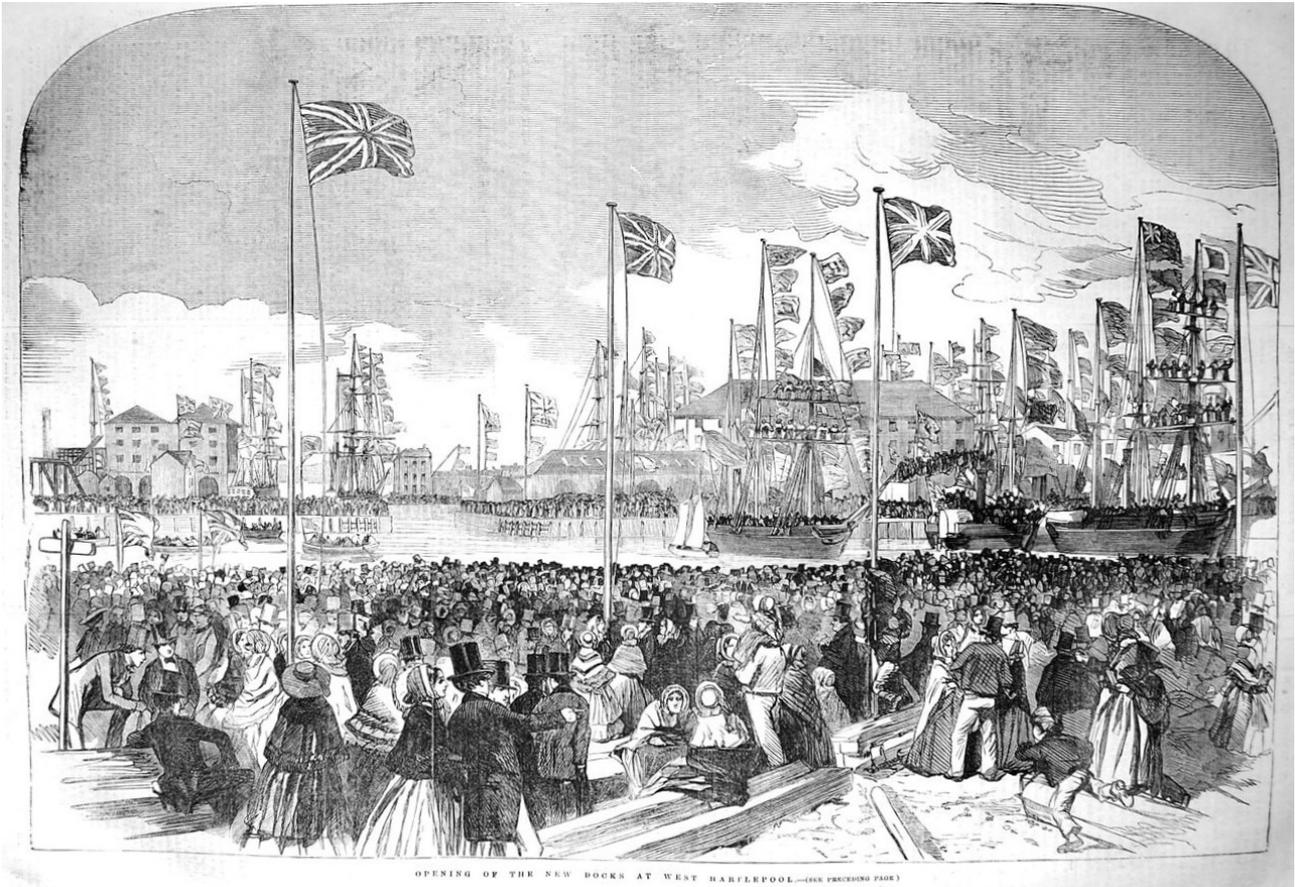


HMS Trincomalee at Hartlepool 1863 to 1877



Opening of the New Docks at West Hartlepool 1856 – Illustrated London News

From 1861 to 1863 HMS Trincomalee was a training ship at Sunderland, tender to the drill ship HMS Castor, training naval volunteers, Boys aged 15 to 16 years were signed up to serve in the navy for 10 years on reaching the age of 18 years. In 1863 the Trincomalee was moved to West Hartlepool, then the third largest port in Britain, and was moored in the Union Dock as an independent drill ship.

