



Quarterdeck

The Newsletter of The Friends of HMS Trincomalee

July 1996

NEXT STOP DRYDOCK

TRINCOMALEE TO BE DRYDOCKED ON AUGUST 30th

On August 30th at around 0500 hrs. HMS Trincomalee will move from her present berth into the Historic Quay Basin to be drydocked for the next major stage of her restoration.

The keel blocks necessary for this operation were laid out in the dock on July 3rd, and inclining tests have been carried out. The drydocking will take place under the supervision and control of engineers from the Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Association. The drydocking of any ship is an interesting procedure, but drydocking a wooden ship whose hull is almost 180 years old will undoubtedly be a historic occasion.

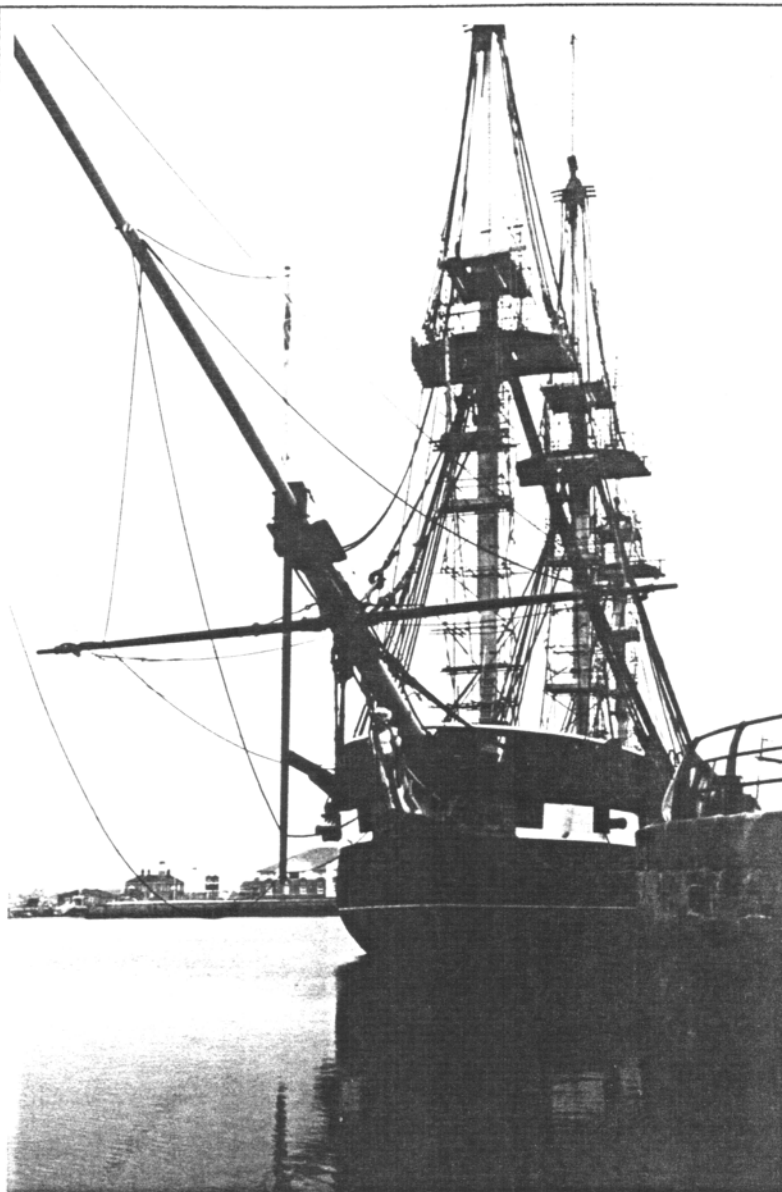
The Restoration Team are confident that the drydocking will go smoothly, but before the ship moves to the dry-dock, telemetry equipment will be installed to measure any movement in the ship's structure during drydocking and the subsequent work on the hull. This will measure deflection in the area of the Gun Deck, the Keel and in the hull cross-section.

LOWER HULL RESTORATION

The primary reason for the drydocking is for the surveying, repair and restoration of the lower hull.

Once the dock is pumped dry, the hull shored up on the keel blocks and working platforms erected, the first operation will be the removal of marine growth from the hull by high pressure water blasting.

Following the complete cleaning of the hull, the remains of the ship's old copper plating will be removed and the condition survey of the lower hull can begin. The Sibert Drill (see "Quarterdeck" November 1994) will be used during this process to assist in detecting any areas of decay in the outer timbers. The findings of this survey will determine the amount of



A bow view taken in early July, showing the flying jib boom, martingale and spritsail boom (photo: Bob Wynn)

work required on the hull and thus the length of time during which she will have to remain in drydock.

