



# A Passport to Empire

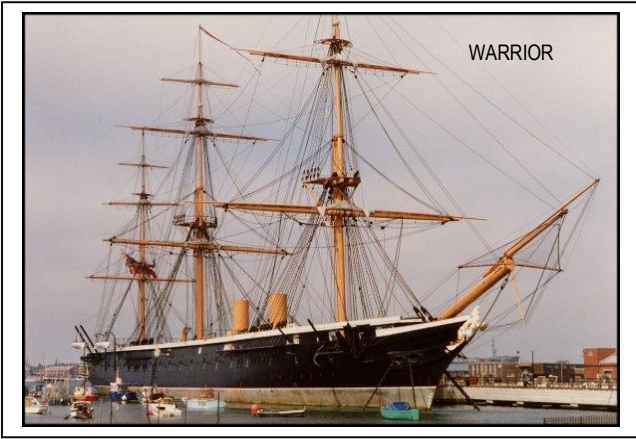


**Part one**

**&**

**Part TWO**

# The Royal Navy in transition



Henry was born at a time when the Royal Navy was struggling to come to terms with a new vision for the warship. In 1850 the fleet consisted of 86 Line of Battle ships and 104 frigates and ALL OF THEM WERE SAILING VESSELS. In 1854 war was declared in Europe once again and the battleground became

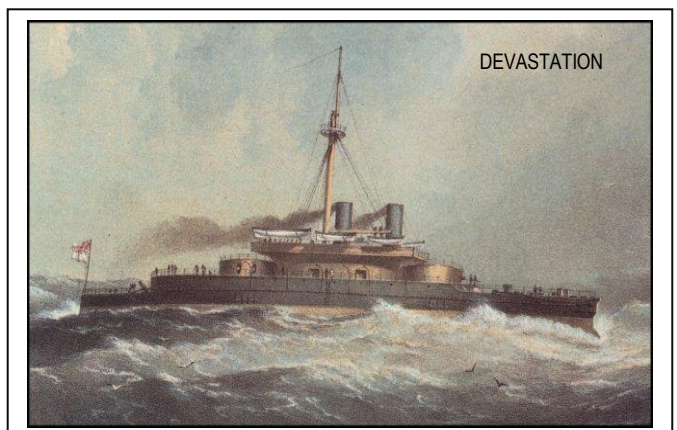
the Crimea. The Navy could muster only three propeller-driven ships and their overall design clung desperately to the Nelson era, but change WAS coming, albeit very slowly.

By the end of the decade, 34 ships had been 'converted' with steam driven propellers and ten of these were done at Devonport. Henry would become familiar with one of them, the **PHOEBE**, which was the last to be finished in April 1860. It was also the year when a new word was coming into the naval vocabulary – IRONCLAD. In response to French innovation, the Admiralty ordered an inevitable 'experiment' and the **WARRIOR** was commissioned in 1861. No sooner had she been brought into service than the first battle between Ironclads took place in the Americas in 1862. During this battle a new tactic was discovered. Iron hulls made it possible to ram in comparative safety and this altered the designs on the Admiralty drawing boards once again.

In 1865, the age-old subject of gunnery was thrown into the debate as new weapons and new tactics were developed. The **BELLEREPHON** was the first ship to mount a Battery, instead of relying upon the close encounter of a broadside and Henry would serve under her as Flagship during his career.

At the beginning of 1867, the Fleet was assessed to contain 579 ships and 262 of these were in service overseas. Among the total were 312 frigates and corvettes, 100 gunboats and 72 sailing vessels. The definition of the warship had become blurred. Almost everything was now a 'frigate' until Admiral Dundas coined the term 'steam cruizer' and the word stuck.

Gunnery took another step forward in 1869 with the appearance of a Turret Ship named the **CAPTAIN**, but she overturned under the weight of her masts and sails. Her loss led directly to a new outline. The **DEVASTATION** of 1871 was the first glimpse of a warship recognisable in the 20th century.



# New ships - Old traditions

# Four



# Brothers

## ALFRED

Born 19 September 1848 Gosport, Hampshire  
C.S No.25333A – 60815

TNA Reference – ADM 139/654 & ADM 188/39  
He joined **IMPREGNABLE** on the 25 March 1863 as  
a Boy 2<sup>nd</sup> Class with the consent off his mother  
ANN TAYLOR

At the age of 18 in 1866 he was rated Ordinary  
Seaman. At the age of 22 in 1870 he became the  
coxswain of a pinnace. In 1873 he was rated Able  
Seaman and in 1876 he passed for Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Class. One year later he was promoted again to  
Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class and Second Captain of the  
Forecastle as well as being the Captain's Coxswain.

In 1880 his exemplary career began to disintegrate  
when he was **DISRATED** to Able Seaman. Within  
six months he recovered his rank at PO 2<sup>nd</sup> Class,  
but in 1882 his continued conduct led to the loss of  
one of his Good Conduct badges and on the 22<sup>nd</sup>  
September 1882 he was broken back to Leading  
Seaman. **Ten days later in October 1882 he  
DESERTED his ship SAPPHO in Honolulu.**

Among his seagoing ships were, SWIFTSURE,  
BITTERN, SEAGULL & **SAPPHO** with shorter spells  
on MALABAR, BRITANNIA, GANGES & DEFENCE

## HENRY WESTAWAY

Born 27 June 1852 Plymouth, Devon  
C.S No.241B – 79394

TNA Reference – ADM 139/803 & ADM 188/  
He joined **IMPLACABLE** on the 9 January 1867 as a  
Boy 2<sup>nd</sup> Class with the consent off his mother  
ANN TAYLOR having left a job as a mason.

He was promoted to Ordinary Seaman on the  
PHOEBE on the 27 June 1870 and on the 1  
February 1873 he was rated Able Seaman. His  
conduct was often 'exemplary' yet it was the 19 July  
1879 before he was promoted to Leading Seaman.

He made Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class on the 26  
September 1879, but his 10 years service was  
concluding and at the end of his time he transferred  
to the COASTGUARD for a further 10 years.

He served 8 of his 10 years on foreign stations with  
long commissions on MULLET; IRON DUKE &  
SIRIUS. These were supplemented by short spells  
on ECLIPSE; PHOEBE' ROYAL ALFRED and  
THALIA.

In the Coastguard he served at Mill Cove,  
Baltimore and Ballyeroneen in County Cork and  
Boscastle in Cornwall

## CHARLES

Born 3 May 1855 Plymouth, Devon  
C.S No.12123B

TNA Reference – ADM 139/922  
He joined **IMPREGNABLE** on the 22 June 1870 as  
a Boy 2<sup>nd</sup> Class with the consent off his mother  
ANN TAYLOR having left a job as an errand boy.

