



# Quarterdeck

The Newsletter of The Friends of HMS Trincomalee

November 2001

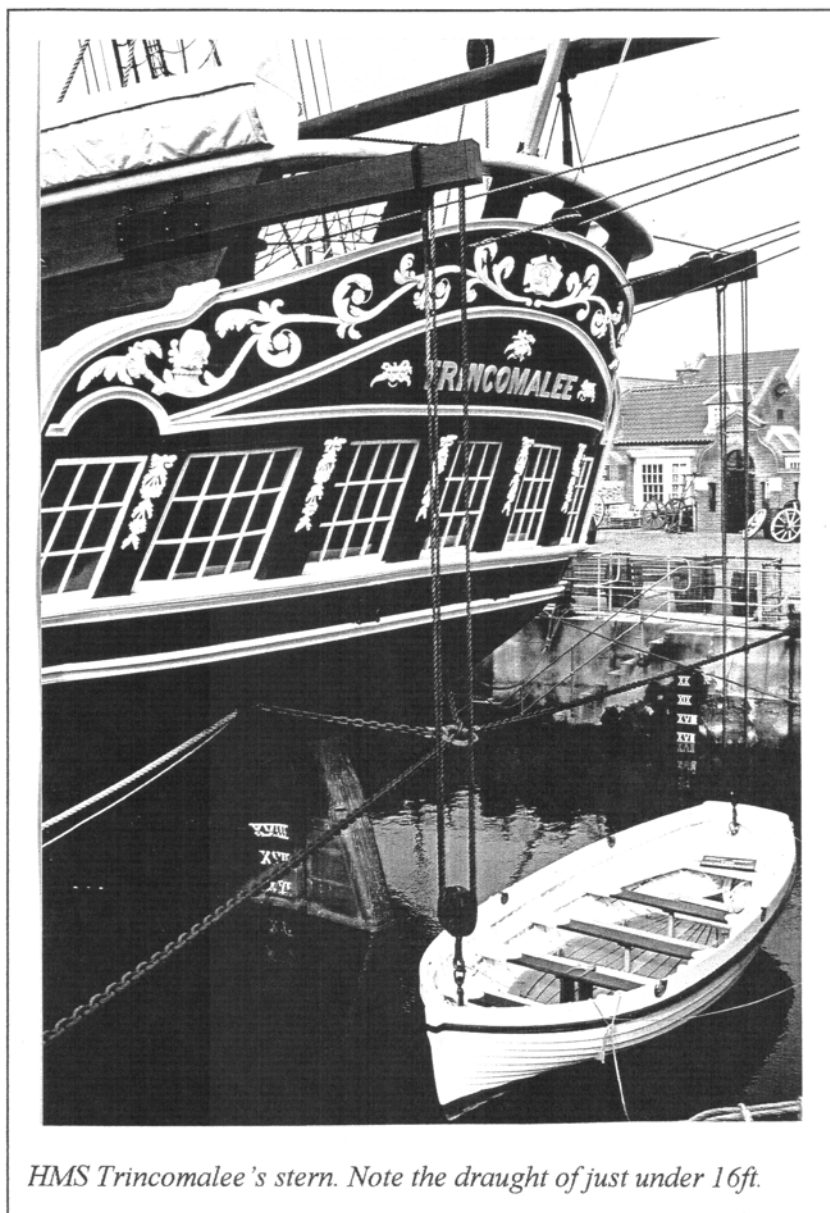
## ALL SHIP SHAPE & BRISTOL FASHION

The trustees of HMS Trincomalee were delighted to be able to announce this summer that the restoration and fitting-out of the ship is now complete. Visitors will see that the captain now sits in a properly furnished cabin, with his books, charts and personal possessions all in place. The gun deck is complete not only with guns but with all their accoutrements. Lumps of salt pork are soaking in water casks and pans of slush are simmering on the cooking range. The mess tables are all laid out with square meals, and in the wardroom, dinner is ready to be served to the officers. Open a hatchway and you will see chests of small-arms below. Peep through a door, and the uniforms and private possessions of a junior officer can be seen in his tiny, cramped cabin.