Where there are signs of serious deterioration of the timbers, these will be removed and replaced with new timber, but it is hoped that few areas of the hull will need such drastic treatment. Localised areas of decay can be treated using specialised timber preservation techniques or "patching" with Opepe.

NEW COPPER BOTTOM

Once the restoration of the hull is complete and any new timbers properly caulked, the intention is to paint the lower hull and apply copper plating according to the original pattern. It is not known how much of the original copper remains on the hull, but the Trust would like to be able to convert

NEXT STOP DRYDOCK

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this into suitable souvenirs for sale to visitors and Members are invited to submit their own suggestions as to the form these might take - all ideas will be welcome and will receive serious consideration by the Trust! Please write to the Friends' address on p. 4.

MEANWHILE...

Members who have noted the astonishing progress of the restoration during the past year will not be surprised to learn that the drydocking will not disturb the programme of work elsewhere on the ship for more than a few days.

Visitors can now walk up to the forecastle and look back along the length of the gundeck. With all the topgallant masts now stepped, and much of the standing rigging in place, this view gives a marvellous impression of how the ship will look when all work is finally completed. In fact it is hoped that all work above the Gun Deck will be finished before this time next year. It should not be long before visitors can pace the Quarter

Deck, where work is almost complete and the Wheels have now been fitted.

Following the stepping of the topgallant masts and the raising of all three topmasts the riggers are busy with the headgear and upper mast rigging, but as the photograph shows, the flying jib-boom and martingale as well as the spritsail yard have been erected.

Back in the workshops, the Driver Boom and Gaff are complete, and work is now at an advanced stage on the fabrication of the Fore & Main Lower and Topsail Yards. And if ever there should be a quiet moment, there are a number of 18 Pounder Gun Carriages to be made up.

CLOSED TO VISITORS

For obvious reasons the ship will be closed to visitors for a short period immediately before the drydocking and for a couple of weeks afterwards. After September 20th the ship will be open once more, but as it will be within the Historic Quay site, special arrangements will be available to Members who wish to visit the ship but would rather not pay an entry fee to the Historic Quay. Please see the Important Notice on Page 4 for further details.

THE HISTORICAL MARITIME SOCIETY

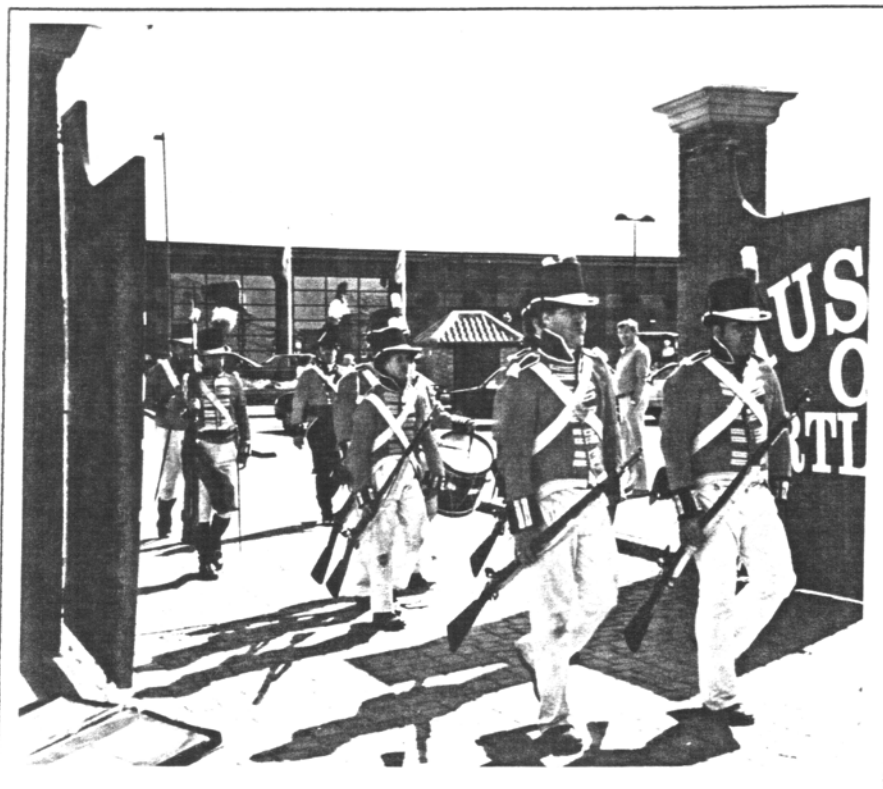
Visitors to the ship during the weekend of 15/16 June were delighted to find that authentic looking officers and crew from the early 1800s were going about their business on board and that a squad of handsomely turned out Marines were parading on the quayside. Members of the Historical Maritime Society had descended upon HMS Trincomalee for the weekend, and the tour guides were able to show visitors the surgeon bleeding his patients, sailors swinging the lead, the gun crew at drill and a highly disciplined boat crew rowing the Purser across Jackson Dock. From time to time a platoon of Marines in scarlet tunics, drums beating and muskets glinting in the sunshine, would march a miscreant off to the brig in irons, followed by a gaggle of quayside doxies. From time to time there was the crackle of musket fire and the acrid smell of black powder smoke mingling with the even more acrid smoke from the Gunner's churchwarden pipe.

