
QUARTERDECK

The Friends of HMS Trincomalee

Spring 2022



Sailors in Port

Annual Report from the Museum

Observations at the Quay

The Effects of Lightning on Ships

Mess Deck Crossword

EDITORIAL

This issue of the magazine includes the Annual Report given to the Friends by the General Manager of the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Hartlepool. As you will read, the Friends have provided significant funds for some of their projects. Martin Barker, a fellow trustee, visited the Quay in January and I thank him for his observations and photographs.

William Dawson was one of the officers aboard HMS Trincomalee during her Second Commission. Many years later, in 1895, he wrote the article "Sailors in Port" reflecting on his time around Fort Victoria with the ship and settlers there.

After all the storms we have had in the United Kingdom in the last few months, it seems an apt time to consider the hazard of lightning strikes on ships. Sir William Snow Harris (1791-1867) was a British physician and electrical researcher who invented a successful system of lightning conductors for ships. Extracts from his report of 1847 are in this issue. As many of you will know, for many years our ship was called the Foudroyant, which means lightning strike in French.

Let's look forward to a calmer and sunnier Spring.

Hugh Turner

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SAILORS IN PORT.

BY COMMANDER DAWSON, RN.
(The Sunday at Home, 1895)

It was after a seventy-two-days' voyage across the Pacific, from south to north, that H.M.S. Trincomalee, a sailing frigate of twenty-five guns, with 240 men, anchored for the first time in Esquimault Harbour, Vancouver's Islands, having sailed 20,000 miles since leaving England. That was more than forty years ago, in the spring of 1853, the year before the Russian war, as the survivors of her crew may well remember.

British Columbia with its European population had as yet hardly an existence. The several islands named after Captain Vancouver, R.N., who had circumnavigated them 110 years ago, were beautiful park-like lands, well wooded, with a fertile bracken soil, little disturbed by the hand of men. Victoria, the capital, was a stockaded fort (so called), containing free-trading stores of the Hudson's Bay Company, near which a few officials resided, separated by a narrow harbour from an Indian settlement. There was some difficulty in finding in the woods the few farms with some 300 or 400 settlers scattered over the Islands.

A colony of seventeen men, most of them with wives and families, had recently been brought out from Haddington in Scotland by an enterprising farmer, Mr. Mackenzie, and were settling in the woods about a mile or two from Esquimault Harbour. They had brought out a steam engine with sawing and other machines, etc., and were cutting down trees, sawing planks, and building themselves houses. They were living on ship's provisions, whilst the seeds they had planted were growing up for their sustenance.

It was a delightful climate, virgin soil, plenty of elbow room, no inhabitants near the harbour, a novel experience which charmed the sailors, who had themselves to improvise a kind of dockyard and pier. Several of the younger officers invested in Indian canoes; whilst there were not wanting exciting adventures of being lost in the trackless woods, walking in recurrent circles which could not be broken away from, and interesting studies of the primitive ways of North American Indians, whilst learning the Chinook jargon (a mixture of English, French and Indian languages), which formed the medium of conversation with them.

It was on the Sunday afternoon following the arrival of the Trincomalee, that some of the people from Mackenzie's farm turned up on board the frigate. Thus began that special intercourse with the farm which has now to be mentioned. If the new colonists were curious to see a man-of-war, the sailors were no less curious to witness the foundations of a British colony. Each had something to

learn from the other.

Showing them over the ship, the gunner, Mr. George Cook, ascertained that these good Scotch folk were in some danger of forgetting the worship of the Lord's Day and the religious customs of Scotland. They had been well brought up in the land, but a six months' voyage in a prayerless merchant ship, with the novelties and discomforts of such a life, without worship or privacy, on the seas, had broken up old religious habits. The difficulties of the beginnings of life in the woods, with its ever-present struggle to provide shelter and daily food, were something so different from their Haddington homes, that the Lord's Day, though a day of rest, so far as Mr. Mackenzie's service was concerned, was not devoted to the higher service of the Divine Being.

"Would you not like your little ones to grow up with some of the religious privileges which you had in your youth?"

There could be but one reply to Mr. Cook's enquiry.

"But we have no minister, no church, no schools."

"Neither had you a house to shelter you the other day, and no architect and no builder; yet you say you have some wooden houses now! If some of us sailors pay you a return visit next Sunday afternoon, may we hold a service for worship with your people?" This offer was readily accepted.

