors, please contact The Friends at the usual address.

MORE FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

Following a generous gesture by HMS Trincomalee Trust, members will now be able to visit the ship free of charge on as many occasions as they wish on production of a valid membership card. Friends renewing their membership will no longer receive the old pale blue voucher, but should carry their membership card when visiting the ship, and produce it when required.

If you have lost or misplaced your card, please contact the Hon. Membership Secretary at The Friends of HMS Trincomalee, PO Box 1817, Hartlepool TS24 7YE.

We hope that as many members as possible will take advantage of this privilege, and encourage their friends and family to take up membership as well!

RESTORATION PROGRESS: THE FINAL DETAILS

Officially, the restoration of HMS Trincomalee is now effectively complete. This does not mean that the ship is now in a finished state, but the remaining work is classified as "fitting out", and will continue well into 2001.

Among the final items to be completed were the sealing of the deck timbers, the replacement of the restored ship's wheels, and the installation of the capstan.

Down below, the carpenters have been fully occupied in panelling the captain's cabin, and no doubt the captain himself will be relieved to see that "seats of ease" have now been installed in the quarter galleries.

In the lower decks panelling work has also been completed in the cabins, store room and magazines, and is now being painted. A special base was prepared for the galley stove, which was hoisted aboard on December 7th.

Up aloft, the topsail and topgallant yards for all three masts have been rigged ready to lift into position in the future. It is not considered safe to hoist these yards into position until the ship can be

fully ballasted and trimmed, which is not possible within the drydock. However, re-floating and stability tests carried out in September were entirely satisfactory, and the ship has remained afloat since that time.

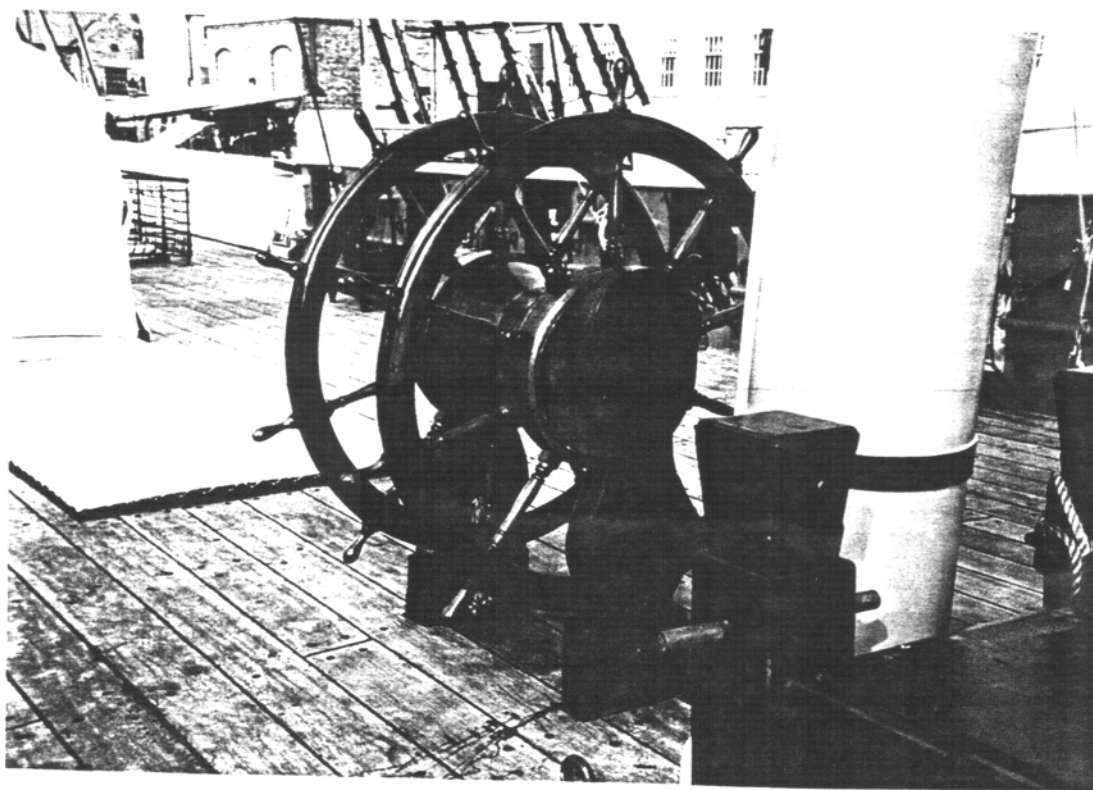
Meantime, the painstaking work of installing wiring throughout the ship to provide power, light and safety systems has continued. This has been carried out by specialised subcontractors but under the close supervision of the restoration team to ensure that there is as little disturbance as possible to the original fabric of the ship, whilst taking care to keep the cabling well hidden from view.

