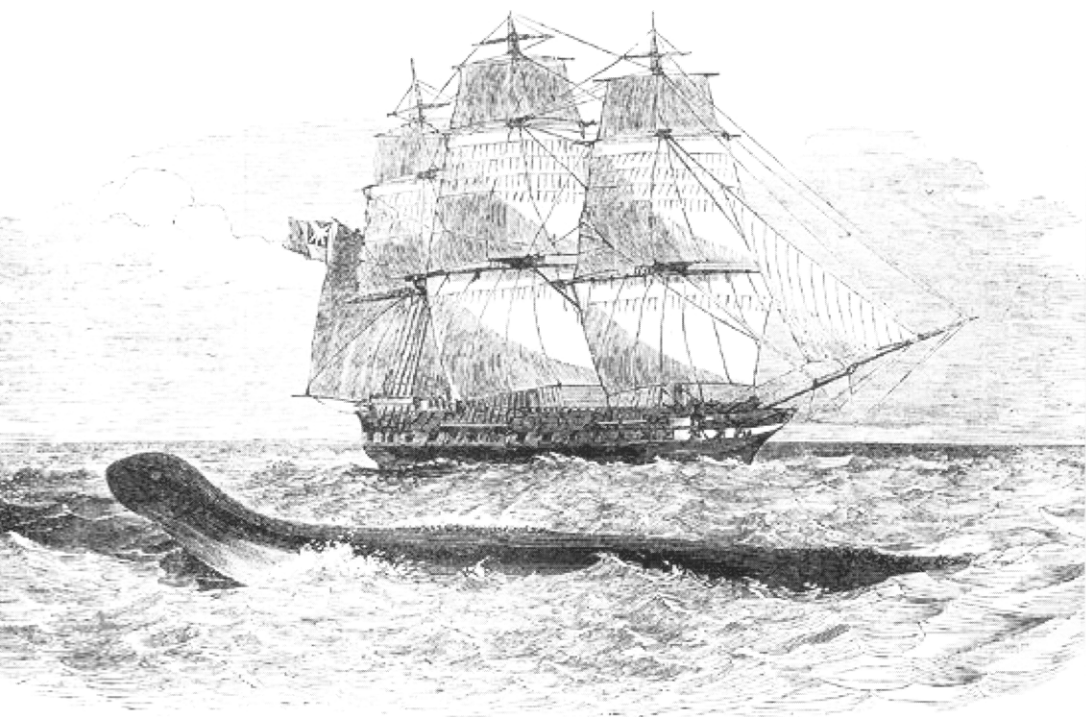


Quarterdeck

FRIENDS OF HMS TRINCOMALEE AUTUMN 2014



The strange tale of the Daedalus sea-serpent
Off the beaten track
Mess Deck Crossword / Future events

Editorial

In this issue Matthew Willis, author of the book “Daedalus and the Deep”, has provided us with an article touching on the mysteries of the deep as perceived in the mid-nineteenth century. The pictures come from the October 1848 issue of the Illustrated London News, a useful source of information from this period.

The Daedalus is also mentioned in the article “Off the Beaten Track”. This latter article demonstrates that there are benefits from researching and visiting places associated with our ship. Not only is it a pleasure to find and see these places, but it also helps with our understanding of the characters associated with HMS Trincomalee. There is in addition the possibility of finding tea shops and public houses to explore.

Perhaps readers have visited other lesser known places associated with the ship and would like to share their experiences with us. Houses of refreshment a bonus.

Our Annual General Meeting was on Wednesday 15th October was well attended. A brief account is to be found on page 44.

Hugh Turner (*Editor*)

Any correspondence concerning the Friends Association should be sent to:

The Secretary, Ian Purdy

39 The Poplars, Wolviston, Billingham TS22 5LY
Tel: 01740 644381 E-mail: IanPurdy@ntlworld.com

Correspondence and contributions for the magazine to:

The Editor, Hugh Turner

Chevin House, 30 Kingfisher Close, Bishop Cleeve, Hartlepool TS26 0GA
Tel: 01429 236848 E-Mail: TrincomaleeFriends@chevinhouse.org.uk

Membership matters directed to:

The Membership Secretary, Tony Blades

The Friends of HMS Trincomalee,

Jackson Dock, Maritime Avenue, Hartlepool TS24 0XZ

Tel: 07951 156607 E-Mail: membership@hms-trincomalee-friends.org.uk

The strange tale of the Daedalus sea-serpent

Leda-class frigates like HMS Trincomalee have many stories to tell. The class was very successful for the Royal Navy, with numerous victories in battle during the Napoleonic wars and the War of 1812 against the United States. Undoubtedly the strangest tale ever told in relation to ships of this class did not relate to battle, but the natural world. The story belongs to HMS Daedalus, whose officers made a detailed report in 1848 of a giant sea serpent they claimed to have seen in the South Atlantic.

