

TS Foudroyant & the Lion



(An account of the time the Nautical Training Corps used our ship when it was TS Foudroyant – by 1st Officer Brian Mitchell, illustrations by 2nd Officer McGilvray)

In the late 1950's and early 1960's, seamanship training was not as well developed within the Corps as it is today, and use had to be made of the training facilities of other organisations. One of these was the Foudroyant Trust which ran the old wooden wall frigate TS Foudroyant, moored on the Gosport side of Portsmouth Harbour. In 1959 and 1960, the Nautical Training Corps took over the whole ship at the beginning of August.



The Lion
– formerly the Scott-Paine, tender
to the Foudroyant

We all travelled down to Portsmouth by train to join the ship (there were no cars for young people in those days). We were met on the Gosport ferry ramp by Rear Commodore Phil Clifton who I will always remember as a very strict but very fair officer. We were then transported across the harbour on the ferry and then across to the ship by the Foudroyant's tender, the Scott-Paine. In 1859 the ship was moored at the entrance to Haslar Creek, opposite HMS Dolphin, but in 1960 she was moved to a mooring opposite the Signal Tower to give more room for the submarines entering the creek (This was in the days of course when we had submarines to fill the creek).

Going on board was just like stepping back in time to the days of Nelson. The smell of the ship was a mixture of rope, wood and tar and the smell of tarred rope to this day always reminds me of the ship. The main gundeck was used as the messdeck and was arranged in the "broadside messing style" (tables between the gunports running athwartships). The lower gundeck was used for sleeping and before you could turn in you had to learn how to rig and lash a hammock. One thing you did need was a hammock stretcher, otherwise the hammock would wrap itself around you and make sleeping difficult. This was not provided and you had to beg, borrow or steal one. The washing facilities were located on the upper deck and had no hot water available.

The Captain Superintendent was an old Cape Horner by the name of Captain Noble, and a more fearsome man you could not imagine. I will always remember him bellowing at us when we stood up in a boat "to never stand up in a boat until you have been round Cape Horn twice."

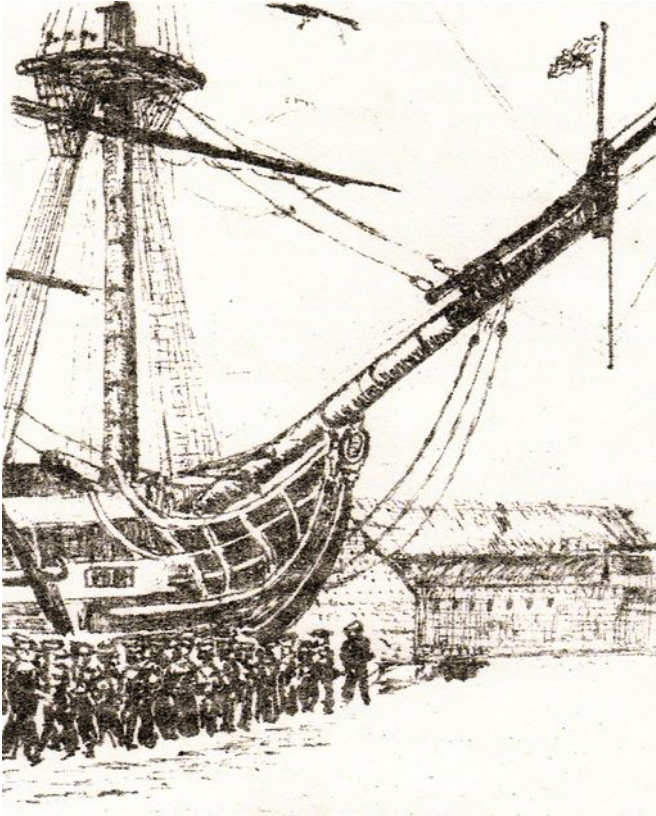
The training on board was excellent and mainly centred on boat pulling and sailing using the many boats moored alongside the Foudroyant. The boatpulling was carried out in fairly heavy whalers and gigs which had oars weighing a considerable amount, especially for young cadets. I remember being in a boat when the Founder Commodore, F. P. Froest-Carr passed on his way to visit the Foudroyant and we saluted him by tossing oars as he passed.

The sailing was also carried out in heavy wooden craft (not much fibreglass in those days) and the highlight of the week was the sailing expedition to the Isle of Wight. The first year all the inexperienced trainees (including myself) were taken over in the large sailing craft whilst the experienced were allowed to sail unsupervised in the small craft.

The second year, as more experienced P.O.'s, we were allowed to use the small craft and make the crossing unsupervised. In those days to cross Spithead was even more daunting than it is today, as the shipping traffic was considerable. You not only had the ferries, but there were far more warships entering Portsmouth and ocean liners heading down the Solent for Southampton. I well remember on the return journey having to pull the craft back into the harbour alongside the foreshore of the harbour entrance, as the ebbing tide was far too strong to sail against and we had to be back by a given time or no supper. (It should be pointed out that the Tender Scott-Paine also accompanied the expedition in case of serious problems).