On the 18 June 1871 he became a Boy 1<sup>st</sup> Class  
whilst on the CLYDE.  
On the 3 April 1872 he was **INVALIDED** from the  
service and Whitehall was informed on the  
16 April 1872

**Samuel** served on the RESISTANCE; AURORA;  
**PELICAN** with short spells on the REVENGE;  
VALOURUS; NARCISSUS & LIFFEY

## SAMUEL

Born 15 September 1856 Plymouth, Devon  
C.S No.17998B - 57920

TNA Reference – ADM 139/980  
He joined **IMPREGNABLE** on the 4 October 1871 as  
a Boy 2<sup>nd</sup> Class with the consent off his step-father  
S.W. TAYLOR

On the 14 November he became a Boy 1<sup>st</sup> Class  
whilst on REVENGE. He was promoted to Ordinary  
Seaman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class on his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and this  
became OS 1<sup>st</sup> Class at the start of 1875. He took 5  
years to reach Able Seaman on the 1 February 1880  
after he had served 11 days in the cells during May  
1879 for Disobeying an Officer.

**In spite of being rated 'Good' or 'Very Good' he  
DESRTED the PELICAN in Honolulu on the  
9 September 1880.**



## Henry Westaway Trethewey

Henry joined the Royal Navy in 1867 as a Boy Second Class

This is the story of his training on the IMPLACABLE in the Hamoaze

It gives a brief insight into life on board with 600 boys

It examines the uniform, the food and the discipline

It follows the boys through their lessons

It describes the final training cruises on the Brig SEALARK

It is generously illustrated with photographs of life under sail.



The following pages are not simply a list of ships on a Service record, although that is available, it is the story of one sailor in a Royal Navy that was attempting to police the colonies of Queen Victoria's Empire.

The ships of the fleets were in transition. Technology was advancing faster than the Admirals knew how to cope with it. The first iron warship (WARRIOR) was already seven years old, but was it to be wooden hulls or iron? Should they have steam engines with propellers or sails? What would the new guns actually do?

Britain was also in competition with its European rivals for Empire expansion. Germany, France, the Netherlands were all building new ships and laying claim to new trading routes, but it was Britain's methods of protecting its' interests that gave rise to a new term – GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY.

Henry knew nothing of this, but he would become a part of it. Instead he began his career in a navy whose practises had not changed since the days of Nelson and Henry would gain his confidence and his skills on a ship that had fought against Nelson at Trafalgar. In 1805 the DOUGAY TROUIN flew the French Tricolor. In 1867 she was the IMPLACABLE where Henry slung his hammock.

## Henry joins the Victorian Royal Navy

The snow began falling on Plymouth in the evening of New Year's Day 1867. Within 24 hours the blanket of snow covering the Town was thick and frozen hard. All along the south coast of England heavy snowfalls had been driven into blizzard conditions by a viciously biting wind. At Lands End it was said to have been the heaviest snowfall in living memory. In London the buses of the London General Omnibus Company stopped running on roads too dangerous to use. Worse was to come.

By the weekend, SSW gales began lashing the snow covered coastline. The mounting catalogue of shipping disasters stretched from Mounts Bay, where there were two dramatic rescues, to Portland where the Breakwater was smashed. In Looe Bay the Plymouth fishing trawler '*Emmeline*' was lost before the lifeboat could reach her, taking her Master John Williams and his five man crew with her. In Truro the streets of the Town were flooded whilst at Dawlish the South Devon Railway line had been washed away halting the trains.

Henry Trethewey went to bed on the Monday night fearful of the coming day. His excitement and apprehension made it impossible to sleep. By 2 a.m. the howling of the rising wind had reached hurricane pitch, driving the rain into every ill-fitting crevice. For four hours the storm battered the area giving no rest to the unhappy youngster. Unbeknown to Henry a house which was being built nearby in Tink's Field, North Road, close upto the South Devon Railway line, suddenly collapsed under the pressure of snow, wind and rain. Two vessels were in trouble in Mount Batten Bay and were driven ashore with the loss of all hands except for one very lucky survivor.

Sleep was impossible that night so it would not be surprising if the time seemed to drag. This was Henry's last night at home, for on that day, Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 1867, he had an appointment with the Royal Navy on board HMS *IMPLACABLE* moored in Devonport's Hamoaze.

The wind had abated considerably as he stood with his mother Ann Taylor on the curved steps of North Corner in Devonport. He looked anxiously for the boat which would ferry him out to the huge imposing hulk of the French Ship of the Line which had opposed Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar.

The '*DUGUAY TROUIN*' of Napoleon's Imperial Navy, was only 4 years old when she took her place in the van against the English Fleet on that historic day of the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1805. As the battle slipped from the French grasp in a confusion of burning and dismasted ships, she broke clear of the tangled flotsam and slipped away. It took almost two weeks for a British Squadron to track her down and force her surrender. She last sailed in commission nearly 25 years previously and when she returned to Devonport for the last time from the Mediterranean, she was sporting a cock at the masthead, signifying her position as the smartest ship in the Fleet. How fitting that she should become one of Devonport's Training Ships for the thousands of boys keen to learn their seamanship under the flag of the Royal Navy.

Henry knew nothing of these traditions and glories past as the well filled boat responded to the muscular oarsmen and backed off the steps to turn around and head upstream. The magnificence of the Flagship, *ROYAL ADELAIDE* dominated their port side as she lay off the Gun Wharf. Today there was a court-martial on board. Sub Lieutenant Trafford Leigh Mallory of the *LORD CLYDE* had to face his superiors charged with drunkenness, but fortunately for him the senior officers of the Board found the charge unproved and he was returned to his ship. Courts Martial were quite commonplace on the Flagship as the strict naval discipline was

enforced without favour, yet it was less common to find that it was an Officer who stood nervously, head bowed, before the Court.

The *LORD CLYDE* was an armour-plated ship of over 4000 tons and was a member of the Channel Squadron, two other ships of which were also present in the harbour. The Flagship of the Squadron was the *CALEDONIA*, a sister ship to the *ROYAL ALFRED*, and an armour plated ship, whilst the *ACHILLES* was a much larger iron ship exceeding 6000 tons and the largest warship in the world when she was new 4 years earlier. Other vessels moored in the harbour that week included the *BRISTOL* a 3000 tons frigate and Flagship of the West Coast of Africa Station and the *PRINCE ALBERT*, a Devonport based modern iron turret ship of some 2500 tons. The Gunboats *JACKAL* and *VIXEN*; the tender to the *ROYAL ADELAIDE* the *PRINCESS ALICE* and the two harbour tugs *CONFIANCE* and *SCOTIA* all helped to generate their own colourful boat traffic as mail and stores; officers and crew all shuttled to and fro on their seemingly endless errands.

The boat carrying the boys nosed ever closer to the black and white hull moored just above Torpoint at a place known as Thankses. Their bodies swayed with the unfamiliar and uncertain movements of the river current. Most of the boys were alone having walked, in some instances, from far off inland towns and villages, yet they were now looking in awe at the partially rigged 'man o' war' with her two white painted side bands joined by the beautiful galleried stern with its two lines of squared windows.

The now seemingly tiny toy boat was edging carefully towards the wooden slab sides of the huge hull which floated placidly facing upstream. A sailor stood in the bow with a painter ready to grab the platform of the companionway, which hung at an angle from the receiving deck to the water level. This would be the boys' first test under the critical gaze of the Petty Officers. They had to get off their transport and up the swaying companionway without making a fool of themselves.