The sea serpent sighting is one of the best known in history. On the one hand it is still considered one of the best pieces of evidence for the existence of giant sea serpents and one of the most detailed reports of 'cryptids' (creatures that have been recorded, or their existence suggested, but with little or no scientific proof). On the other, it may have contributed to the scientific community failing to take sea serpents seriously ever since.

HMS Daedalus was built in 1826, one of the vessels bearing the modified stern design similar to that of HMS Unicorn. Like Trincomalee, Daedalus was placed in reserve for a number of years soon after being built. By the end of the Napoleonic wars, the Royal Navy preferred larger frigates and in the period of peace that followed, had more vessels than it needed. By the 1840s, however, the RN began to find uses for the frigates in reserve. Daedalus, like Trincomalee, was modified with fewer, larger guns and re-rated to corvette.

Daedalus' early career showed nothing particularly out of the ordinary. She served with the Mediterranean Fleet in 1836 before being re-rated as a 20-gun corvette in 1843. In April 1845 she was sent to New Zealand to supplement the force under the control of governor Robert Fitzroy (former captain of HMS Beagle during Darwin's voyages, and father of modern weather forecasting). In July, Daedalus formed part of a force that sailed for Borneo to tackle pirates preying on shipping in the South China Sea.

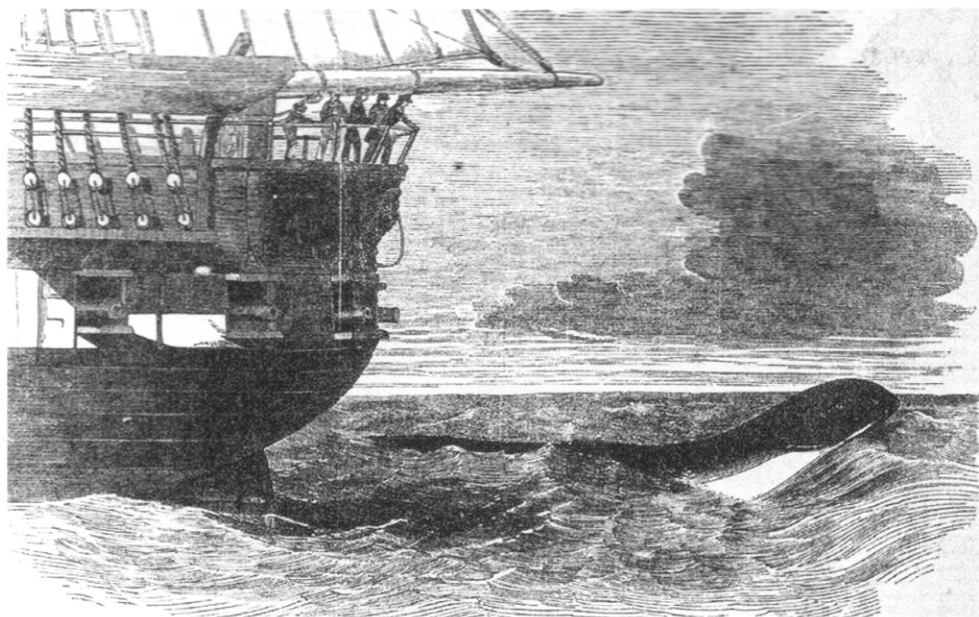
This was all fairly typical of cruisers in the Royal Navy during the middle of the 19th century. Daedalus began to head home from New Zealand, via Australia and Hong Kong, in February 1847.

By 6 August 1848, Daedalus had reached the South Atlantic and was sailing between the Cape of Good Hope and St Helena. At this point, Midshipman Sartoris alerted the officers on the ship's quarterdeck to an unusual sight.