The ancient custom of the sea for united daily prayer on board ship had not, at that period, been generally revived in ships of war, as it happily has since been, at least in the mornings, for some years. But Mr. George Cook had so denuded his sleeping cabin of ordinary furniture, and arranged its scant accommodation with a sacrifice of his personal comfort, that as many as ten or twelve sailors had been squeezed into it for daily evening prayer in the second dog-watch. Ordinarily, however, the attendance was more nearly in numbers to that fulfilment of the gracious pledge and promise that, "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." This united prayer was conducted every evening with rare exceptions, during the five years of the frigate's commission. The little meeting began ere the ship tripped anchor from Plymouth Sound, and continued round the Horn, up to the Behring Straits, whilst crossing and recrossing the two Atlantics and the Pacific, at sea as well as in port, in storm as in calm, amidst icebergs and in tropics, till the Trincomalee returned to Plymouth Sound a year after the conclusion of the Russian War. But once had the little company the honour and the advantage of the presence of a clergyman. In the absence of privacy for kneeling in individual prayer on board ship, to many sailors a sore deprivation and misery, such a daily private gathering had its personal uses to a few; but it was also a standing witness to their shipmates for the Christ, an Epiphany, felt throughout the ship.



Fort Victoria 1854 by Alden (Royal BC Museum)

On Sunday afternoons, the second class boys from fifteen to seventeen years of age, about a dozen in number, formed a Bible class held by one of the officers on the main deck, between two guns. This was followed soon afterwards by the service of the National Church conducted in Mr. Cook's cabin according to the order of the Book of Common Prayer, for the members of the daily prayer meeting.

The captain himself, of course, in accordance with the ancient first Article of the Naval Discipline Act of Parliament, every Sunday forenoon, whether at sea or in port, assembled the whole crew together, and "caused the public worship of Almighty God to be solemnly, orderly, and reverently performed according to the Liturgy of the Church of England"; the fact being duly entered in the ship's log for the admiral's information. Most thoughtful men-of-war's men highly value this official recognition that they are something more than animals; and gratefully feel, when far distant from home, that thus, on Sundays at least,

"Tis something that we kneel and pray
With loved ones, near or far away;
One Lord, one faith, one hope, one care,
One form of words, one common prayer."

The sailors attending the daily prayer-meeting in Mr. Cook's cabin became deeply interested in the proposed Sunday service for the Scotch people ashore. One seaman collected a few tracts, etc., done up carefully in a red handkerchief, to take to shore as his contribution. A midshipman lent his canoe for the landing party, a somewhat perilous loan it was found to be at first. A few Prayer Books were lent for the occasion. Hymn books we had none, except a single copy of Wesley's Hymns. There were, however, Tate and Brady's psalms bound up with the Prayer Books in those days. And we had, of course, the church's best Book, for is not "the church a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ?"

It was with no little trepidation, but with much prayer, that some of us landed that Sunday afternoon. In the depth of the great woods, the little Scotch settlement was found. Several of the men were absent with guns, trying to add to their rations some savoury game. Some of the women were washing or mending clothes. Still the scene was peaceful, and otherwise in harmony with the Sabbath day. The Sunday clothing of the sailors was itself a message from above, and their books helped to explain their devout errand.

So soon as the object was understood, a kindly welcome was accorded. Work was laid aside; one family offered their house in which a few planks supported on tubs supplied seats. The congregation had not far to come, and they did come very readily. Each was willing to condone the inexperience of the sailors, to accept their good intentions for better deeds, and to lend his or her own share of assistance to make the little service a time of real blessing from above.

The anticipated difficulty about the singing was easily surmounted, for most of the people had brought their Bibles with the Scotch paraphrases at the end; and right lustily they sang the Lord's song for the first time in a strange land. It was a bit of old Scotland transferred to the ends of the earth, and set all hearts aglow and in tune for the further worship of the sanctuary. None of the sailors were preachers, but they could read and expound a chapter; and the little service, begun in fear and trembling on their part, ended in praise and thanksgiving to God.

Then came the question, what was to be done for the children? Another house was offered as a Sunday school. The children were accordingly assembled. There was, of course, a lack of books and other appurtenances; but there was no lack of both attention and order, as the sailors endeavoured, however lamely, yet fervently, "to tell them the old, old story of Jesus and His love."

