



Quarterdeck

The Newsletter of The Friends of HMS Trincomalee

December 1999

READY FOR SEA!

(well, sea-water, anyway)

With all the external work on the ship's hull finished, HMS Trincomalee is now ready to take to the water once more. However, in order for the ship to float, the height of water within the dock at the Historic Quay which has been her home since August 1996 will need to remain constant, and independent of the fluctuations in water level in the Marina to which it is connected.

This means that for much of the time the water level in the Historic Quay will be higher than that on the other side of the steel dam board which seals off the entrance to the dry dock. The dam board was designed and constructed to keep water OUT of the dry dock rather than penning it IN, so there are concerns that if it should fail in any way, the water level in the dock could run down to the level outside, with consequent danger to HMS Trincomalee's hull through grounding.

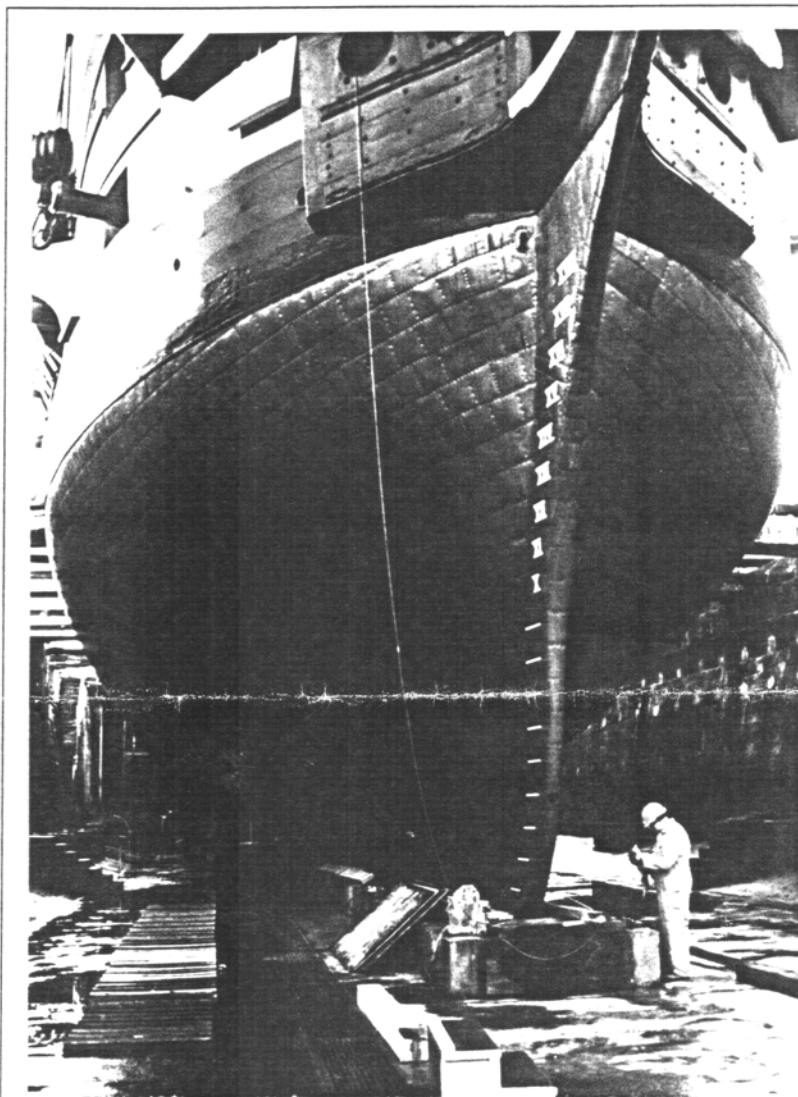
The keel blocks upon which the hull has rested for the past four years will remain in position on the dock bottom, and in the event of a sudden drastic reduction in water level it is vital that the keel should come to rest fairly and squarely onto these blocks. If this were not to happen, the consequences could be extremely serious, with a risk of considerable damage to the ship's bottom.