The captain, first lieutenant and sailing master were all present to witness, approaching from the ship's beam, a very large creature of a kind none had seen before. Captain Peter M'Quhae, in command of the vessel, described the beast in his official report to the Admiralty:

'It was discovered to be an enormous serpent, with head and shoulders kept about four feet constantly above the surface of the sea; and as nearly as we could approximate by comparing it with the length of what our maintopsail-yard would show in the water, there was at the very least sixty feet of the animal a fleur d'eau no portion of which was, to our perception, used in propelling it through the water, either by vertical or horizontal undulation. It passed rapidly, but so close under our lee quarter that had it been a man of my acquaintance I should have easily recognised the features with the naked eye... It had no fins, but something like the mane of a horse, or rather a bunch of seaweed washed about its back.' M'Quhae described the creature's head as like 'that of a snake'.

The report continues: 'Its head appeared to be about four feet clear of the water, and there was about sixty feet of body in a straight line on the surface. It is calculated that there must have been under water a length of thirty or forty feet more, by which it propelled itself at the rate of fifteen miles an



hour. The diameter of the exposed part of the body was about sixteen inches; and when it extended its jaws, which were full of large jagged teeth, they seemed sufficiently capacious to admit of a tall man standing upright between them.'

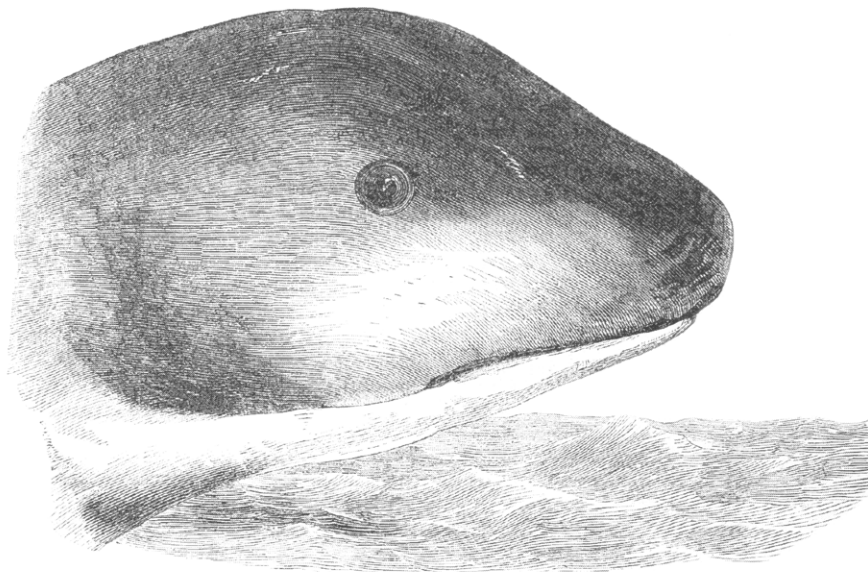
M'Quhae was all for pursuing the creature but it was travelling too close to the wind for the corvette to follow. Instead, the *Daedalus*' First Lieutenant, Edgar Atheling Drummond, made a rough sketch of the serpent, and Captain M'Quhae made a report to the Admiralty.

Perhaps M'Quhae and the *Daedalus*'s officers didn't appreciate the storm their story would create. The media seized upon the sighting. The first public report of the sea serpent was in the *Times* of 10 October, six days after the corvette's return. The *London Illustrated News* hailed 'a new attestation to the existence of the Great Sea Serpent'.

In the first part of the 19th century, the notion of the 'gentleman scientist' had grown popular, and the British Association for the Advancement of Science was formed in 1831 to promote scientific pursuits in the landed classes. Royal Navy officers, overwhelmingly gentlemen themselves, were encouraged to take an interest in science and the natural world. In many respects, M'Quhae and his officers were ideal witnesses – objective observers familiar with the environment and trained to assess what they saw accurately. Despite this, reaction to the *Daedalus* sea serpent sighting was mixed.

Much as the public were fascinated by the reports, the Admiralty and the Government were less impressed. Questions arose in Parliament about how a Royal Navy captain could have allowed the report to be printed. Rather than backing off, M'Quhae collaborated with an illustrator to produce a series of engravings of the encounter, and these appeared alongside a copy of M'Quhae's report to the Admiralty in the *Illustrated London News* of 28 October. In addition to three images portraying the *Daedalus* sea-serpent, the paper reproduced an anatomical drawing of the 'American Sea Serpent, *Scoliooph Atlanticus*' and an illustration representing a 1740 sighting off Norway.

The scientific community also reacted with horror, and search for 'rational' explanations for the *Daedalus* sea serpent sighting began immediately. The *Times* published comments by the biologist Sir Richard Owen, who claimed that the most likely explanation for the sighting was that it was an



elephant seal swimming in open water. Owen, the inventor of the term 'dinosaur', suggested that what the officers had thought to be the creature's tail was the long eddy which typically trailed behind an elephant seal.