The deck onto which they stepped was like nothing they had ever seen before. Immaculately scrubbed, the bare wooden planks seemed to squeeze the already short stature of the boys beneath the massive deckhead timbers. Ropes lay everywhere, neatly coiled as if to some artistic design. Guns leaned out of some of the open ports. Men and boys filled the space, 600 of them and none with the time or the inclination to spare a passing glance. The Officer of the Day stood impassively viewing the proceedings, hands clasped behind his back and a leather-bound telescope under his arm, as the Duty Rating led the crocodile of new recruits towards the huge saloon at the stern of the vessel. Its double doors were thrown open to reveal a cloth covered table behind which sat a line of stern faced officers, their faces barely illuminated on that dark and dismal January day.

When it came to Henry's turn to walk apprehensively forward, he longed to clutch his mother's hand, but dare not do so. The document seeking Ann Taylor's consent to release her son into the care of the Royal Navy for ten years from the age of 18, did not allow enough room for her to write Henry's name out in full and that must have caused some embarrassment. It was an embarrassment further compounded when Henry's own well written signature was smudged. So the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1867 was a date to remember. It was the date on which our family fortunes changed direction. It was a date which would coincidentally reappear in our immediate family in the next decade.

Henry was not the oldest of Ann's four surviving sons, that was Alfred, and he had already been in the Service for nearly four years. He joined the *IMPREGNABLE* on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1863 rendering the recruitment process not unfamiliar to Ann. It is, however, unfamiliar to the author and in spite of a considerable amount of time spent investigating the subject, no accurate picture of the system has emerged.

In the 1860's there were three major Training Ships moored in the Hamoaze - *IMPREGNABLE*: *IMPLACABLE* and *CAMBRIDGE*. The latter was a gunnery training ship for the fleet, but it would seem that either of the two former ships would accept boys desiring to join the Royal Navy. How that choice was made and who made it is unclear. It certainly seems to have been an individual choice.

In 1872 a Naval Committee was convened to inquire into the '*system of victualling boys in the Training Ships*' and Captain J.C.Wilson of the *IMPREGNABLE* said in his evidence that, "*all newly entered boys at Portsmouth or Plymouth are taken before a Board of Officers every Thursday on the Flagship. The Board has the power of final entry or rejection.*"

However he went on to comment that this power was too limited as the majority of the boys were accepted by 'out stations'. "*These boys,*" he continued, "*walk from London, Bristol, Bath etc. and come on board generally on Wednesdays for examination on Thursday.*"

From a detailed examination of the three pieces of evidence relating to Henry's entry into the service, the procedure remains unclear. The first document is undoubtedly the document containing not only Ann's consent, but also that of Henry, yet its date is written in such an imprecise manner as to leave the reader wondering whether it is an 8 or 9 which precedes the month. There is nothing on the document to suggest that it had been completed on board ship, yet another document, which undoubtedly WAS completed on board the *IMPLACABLE*, carries neither Henry's signature nor that of Ann. It simply represents Henry's entry into the Ship's Crew List, but again the date is at fault – 9<sup>th</sup> January 1866 - being very obviously incorrect.

So the reader will now understand that my descriptive introduction although factually based, is simply an interpretation of the evidence at hand. Perhaps Henry chose to join the *IMPLACABLE* because of the deliberately exaggerated stories told to him by Alfred about life on the *IMPREGNABLE*. Perhaps the entry paper of consent that has survived was not written out on board ship, but somewhere ashore. Perhaps the journey to the *IMPLACABLE* took place on the 9th and not on the 8th. Whatever the truth, one thing is certain, January 9th was NOT a Thursday..... It was a Wednesday!

The Certificate issued on the Flagship on that particular Wednesday gives a list of fascinating signatures which cling more closely to the evidence presented to the 1872 Committee than the exactness of the days of the week, which may have changed in the intervening 5 years. The document stated that as a lad of fourteen Henry scaled only six stone for his 4ft 9in height, yet it certified that he was '*a well grown and stout lad of perfectly sound and healthy constitution*'.

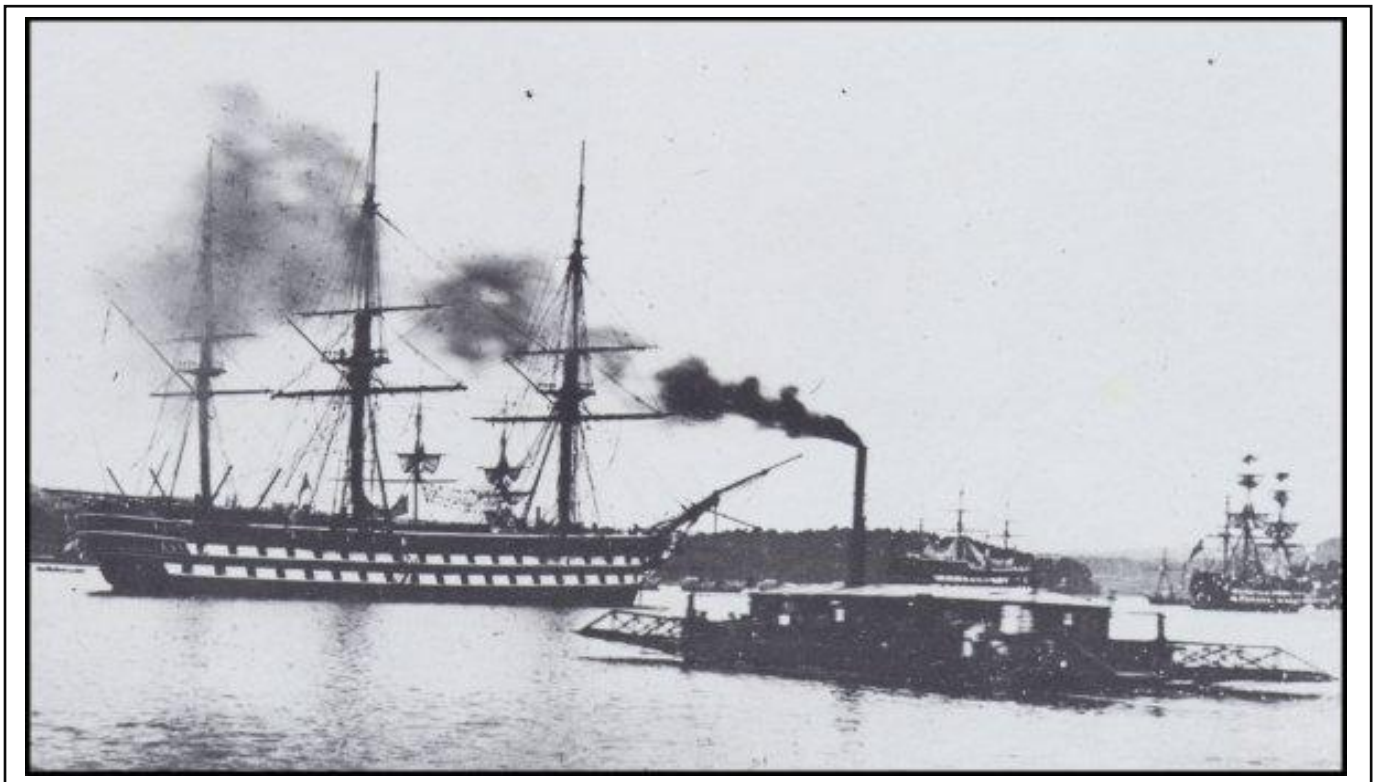
Six senior officers countersigned Henry's own signature and they included names which can easily be confirmed in a contemporary Navy List.