### Up Aloft

To be fair, there are still one or two things, particularly above decks, which aren't yet complete. In particular, many of the yards and associated running rigging cannot be installed without putting in more ballast to compensate. And putting more ballast below will increase the ship's draught, which will then become too deep for her to cross the sill of the drydock. However, this does not really spoil the effect for the visitor strolling down the deck, who can easily imagine stepping back in time a hundred and eighty years; and if there's a reasonable breeze blowing, can feel the deck moving under his feet.

A great deal of thought has been given to access for disabled visitors, and wheelchair lifts from the gun deck up to the weatherdeck and down to the orlop deck have been very



*HMS Trincomalee's stern. Note the draught of just under 16ft.*

cleverly and unobtrusively installed in hatchways and accommodation openings without in any way disturbing the original fabric of the ship. These lifts have already been very well used by elderly and disabled visitors, who otherwise would not have been able to go much further than the gun deck.

### Audio Guides

Visitors are now free to wander throughout the ship, following a suggested route, carrying an audio guide. This is a neat little electronic device that you can hold up to your ear in the manner

of a mobile phone, and which uses an entertaining mixture of narration, sound effects and actors' voices to inform and amuse the user. Happily, this technology has not done away with the ship's guides, who have conducted visitors round the ship for so many years. They are still on hand to provide assistance and advice, and to take organised parties (especially schoolchildren!) around the ship.

After several years of being based in a glorified garden shed, the ship's guides now have a rather more spacious building at their disposal. This is, in fact, a portacabin but so cunningly disguised that it fits perfectly into the surroundings. As a temporary measure it does at least provide the long-suffering guides with a weatherproof haven in winter and creates enough space to display information about the ship, her history and restoration as well as a small stock of souvenirs, books and other items on sale to the public ❖



*The wardroom table set for Dinner. The dinner service was generously donated by Spode, and is the same pattern they would have supplied when the ship was built*

## FROM TRINCOMALEE TO PORTSEA

A new book of interest to all Friends of HMS Trincomalee by Mary Monnery

On October 27th 1818, a young widow, Eliza Bunt, together with her two small children, boarded a ship at Trincomalee which would take her home to England. The ship was HMS Trincomalee, newly handed over by the Wadia Shipyard in Bombay and in the care of Captain Philip Henry Bridges RN and his company who were to deliver the ship to Portsmouth.

It was the first and only time that HMS Trincomalee was to call at her eponymous port, and it was a brief stay, to embark Mrs Bunt and her family together with a handful of other passengers on the long journey (it was to be March 30th 1819 before the ship finally anchored off Spithead). The following day, HMS Trincomalee was on passage to Colombo, her next port of call, rolling heavily in the swell. In spite of the poor weather and uncomfortable motion of the ship, Mrs Bunt ordered one of her sheep to be killed, generously sending

one quarter of the carcass to Captain Bridges, another to the Gun Room and a third to "the young gentlemen", the remaining quarter to be preserved for her and the children, while she had the head and fry cooked up for her lunch.

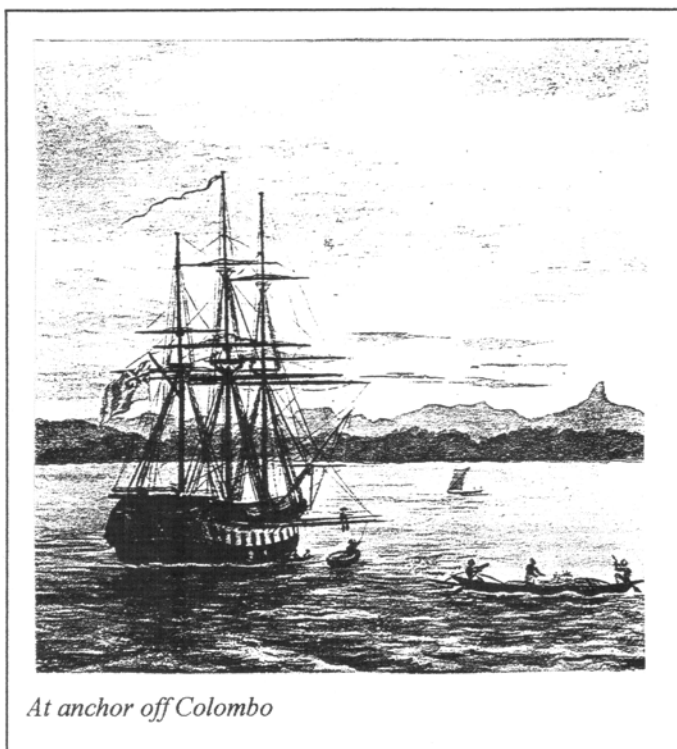
How do we know this? Fortunately, Eliza kept a detailed diary which has survived to the present day. Even more fortunately, Mary Hope Monnery, a great-great-great granddaughter of Eliza and John Bunt, has transcribed the diary, carefully annotated it, and published it privately in a fascinating paperback book entitled "From Trincomalee to Portsea".