The ice had been broken. The sailors had found out their own powers. They were amazed at the gratitude which their little effort evoked. They were asked to come again the following Sunday; the sportsmen would surely be present; the little difficulties of the first attempt would be provided against; and the Sabbath service and school would be valued by all. God had indeed been with

them and blessed them, so that the sailors returned to their ship in somewhat of the joyful spirit of the seventy whom our Lord had sent forth by twos "whither He Himself would come."

In the intervening week some sailors visited the farm, and made friends with the men at their work, becoming deeply interested in the variety of operations going on. A young brick-maker (for the time), at work shaping bricks for building chimneys to the plank houses, well educated, as Scotchmen of that social rank often are, became a fast friend and fellow-helper in the subsequent arrangements. There was, of course, no saying when the Trincomalee may trip her anchor and be off; so that, if permanence was to be given to the Divine service, and Sunday school, these must not be made wholly dependent on the presence of sailors.

The "fort," too, at Victoria had to be ransacked to find out what school-books, maps, slates, and copy-books, as well as Bibles and hymn books could be discovered amongst its ample stores of more saleable articles, chiefly intended for traffic with the Indians.

The book shelves of sailors are not ordinarily very extensive, and a copy of "Village Sermons" thereon was a grand gift to the little congregation; and "Barnes's Commentary on the Four Gospels" was rather reluctantly given up; whilst a few other books which could not be replaced, in those days, at that end of the world, were surrendered for the common good.

It was a great interest to the sailors organising an evening day school for the children under the young bricklayer, who also became superintendent of the Sunday school; and eventually, when in a few months, the ship sailed away from Esquimaux, he, by general consent, succeeded the sailors in the conduct of the Sunday service, having been gradually led to take an active part, so as to gain experience under their guidance.

As week by week the sailors landed to their delightful task, the tone of the little community underwent an observable change. The ordinary grumbling and complaints usual against an employer ceased. Cheerfulness and contentment under difficulties and privations regained sway. Family prayer was started in some houses. And it might have been almost said of Mackenzie's Farm, as it is recorded when Philip went down to Samaria, and preached Christ unto them, "And there was great joy in that city."

Presently a good Scotch mother wanted her infant baptized. This seemed beyond the commission of those sailors who had originated public worship at the farm. But Captain Wallace Houstoun, R.N., himself a Haddington man and no indifferent spectator of these things, who commanded the Trincomalee, hearing of the difficulty, kindly invited the family to come on board to the usual



View of Esquimault bay from Mount Seymour by Alden (Royal BC Museum)

Sunday forenoon service, thoughtfully sending a boat round the bay to the point nearest to the farm for them to embark. After Divine service on the main, or gun deck, an adjournment took place to the captain's fore-cabin or dining-room, where, in the presence of a smaller, but deeply interested assembly, that good officer publicly admitted the child into the congregation of Christ's flock, "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," in accordance with the order to be used in the National Church, much to the comfort of all concerned; entering the baptism in due form in the ship's log.

All this was half-a-dozen years before the consecration of the first Bishop of Columbia, the good Dr. George Hills, who brought out from England duly qualified clergymen to minister to the increased and increasing island population. Therefore the Holy Communion was not administered either ashore or afloat. The 240 seamen in the Trincomalee during their five years' commission, had not a single opportunity on board their ship to "shew the Lord's death till He come."

After a delightful stay of several months at Esquimault, during which the Sunday

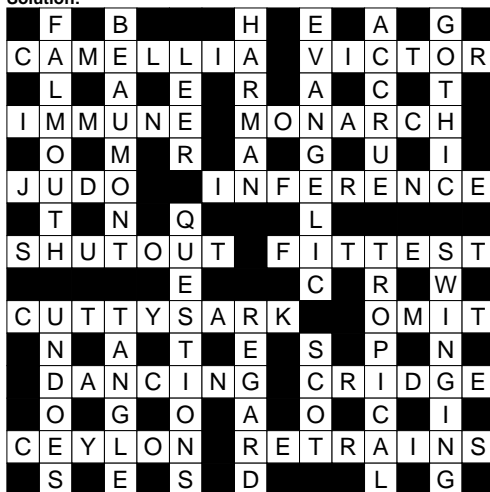
services ashore were further built up, the Trincomalee sailed northward for the then Russian settlement of Sitka, one of the cluster of George the Third Islands which hide the coastline of North West America, a territory now belonging to the United States and better known as Alaska. We had a most pleasant visit of a few weeks, very interesting in many ways, experiencing much kindness from the Russians, which was not forgotten when, a year afterwards, the frigate again dropped anchor off Sitka, but, alas, as an enemy, the two countries being then at war, and did her hostile duty with special gentleness towards our quondam hosts. Turning south to the Queen Charlotte Islands, the Indian inhabitants of which interested us exceedingly, we reached Esquimault once more after a six weeks' absence.