On Wednesday 10 June 1863, HM Paddle Steamer Medusa left the Tyne for the Wear with the task of towing the training ship Trincomalee to Hartlepool.

A report in the South Durham Herald describes how the ship:

“...was towed into the bay by three steamers, and in one of the steamers were stationed the band of the 4th Durham Artillery Volunteer Corps., which, as the vessel entered, played “Rule Britannia” and several other national airs. A large crowd assembled on the docks and on the piers to witness the arrival, and in making for the harbour, Captain Field, in compliment to the inhabitants of the Hartlepoons, fired a salute from the Trincomalee, which was responded to by the 4th Durham Artillery Volunteers from the battery at West Hartlepool, and a salvo of artillery was also fired from the harbour and the docks.

The band continued its national strains until the ship was safely moored when, after several rounds of cheers had been given for the Queen, the Trincomalee, &c., &c., the band played through the town, and it was some time before the dock heads were cleared of the immense crowd who hung about the neighbourhood of the ship in groups.”

The Trincomalee became well established in the local community of the Hartlepoons, her officers and men playing an active part in the towns' activities.

On Monday 20th February 1865 there was a storm at Hartlepool, and the men on board the Trincomalee hurried along the beach with rocket launching apparatus. The following is from the Dundee Courier and Argus newspaper of Wednesday 22th February 1865:

“DESTRUCTIVE STORM AT HARTLEPOOL.

... During the whole night the sea continued with unabated fury, and when morning dawned a fishing lugger was seen making for the port. She weathered the breakers well, and on nearing the West Hartlepool bar a sea caught her, and carried away her mainsail. The sudden shock of so large a body of water coming on her turned her out of her course, and the wind took her towards Long Scar Rocks.

On shore it appeared evident she would either be wrecked or stranded, and the pilots got the West Hartlepool lifeboat out and manned her, and pulled a distance along the sands; the rocket apparatus also was in charge of the sailors belonging H.M.S. Trincomalee, and was hurriedly taken along, but intelligence met them half way to the effect that the crew had perished.

The craft was the Thomas and Margaret of Staithes, and went ashore a little to the north of Seaton Burn, and several persons who reside on the banks immediately opposite were on the beach when she grounded. The sea was making complete breaches over her; and at this part of the coast, owing to the sweep round Long Scar Rocks, and the current from the Tees, the shore swell is more furious than further north. The craft was lying stern on to the sea, and as the waves burst over her the crew – nine in number – all huddled together around the mast, but were scattered like so many corks about the deck. Those on shore – only about 100 yards distant – piteously beheld the poor fellows struggling for their lives, and although they shouted to them to remain with the vessel, and not take to their boats, yet they scarcely could think they would be able to withstand the force of each succeeding wave as it swept over them.

After about eight of these almighty seas had broken the human group which gathered round the mast, in the interval which elapsed, as the water was receding after spending its violence on the vessel, one of the small boats was put overboard, and one of the crew got into it. Another terrific breaker rushed over the vessel, and the remainder of the crew all got safely into the boat. Scarcely had they got seated, and were on the point of making for the shore, when another wave, as if maddened by the barrier which was breaking its tempestuous career, came with furious agitation and engulfed the boat with its living freight.

A shriek from those on shore, and a momentary glimpse of the victims of the boiling surge, and all was over, and nine souls were launched into eternity. The little boat appeared keel upwards, and drifted ashore further south. The poor fellows would have been safer on board their vessel, and had they remained a short time longer there is no doubt they would have been rescued by the lifeboat; but they seemed too eager to get to the shore, which was only a stone's throw off...”

Happier occasions are recorded in the newspapers. Only four days after the storm, on Friday 24th February 1865, there was a Grand Ball at Sunderland, and Captain Pollard of HMS Trincomalee was amongst the list of acceptances. The Newcastle Daily Journal next day reported:

“GRAND BALL AT SUNDERLAND.

Last night, one of the largest attended and most brilliant assemblages witnessed in Sunderland took place on the occasion of a grand ball, given by the Mayor (E.T. Gourley, Esq.). The Mayors' balls have generally been given towards the close of the year of office; but the present chief magistrate determined to entertain his friends at an earlier period than usual.