Gabriel Beer Assistant Paymaster of the *IMPLACABLE*: both the Captains of the *ROYAL ADELAIDE* and the *IMPREGNABLE*, Captains Preedy and Tremlett: two Medical Officers, one of which was William Dalby of the *IMPLACABLE*. And finally the place set aside for the signature of the '*Commanding Officer of the ship from which the engagement is sent into office*' contains the name of William Goold, Lieutenant of the *IMPLACABLE* signing in place of his Commander who was sick.

So it seems to me that this ceremony WAS conducted on board the Flagship, as the Committee later recorded, in the presence of the two receiving Training Ship Captains. The purpose of this formal gathering was to confirm the findings of the Medical Officers, who had examined Henry and pronounced him fit to join the Service, and to issue the appropriate Certificate.

The Certificate reads, 'The consent of his parents has been obtained in writing' and there follows an asterisked note - 'The document conveying the consent of the parents to be attached to this paper.' This implies that the action contained within the giving of that consent took place at a different time and in a different place. This leads me to believe that Henry DID make the journey to the *IMPLACABLE* on the previous day with his mother, a journey which I have attempted to recreate.

It seemed a long time since Henry lay awake in his bed at home listening to the rising pitch of the gale force wind, yet it was only yesterday. Last night he had spent another sleepless night trying to get used to the feel of a hammock slung with dozens of others in a mess deck. All around were the incessant, strange noises of the ship creaking and groaning to the wind. These were noises that he would soon learn to notice only when they indicated that something was amiss. Today, he was a Boy 2nd Class and his ruddy complexion would soon be exposed to the vagaries of the wind and the weather. Tomorrow, the Naval routines would start in earnest, while the Winter Ferry continues to grind backwards and forwards across the Tamar astern of the *IMPLACABLE*.



The picture above must date from Henry's time, as the ferry crossing to Torpoint was the ferry built in Stonehouse Pool in 1835 and recognisable for its lack of passenger deck adjacent to its funnel. It was replaced in 1871, the same year in which the *IMPLACABLE* was moved further up river and joined at the stern to the *LION*.

**258 IMPLACABLE, 24. Training  
Ship for Boys.  
1882 Tons.  
Devonport.**

Commander ..	Edward T. Nott ...	20 Apr 66
Lieutenant....	William H. Goold	30 June 66
Additional ...	James N. Croke ....	13 Jan 66
(For service in Sealark.)		
Chaplain and } Nav. Inst. }	Rev. Percy Rogers, MA.	4 May 66
Surgeon.....	William B. Dalby, MD.	2 May 66
Paymaster ....	Edward J. Giles . . .	1 Jan 67
2nd Master ...	William F. A. Greet	3 Aug 65
(Additional for service in Sealark.)		
Assist. Surg...	John Buckley .....	25 July 66
Additional....	James F. Parr .....	10 May 66
(For service in Sealark.)		
Assist. Paym. .	Gabriel Beer .....	1 Feb 67



herby certify that my son, *Henry Westaway Trethewey* (has my full consent  
 self willing) to enter Her Majesty's Navy for a period of Ten Years' Continuous  
 al Service, from the age of 18, in addition to whatever period may be necessary  
 tain that age, agreeably to Her Majesty's Order in Council, dated 1st April, '53,  
 dmiralty Regulations of the 14th June, '53, relating thereto. *And I also*  
*that he has never had his*  
 Witness our hands at *Plymouth Devon Taylor*  
 day of *January* 1867  
 Date of Boy's Birth, *Plymouth the 27 day of June 1852*  
 Parent's Signature, { or, if dead, } *Ann Taylor*  
 nearest relative }  
 Boy's Signature of consent, and who further declares that he is not Indentured  
 as an Apprentice. *Henry Westaway Trethewey*  
*Charles Carey*

Three Very Important Documents

The Parental Consent Form showing the important signature of Ann Trethewey née Westaway now called Ann Taylor

*241*  
 Men or Boys enter for Continuous and General Service, (C.S.) Commanding Officers are immediately to fill up this Form and to transmit it to the Accountant-General of the Navy, at the end of the Month, with the List of Engagements executed. (Form No 41, vide Paymaster's Instructions, Page 40, Article 120, Clause 7.)

Name and Surname in full, *Henry Westaway Trethewey*  
 Where Born, *Plymouth Devon*  
 Date of Birth, *27 June 1852*  
 Description, Height *5 q 2* Complexion *Ruddy*  
 Hair *Brown* Eyes *Blue*  
 Marks *None*  
 Ship in which he Volunteers, *Implacable Dec 18 1867*  
 Date of Entry in Do., *9 January 1867*  
 Rating in Do., *Boy 2 class*  
 Date of actually Volunteering for Continuous Service, *9 January 1867*  
 Commencement of Engagement, *27 June 18 67*  
 Period of ditto, *Ten Year*  
 Statement of all former Service in the Navy, *Intended for 10 yrs from 27/6/50 vide Re-imp's Instructions*  
 If the Man has ever previously been entered for "C.S." the particulars of his former Engagement should be inserted here in Red Ink

CERTIFICATE FOR BOYS.  
 Date *January 1867*  
 This is to certify, that we have examined the boy named on the other side hereof; his fitness for Her Majesty's Navy, and we find as follows:—He is a well grown, stout lad; of perfect sound and healthy constitution, free from all physical malformation, and intelligent, and we con him in all respects fit for Her Majesty's Service.  
 The consent of his parents or friends has been obtained in writing,\* and they are willing and desirous that the boy should be entered for 10 years' continuous and general service from the of 18, in addition to whatever periods may be necessary till he attains that age; and the boy him is willing and desirous to enter the Royal Navy under these conditions, as attested by his signa attached hereto, and declares that he is not indentured as an apprentice.  
 Henry Westaway Trethewey Boy's Signature or Mark  
 Witness to Signature or Mark *Robert Preezy Assistant Paymtr.*  
*W. M. Preedy* Captain, H.M.  
*W. Tremlett* Captain, H.M.  
*W. S. ...* Two Medi Officers.  
*W. S. ...* Two Medi Officers.  
*W. S. ...* Two Medi Officers.  
 \* The document conveying the consent to be attached to this paper.