Captain M'Quhae immediately and angrily rejected Owen's claims. The creature was nothing like an elephant seal, he insisted, and the officers had seen it very clearly.

Part of the problem with Owen's assessment of the creature was that it was based closely on the Illustrated London News's drawings. Drummond's original sketch suggested a rather narrower head and more pointed snout. But in the months between the sightings and the corvette's return home, M'Quhae had evidently convinced himself that his version was correct.

Another factor in Owen's rejection of any suggestion that the creature could be a sea serpent was the biologist's history. He had looked into the existence of the sea serpent, seemingly taking it more seriously than his contemporaries. However, his studies appear to have taken place from a particularly sceptical standpoint. 'A larger body of evidence from eye-witnesses might be got together in proof of ghosts than of the sea-serpent,' he concluded. He ignored M'Quhae's protestations, apparently satisfied with his interpretation that all sea serpent sightings could be explained as misidentifications of creatures such as whales and seals.

Owen's aversion to any suggestion that the sea serpent might be genuine is more understandable in the light of his work to denounce hoaxes. Three years before the Daedalus sighting, a celebrated fraudster by the name of 'Dr' Albert Koch unleashed a 'genuine' sea serpent skeleton on a credulous public. Koch had earlier jumped on the bandwagon created by the discovery and display of fossil skeletons by respectable naturalists and created numerous fake creatures to popular acclaim.

Koch turned to the fashionable sea serpent in 1845. The prehistoric whale *Basilosaurus* had been discovered ten years earlier, and there were several well-known skeletons at this time. The skeleton of the *Basilosaurus* looks like that of a large serpent – as with all whales, the skeleton tends to offer little clue to the bulk of the living creature. Owen had been instrumental in the identification of *Basilosaurus* as a whale, not a lizard as originally thought. Koch cared little, and in the first four months of 1845, he travelled across three counties known to contain *Basilosaurus* remains and

assembled parts of at least six skeletons as well as pieces of other whale skeletons and even Ammonite shells. The result was a 114-foot triumph of fakery which Koch termed the 'Hydrarchos – or Leviathan of the Antediluvian World, As described in the Book of Job, Chapt. 41'.

Koch's fraud was immediately pointed out by Owen, but the uncovering of the fake simply created greater publicity for Koch and increased the number of visitors to the exhibit. Koch sold the 'Hydrarchos' and promptly made a second one. It's easy to imagine Owen's frustration, so when the Daedalus report was received a few years later, Owen had little reason to welcome it. In fact, his scepticism has been linked to the way in which the scientific community treated sea serpent reports ever since. A recent report by Dr Darren Naish of Southampton University pointed out that scepticism about sea serpents almost became self-fulfilling, with every report in non-mainstream literature hardening a sense that this was not a subject fit for proper scientists.

The story didn't go away, but neither did a desire to explain the Daedalus sea serpent as anything but a sea serpent. 'That there is such a creature, however, there can be little doubt,' Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion reported, in a piece on the Daedalus sighting nearly five years on, 'as his appearance has been so often alluded to'.

A decade after the incident, Captain Smith of the Pekin reported having examined what lookouts identified as a sea-serpent while the ship was becalmed near the Cape of Good Hope. It turned out to be a 20 foot piece of floating seaweed 'with a root shaped like a head and neck.' Smith had little hesitation in declaring that the Daedalus sea serpent, encountered reasonably nearby, must have been 'a piece of the same weed.' The 'explanation' was again swiftly denied in a letter in the Times of 13 February 1858. The author of the letter insisted that the sea serpent was 'beyond all question a living creature, moving rapidly through the water in a cross sea, and within five points of a fresh breeze, with such velocity that the water was surging under its chest as it passed along at a rate, probably, of not less than 10 miles per hour.' Interestingly, the letter was signed simply as 'An Officer of Her Majesty's Ship Daedalus.' All of the officers had been named in the original reports, so it is curious that one of them should want to be anonymous later. Were the officers embarrassed about the sighting? Had it had a negative effect on their careers?

This Daedalus sighting was, as Gleason's pointed out, not unique. In fact, the year after Daedalus' encounter, a remarkably similar sighting was reported by the sloop HMS Plumper in the Atlantic off the coast of Portugal. An officer described 'a long black creature with a sharp head, moving slowly, I should think about two knots ... its back was about twenty feet if not more above water; and its head, as near as I could judge, from six to eight...There was something on its back that appeared like a mane, and, as it moved through the water, kept washing about; but before I could examine it more closely, it was too far astern'.