The whole of the suite of rooms was found to be necessary to accommodate the large numbers of persons who had accepted his Worship's invitations. The large hall, as dancing room, was very beautifully decorated, while the ante-rooms were set apart for reception and cloak apartments. The room ordinarily occupied by the Museum was most elegantly set out as a supper room, this department being under the care of Mr. Shiel, of the Queen's Hotel.

The musical arrangements were under the direction of Mr. Beswick. The ball was led off by his Worship and Mrs. Richard Hay: and the proceedings were kept up with unflagging spirit until the programme of dances was got through. The following is a list of acceptances :- The Right Hon. The Earl and Countess of Durham; Sir Hellworth Williamson, Bart., M.P., and Lady Williamson: the Lord Mayors of York and London ... Commander Jackson, H.M.S. Castor ... Capt. Pollard, H.M.S. Trincomalee ...”

On 26th September 1865 Captain Pollard was present at the laying of “the foundation stone of an intended, long-projected, and much desired Mechanics’ Institute at Hartlepool.” He is also mentioned in the Newcastle Daily Journal of 29th December 1865 in relationship to religious services in West Hartlepool:

“CHRIST CHURCH, WEST HARTLEPOOL.

The celebration of the festival of the nativity of our saviour was held at this church on Monday last. There were morning and evening services, the rev. J.G. Rowe, M.A., officiating on both occasions.

... Seven years ago, he had only one curate; there are now, in addition, three curates in charge of the district chapelries of St. James', Dock Street, and St. John's, Middleton, one of whom being appointed chaplain to the seamen of the port, the importance of whose duties can scarcely be over estimated, when it is taken into consideration that there is an average floating population of about 10,000 persons.

In connection with this chaplaincy, services are held every Sunday, with occasional services during the week on board H.M.S. Trincomalee, by the kind permission of Captain Pollard, R.N. ...”

By the 30th October 1868 Captain Pollard had been replaced by Commander E T Nott RN, the birth of his son on that day being recorded in the newspapers.

In the Northern Echo of Tuesday 5th April 1870 was the following report of how the ship contributed to local events:

“WEST HARTLEPOOL BOATING CLUB.

The members of the West Hartlepool Neptune Amateur Boating Club celebrated the commencement of the boating season yesterday by a row round. The four gigs belonging the club were brought out for the occasion, and these, with two private gigs and a gun-boat, belonging to H.M.S. Trincomalee, formed a procession from harbour to harbour – the gun-boat, of which gunner Parsons was in charge, leading. Three of the club's boats joined in a friendly contest around the stone-buoy off Hartlepool, the crew of Mr. Charles Wilmot (consisting of Thompson, Farrar, Simpson and Meredith), coming off the winners.

A rather amusing *contretemps* took place after the return home, an Italian seaman having obtained the loan of a skiff, and, after rowing out some 200 yards, fouled a buoy, and capsized. Being a good swimmer, he was fortunate enough to reach *terra firma* in safety, and drink a friendly glass of grog, which was offered to him as a token of congratulation.”

In 1874 there was concern amongst the civic leaders in West Hartlepool that the Trincomalee was to be removed from Hartlepool. The next extract is from the London Standard of Friday 4th September 1874:

“VISIT OF THE LORDS OF THE ADMIRALTY TO WEST HARTLEPOOL.

Yesterday the Admiralty yacht Enchantress arrived in Hartlepool Bay, from Sunderland, at 7.30 a.m., having on board the Right Hon. George Ward Hunt, First Lord of the Admiralty; Vice Admiral Tarleton, K.C.B., also a Lord of the Admiralty, together with the First Lord's private secretary, Captain Seymour.

Their lordships were received on landing by Commander Kineham, of H.M.S. Trincomalee, the training ship of the Naval Reserve, by whom they were escorted on board that vessel where the other officers assembled to meet them. A guard of honour of the Naval Reserve, together with the entire ship's company, were assembled on the deck, and from the battery of the 4th Durham Artillery Volunteers a salute of 19 guns was fired.

Their lordships minutely inspected the ship, and put the assembled Naval Reserve men through their drill, with which, as well as the state of the ship, the First Lord expressed much gratification. Mr. Thomas

Richardson, M.P., introduced a deputation consisting of the West Hartlepool Improvement Commissioners and several leading gentlemen of the district. Acting as their spokesman, he first welcomed their lordships to the port, and regretted that time had not permitted them to give a reception more worthy of their lordships' visit.