Naturally, the sailors' first visit was to Mackenzie's Farm, where their return was warmly welcomed, and they were allowed to resume the lead in the Sunday services which they had been privileged to originate. It was very gratifying to find that, during the absence of the ship, the little congregation had held steadfastly together, that the Sunday school was well maintained, the day school prospering, and the young brick-maker adequately supported by the heads of families. Soon afterwards, orders came for Callao in Peru, and the Trincomalee's officers and crew sailed away from Vancouver Island full of pleasant memories, and grateful thoughts, which have still an abiding place with at least one of those who had the great honour of being thus in a small way "a witness unto Christ unto" what, in those pre-railway and pre-steamship days, might be called "the uttermost part of the earth."

Mess Deck Crossword

Autumn 2021

Solution:



Museum Annual Update 2021

1. HMS Trincomalee

1.1 Overall, the ship has received investment in the region of £170,000 in 2021 excluding the time spent by the National Museum of the Royal Navy's own ship team who have made several journeys north to carry out repairs and maintenance to rigging, re-caulking and to survey the masts.

1.2 The figurehead restoration was complete and it re-displayed with fresh interpretation prior to reopening in May. The Friends are once again thanked for their vital contribution to this work.

1.3 Paint analysis of the ship (also funded by the Friends) has revealed interesting findings and costs have been obtained for repainting below decks using the correct colour schemes and finishes. Sadly, this is expensive work due to the complex spaces and different finishes required so may have to be tackled in phases. One deck per year could be an option but an interpretation plan is needed first to help determine how we present the ship in the long term. A repaint of the ship's hull has however recently completed (including gilding of the cat heads!).

1.4 The Senior Curator presented a paper on findings from the ship's paint analysis to the Nautical Archaeology Society's annual conference on 21 Nov.

1.5 Some re-caulking has been carried out to tackle some areas where water ingress has been a problem. Further works are to be carried out in the spring.

1.6 A new main hatch cover has been ordered and is currently being designed. Solutions have also been put forward for leaking around the masts. The masts were not chocked when they were added during the ship's restoration, leaving them vulnerable to leaks when the ship moves.

1.7 We are grateful for the Friends contributing to the purchase of dehumidifiers which will assist in our ongoing care of the ship, particularly when responding to the issues described above.

1.8 A new fire alarm system has been installed on board to replace previous defective equipment. By the spring, the ship system will link to a new panel on the quayside and so offer better protection for the ship out of hours an addition to making it safer for visitors.

2. Museum Development

2.1 The National Museum of the Royal Navy continues to work in partnership with Hartlepool Borough Council on plans to expand the site. An investment of £8,500,000 is already secured from the Tees Valley Combined Authority and is allowing us to take forward the first phase of the expansion. This will include:

2.1.1 An extension to the site and creation of new galleries to house RML 497 and allow us to share a broader story of the Royal Navy, whilst at the same time protecting the Georgian navy focus on the quayside with HMS Trincomalee at its heart.

2.1.2 Move of the site entrance to create more visibility, sense of arrival and to connect old with new.

2.2 Additional fundraising work is being carried out to enable future phases of work likely to include:

2.2.1 A refit of the Fighting Ship Experience which will be supported by the recent acquisition of the Sim Comfort Collection of Naval Edged Weapons and Small Arms. The story they will be used to tell is that of the frigate action between HMS Shannon and USS Chesapeake as a way into the story of frigates in general. The sword of Captain Broke of the Shannon is included in the collection as is Nelson's fighting sword.

2.2.2 A new exhibition space which tells the story of the East India Company Navy and the Royal Indian Navy, thus addressing new and more diverse audiences.