Few first hand accounts of such a voyage can have survived the passage of time, and Eliza's daily journal gives an intriguing glimpse of life on board a Royal Navy frigate as observed by a civilian.

Eliza was no stranger to naval life, however. Her late husband, John (who was twenty years her senior, and died of a fever in July 1818) was in Trincomalee as

boatswain at the naval dockyard. He had served 29 years in the Royal Navy, nineteen of them as boatswain, including action at Trafalgar in HMS Mars which was one of the first of Nelson's ships to engage the French Fleet. His ship was badly damaged in the action and suffered ninety-eight casualties, including its Captain.

HMS Trincomalee called en route at Port Louis, Mauritius (where Eliza did not care for the French manners), Cape Town (where Captain Bridges married a Miss Young, who had boarded the ship as a passenger at Port Louis), St Helena, Ascension Island ("a dismall (sic) place to look at") and the Azores, where Eliza bought two baskets and some sewing silks.



During the most trying parts of the voyage, Eliza's private thoughts frequently turn to a friend of the Bunt Family in Trincomalee, one John Craven, the dockyard foreman. It is evident that Eliza is extremely fond of Mr Craven and lives in the hope that he will follow her to England with a view to proposing marriage. One cannot help feeling sorry for her, widowed at twenty seven and with two small children, faced with a voyage half way round the world in the cramped confines of a naval frigate and unsure of what the future might hold, and confiding her innermost thoughts and fears to her

journal. But it is full of everyday references that must have seemed humdrum and ordinary to Eliza and yet are so intriguing to us. How unexpected, for instance, to find that Spanish Dollars seem to be an acceptable currency almost everywhere. And that even on such a small ship the Captain should send a card to his passengers each time he invited them to dine with him. We discover later that as a result of John's long naval service, Eliza was entitled to a pension of £25 per year for life, which was considered by her friends to be a handsome sum.

### Hard Times

Poor Eliza was no stranger to misfortune, and seems to have been constantly beset by problems. The children contract measles (a disease often fatal to the young in those days), the servant assigned to her is an incurable drunkard, she has to fight off the unwanted attentions of one of the ship's officers, and must endure seasickness during the most appalling weather for weeks on end. Even Eliza's parrot, ("poor poll") which had journeyed with her all the way from Ceylon and survived a number of nasty moments on the voyage, including having its cage dashed into the scuppers three times in one particularly stormy night, is eaten by her neighbour's cat on her return home to Portsea.