There was much less coverage of Plumper's sighting, and it appears that the officers did not engage in further publicity. Perhaps this was wise. While it is impossible to tell if the officers of the Daedalus suffered any harm to their reputation or career as a direct result of the sighting, M'Quhae never commanded another ship and Drummond, despite coming from a famous naval family, never progressed beyond the rank of lieutenant.

Daedalus herself lasted well into the 20th century. Like her near-sister Trincomalee, she was placed in the reserve and converted to a training ship and served for many years in that role. She finally paid off in 1910 and was broken up the following year. Her strange tale, though, lives on.

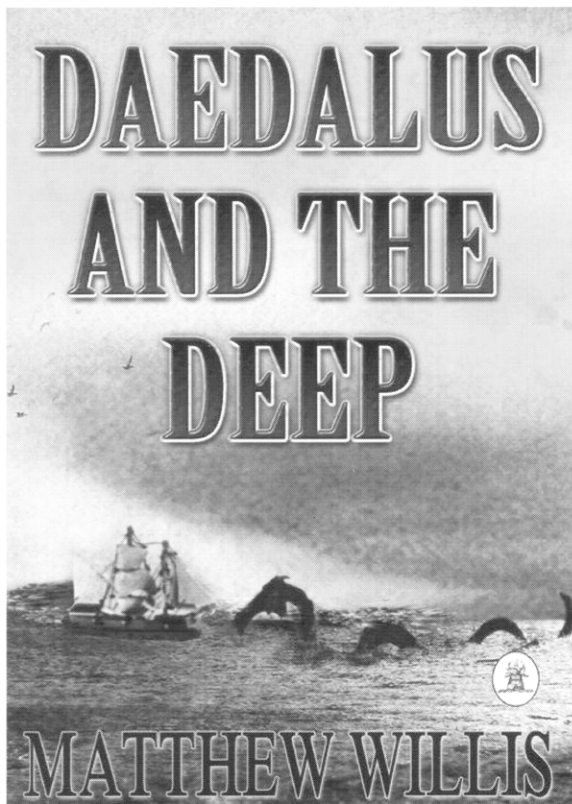
Matthew Willis



The Daedalus as a Training Ship

For further reading
– Daedalus and the Deep:

For Midshipman Colyer of the corvette HMS Daedalus, life is a constant struggle, with savage pirates in the South China Sea, an erratic Captain, and a secret to guard. But the voyage of the Daedalus takes a stranger turn when the ship encounters a giant sea-serpent in the South Atlantic, and is plunged into a headlong pursuit of the creature in the name of science, personal glory, and the promise of fortune. "This exciting reconstruction is told with a bold touch that marks the first novel of a new talent in the genre of nautical fiction." - Captain Richard Woodman, author of the Nathaniel Drinkwater series of historic nautical novels.