2.2.3 Special exhibition galleries where the existing entrance and shop are located.

2.2.4 A conservation workshop to support the historic ships and exhibits.

2.2.5 To provide a STEM centre to promote learning.

2.3 As part of the wider project programme, Hartlepool Borough Council have instructed survey work and an optioneering study for the repair/replacement of the dam board to ensure the continues safety of HMS Trincomalee.

2.4 All of the work outlined above is vital to ensuring the museum's resilience and future ability to fund the ship's ongoing care and maintenance.

Roslyn Adamson
General Manager

26th November 2021

Observations on the Historic Quay

by Martin Barker

In September 2021 Agnes and I visited the ship for the first time for over a year. We were struck by how shiny the paintwork was, especially the gilding, though perhaps it was the sun and clear cold air. We visited again in January 2022.

The figurehead was resplendent in the exhibition room and is accompanied by an informative short video/ slide show about it's history and restoration. It's good that the Friends were able to contribute to this fine project.



The replica on the ship differs somewhat from the original (or strictly speaking Mk.II version) as you can see from the composite photo. I wonder why the star decoration is not on the front of his head gear. It's hard to see if one is present on the cigarette card, which is apparently what it was based upon.

For fun there is a picture of the 3rd figurehead which we spotted on site.



Some of the Friends will be pleased to hear that the inoperative video has been removed from the exhibition.

On board the ship we noticed that sections of the inner hull have been cut away for investigation.



The floor of the Captain's cabin has no canvas covering as yet. Perhaps this is due to water ingress from the weather deck. We noticed a small damp patch in the corner. The buckets are back elsewhere! Perhaps there was insufficient rain in Hartlepool last summer to keep the recently caulked deck from shrinking.



The lack of canvas has made visible a gap in the deck through which can be seen the top of the rudder stock and the dock water - fascinating.



There is a different flag flying at the stern and the platform at the stern has been removed.



On the quayside there is now a tavern exhibit and there is a presentation on the Rescue Motor Launch being restored on site.



The education/ adventure centre is closed and there were men in high-vis jackets looking at it. Some other new and exciting development no doubt.



.....



**From: “Remarkable instances of the protection of
certain ships of Her Majesty’s Navy,
from the destructive effects of lightning”
by W Snow Harris FRS et al. 1847**

The Official Journals of the British Navy present, from the earliest period of its history, melancholy and often fatal instances of the destructive action of Lightning. In about 120 cases only, the amount of money sunk on account of masts and other material ruined or destroyed, cannot be set down, on a moderate computation, at less than £100,000. Three hundred seamen either lost their lives or were seriously injured, and the country was frequently deprived of the efficient services of its ships and fleets at critical periods. Between the years of 1810 and 1815, we find records of no less than thirty-five sail of the line, thirteen frigates, and ten sloops, either disabled or greatly damaged. Taking into account every instance in which ships of the Royal Navy have suffered from lightning since the war of 1793, and every expense contingent on the repairs and refit of the ships, the country did not certainly, on a moderate estimate, expend less than from £7,000 to £10,000 annually, during a period of about twenty-three years’ war, and from £2,000 to £5,000 for about the same period of peace, in consequence of damage done to its navy by lightning.

A want of due attention to the means of parrying the force of the electrical discharge, may be considered as the more immediate cause of so much devastation. Our ships have either been unprovided with lightning-conductors altogether, or if furnished with them, they have been of such small capacity, so partially and ill-applied, and so dependent on the prejudices of sailors, for due care and attention to them, that little benefit seems to have been derived from this source of protection.

That the common temporary forms of lightning-conductor, applied as rigging, do not satisfy all the conditions of the problem, or meet the many difficult circumstances in which the general fabric of a ship, in all its casualties, may become placed, is now pretty generally admitted. In certain cases of electrical discharge, this kind of conductor may be partially destroyed; or otherwise, from its misapplication, or from its constituting an imperfect line of discharge, or from lightning striking low down, or obliquely, upon the mast, it may fail to afford the required protection. The results of the trials resorted to by the Board of Admiralty, [1839 to 1842,] are quite conclusive on this point, even if all former experience had not already determined the fact. The following are two extracts from the log of HMS Hazard, lately returned from China, and which, in 1841, was ordered to be furnished with lightning-conductors consisting of small ropes of wire led from the trunk to the sea, along the rigging and over the ship’s side; their lordships having been informed, that ropes of this kind would

prove economical, and be more safe, than a more capacious and permanent kind of conductor fixed in the masts and hull:-

“Diamond Point, north end of Sumatra, May 1, 1846, A.M. 3.35.- In royals and flying jib – up, mainsail. 5, set top-gallant sails. 7, ship struck by lightning, splitting masthead vane-staff, and carrying away the conductor. Maintop-sail sheet-bits damaged. Lightning passed down by the starboard maintop-sail chain-sheet and by the wire conductor, tearing copper off the ship’s side, and materially injuring the wire by breaking the strands.”