The Ship's Ledger showing Henry's personal details, his description and his Royal Navy Number

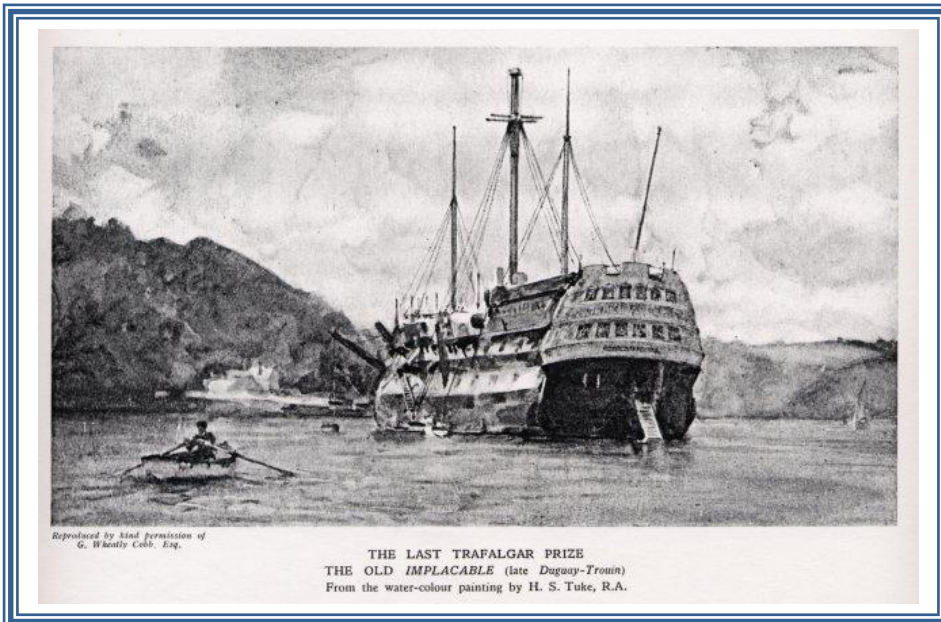
The Medical Certificate showing some important signatures from the IMPLACABLE and TWO Captains Preedy and Tremlett.

# Life on the IMPLACABLE in the Hamoaze

DEVONPORT 9<sup>th</sup> January 1867 to 25<sup>th</sup> August 1868

After nearly 50 years afloat serving both the French and English Fleets, the IMPLACABLE had lain out of use for almost a decade when, in 1855, she was selected to become one of the Navy's first dedicated Training Ships for young recruits.

She stayed alone at her moorings off Torpoint for 16 years and it was during the latter part of that period that Henry Trethewey spent 19 months on board in 1867 and 68. However, a photograph of the ship before she was physically joined to the LION in 1871, has proved to be elusive.



The IMPLACABLE's romantic history as a French adversary at the Battle of Trafalgar underlined the fact that she had been a fighting ship which had seen action, albeit on the wrong side. This misdemeanour was soon rectified in the Baltic in 1808 when she was accorded a British Naval Battle Honour in the first action ever recorded with a Russian ship as an enemy.

Seafarers are reputed to be great storytellers and such battle honours are crucial to both ships and Regiments alike. They form the foundations upon which the courage and allegiance of the fighting men are tested in time of war. Consequently, I wonder if the Boys were told anything of her allegiance at Trafalgar, as she fought under the Tricolor of France against our seamen in the British Fleet.

The political decision to establish Training Ships all along the Channel Coast was probably influenced by the words of a senior naval officer serving in the Baltic Expedition of 1854/55. He observed that,

*"Public opinion resented the revival of the Press Gang, therefore the only alternative was the offer of a large bounty and by this means the ships were filled with counter jumpers and riffraff of all sorts and rarely a sailor amongst them."*

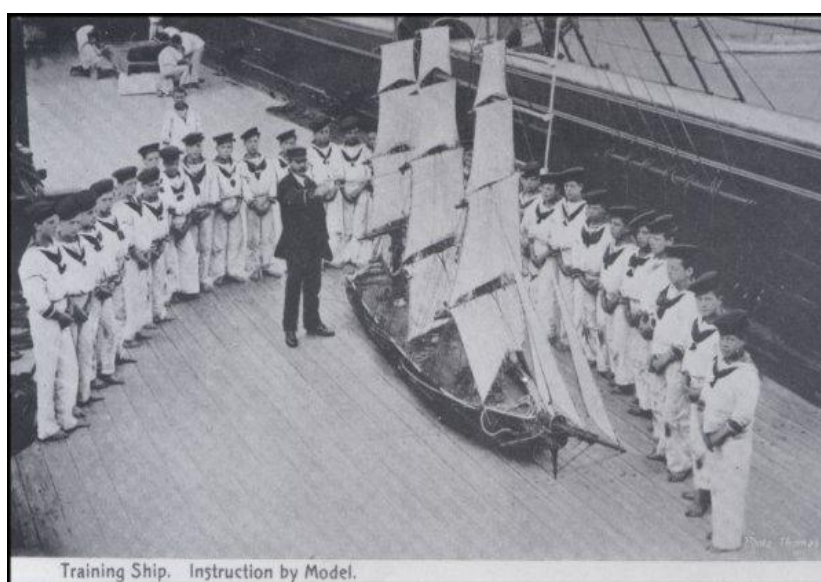
Four years later, Captain Alston's '**Manual of Seamanship**' was published in which he wrote:-

*"Although we are living in what may be termed the steam era and our Navy is a steam navy, I have in this work excluded the consideration of steam power as, owing to the great cost of coal and the impossibility of providing stowage for it except to a limited extent, the application of steam power for ordinary purposes must be strictly auxiliary and subordinate, and its employment on general service the exception and not the rule."*

The senior officers were unerring in their belief that steam was a smelly, unreliable nuisance. Their abhorrence of the idea of smoke blackened spars and canvas and their complete lack of enthusiasm, guaranteed that the Admiralty Board would stay firmly committed to the 'reliability' of sail until the end of the century.

With such swingeing statements ringing in our ears it comes as no surprise to find that the Boys' training was based squarely on the principles of seamanship under sail and the conversion of willing Boys into 'Bluejackets' was already 12 years old when Henry arrived on board the IMPLACABLE. His training would embrace essential skills like knots and splices, swimming and boat pulling, but there was also the 'monkey topsail yard' to master. This was a replica yard close to the deck on which the boys were taught how to get in and out from the crosstrees and loose and furl the sails. This skill HAD TO BE MASTERED before they were ordered aloft, scores of feet above a heaving deck in a fresh breeze, to test their knowledge, dexterity, agility and above all their courage.

There is no doubt that the training was hard and it was physical but it was interspersed with a lot of basic schooling as well as training sessions in which the boys were taught about the ship's hull and rigging. They had to learn to stand a turn at the helm and to 'box the compass'. They had to learn how to swing the lead for soundings but by far the most popular



activity was the cutlass drill carried out under strict supervision together with the less exciting rifle drill during which they were only taught how to handle the weapon and not to fire it.

## A Question of Uniform

Henry was destined for a very busy time ahead, with very little time to be alone with his thoughts, but the first thing he had to do was to be measured for the uniform which had seen very little change since its introduction in 1857. This ritual was conducted every Thursday by the local contractor Mr. Lake of Stonehouse, who had held the contract since 1862 and it seems likely that this was George Lake of Edcumbe Street who is thought to have started his business in that same year. He employed seamen's wives on very low rates to sew up the garments and the number of kits which might have been required ranged from 30 to 100 depending upon the intake of boys that week. On the following Thursday, the finished kits were returned to the ship by the Contractor where they were examined and fitted in the presence of the Regulating Lieutenant and the Ship's Corporal. Any misfits had to be altered on the spot at the Contractor's own expense.