Dolphins

To avoid this unpleasant possibility, four large steel fenders (known as "dolphins") have been constructed in consultation with the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association's experts. These dolphins, installed between the drydock walls and the ship's hull, will keep the ship in her central position in the dock, and in case of a sudden reduction in water level will guide her safely down onto the keel blocks again.

High Tide

In order to allow for the installation of the dolphins and with some necessary maintenance work to be done on the dry dock itself, the re-floating of the ship was deferred until the New Year. It is now likely that the dock will be fully flooded to allow the ship to float on February 15th 2000. There are plans to arrange for some water to be run into the dry dock a week or so beforehand to permit all systems to be checked and for the restoration team to check that



*The completed hull, with all working platforms removed, awaiting the installation of the specially designed dolphins.
(photo HMS Trincomalee Trust)*

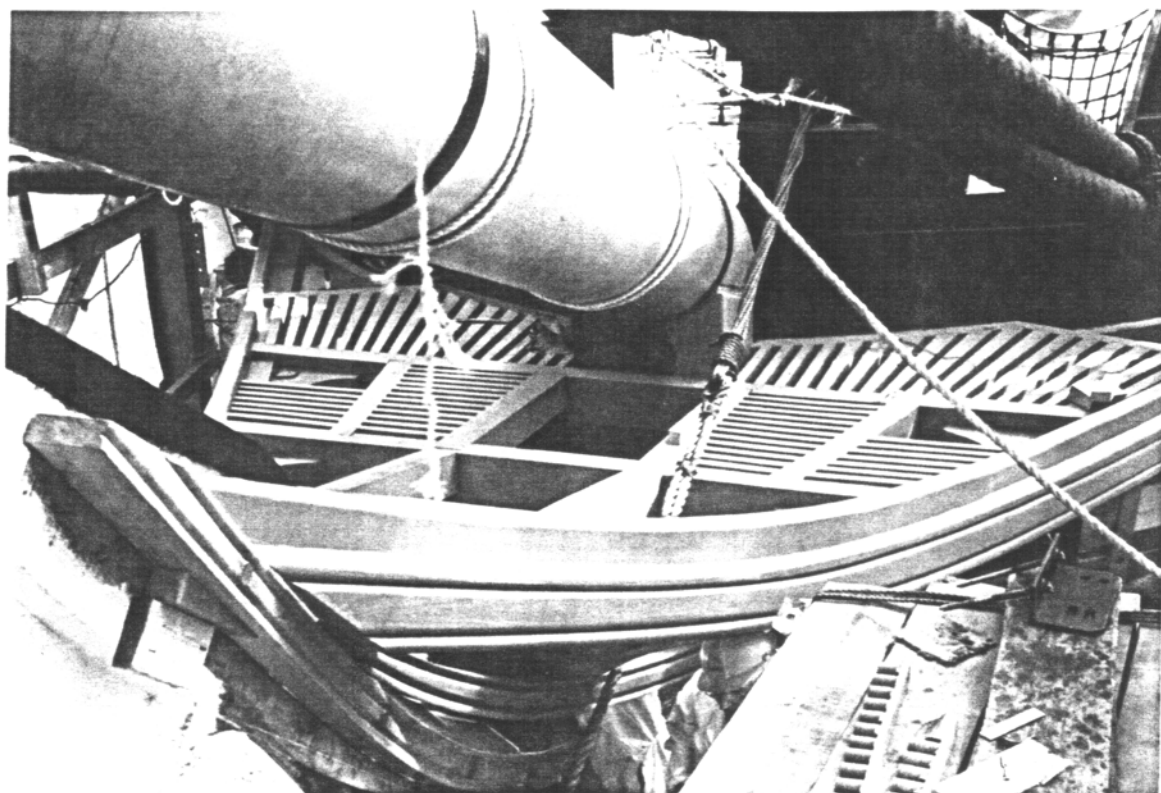
the lower hull is watertight.