“Cape Po, Sarawak, Borneo, June 12, 1846; at anchor, A.M. 5.30. - Lightning struck the ship, splitting and carrying away maintop-gallant and royal-mast, the whole of maintop-mast, from the hounds to the lower cap, sprung after cross-tree, split and carried away starboard trusseltree. The electric fluid partly escaped down the conductor by main rigging overboard. A part of the damaged topmast on falling went through the quarter-deck into the gun-room. 8, cleared the wreck, and pointed new maintop-mast, ...”

In referring to the log of HMS Bittern, another of the vessels in which these conductors were ordered to be tried, we find a similar result, as shown in the following extract from the log :-

“Angorha River, Jan. 23, 1844, P.M. 1020. - Struck by lightning, which shivered the main-trunk, and splintered the royal-mast.”

It further appears, by the medical officer’s report, that the discharge fell on the deck, and disabled several of the sailors: eight men were sent to the hospital. A great portion of the discharge, however, is said to have passed off by the conductor, so far contributing to protection. These are not solitary instances; Arago, in his “Notices sur Le Tonnerre,” *Annuaire* for 1838, p. 515, gives a similar case, as occurring in *La Junon*, a French frigate, which had a rope of twisted wires applied as a lightning-conductor in the rigging. In the “*Comptes Rendus*,” for June 1839, we find an account of damage by lightning to l’Hôtel des Invalides at Paris, in which case the lightning-conductor of twisted wire ropes was knocked in pieces. In HMS *Impregnable* and HMS *Belleisle*, two line-of-battle ships, these ropes were chafed through by the working of the gear aloft, and were returned as defective to the Devonport dockyard; and these are not the only instances of this, beside others in which they have been found either misapplied or out of place.

The Commission for inquiring into the best form of lightning-conductors for ships, appointed in 1839 by the Board of Admiralty, under the countenance of the House of Commons, gave in their Report numerous examples of the inapplicability of these temporary expedients to meet the exigencies of a ship in storms of lightning, and to resist the violent mechanical forces to which a ship’s



Protection of HM Corvette "Dido"

rigging is exposed, and concur fully in the opinion advanced by almost every practical seamen, that if lightning-conductors are applied at all on shipboard, they should be applied under a capacious and permanent form, so as to render them secure, and independent of the crew of the ship for their perfect application and preservation.

This has lately become an affair of no inconsiderable moment, since it is now found requisite to apply a conductor to each mast; hence it follows that the officers and seamen have to look after three conductors instead of one, as in former times, all of which is considered a great source of peril and annoyance, especially in gales of wind and in thunder-storms. But then the question arose, how far metallic conductors, of a fixed and capacious kind, can be applied so as to meet all the varying conditions of a ship's masts, and all the casualties in which the vessel itself may become placed – a problem more difficult of solution than would at first be imagined.