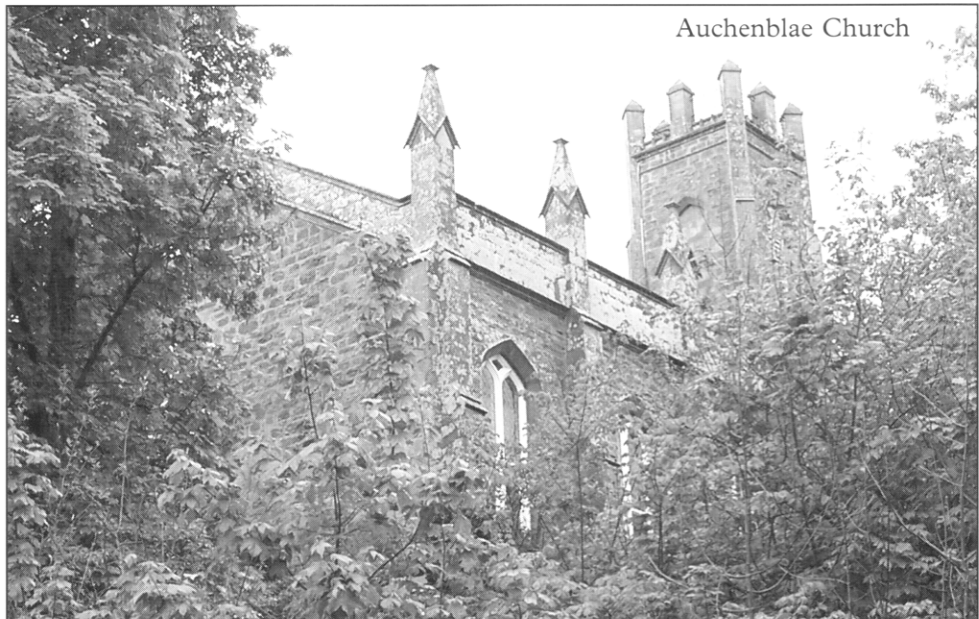
Off the Beaten Track



David Lyall



An interest that has developed since we started looking into the history of HMS Trincomalee and of the people associated with her, is that of visiting places linked with this history. In 2009 we started out by making a detour during a holiday in Scotland. After having visited the Frigate Unicorn at Dundee we were on our way to Aberdeen, and planned into the trip was a visit to the village of Auchenblae in Aberdeenshire. Why Auchenblae?



Auchenblae Church

Kirkharle Hall



Dr David Lyall, surgeon with the Royal Navy, was given a home appointment to HMS Trincomalee in 1868 followed by the same to HMS Daedalus until 1873. He was born in Auchenblae on 1st June 1817, in the same year that our ship was launched. After being granted a Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh he finished his medical training in Aberdeen, and then acted as the surgeon on a whaling ship before joining the Royal Navy in 1839, when he was soon able to develop his skills as a naturalist. He worked with the botanist Joseph Hooker on a scientific expedition to the Antarctic led by Sir James Ross. An article about David Lyall appeared in the Autumn 2008 issue of the Quarterdeck.

It was pouring with rain on the day in May 2009 when we reached Auchenblae, but this isolated village had a charm of its own. The church is on the wooded hillside above the stream and the unspoilt village buildings of the Victorian era. Unfortunately we were unable to find a source of refreshments here.

More luck though when we visited Kirkharle in Northumbria, ancestral home of Lambton Loraine, midshipman on HMS Trincomalee 1853 to 1857 during her second commission. Lambton was born on 17th November 1838, and in his autobiography he recalls how his first schoolmaster, Dr Watts, “had a house near a piece of the old Roman wall, at Newcastle”. It was whilst visiting Hadrian's wall that we decided to visit Kirkharle, a few miles north of Newcastle.

Sir William Loraine, 2nd Baronet of Kirkharle (1658 – 1743) built Kirkharle Hall with his gardener, Lancelot “Capability” Brown being entrusted with the landscaping of the grounds. In Lambton Loraine's memoirs he gives his opinion that this was probably the first landscape work which Capability Brown was paid to do. These original gardens were removed by the 4th Baronet after 1770. In 1836 the family were forced to sell their estate, and the hall was largely demolished and renamed Kirkharle farmhouse.

Presently the hall remains a private residence, however the outbuildings have been converted into workrooms, gift and antique shops, there is also a café/restaurant of which we availed ourselves.



St. Wilfrid's Church, Kirkharle



Lambton Loraine

The grounds of Kirkharle have been recently landscaped in a manner sympathetic with Capability Brown's original plans, with a short walk provided around the ornamental lake. In the church, many memorials to the Loraine family can be seen, and a lone memorial stone stands between the hall and church commemorating Robert Loraine who was "barbarously murdered" by Scottish raiders in 1483, "as he was returning home from church alone, where he had been at his private devotions."

On the death of his father in 1852 Lambton Loraine became 11th Baronet of Kirkharle, and so when he joined HMS Trincomalee it was as a midshipman with a title. Sir Lambton Loraine went on to a distinguished career in the Royal Navy (article in Autumn 2009 issue of *Quarterdeck*), and he died on 13th May 1917 as a retired Rear-Admiral.

Our most recent visit to a place associated with HMS Trincomalee, with refreshment possibilities, was made this summer when we were at Portsmouth Harbour. Tucked away behind The Hard, next to the entrance to the Naval Dockyard Museum site is Hawke Street.

Eliza Bunt was a passenger on the maiden voyage of HMS Trincomalee from Trincomalee to Portsea, when she and her children were returned to England after the death of her husband, John Bunt, boatswain at the Trincomalee dockyard in Ceylon - modern day Sri Lanka. (Ref: From Trincomalee to Portsea, the Diary of Eliza Bunt transcribed by Mary Hope Monnery)

In Eliza's diary she records in her idiosyncratic writing style that on Saturday 3rd April 1819 "... we are with all our things packed and in the Boat now standing on the Quarter Deck bidding adieus to our ship friends who are all assembled for that purpose with palpating Hearts and smiling Countance we descend to the Boat in the Chair of State from whence we procede to Portsmouth Beach and after An Absence of two years and nine months we again set our foot on English Ground the luggage is landed put into a Cart and taking to the Custom House where they are examined passed and taking into Hawk Street ...". It is thought that Eliza stayed at number 22 Hawke Street.