The chief question, however, which brought the deputation there was the contemplated removal of the training ship, which, however locally undesirable, they did not desire to oppose, provided its removal was calculated to add to the efficiency of the navy. He pointed out the great natural and trading facilities of the port, the projected improvements, dock extension, and depth of water, which was already ten feet at low water spring tides, and 26 feet at high water. With the natural increase of trade which these facilities would afford more seamen would be brought to the port, and an increase of the Naval Reserve must necessarily follow. Although in 1872-73 the number of men had seriously fallen off, they had now increased by about 50 in the year, the numbers being 264 last year and 311 now.

The first Lord said that no determination had yet been arrived at to move the ship, although it might have been considered better to take her to another port; but as the numbers had risen during the year the question would be reconsidered. The object of these visits was to obtain local information as to these training establishments.

Mr. T. Belk, town clerk of Hartlepool, acting as the spokesman of a deputation of the corporation (in the absence of the mayor), cordially welcomed their lordships. He called attention to the facilities always gladly afforded by the corporation for the drill of the Naval Reserve at the battery on the moor, and pointed out the necessity of some protection of the headland in the locality of the battery. He said that the corporation would gladly do all in their power to achieve this end, and hoped that the Admiralty would assist in the work.

His lordship expressed his regret that an engagement at Scarborough would prevent their making a personal inspection of the batteries. They would consider the question of the ship remaining here, and he hoped the gentlemen present interested in the mercantile marine would do all in their power to induce able seamen to join the reserve, in which important modifications were in contemplation in favour of the men. Their lordships, after taking leave of the deputations, embarked on board the *Enchantress*, which steamed away about ten o'clock for Scarborough, where she would arrive about one o'clock.

It is said that the *Enchantress* was rather unfortunate at Sunderland. While entering the dock on Wednesday night she stove in a boat, and yesterday as she was leaving she came into collision with the quay, starting her stern timbers and carrying away her top rail."

THE WRECK OF THE BARQUE FRANCOIS

In December 1874 there was an incident which led to bad reports about those at Hartlepool. The barque *Francois* was wrecked in local waters, there was only one survivor, Frederic Ancoin, aged 17 years. The following is a report of a meeting of the Hartlepool Harbour Commission on 29th December 1874 taken from the *Sunderland Daily Echo* of the next day:

"Captain Young called attention to the infamous charges contained in a letter signed by several foreign captains, first published in a leading Copenhagen papers and subsequently copied into the English *Times* and other dailies. ... there was one portion of that letter which had deeply shocked him, to find that any sixteen foreign captains could believe in the truth of – he alluded to the alleged shouts of joy which were stated to have greeted the stranding of the ill-fated barque.

As Englishmen they must distinctly repudiate that any such disgraceful scene had been or could be witnessed at any English port. It was a foul slander on the locality, and he (the captain) was astounded that any such impression could be formed in the human mind, and especially the minds of seamen, and believed it had been signed without due deliberation.

It was true that there were shouts of joy uttered whilst the steam tug was trying to tow the *Francois* off, but they were merely intended to greet the successful efforts of the pilots in guiding a large steamer safely into West Hartlepool in the height of the storm.

Mr Ald. Groves was surprised to see in the letter that the Danish captains could have saved the crew in a Scandinavian yawl. If this had been so, why did not they obtain one from the many Norwegian vessels lying

in dock 200 yards away?

Mr G. Pyman considered that as the ship lay deck to sea she was dangerous to closely approach. - Mr Ald. Groves believed it impossible for the lifeboat to come on the lee side. - Mr Ald. Nielson (a Dane), repudiated the authorship of the libellous letter on the part of his countrymen, asserting his belief that it had been drawn up by some designing person ashore, who did not understand the facts, and who had induced them to sign it. - the discussion then dropped."

NAUTICAL SPELLING BEES

Happier times are shown by the fact that the Cleveland Mercury of 9 February 1876 carried an advertisement for "Two Grand Nautical Spelling Bees", under the patronage of the town's mayor and the Captain of Her Majesty's Training ship Trincomalee. The first was to be held in the Temperance Hall, Hartlepool with the rector presiding. Alderman James Groves, JP, promised to read 'A Sailor's Love Yarn' on that occasion with a Mr Hoggett overseeing the music.