From the inquiry into the training of Boys in 1872, we can gain a very clear insight into the attitudes and opinions of both the men and the Officers concerning the clothing, which was supplied to them. It would appear that everyone, including

the Boys, were expected to buy their own clothing and this led to an often repeated concern that the Boys left the Training Ship in debt by as much as £1, which in itself led to a small number of desertions. Until they reached the age of 16, a Boy Second Class was paid 6 pence per day, yet it would cost one of those precious pennies to sew a hem on a handkerchief, whilst a pair of 'French grey' socks would cost one shilling, or two days pay, and a shirt as much as five days pay (2/6d ).

Most Boys were discharged from the Training Ship to the Gunnery Ship CAMBRIDGE, although this did not happen to Henry. In such cases the unfortunate trainees were charged the princely sum of £2-10s-0d for the extra garments they needed on board, plunging them massively into debt before they had even begun to learn the rudiments of Naval gunnery.

So what was the uniform of the period? The following description, which embraces Petty Officers, Seamen AND Boys, is taken from the Navy List of 1870 and the reader may well smile at the wording and style of a piece which reflects the depth of detail with which everything in the Navy was recorded.



*Unfortunately this is not Henry Trethewey from the IMPLACABLE in 1869 but a Boy First Class from the IMPREGNABLE in 1897 showing off the uniform of the day. The Royal Navy has never reacted with undue haste to a change of uniform and you will see reference in the text to a desired change in the late 1870's. However the picture does give a flavour of the time when Henry was already on Pension. The hat is one item that has seen many different styles, but the 'straw' or sennet hat with its turned up brim, seen mostly in the tropics, remained in the Service until 1931.*

#### **Blue Cloth Jacket**

Double breasted with stand and fall collar, sleeve sufficiently large to go easily over a duck and serge frock, to reach to the hip, with an opening at the cuffs on the seam, with two black buttons, one inside pocket on the left side and seven black horn crown and anchor buttons, seven tenths of an inch in diameter, on each side according to a pattern.

#### **Blue Cloth Trousers**

To be made fitting tight at the waistband with two pockets and a broad flap and stained bone buttons.

#### **Duck or White Drill Frock**

To be made with collar and wristbands of blue jean, the collar having a border of three rows of three sixteenths of an inch white tape, one eighth of an inch apart and the wristbands to be peaked with two rows of white tape along the upper margin and one along the lower, with one white metal dead-eye button at each of the wrists.

#### **Duck Trousers**

To be made of white duck in a similar manner to the blue trousers with white metal dead-eye buttons

#### **Black Serge Frock Pea Jacket**

To be made of blue Flushing with seven buttons on each side of black horn, navy pattern, one inch and a third in diameter.

#### **Black Silk Handkerchief**

#### **Hat**

To be black or white according to the climate. The hat to be four inches high in the crown, three inches wide in the rim and seven inches across the crown and made of sennet covered with brown Holland painted black, with a hat ribbon bearing the ship's name; and in warm climates the same hat uncovered. A chinstrap to be attached to the hat.

#### **Cap**

To be worn at night and at sea when ordered. The cap to be made round of No.1 cloth and partially stiffened across the crown similar in shape to that worn by officers without the peak. Ten inches in diameter for men and nine inches for boys with a ribbon bearing the ship's name. A chinstrap to be attached to the cap.

#### **Woollen Comforter**

To be of a dark blue colour

Captain Wilson of the *IMPREGNABLE* held some very critical opinions of the uniform which were not necessarily always supported by his contemporaries on the other ships. However, one view that was supported by other witnesses concerned the quality of the blue serge material which was supplied to the Contractors. It continuously varied in colour. It would not wash and it had a habit of turning green. The serge trousers worn by the Boys soon wore out and never looked presentable and the Medical Officer of the *GANGES* complained that the Boys continually defied orders to stop wearing them by night, presumably to keep warm. This was a garment, together with the frequently filthy worsted cap, which was not worn in the Fleet, and it is reasonably obvious that the Senior Officers were using these as examples of the large number of wasteful variations that existed in the Service.

It may come as a surprise to my reader to discover that '*blue jean*' was not the preserve of the 1950's American teenager, but had been in use in the Royal Navy 100 years before James Dean. The Navy's Stonehouse Contractor, Mr. Lake, was keen to make shirts with a detachable jean collar and Captain Wilson presented this proposal to the inquiry as a more economical garment than the cotton shirts, which were soon spoiled. Other economies he suggested included the use of duck instead of canvas for the working suits and the reduction in size of the woollen comforter by one third. It is hard to comprehend a statement, which says, "*the cloth jackets don't fit the men.*" This was borne out at the clothing issues to the men which took place every quarter on the orlop<sup>1</sup> deck in front of the Paymaster. Here it was observed that, "*Nothing was measured and the men took very little as they arrived with a full kit and stayed only 12 months.*" It is not surprising therefore, that it should be proposed that the jackets should be, "*thoroughly well made in four sizes so that any man might be fitted.*"

However the items which attracted almost unanimous criticism were the shoes. They were considered to be very bad and not worth the money which was paid for them. The stitching easily fell apart and they would not stand up to salt water. The men would not take them when they had enough money to buy shoes ashore, but it would seem that the Boys had very little choice in the matter. It is perhaps fortunate that seamen found little use for shoes on board ship as daily life and work was accomplished in bare feet.

## A Question of Food

So here we have a brief insight into one of the subjects which would have given Henry and his shipmates cause for endless comment and complaint, but I am sure that the idiosyncrasies of naval clothing figured but briefly against that eternal topic - FOOD !

If the Navy did anything for the Boys in terms of improving their diet it was, for most of them, the provision of a regular meal, which many might not have had at home. It also provided a surprisingly wide variety of foods, some of which came as quite a surprise to the author, and was the result of a major reassessment, which took place prior to 1861. This led directly to the introduction of the following items.

Cocoa	Chocolate	Tea	Coffee
Bread (soft tack)			
Sago	Rice	Flour	Pearl Barley
Tinned potatoes	Vegetables	Split Peas	
Salt Horse	Pressed Beef		
Mustard	Pepper	Currants	Raisins

<sup>1</sup> The ORLOP Deck was the lowest deck in a ship with more than three decks.

Although the number of ingredients had been considerably increased, the daily menus remained somewhat bland. By our standards, we might think the meals very short on quantity but that was not the view taken by some of the Medical Officers who considered the new Boys to be 'overfed'. If there was such a thing as a 'typical' menu, then the one set out below gives us an insight into the meals that the Boys could expect to get each day.