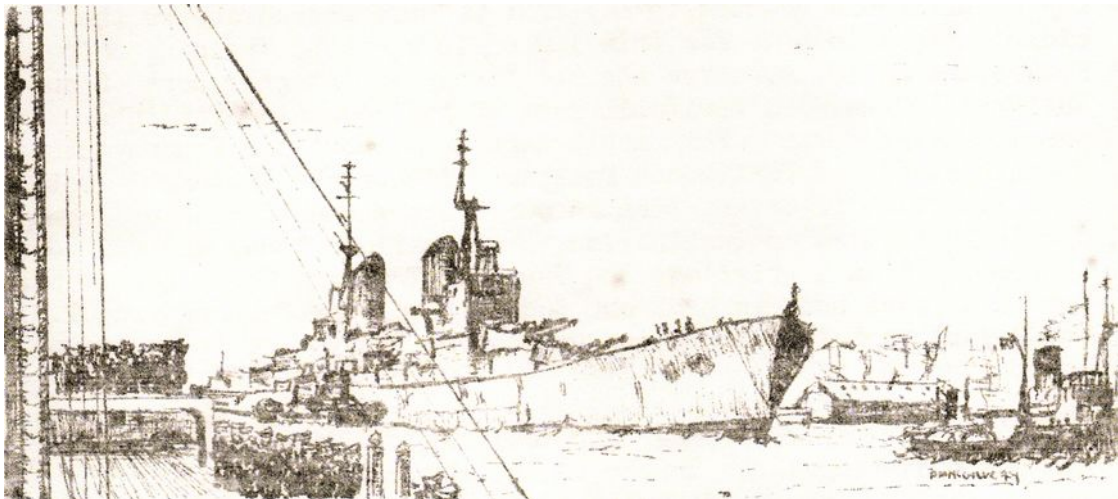
On one of the weeks, the church parade on the Sunday was held aboard HMS Victory, and there cannot be a more moving place to have a church service than on that old ship. Whenever I see Victory today I am always reminded of that service.

During the second week spent on Foudroyant in 1960 when I was then Petty Officer, things were more civilised. We slept on bunks in a cabin and had meals in the gunroom and we had the pleasure of turning out malingers in their hammocks just as we had been turned out the year before. We did not get away with everything however, for I well remember, following some misdemeanour, all the P.O.s being turned out by the Rear Commodore Clifton to stand on the upper deck for 30 minutes in the early hours of the morning to gaze at the lights of Portsmouth whilst standing to attention. It was a good job that it was August.



Cadets in front of HMS Victory

During that week we were fortunate to see the last British Battleship, HMS Vanguard, being towed out of Portsmouth to go for scrap. We had visited Vanguard the previous year and I remember being amazed at the sheer size of the ship. The gun turrets were of particular interest to me as I found that they had been removed from HMS Courageous and HMS Glorious before they were converted to Aircraft Carriers (My Division was of course TS Courageous). This information was to lead a few years later to me being able to persuade the Founder Commodore to change the proposed name of the 2nd Crawley Division from Resource to Glorious and to keep the names of Courageous and Glorious as sister ships as they had been in the Royal Navy.



HMS Vanguard

As the Vanguard left the harbour under tow of powerful tugs, the whole crew of the Foudroyant cleaned into No 1's and lined the side to give her three cheers as she passed. There must have been some power in those cheers because soon after she ran aground in the harbour entrance and caused chaos for several hours. She really did not want to be scrapped.

I mentioned earlier the tender to the Foudroyant, the Scott-Paine. This vessel was named after a famous designer of wooden launches and was probably designed by him. When she was replaced some years later, she came to the Nautical Training Corps for use as a training tender and was moored opposite TS Attentive at the lock end of Shoreham Harbour. The vessel was renamed Lion in memory of the ship the Founder Commodore was trained in and to this day the name Lion is perpetuated in the Seamanship Training Centre at Portsmouth.

For those of you in the Corps who have not heard of HMS Lion or realised the connection the name has with the Founder, I will give you some brief details, taken from the Founder's book "Spun yarn and Bellbottoms".

The Lion was a second rate of 3,842 tons, built at Pembroke and launched in 1847 and became a training ship in 1871. She was moored off Torpoint in Cornwall (close to the current New Entries Training Establishment of today, HMS Raleigh) and was well known amongst the various training ships of the day as being one of the toughest for training and discipline. The Founder joined her in 1903.



The Lion

1st Officer Brian Mitchell

**QD062: Originally appeared in the "Quarterdeck" magazine
Ref: 2018 Issue 1 (Spring) pages 8 to 12**