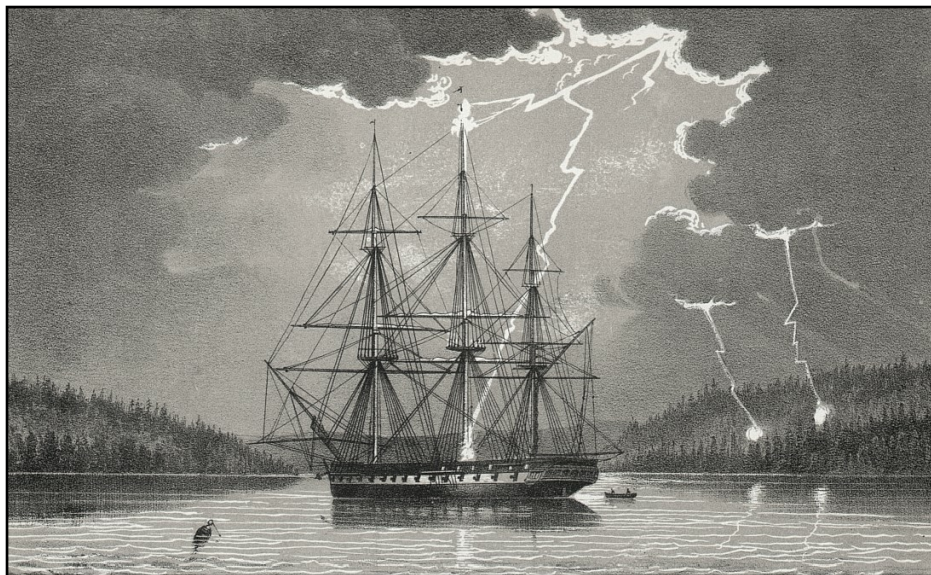
It, in fact, amounts to this:- to construct and apply lightning-conductors in ships, so as to be always in place, always ready to meet the most unexpected danger; to be permanently fixed and of great capacity, admitting, at the same time, not only of every possible motion of the different parts of the masts one on the other, but also of any portion of the mast being removed, either by accident or design, without in any way interfering with the protecting power; to be quite independent of the officers and crew of the ship, so as not to impose on them

the responsibility of their correct application, or the necessity of watching and handling them, of placing and replacing them in times of difficulty, to their great peril and annoyance; to be quite clear of the standing and running rigging, capable of resisting external violence, and at the same time yield to any flexure the mast can sustain; finally, to be so applied, that a discharge of lightning falling on the ship cannot enter into any circuit in its passage to the sea, of which the conductors do not constitute a part. Such are the principal conditions we have to satisfy in any attempt to effectually secure shipping against the destructive ravages of lightning.

To meet such complicated conditions the author of these remarks proposed, so long since as the year 1820, to give the ship a perfectly continuous conducting power throughout the masts and hull, by incorporating with the masts a line of double copper plates, of great electrical capacity, applied one over the other, in alternating close joints, so as to yield with the flexure of the spar, being firmly embedded in a shallow groove ploughed in the after part of it. These flexible metallic lines to be finally connected with similar conductors, fixed under the beams and in the body of the ship, and connected with all the great metallic masses employed in the construction of the hull, and with the sea; thus bringing the general fabric into that peculiar electrical position it would assume, supposing the whole were metallic throughout. Thus the conductor, all the minor mechanical details being perfected, became an integral portion of the ship and masts, and the vessel consequently made secure against the violent action of lightning at all times and under all circumstances, without the officers and crew of the ship being parties to it in any way whatever.

So bold an application of the general principles of lightning-conductors was not at first received without much distrust and apprehension; almost everyone having been led to imagine that metallic bodies had a peculiar affinity for the matter of lightning, and by inviting or drawing it down the ship, frequently accelerated the mischief they were meant to obviate; that from the position of the conductors the electrical discharge would necessarily pass through the body of the hull, whilst the variable positions which the sliding masts were liable to assume would derange the line of conduction, and hence damage may ensue.

The author, however, succeeded in proving, by new researches in electricity and by a very extensive induction of facts derived from the analyses of numerous instances in which ships of HM Navy had suffered from lightning, that such apprehensions were not tenable; that what we term lightning being nothing more than an explosive form of action of some occult power in nature when forcing its way through resisting matter, we should, in giving it a free passage through little resisting matter, transform this explosive action, termed lightning, into a comparatively quiescent current, and so avoid those violent results arising from disruptive force altogether;