Float Out

Assuming that all goes well on February 15th, inclining tests can then be carried out on the ship to calculate her stability data. This work will be carried out under the direction of the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association's surveyors and the information gained from these tests will allow the ship to be correctly trimmed for her float out later in the year.

At this stage, it is still hoped that HMS Trincomalee will be ready to float out of the drydock in May 2000, with the best high tide that month being predicted for the 6th. We will do our best to keep all members informed as the float-out approaches.

*Right:
The newly
reconstructed
Head
Platform*



*(photo - HMS
Trincomalee
Trust)*

RESTORATION UPDATE

With the outer hull work complete, and the ship ready to float again, the restoration team are still facing a formidable list of tasks to complete during the year 2000.

Forward Magazine & platform: Old, damaged and non-original timbers have been removed from this area, and new beams have been fitted. New decking and cladding will be installed before this area is painted and prepared for visitor access once again.

After Magazine: Detail drawings of this area have now been prepared and work on reconstructing the magazine will be under way in the new year.

Yards and Running Rigging: Although the yards have been fabricated and much of the running rigging has been prepared, no decision will be made on the timing for installation of the yards until the results of the inclining tests have been examined.

Ground Tackle: Drawings of the stream and kedge anchors are being prepared, and manufacture of these will begin shortly. Mooring chains and wires will also be installed ready for the floating out of the ship. In addition to this programme there is still a considerable amount of work to be undertaken below decks such as the manufacture and fitting of cabin panels, the restoration of the capstan, the installation of the wheels and steering gear and the re-stowing of the cast iron ballast (which has been cleaned and

painted during its stay ashore).

All this work must be fitted in between the preparations for refloating the ship (the restoration team have had to devote a good deal of time and effort to the manufacture and installation of the dolphins, inclining tests, and preparations for moving to another berth in May).

To complete the presentation of the ship, a huge quantity of fittings, furniture, small arms and other items will be needed, and enquiries have already been made of museums and other institutions who might be in a position to give or lend original items to be displayed on board. Only when it proves impossible to find original items will reproductions be used, and these will be carefully manufactured as exact replicas of the correct article. The sourcing of some fittings poses difficulties, as one would expect when restoring the last remaining example of any ship. For example original early eighteenth century galley-stoves are effectively non-existent. Painstaking research must then be carried out into the size and appearance of even this most mundane of objects and detailed drawings prepared for the manufacture of a replica.

The Trust has now produced a final draft of the Conservation Plan. This comprehensive document effectively covers all the stages in the restoration of HMS Trincomalee and plans for its presentation to the public, together with details of the history and significance of the ship. More news of this fascinating book once it is finally approved and published.

National Historic Ships Committee

HMS TRINCOMALEE EXCLUDED FROM CORE COLLECTION OF HISTORIC VESSELS

Members will almost certainly be aware by now that on November 1st the National Historic Ships Committee published its selection of vessels recommended to comprise the Nation's Core Collection of Historic Ships of the United Kingdom, and that HMS Trincomalee, the oldest British Warship afloat, is not included in that selection.