Today there are very few buildings in Portsea that Eliza would recognise. However we did find the George Hotel, built in 1781, at the corner of Hawke Street which served us good food and real ale. Not far away is St George's Church, Portsea, the Shipwrights' Church built in 1754 which Eliza must have known (Picture on back cover).

Perhaps other Friends of HMS Trincomalee know of similar places to add to our growing list, nearby tearooms or inns an advantage.

Hugh & Ruth Turner

Annual General Meeting

held on Wednesday 15th October 2014

In addition to all ten trustees, twenty one Friends attended this year's Annual General Meeting held in the Captain's cabin aboard HMS Trincomalee.

The following were elected to serve a further year as trustees of the association:

Tony Blades, John Davies, Nigel Hogg, John Megson, Peter Olsen, Ian Purdy, Maureen Storm, Hugh Turner and Ruth Turner.

The officers for 2014 to 2015 are Chairman Hugh Turner, Secretary Ian Purdy, Treasurer Peter Olsen and Membership Secretary Tony Blades.

After the formal proceedings, Captain Colin Pratt, a Friend and Chairman of the Trincomalee Trading Company, was invited to give a short presentation. He informed those present that his company was looking at on-line trading as an income generator for the Trincomalee Trust, and that they were working with the National Museum of the Royal Navy. It is intended that gift membership of the Friends of HMS Trincomalee will be offered on-line. Further links between the different Friends' associations connected with the Museum of the Royal Navy are being explored.

Thanks were expressed from the floor to Ruth Turner for her year as Chairwoman, and then Colonel Euan Houstoun OBE, President of the Trincomalee Trust, gave an entertaining talk about the founding of the Friends of HMS Trincomalee, and his own family ties with the ship. Through a series of anecdotes he also gave a brief history of his personal military service.

Mess Deck Summer Crossword Solution

Solution:



Summer 2014

ACROSS

- 1 A ship's capacity puts a horse in the shade (7)
- 5 Mark gives support to sailors refrain (7)
- 9 Take top off barrel and have a bit of grog (3)
- 10 No drills followed by this radio worker (11)
- 11 Have fun today or build a ship (10)
- 12 Madame returns to a book (4)
- 14 With strong views Iona pointed out (11)
- 18 Tom tells Bob to change into naval dress (4-7)
- 21 No hat required for solemn declaration (4)
- 22 Desire nothing in attempt to reform (10)
- 26 Freely perform organ solo around Illinois (11)
- 27 A member of a jolly group (3)
- 28 Order to be quiet given to lady on river (7)
- 29 Keep lawmen on ship (7)

DOWN

- 1 Duty of sailor, one attached to two forces (6)
- 2 A dark cloud makes doctor go to America after Ulster (6)
- 3 Cautionary signal between the port and starboard lights (5)

- 4 Black honour returned to New York (5)
- 5 Musical movement and not in a new direction (9)
- 6 Almost superfluous part of the rigging (4)
- 7 Disorderly team behind car production convert to robotics (8)
- 8 The usual and unknown lands in France (8)
- 13 Burden free? (4)
- 14 Takes in losing sailors' regalia (4)
- 15 Mostly in deep water (2-3-4)
- 16 Sailor finds answer and frees one from punishment (8)
- 17 I'll float around the ships (8)
- 19 A bad character in the main (6)
- 20 Find us in the garden and snog me (6)
- 23 Make adjustment to make-up of electoral scheme supported by a member (5)
- 24 Gulf where sailor joins unknown ship (5)
- 25 Soon seen in a non-commissioned rank (4)

THE FRIENDS OF HMS TRINCOMALEE

Winter & Spring Events 2014-15

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 26 November
Wednesday | <i>"The Austen Brothers" (Jane Austen's naval connections)
Paul Brunyee</i> |
| 22 December
Monday | <i>Carols in the Captain's cabin</i> |
| 25 February
Wednesday | <i>"The Ship-Owners' Houses of Hartlepool"
Edward Bunting</i> |
| 25 March
Wednesday | <i>"Two Hundred Years of HMS Trincomalee"
Hugh Turner</i> |
| 22 April
Wednesday | <i>To be confirmed</i> |
| 27 May
Wednesday | <i>An entertainment on board the Ship</i> |