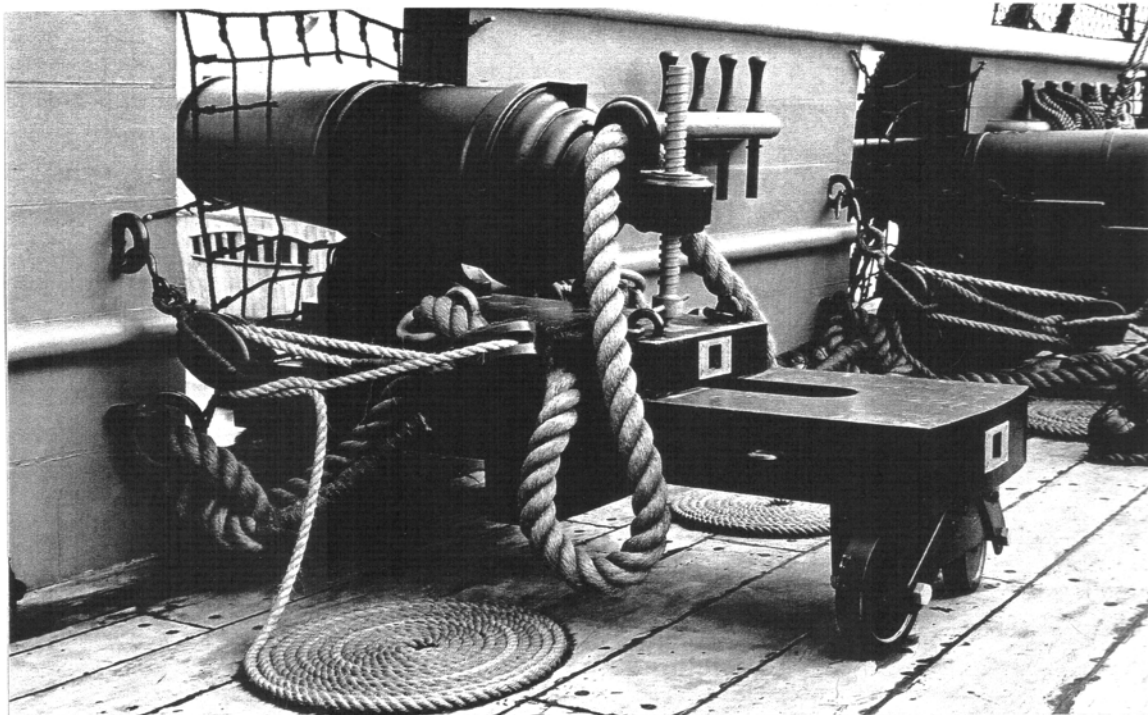
The diary has been reproduced with its original spelling, which adds considerably to its charm, and a number of apposite illustrations. Mrs Monnery has added footnotes where necessary to help the reader follow some of the more obscure references. A useful introduction and a postscript which helps to put the diary into the context of the times and provides further information on the Bunt family completes this delightful book.

Mrs Monnery is a dedicated "Friend" of HMS Trincomalee, and has generously offered to make a donation to The Friends for each book sold.

Copies are on sale at the ship, or can be obtained from Mrs Mary Monnery, 5 The Boulevard, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 1JZ, price £6.00 including postage and packing ❖

*As a sad footnote to this article, we regret to note the death, at the age of 94, of Mr Eric Bunt, great great grandson of John and Eliza Bunt, and a longstanding member of The Friends of HMS Trincomalee ❖*

*A carronade on HMS Trincomalee's quarterdeck. These short-barrelled, large calibre weapons were named after the foundry at Loch Carron where they were cast. Loaded with roundshot or musketballs (or both) they were highly effective at close quarters*



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The following events for Friends of HMS Trincomalee are planned for this winter. All these will take place aboard the ship and are free of charge to Members:

### Friday 23rd November 2001

"Welcome Aboard" Night - between 6pm and 8pm. No need to book, just come along. Sherry & mince pies will be served. Bring a guest or two, and get some stocking-fillers from the shop!

### Wednesday 16th January 2002

"HMS Trincomalee - her History and Restoration" (illustrated talk) starts 6.00pm. Guests Welcome

### Thursday 28th February 2002

Social Meeting with Guest Speaker - details will be sent out in January

### Tuesday 16th April 2002

Annual General Meeting (Members Only)

## CHRISTMAS CARDS

Cards featuring HMS Trincomalee are now on sale at the ship, or may be ordered by post from the Trust, using the form inside this issue of Quarterdeck.

This year's card features a sepia tone photograph of the ship afloat in the dock at the Historic Quay, and packs of 6 cards with envelopes are available at £3.50 per pack.

Limited stocks of earlier designs are still available to Friends, at reduced prices. Please do not send orders to The Friends P.O. Box, but direct to:

**HMS TRINCOMALEE TRUST  
JACKSON DOCK  
HARTLEPOOL TS24 0SQ**



*Quarterdeck is produced  
by The Friends of HMS  
Trincomalee,  
P.O. Box 1817  
HARTLEPOOL  
TS24 7YE*