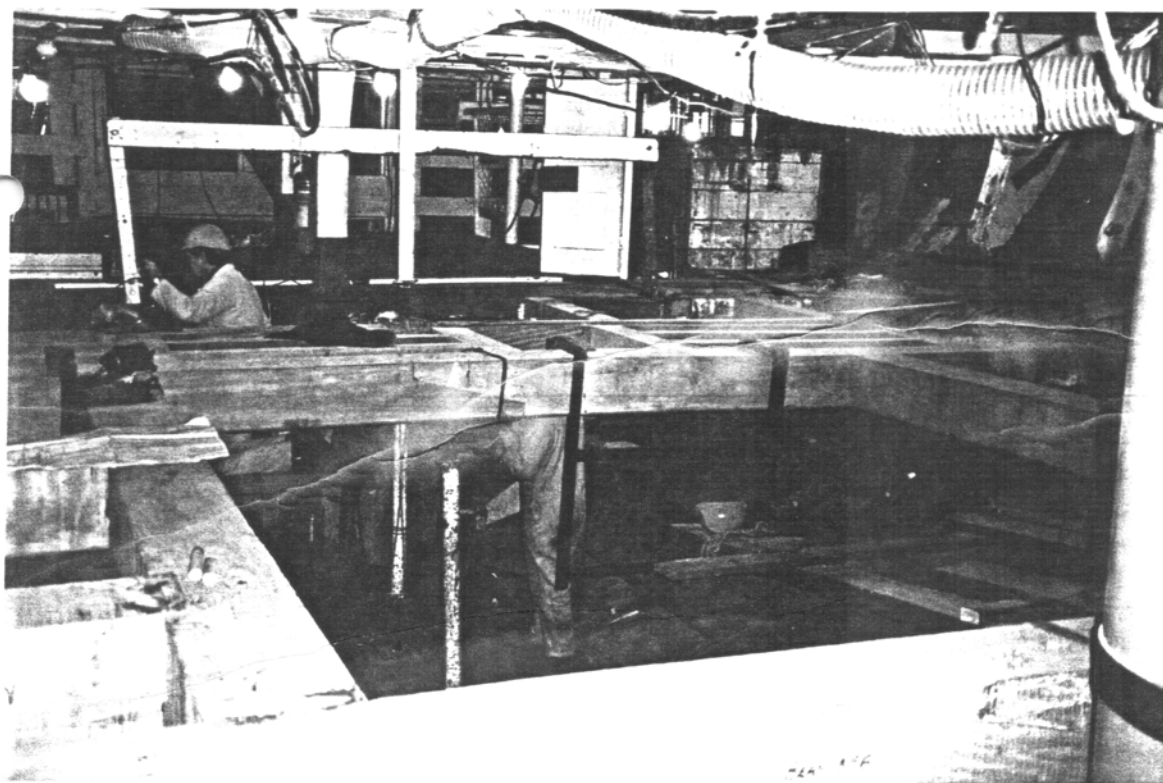
This unwelcome news has caused dismay and concern to all of us who are associated with the ship, and strong representations have been made to the Committee by the Trustees and many other bodies and individuals who feel that this omission cannot be right. Many members will have seen the press release issued by the Trust's Chairman immediately following the publication of the list in which the principle objections of the Trustees are clearly set out. The reason behind Trincomalee's exclusion by the Committee is that their criteria for Core Collection vessels include a stipulation that ships must have been "built in the UK before the end of 1945". HMS Trincomalee was of course built in Bombay, but the Trust had been assured,

after a Certificate of Registry had been applied for, that the history and unique position of our ship should allow a special exception to the normal criteria.

It is alarming to consider how many other ships of Nelson's fleet would have been excluded from the National Core Collection on the same grounds if they had still been afloat today – including the old *IMPLACABLE* which kept Trincomalee company in Portsmouth for so many years.

The Trustees are particularly concerned that the exclusion of Trincomalee from the Core Collection will affect the Trust's ability to secure funding for the preservation of the ship from a number of bodies, which are likely to give priority to ships in the Core Collection list. Members can rest assured that further representations are being made at the highest level to secure special status for HMS Trincomalee.

Details of the vessels proposed for the Core Collection can be seen on the N H S C website at www.st-and.ac.uk/institutes/sims/ukcore.htm



Replacement beams are fitted in the forward magazine and platform area

(photo: HMS Trincomalee Trust)

SILVER NAIL MARKS COMPLETION OF HULL RESTORATION



It was a tradition in the Wadia Shipyard in Bombay, where HMS Trincomalee was built, that a silver nail was driven into the keel during the early stages of construction. History relates that HMS Trincomalee received her nail on May 29th 1816, but curiously, no trace of the nail has ever been found. It was therefore felt appropriate, before the hull was submerged, to replace it. Fortunately Mrs Daphne Smith, wife of the Chairman of the Trust, is an accomplished silversmith and crafted a 7" silver nail conforming as closely as possible to those in use at the time. The nail is suitably engraved with the ship's name (as seen above) and also bears the names of our Patron, the Chairman of the Trust and the dates and place of the ship's restoration.