Breakfast was taken early, between 6 and 7 am and might have been 12 ozs of corned pork with 12 ozs of soft bread all washed down with 3/4 oz of chocolate and the same amount of sugar. Dinner was at noon and one record showed a rolling 4 day cycle of meals as follows:-

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4
12 ozs fresh beef	12 ozs mutton	12 ozs beef	12 ozs corned pork
12 ozs potatoes	12 ozs potatoes	12 ozs potatoes	12 ozs potatoes
Roast or baked	8 ozs flour	4 ozs flour	4 ozs split peas
	1 oz suet	½ oz suet	
	2 ozs raisins	8 ozs mixed vegetables	

On this rota Days 2 and 3 are particularly interesting as these were the days on which the Boys were taught to make their own food and on the *IMPLACABLE* this was done by the Seamen Instructors and NOT the cook. '*Plum Duff*' was the hopeful result of their efforts on Day 2. For this it was essential to buy fresh suet to add to the flour and raisins. On Day 3, however, the ingredients were intended to produce the imaginatively named '*Sea Pie*' and for this exercise it was acceptable to use the 'Government' suet which came from the Victualling Yard in Stonehouse.

With such a large and constantly changing population, it is not surprising that there were mixed perceptions and different systems found in every ship. The Paymaster of the *IMPLACABLE* believed that the Boys "*liked their sea pies very much*", whilst on other ships it was thought that food was wasted by their erratic and unskilled attempts at cooking.

There seems to have been an Admiralty Order stating that there must be '*four salt meat days each week*' but the interpretation of that order, as always, left enough scope for the individual to devise his own solution. Some used the 7 day cycle whilst the more imaginative innovators based theirs upon 8 days and both met the '*letter of the law*', but all were unanimous in their complaints concerning the difficulty of obtaining fresh meat locally and keeping it fresh on board.

Once dinner was finished, the rest of the meals for the day - tea and supper - were simply composed of bread and more bread. At the end of each day a Boy would have consumed half of a 3lb standard loaf. Yet their final 4ozs. at supper was so meagre that the Boys on the *IMPLACABLE* kept back some of their portion from dinner, which they enhanced with a carefully measured spoonful of treacle.

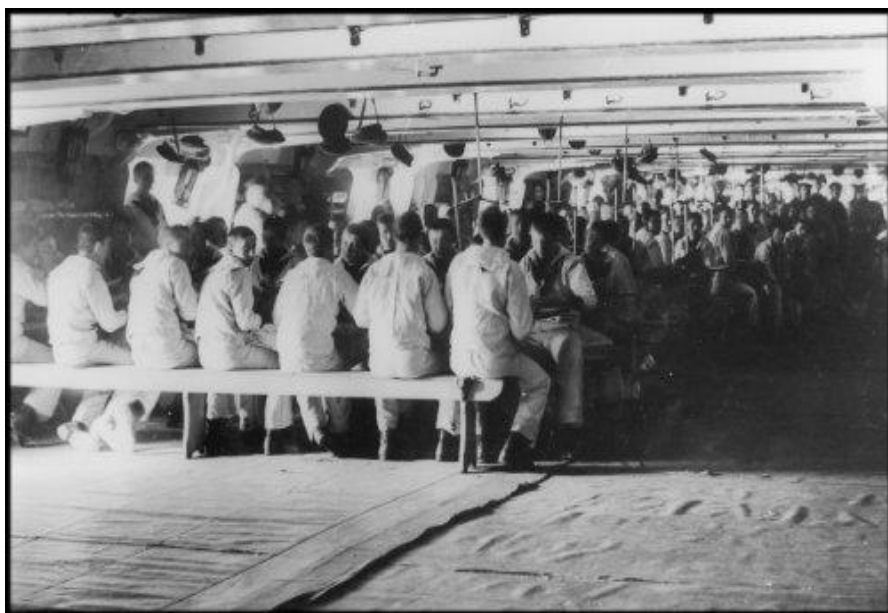
Stories of the likes and dislikes are as many and as varied as there were individuals on a ship. Cheese was guaranteed to attract some comment both for and against its usefulness. On the *IMPLACABLE*, the Doctor objected to it on the grounds that it caused diarrhoea and enlarged his sick list, yet the Paymaster believed that the Boys enjoyed the Dutch cheese especially brought in from Rotterdam. On the *BOSCAWEN* in Portland Harbour, the cheese was thought so offensive '*that the whole ship stinks of it*' and the Officers were adamant that so much was flung over the side by the Boys that the money wasted would have been better spent buying flour. It was a different story again on the *IMPREGNABLE* whose Paymaster bought "*only the best Glo'ster which the Boys like and eat it all.*"

Soup was another dish, which attracted a mixed reaction. Some said that the Boys liked nothing other than the pea soup, whilst others said that the soup given on *'beef days was much liked.'*

At first glance it would seem that the Royal Navy maintained such strictness in the purchase and distribution of food and drink that every move was watched closely, every portion weighed accurately and every penny accounted for. Yet that was not the reality. There was endless scope for the sharp eyed, light fingered thief who happened to be at the right place at the right time intent on supplementing either his rations or his pocket. Whether he would have escaped detection is another matter, for the evidence given to the inquiry of 1872 suggests that the Boys were not reticent about complaining should the occasion arise. The Paymaster of the *IMPLACABLE* in describing the issuing system, stated that the Ship's Cook sent the Cook's Mate to collect the sugar, tea and chocolate for the Boys and this was carefully weighed out in front of two duty Petty Officers. It was then taken to the Sentry in the presence of the Ship's Corporal (policeman) in whose charge it remained throughout the night. No check was made on the quantities again and neither did anyone see it put into the Mess coppers in time for the early breakfast, yet there had never been any complaint concerning short measure, weak tea or chocolate.

There were probably 20 Messes on the *IMPLACABLE* each containing 20 Boys and a Mess Captain was appointed to fetch the food or its ingredients from the place appointed for its serving. One colourful but brief description of a typical meal time begins with the pipe, *'Hands to dinner.'*

*"The food was already standing on the tables when the Boys dashed pell-mell for the plate they judged to be the most appetizing. No one was permitted to sit or to touch the food until an Officer had made his round of the tables to see if there were any complaints. If there were, the Officer solved the problem by exchanging the plate with that of the Boy who had served the meal. Once grace had been said at the head of each table as the Officer passed, he ordered 'Carry on' and the Boys fell ravenously on their plates."*



The last word on food must rest with the Christmas Dinner and I can detect a justifiable hint of satisfaction in the reports of the various Paymasters when they succeeded in feeding more than 500 hungry Boys for less than £20. I can imagine the excitement in the Messes as they chattered in anticipation of the luxuries to come. Geese, hams and extra meat: cheese and butter: apples, oranges and nuts: even a glass of real ale. A feast indeed!

## A Question of 'Stick and Carrot'

The discipline of the regime on board ship was stricter and harsher than anything we would understand or accept today. The Seaman Instructor or Petty Officer was constantly on watch for the slightest display of misplaced, youthful exuberance or inattention. Many carried canes as a matter of routine and the sudden and unexpected swish of bamboo through the air was enough to focus all eyes instantly on its target. All Training Ships had a punishment Mess in the open air on the upper deck where the regime was even more strict until the sentence had been served.

The working day for the Boys ended at 8 p.m. when the hammocks were piped down and slung, and *'lights out'* was piped at 9 p.m. It was at this time of day that the temptation to relax was overwhelming, but it was unwise to make any noise, which would attract the attentions of the ever-present 'watchdogs'. If they did, the entire Mess would be turned out and ordered to lash their hammocks and carry them to the upper deck where the Boys would be forced to stand in the chill night air with the heavy canvas bundles held over their heads.

