

# Captain's Remark Book

## H.M. Ship Trincomalee 1853



Exhib. 455. G.M. (1)

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H.M. Ship Trincomalee 1853.

Valparaiso

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[Transcribed from the original by Dr Hugh Turner]

January to February 16<sup>th</sup>:

### Valparaiso

Seven weeks here, as usual during the summer we had often violent Southerly winds during the day. I observed that the aneroid gave warning of their approaching in this manner, if it either rose or fell something like 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an inch, the day would be different from the last, i.e. if the last was a strong breeze it would be moderate, or vice versa, but sometimes it rose to show this, and at other times fell. Supplies of all description continue to be easily obtained here, and water to be brought in good tanks at a moderate price.

February 16<sup>th</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>:

### Valparaiso to Concepcion and back

Sailed on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February arriving at Concepcion on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The usual *dead beach with a wall of a head sea*. Remained here four days, supplies of all kinds can be obtained here, and at a moderate price, it is now much frequented by American Whale Ships about forty were in the Bay at our visit. We left early ...

June 27<sup>th</sup> to August 10<sup>th</sup>:

### Esquimalt Harbour

Here forty four days. A perfect harbour, the Admiralty Surveys quite correct. The tides here cannot be calculated when there is commonly tide and half tide, one day at ½ past ten am it was high water, the next day at that hour it was low water, and the third day at the same hour, it was again high water, these great irregularities may be accounted for by the great inland mass of water, fed by numerous rivers which always run down. The rise and fall about eight feet, although upon one occasion, at night it must have been at least thirteen. Good fresh water is obtained at the head of the river, about three miles from Esquimalt, but in the summer, the tides permit all night only, in the winter I understand, only all day. As yet fresh meat and vegetables are scarce, but fish also very plentiful, the descriptions salmon rock cod herrings be varying with the seasons.

August 19<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> September:

### Esquimalt to Sitka

Sailed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, arriving at Sitka on the 21<sup>st</sup>. A very secure anchorage or harbour, at the bottom of a bay 15 miles deep, and further protected from seaward by numerous chains of Islands, which form a perfect breakwater (vide chart). There are three passages to the anchorage, through the Islands, the Eastern most one the widest, about a mile in its narrowest part, the centre one about a cable's length in its narrowest, the other not a very good one. The Trincomalee was towed in and out by a steamer each way through the Centre Channel. Neither fresh meat nor vegetables can be obtained here, but fish is very plentiful especially salmon during the season. There is a fixed transit instrument in the centre of the town of New Archangel, its position

Latitude 57 deg 3 mins North  
Longitude 135 deg 18 mins West

Our anchorage bore from this spot E6S a short mile.

High Water fall and change – Noon Rise and Fall 19 feet  
Variation of the Compass 28½ deg Easterly.

The variation of the compass all the way from Esquimalt we found greater than given in the directions. We swung the ship twice at Sitka but found no change from Esquimalt. The great drawback at Sitka is rain, in 1851 74 inches fell, in 1852 74½ inches, the maximum 100 inches, of course water is abundant and it is easily procured. There is excellent limestone in the neighbourhood of New Archangel and coal in most part of the Russian American Territories.

7th September to 20<sup>th</sup>:

### From Sitka to Virago Sound North Part of Northern Queen Charlotte Islands

Sailed on 4<sup>th</sup> September arriving on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Virago Sound was discovered by Her Majesty's Steamer Virago about two months before we visited it. It is a very fine anchorage, and quite protected from the only winds which blow from the land. For further particulars, vide the Chart of it constructed by Mr Norway the master of this ship. Mr Norway has also made an outline of Trincomalee Harbour the inner anchorage from the sound, and as fine a harbour as there is in the world. He did not quite finish the marks for the passage from the sound into the harbour (time not permitting) but we have no reason to doubt there being a very good one.

The harbour, perfectly land-locked, something like six miles across every way, and 6,7 and 8 fathoms water. A fine river runs into the harbour at its head. We went up it about two miles, when we came to an Indian salmon fishery with stakes across it, a mile and a half up at  $\frac{3}{4}$  flood the water was fresh, and the river there six feet deep and about a quarter of a mile in width, there did not appear much tide in the river.

The rise and fall in the sound and harbour is not less than twenty feet, and the beach in the harbour well suited for laying a ship upon. We consider the North Point, of North Island, to be placed on the chart from six to eight miles too far north, i.e. it is not further north than 54 deg. 14 mins.

No fresh meat can be obtained from the Indians, but any quantity of fish, and in the season a large quantity of potatoes and turnips, and of all descriptions of wild berries and very fine. We got twenty tons of potatoes and about six tons of fish for slops of the value of £22 – Many of the halibut weighed 100 ozs, rock cod 40 ozs, an ordinary sized halibut weighed 30 oz.

20<sup>th</sup> September to 5<sup>th</sup> of October:

#### Virago Sound to Esquimalt

Sailed on 20<sup>th</sup> September arrived on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October. On the 25<sup>th</sup> we had a fine view of Mount Olympus distance 140 miles. The next day was calm, then we had four days of thick fog, and then eight of NE winds to work up the Straits. We think Nituist island is laid down about eight miles too far to the eastward. All our observations, and all I have heard from the Hudson's Bay Company's officers, bear out the Virago's reports, i.e. that both coasts of Vancouver's Island and both coasts of Queen Charlotte's islands are laid down about fifteen miles of Longitude too far east. The latitude and longitude of Nanaimo, where the Hudson's Bay Company are at present working coal, is 49 deg. 10 mins. And 123 deg. 55 mins., i.e. the wharf, by the Admiralty Chart, that position is several miles inland.

When at anchor in the Straits about two miles East of Pillar Point, we were tide rode, to the ebb through it blew a gale from the westward. These great masses of inland water, fed by rivers which never flow, come down at times with a pressure which cannot be measured, nor can their advent be calculated upon, on one occasion, in the Virago's gig, during a sixteen hours sail of fifty miles, we had no tide, the next day the ebb ran all day and most of the night.

25<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November:

#### Esquimalt to San Francisco

Sailed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, arrived on the 5<sup>th</sup> November. Four days getting clear of the Straits and two days at anchorage at the South Hasallen (San Francisco) in a dense fog, and calm, the rocks bore NW off 6 miles from us, there appeared to be no current during the time we were at anchor. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, in Latitude 38 deg. 10 min. N, Longitude 123 deg. 32 min. W we struck soundings in 43 fathoms fine white sand. After steering SW 7 miles we got 70 fathoms coarse sand, we then steered SSE 3 miles and got no bottom with 100 fathoms. We found Captain Beechey's description of the Bay of San Francisco very correct.

**QD73: Originally appeared In the "Quarterdeck" magazine  
Ref: 2024 Issue 1 (Spring) pages 4 to 11**