The Society's Members had obviously gone to great trouble to ensure that their costumes and equipment were entirely authentic, and they showed every sign that they were enjoying themselves immensely.

Many of these enthusiasts had travelled long distances at their own expense to provide this "living tableau" and the effect was truly splendid.

We very much hope that the Society will want to make this a regular feature of their calendar, since it provided an authentic glimpse of life on board and ashore 170 years ago.

Left: The Marines, muskets at the trail, march on to the Museum Quay. Pity about the ultra-modern bingo hall in the background!
(Photo: Liz Hogg)



Small Arms of HMS Trincomalee

THE BOARDING PIKE

The Boarding Pike as used on board ship was a development of the infantry pike, but survived in sea service long after the infantry had abandoned the pike in favour of the musket and bayonet.

Before the 17th century there was little difference between the weapons used on land and on board ship, but the ship's boarding pike gradually developed into a relatively simple form.

Two basic types of pike were in use by the Royal Navy throughout the 17th and 18th centuries - the spear or leaf-shaped blade, with cutting edges, and the spike-headed pike, mounted on a shaft of ash, usually between 8 and 12 feet long. There is evidence that the Royal Navy favoured the spike-headed pike during the early 19th century, but surprisingly no official Admiralty pattern emerged until 1888. This was an ash shaft, 7'6" long, with a spiked head of triangular cross section, shod with an iron collar at the butt end. These pikes were in issue until 1926 when they were finally called back into store.

The pike was primarily intended for defensive use by HM Ships, and was a useful weapon against boarders, who were at their most vulnerable as they clambered over the bulwarks. They would frequently be confronted by strong netting rigged across the shrouds with a line of pike men behind it. Pikes

could easily be poked through this netting and were used as thrusting or stabbing weapons.

In larger ships pikes were also issued to gun crews who could find themselves face to face with the enemy through their gun ports when opposing ships came together. A party armed with pikes could also keep hostile small craft away from the ship's sides.

There is ample documented evidence that pikes could also be used as offensive weapons and were carried by boarding parties in "cutting-out" operations.

According to Brian Horton, HMS Trincomalee carried 75 pikes in 1853, though there is no clear indication of where these were kept. Visitors to HMS Victory might have noticed the pike racks surrounding the masts, but *"Observations & Instructions for Officers of the Royal Navy"* (1807) mentions that "...the pikes, as they have no beauty in appearance, but are instruments necessary to be at hand, may be kept out of sight," and it seems likely that when the ship was not in actions these would reside in the Gunner's locker. *"Observations & Instructions for Officers"* also suggests that *"the pike handles [should be] scraped very clean, or painted white, and the pike [head] black."*

MR GEOFFREY WHEATLY COBB

A recent honoured guest aboard HMS Trincomalee has been Mrs Dorothy Vaughan, a niece of Mr Geoffrey Wheatly Cobb, who saved the ship from the breakers in 1897 and established her (under the name of "Foudroyant") in her training role.

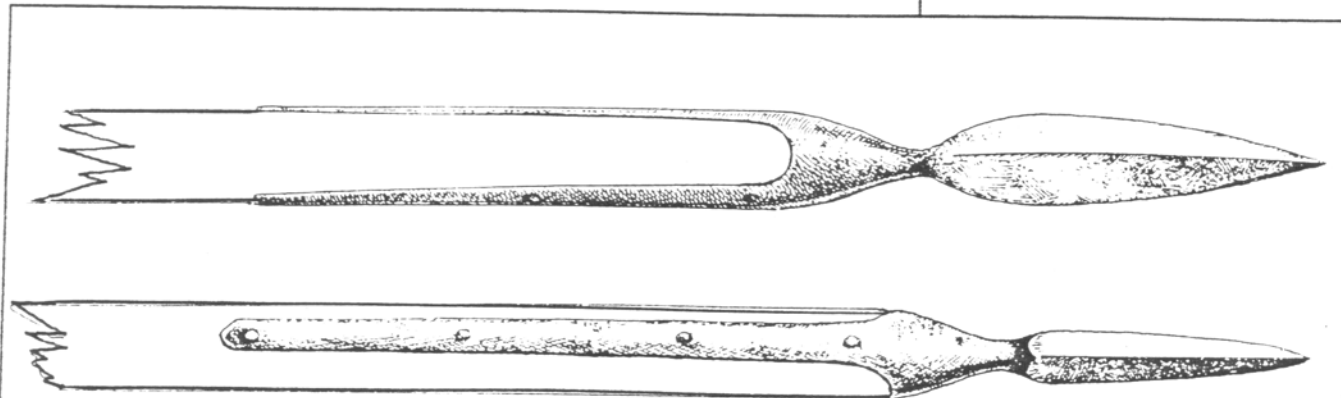
Mrs Vaughan, together with other members of the Cobb family, have generously presented the Trincomalee Trust with a collection of papers and artefacts belonging to the former Owner of the ship.