*Unless otherwise stated all events take place
in the Captain's Quarters on board HMS Trincomalee at 7.00pm
– Talks starting at 7.30pm after refreshments*

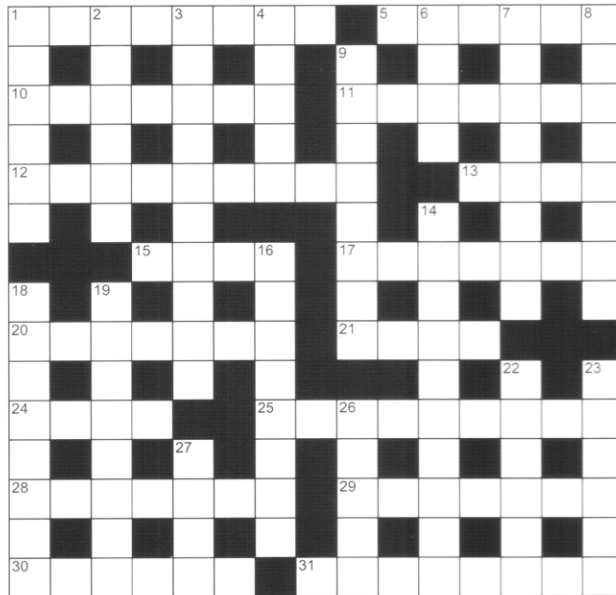
These events are free for Friends, with guests charged £1 each.

Friends receive free entry to HMS Trincomalee and Hartlepool's Maritime Experience for one year, can attend talks and presentations on board, receive the Quarterdeck magazine which is published three times a year and receive a 10% discount on items in the Ship Shop.

An application form is overleaf.

Mess Deck Crossword

Autumn 2014



HDT

ACROSS

- 1 Word invented by Sir Richard Owen (8)
- 5 Robert Fitzroy was Captain of this ship (6)
- 10 Begin again (7)
- 11 Packed (7)
- 12 Travelling from place to place (9)
- 13 Opera solo (4)
- 15 Weapons (4)
- 17 Manage (7)
- 20 Shorten using less words (7)
- 21 He led an expedition to the Antarctic (4)
- 24 Big sand pile (4)
- 25 Captain M'Quhae reported sightings to this department (9)
- 28 Ship's cord (7)
- 29 He produced the pictorial drawing room companion (7)
- 30 Pin to hold meat together (3)
- 31 Midshipman on 18 down (8)

DOWN

- 1 Naturalist on 5 across (6)
- 2 Scottish monster (6)
- 3 Practice policed by the Navy (5,5)
- 4 Radical (5)
- 6 A producer of 26 down (4)
- 7 1849 immigration to California (4,4)
- 8 Delighted (8)
- 9 Slaughterhouse (8)
- 14 A cryptid (3,7)
- 16 They look after ship passengers (8)
- 18 Leda class frigate built in 1826 (8)
- 19 Military supplies (8)
- 22 More intimate (6)
- 23 Laughing dogs (6)
- 26 Lava (5)
- 27 There is an ornamental one at Kirkharle (4)

Solution next issue

APPLICATION FORM
to join
THE FRIENDS OF HMS TRINCOMALEE

Membership categories and twelve monthly subscriptions:
(Fixed until 1st September 2015)

Adult	£20.00
Concessionary *	£15.00
Joint Adult	£35.00
Joint Concessionary *	£27.00
Family Group +	£45.00

* Children, students, senior citizens and those unwaged

+ Two adults and up to three children in a family

Please complete, detach and return this form to:

The Friends of HMS Trincomalee
Jackson Dock, Maritime Avenue, Hartlepool, TS24 0XZ

MEMBERSHIP CARDS ARE NOT TRANSFERABLE

Cheques made payable to 'HMS Trincomalee Trust'

AMOUNT

☐

GIFT AID DECLARATION. As a UK taxpayer I
would like the HMS Trincomalee Trust to claim back
the tax on this and all future donations.

Please tick the box.

SIGNATURE

YOUR DETAILS:

Title Surname

First Names

Address

.....

..... Post Code

Tel.

Membership Category



Near this house,
in Hawke Street
in 1812 lived

CHARLES DICKENS

Novelist
1812 - 1870

Presented by
The Dickens Fellowship