Fitting out

Much remains to be done in equipping the ship and a now greatly reduced workforce has been fully occupied in the manufacture of such important items as gun carriages, the kedge anchor and steering gear. In addition, fittings such as mess tables and benches have to be made up and installed in accordance with the "interpretation" programme, which is now awaiting approval by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Right:

The newly restored ship's wheel, now back in its rightful place on the quarterdeck, just forward of the mizzen mast (October 2000)



*Photo:
Keith Johnson
HMS Trincomalee
Trust*

Lieut. George Palmer's Diary: September 1856

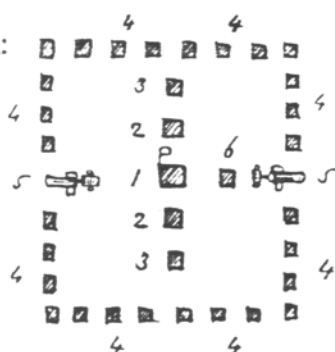
Resuming Lieutenant Palmer's first hand account of the expedition to apprehend the renegade Indian Tathlasut, accused of the murder of a settler on Vancouver Island in 1856. The small force transported by HMS Trincomalee, accompanied by the Governor of Vancouver Island, had made their way up the Cowichan River and were encamped with their light field cannon near an Indian village where Tathlasut was thought to be seeking refuge....

2nd September. Two of the chiefs came up to have a 'talk' with the Governor. They said they could not give the man up and the Governor must go and take him. They said he was not a bad man but had some friends, however they would do all in their power to keep on friendly terms with us, &c. &c. At 9am we made ready for the march and left the encampment, crossing the river in 7 or 8 small canoes. The two field pieces were dismantled and conveyed by water the whole way to our second encampment. The first mile was without any path and amongst long grass about 7 ft high. However, the advanced guard, composed of a Lieut of Marines and 30 men, cleared away all obstacles with the assistance of the Canadians and our own pioneers. In about an hour we got into what they called a track, but nobody but Indians could attempt to get through the trunks of trees, the bushes &c. that thickly beset this same track. However, we managed to jam through them and, after crossing the river at two different bends, we found ourselves in comparatively clear country. The rain began to fall heavily and everybody was wet through to the skin. We passed an Indian village about 3pm - all the braves turned out, armed with long guns (flint locks) and knives. They were a dirty looking lot, but most of them fine looking, active men, faces all covered

with different colours and their long hair, ornamented with the white down of birds, gave them a savage and hideous appearance. They looked steadily at us as we marched past the lodges, counted us all, but never betrayed by the movement of a muscle their uneasiness. We found out afterwards that they rather regretted allowing us to penetrate so far into their country when they might, had they been so pleased, have caused us serious annoyance as our road was so bad, our field pieces worse than useless on the march, and our ignorance of the country, combined with our limited experience of bush fighting, all gave them an advantage over us had they been disposed to have come to warlike measures. But they well knew that whatever Governor Douglas and his white men said, they would do - they always did - they knew this from past experience. We encamped in the middle of a small plain, close to the banks of a small river; this was about 5.30pm. The men began to hut themselves as fast as they could as the rain had been coming down for the last four hours. We served out an extra allowance of rum and made each man drink it as he answered his name. Dinner was then cooked and fires blazing in front of each hut (one section of a company occupied one hut) in this form:

Key to Lieutenant Palmer's sketch:

- 1 - Governor's tent
- 2,2 - Officers' tents
- 3,3 - Commissariat tents
- 4,4,4,4 - Men's huts
- 5,5 - Field pieces
- 6 - Canadians' hut



- 1 - Governor's tent.
- 2,2 - Officers' tents.
- 3,3 - Commissariat tents.
- 4,4,4,4 - Men's huts.
- 5,5 - Field-pieces
- 6 - Canadian's hut.

Sentries were placed around the camp at 50 paces during the night and at 100 during the day. We slept all that night on the wet ground, in fact everything was wet and miserable, but with the help of plenty of hot grog and tobacco we slept tolerably well. I did not envy those on guard during the night and we fancied ourselves nearer than ever to the Crimea that night.

3rd Sep. The next morning was finer with showers every now and then. About 10am there was a report that the murderer was in the village we had passed through yesterday evening, about a mile from our camp. At 2pm all the Indians were seen advancing towards the camp, with their war paint on and making a hideous row, yelling &c. [FOR THE REST SEE PRIVATE JOURNAL] (cont'd overleaf)

(cont'd from p.3)

Sadly, the PRIVATE JOURNAL has never been found. A pencilled note reads "What a pity, just as you were getting interesting."

We know from other sources that the war-painted Indians, with the accused Tathlasut in their midst, approached the expeditionary force "until within arms' length" in what might nowadays be called a "stand-off" until, in a short struggle, the culprit was seized – apparently by Captain Houstoun himself – and placed in confinement within the camp.

The following morning, September 4th, a court of six officers and six petty officers tried the offender, and "after a full and patient investigation of the known and substantiated details of the case, the court returned a verdict of

guilty. The Governor summarily ordered him hanged, and he was executed in the evening".

On September 5th, their mission accomplished, the brigade struck camp and returned, via the north bank of the river, to re-embark on HMS Trincomalee for the return passage to Esquimalt.

Lieutenant Palmer's diary, after this infuriating gap, resumes on Sep 23rd with the entry:

" 5.30am. Weighed, in tow of "Otter". 7.30am. Cast off and made all plain sail. Beating down the Straits of Juan de Fuen. Sounded occasionally – thick fog . 7.45pm ⚓ in 27 fms."

With grateful thanks to Col. Romie Palmer, grandson of Lieut (later Admiral) George Palmer, for sight of his grandfather's journal and permission to reproduce it here.

BOARDERS AWAY!

Hartlepool Maritime Festival 2000

Hartlepool's Millennium Maritime Festival, held over the weekend of 24th/25th June 2000 was judged an unqualified success by the thousands who flocked to the Harbour to take part in it.

Hartlepool Historic Quay opened its doors free of charge to all visitors throughout the weekend, and HMS Trincomalee followed suit, attracting an estimated 10,000 visitors over the weekend. The Friends of HMS Trincomalee set up their stall on the foredeck alongside the Historical Maritime Society and were kept fully occupied from the moment the gates opened. Thanks must go in particular to volunteers Laurie Merrin, Keith Rogers, Jean Hughes and Liz Hogg who not only manned The Friends' display, but found time to help out the ship's guides who were often swamped by customers at their souvenir stall.



Laurie Merrin, armed only with a cutlass, prepares to deal with boarders during the Maritime Festival

STOP PRESS: COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS

A small number of the medals cast from copper removed from the ship's hull are still available to members in presentation boxes at £10 plus £1.50 postage from HMS Trincomalee Trust, Jackson Dock, Hartlepool TS24 0SQ. Get 'em while you can!

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