

On board the Foudroyant In the 1920s



Noel Tyrrell

Noel Tyrrell was a member of the crew on the Foudroyant in the 1920s, in 1996 he wrote a letter to the Friends of HMS Trincomalee about this experience:

Gwynedd
12th Aug 1996

... My brother and I joined the Foudroyant in January 1924, when I was thirteen and he was fifteen. At that time the Cutty Sark and the Foudroyant were moored close together, both 'swinging', moored at the bow, in Falmouth Harbour.

Mr. George Harman was Captain at that time and I believe that he served on the Foudroyant that was wrecked in 1897. The number of boys on board varied between twenty and twenty-five and they were usually lads that lost either one or both parents.

Our days were spent cleaning ship, learning to box the compass, splice ropes, general seamanship and rowing to shore to collect the post, papers and food etc. We slept in hammocks in the foc'sle and lower deck. The food was plain, but plentiful. Our exercise

was obtained by rowing in regattas, playing football on the upper deck, with a ball, made from rolled-up socks (!). We played cricket with the crews from HMS Colne and HMS Ettrick, Fisheries protection vessels.



Noel is right at the back of the boat

We were allowed on shore for a few hours on weekends. When we were about fifteen to sixteen, we were allowed on shore every other evening. We had a religious service, on board every Sunday, but if Mr. Cobb was not present we attended the local parish church.

At Christmas we had holidays at home, but some boys stayed on board. Lads who lived near Caldicott, were allowed to spend a week of their holidays, staying with Mr. Cobb and sleeping in the keep of Caldicott Castle. I stayed there several times.

It was decided, about 1929, that the Foudroyant and the Cutty Sark, swinging in the Harbour, provided a hazard to other shipping and so then they were moored fore and aft. During a gale, I think that it was Christmas 1929, they both dragged anchor, and ended on the beach. The Foudroyant was then moored in the Carrick Roads, until she was towed, by the tug Victor, to the River Cleddau in Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Cobb had an arrangement with the New Zealand Shipping Co. and the Federal Steam Navigation Company, that they would take the lads, between seventeen and nineteen, to become seamen. Mr. Cobb died in 1931, and I left the Foudroyant in July 1931, and joined the New Zealand Shipping Co. ...

...I am now eighty four years of age, but the time I spent on the Foudroyant will always have a very special place in my memory. ...

Yours Sincerely,
N. R. Tyrrell



Hauling a working gig on board for maintainance and painting



The Foudroyant football team



The crew of the Foudroyant c1920

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