These were gratefully accepted by the Chairman of the Trust, Capt. David Smith, and are presently being examined and catalogued. We hope to have more details of this interesting archive in the next edition.

NEW FRIENDS

We are delighted to welcome the following new Members:

Mr N A S Barrett (Riding Mill, Northumberland), Mr Douglas Beard (Benfleet), Mr G C Bridges (Stockton on Tees), Mr David P Cresswell (Wolverhampton), Mr Phil Egginton (Walsall), Mr Martyn J Fox (Nottingham), Mr R J H Haynes (Darlington), Mr Ian Henderson (Spennymoor), Mr Donald Hickson (Tadcaster), Mrs J E Morley (Stoke Bruerne) and Mr Mike Shaw (York)



Top: spear-headed pike, as attributed to HMS Victory (Royal Armouries)
Bottom: The usual form of early 19th century spike-headed pike

OUT AND ABOUT

During the Whitsun weekend (which for once *was* at Whitsuntide this year) the Friends manned a stall for three days at the Braunston Boat Show at Braunston Marina, Northamptonshire, courtesy of Tim Coghlan, Marina operator and staunch Friend of Trincomalee. Primarily an inland waterways boat show, this has become a remarkably popular event with over 14,000 visitors during the weekend and a lot of interest was shown in HMS Trincomalee. Many visitors were familiar with the ship, though a surprising number were unaware that she was still afloat or undergoing restoration. A lot of information about the ship was handed out, and a number of new members recruited. Nigel Hogg, Paul Jackson and Ian Purdy manned the stall throughout the three days of the Show. Ian very kindly providing both the transport and his caravan as accommodation for the weekend. Following a successful weekend, the organisers have promised a generous donation from the takings.

On June 15th & 16th the stall was set out again on Hartlepool's Museum Quay, facing the ship's bows, for the "Maritime Weekend" element of the Hartlepool Visual Arts Week. In spite of glorious weather (or perhaps because of it, who can tell?) the number of visitors was disappointing, but the



*The Friends' stall at the Braunston Boat Show - Whitsun Weekend 1996
(Photo: Ian Purdy)*

volunteers were nonetheless kept busy answering questions about the ship and diverting passers-by towards the Visitors' Centre. Thanks go to Friends Doug Howe, Peter Hogg, Laurie Merrin and Chris Bowers who supported the Chairman throughout the weekend.

At both these events, visitors were encouraged to handle cutlasses, boarding axes and other small-arms of the period, and when it was safe to do so a brace of Sea Service pistols were fired. It is hoped that the "Maritime Weekend" may become a full-blown Festival in 1997 with more attractions and more visitors.

B.A.F.M.

On June 29th two delegates from the Friends of Trincomalee (The Chairman and John Mennear) attended the Northern Regional Conference of the British Association of Friends of Museums, to which we are affiliated.

This event was organised and hosted this year by The Friends of the Laing, Newcastle, and held in their splendid Gallery.

This was a very worthwhile opportunity to meet other "Friends" groups, and your Chairman was invited to speak briefly about HMS Trincomalee. In spite of this, a group of The Friends of the Laing are visiting the ship later this month.

IMPORTANT: VISITING ARRANGEMENTS AFTER DRYDOCKING

As a result of the drydocking operations, the ship will be closed to visitors from the 27th August to 20th September inclusive. After the 20th September the ship will be open once more. However, as it will be berthed in the Historic Quay's basin, the casual visitor will have to pay an entrance fee to the Historic Quay in order to gain access to the ship. Special arrangements have been made for Friends who wish to visit the ship but do not want to tour the Historic Quay. Members should telephone the Trust Offices (01429 223193) in advance of your visit and speak to Bob or Jackie in order to make arrangements. Please give them as much notice as possible.



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