HMF Fisgard (42 guns) struck by lightning

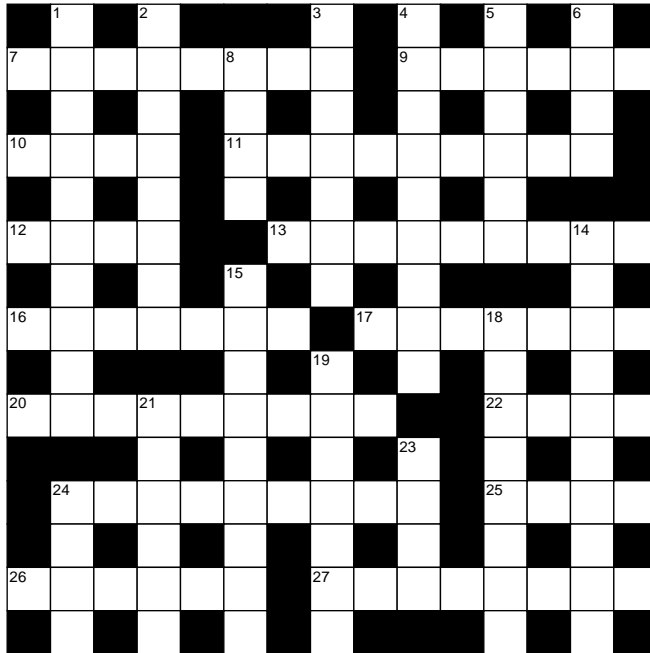
In the case of the 74 gun HMS Minden, “she was completely fitted with the permanent conductors at Devonport, being destined for service in India and China, where storms of lightning are known to be extremely severe... The ship, since the time of her sailing from England, in 1842, has been frequently exposed to such storms, but without receiving the least injury...”

Mr. Cook, the purser of the ship, in a letter, written from Hong Kong in August 1842 describes the experience of a thunder and lightning storm whilst the Minden was at anchor at that port:

“The lightning last night was heavier than I ever saw it before: two flashes struck the Minden, and played about the conductors for a few seconds, conveying a stream of fire throughout the ship awful to behold. A frizzling noise was distinctly heard, and I have no doubt but that we should have received serious injury had we not been protected by our conductors. I have been informed that the lightning struck several vessels, killed four men, and wounded some others. We are now lying with the fore-yards and top-masts struck.”

Mess Deck Crossword

Spring 2022



HDT

ACROSS

- 7 Least heavy (8)
- 9 In 1853 Victoria in British Columbia did not have one (5)
- 10 Skinny (4)
- 11 This ship had a defective lightning-conductor of twisted wire (9)
- 12 The top (4)
- 13 HMS Minden was fitted with permanent conductors here (9)
- 16 Road edge (7)
- 17 Doctor's manner (7)
- 20 Pertaining to the mind (9)
- 22 Fibbed (4)
- 24 Touched (9)
- 25 The fort at Victoria was ransacked for these (4)
- 26 Gnawing animal (6)
- 27 Vancouver' Islands had 300 to 400 in 1853 (8)

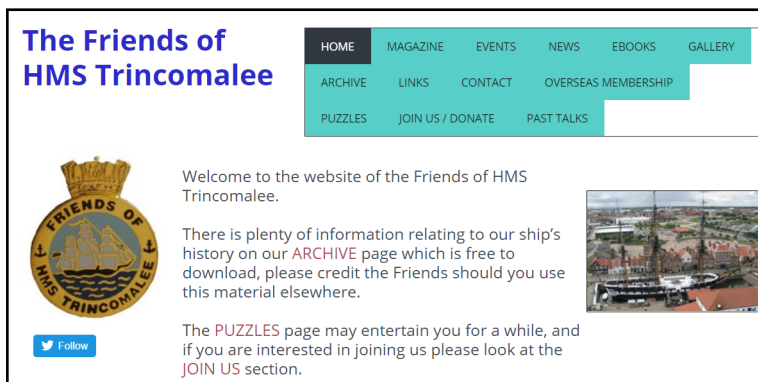
DOWN

- 1 Sunday afternoons one was held on the main deck in 1853 (5,5)
- 2 A brick-maker shaped bricks at Mackenzie's farm for building these (8)
- 3 Stuck (7)
- 4 Hardened (9)
- 5 Chops (4,2)
- 6 Land unit (4)
- 8 Flows back (4)
- 14 Colourful members of the Capsicum genus (3,7)
- 15 This Board in 1839 appointed a Commission to look at lightning-conductors for ships (9)
- 18 Formally (8)
- 19 Captain Houstoun performed one for an infant (7)
- 21 Some officers on the Trincomalee invested in these (6)
- 23 Prepare a publication (4)
- 24 Gunner on HMS Trincomalee in 1853 (4)

The Friends of HMS Trincomalee on the Internet

Website : friendsofhmstrincomalee.org.uk

This has an archive of many of the articles that have appeared in the Quarterdeck, together with news and a listing of events.



Facebook Group : Friends of HMS Trincomalee

We have a closed membership Facebook Group. Members wishing to join this should either approach the group via its Facebook page, or send an email to the secretary.