The second nautical spelling bee was to take place at the Athenaeum, West Hartlepool. Proceeds from both events went to the Missions to Seamen Society's work at the Hartlepoons. In a later edition of the Durham and Cleveland Mercury, on Saturday 11th March 1876, it is reported that amongst the prizes, an aneroid barometer and eight day timepiece in oak, anchor pattern, value £4, was won by a Mrs Baccham, of No. 1 William Street, who successfully competed against her husband. The sailor's love yarn, presented by Alderman Groves was entitled 'The Captain's Yarn, to Oblige the Ladies', and apparently this was appreciated by those present.

THE EUROPA GROUNDED

The ship was also mentioned in the local papers in May 1876, when a Norwegian vessel, the Europa, grounded in the Jackson Dock Locks shortly after High Water at 03.51 hours. The Europa was loaded with timber, and four tugs tried in vain to tow her clear.

Several ships were damaged in the incident, with one, the Deodar, being "...made to feel the weight of Her Majesty's Training Ship Trincomalee which lay next to her...", the report continued "Still, some relief was afforded by the crew of Trincomalee, who kept their ship in as upright a position as they could by means of mooring chains and manifold warps. The circumstances, we understand, have been reported to the Admiralty, and it is feared that some of her timbers have been loosened. Fortunately there have been no other mishaps that we have heard of. The warehouses have not fallen down. The occasion, on the other hand, has been seized as a favourable opportunity for doing some necessary repairs under the watermark...."

In September 1876 the Admiralty had decided to move the Trincomalee to Southampton. The Hampshire Advertiser reported a meeting of the Southampton Harbour and Pier Board held on Tuesday 19th September 1876:

"NAVAL RESERVE TRAINING SHIP AT SOUTHAMPTON

The Chairman announced that a communication had been received from the Admiralty expressing their intention of placing a ship in the Southampton Water for the purpose of training the men belonging to the Naval Reserve, and they were quite satisfied that the board would offer every facility they could to the Admiralty.

The vessel which would be stationed here was named the Trincomalee, and was of 1100 tons burthen. The object of the Admiralty was to clear the Naval Reserve men out of H.M.S. Hector, which was to be retained solely for the Coast-guard service. Captain Dent, the commander of the Hector, and Staff-commander Gibbons, navigating lieutenant of the Hector were present by his invitation, and would inform them what was required.

Captain Dent said the Board of Admiralty would wish the vessel to be moored as near the Royal Pier as possible, bearing in mind at the same time that there shall be no interference with the navigation of the river. (Hear,hear.)

Some conversation between the members of the board and the two officers ensued, after which Alderman Furber proposed and Sheriff Rogers seconded that the board had no objection to the vessel being moored off the Upper Gymp buoy, provided she be moored fore and aft.

Captain Dent thanked the board for the courteous bearing accorded him, and stated that he would report the result of his interview to the Admiralty authorities."

The West Hartlepool Improvement Commission held a meeting on Tuesday 3rd October 1876, at which "it was resolved to petition the Admiralty through the borough M.P. (Mr I.L. Bell), in favour of retaining H.M.S. Trincomalee at West Hartlepool." However this was to no avail.

THE TRINCOMALEE LEAVES HARTLEPOOL

The Trincomalee left Hartlepool on Monday 8th February 1877 when she was towed to Southampton. This departure was attended with less ceremony, Her Majesty's Frigate Valorous being commissioned to tow the Trincomalee. The South Durham Herald reports:

"...She was taken through the North lock, and from thence she was towed by the steam tug Conqueror, assisted by the William Charles, out into the bay. The dock head, and both the north and south piers were crowded with people to witness the departure. A drum and fife band from Middleton marched along the north pier playing a lively melody as the vessel proceeded along the harbour, and as she passed out between the piers a loud cheer was raised by the spectators, which was heartily responded to by those on board.

The cheering lasted as long as the vessel was discernable, but this was only for a short time, as the night being dark, she was soon out of sight. It was eleven o'clock, however, before she got fairly under weigh in tow of the Valorous, the towing tackle, which consisted of two six-inch steel hawsers, taking a considerable time to adjust.

We may state, as a rather remarkable feat, that Mr. James Pounder, who piloted her into West Hartlepool 14 years ago, had the honour of conducting her out again."

**QD061: Originally appeared in the "Quarterdeck" magazine
Ref: 2017 Issue 3 (Autumn) pages 55 to 63**

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