At a small ceremony held in the drydock on Trafalgar Day the nail was duly hammered into the ship's stem by Mrs Smith herself, using a mallet made of teak from the ship's hull. The "History of the Wadia Master Shipbuilders of Bombay" paints the following picture of the original ceremony:

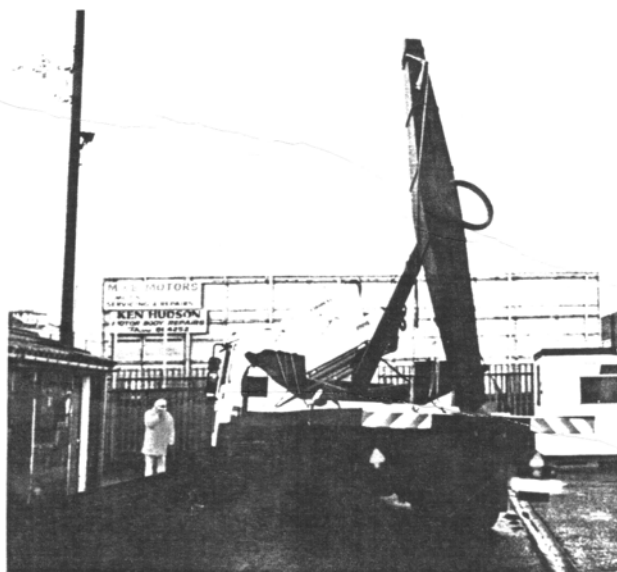
"When the keel is laid, the stern post set up, the stem ready to be fixed, the ceremony is performed. The day being appointed, the stem is suspended ready to be put in the mortise, the parties attend, the owner with his friends and sometimes the Governor and parties of ladies are invited, they are received in the dockyard

by the builders in their robes of ceremony, and a Parsi Priest attends who has the nail in his possession, which he keeps constantly holding over a pot of frankincense. The nail is six or seven inches in length and is in value about 10 to 15 rupees; a certain quantity of sugar, sweetmeat and rose water having been provided for the occasion, the owner of the ship, preceded by the builders, approaches the keel and the ceremony begins by an invocation (or Sulee) from the Bundar Lasc or perhaps from a few Arabs who volunteer on the occasion, to God and Mohammed; some verses from the Koran are also recited. The nail is then produced with a blessing from the Parsi Priest, it is put in the hole and driven down to the head by the hand perhaps of some fair lady; a piece of wood is put on the nail, the stem is put into its mortise and firmly secured, when another invocation from the Lascars and crowd announces the stem to be fixed. The owner, the Governor or some other Lady as may have been previously agreed on, now presents the shawls, six in number, to the builders by putting them over their necks. A sprinkling of rosewater next is given to all the party, and the most distinguished of the visitors are marked on the forehead with a little red paint; sugar and sweetmeats are distributed to the people of the yard and the party disperses."

ANCHORS AWEIGH

One of HMS Trincomalee's Admiralty Pattern bower anchors leaves the Trust's workshops. It is now on the quayside alongside the ship where its impressive size can be seen to advantage.

HMS Trincomalee would have carried two of these bower anchors as well as two sheet anchors (each weighing about 2½ tons), two kedge anchors and an Admiralty Pattern stream anchor as part of her ground tackle, together with both iron and hemp cables for their use.



"Quarterdeck" is produced and published by The Friends of HMS Trincomalee, PO Box 1817, Hartlepool TS24 7YE.