To the reader this might seem to be a simple situation of good humoured fun, seen as such by both the 'masters' and the 'slaves'. It must be remembered, however, that flogging with the cat o' nine tails was still commonplace in the Fleet and the Boys were NOT immune from it. In 1864 the *IMPLACABLE* administered 186 lashes and the *IMPREGNABLE* 253 lashes, a total of 439 lashes on an unpublished number of Boys. A dozen lashes with this barbaric instrument was enough to hospitalise the strongest of physiques and the likelihood of being scarred for life was almost certain.

Although life on board the Training Ships was physically hard and mentally exacting, it was not entirely dedicated to work. There were welcome breaks in the regime in the form of an occasional whole day excursion. It is not clear what form these took, but they were comparatively expensive, sometimes costing as much as £12. Much of this cost seems to have gone into purchasing extra food, as even the delicacy of a single bun for each Boy had to be accounted for. Some ships gave only two excursions during the year but the *IMPLACABLE* recorded FOUR during the summer months. Games were also encouraged among the Boys. Cricket and bagatelle seems to have featured prominently, but the only opportunity they had to follow these pursuits would have been at weekends. Only the members of the Ship's Company were allowed weekend leave and this may account for the generous allowance given to the Boys at the traditional holiday seasons.

Every effort was made to ensure that the Boys had enough money to take with them on leave. During their training they were continuously encouraged to give of their best and cash prizes were on offer for good results in anything from written examinations to rifle drill. These prizes could be as much as two shillings and usually awarded just as the Boys were departing for their Christmas Leave. They were also encouraged to save the 3 pence per week that they were given by the Chaplain as pocket money whilst the First Lieutenant of the ship accumulated all the money that each Boy was sent in the post by his family.

Yes, it is a fact that they did get leave from their ship in the Victorian Navy and it would seem to have been almost as liberal as the modern Navy. Not less than 20 days were awarded at Christmas and a further 15 days at Easter, but the long forgotten season of Michaelmas also attracted a further 15 days making SEVEN WEEKS in all.

I am sure that the ship was a different place once the excited hubbub of 500 Boys had faded away across the Hamoaze as they crowded into the ship's tender for the short journey to shore. Each Boy would have been carrying his bundle of



personal belongings, which would have included a gift of money from the Ship's funds for travelling expenses and more importantly, a day's ration of bread and cheese to sustain him on his journey.

It was on the day after the Boys' return from Christmas Leave that Henry and his mother made their crossing of the Tamar to the *IMPLACABLE*.

## A Question of Seamanship

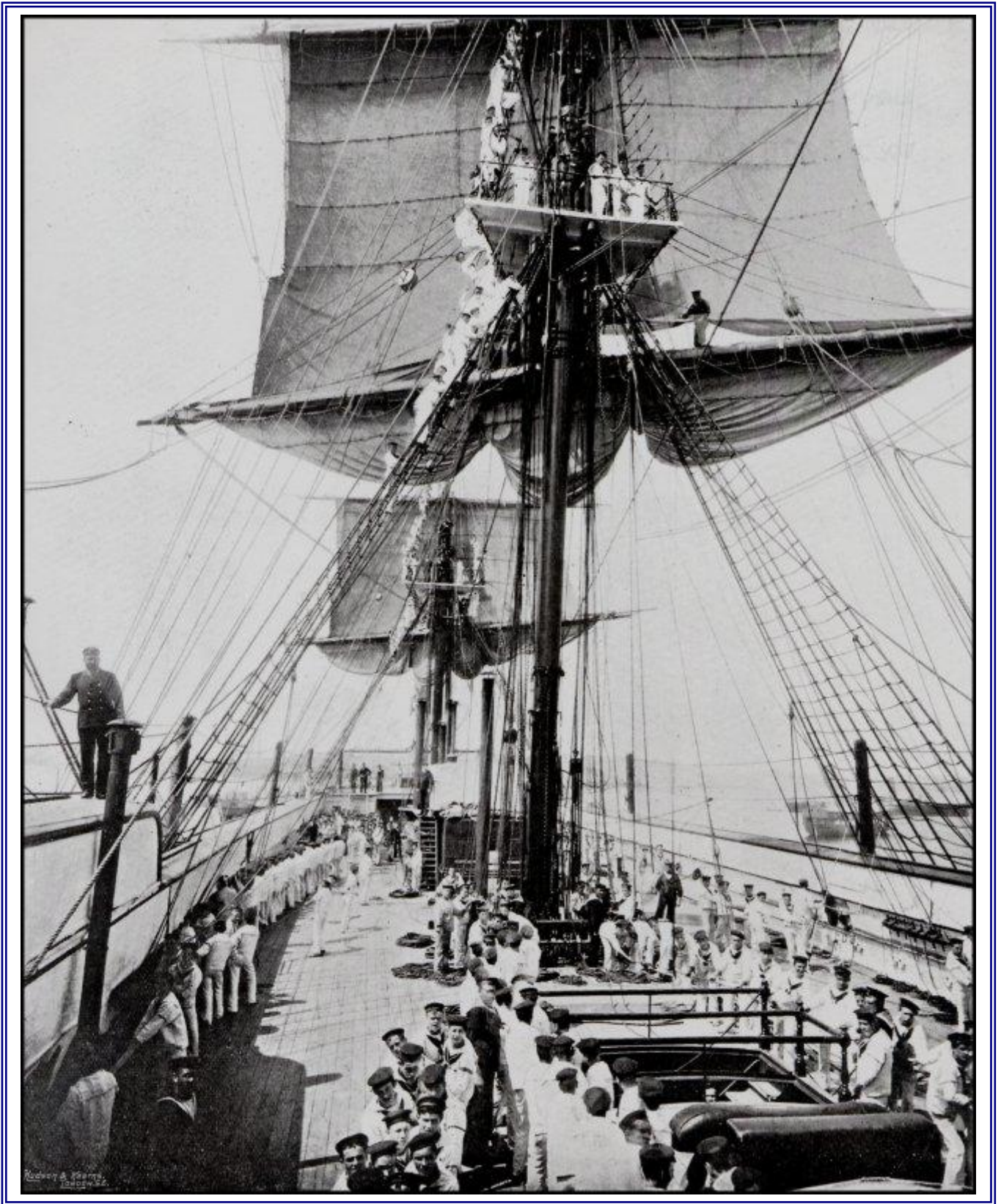


The first lesson – scrubbing decks and anything else that doesn't move!  
Above, it is hammocks and clothes.

The next lesson was to learn to furl and reef a sail on the 'monkey yard' - a yard lowered so that any slip or fall would cause little harm (right)

Then it was a case of going aloft and learning to cope with bare feet on rope ladders and to gain a head for the sheer height of the fighting tops and topmasts (next page)





Every drill on board ship was called an 'evolution' and here the Boys are learning to raise and lower the yards carrying the mainsails on both main and fore masts. This was a frequent task and as can be seen, it needed almost every hand to accomplish it.



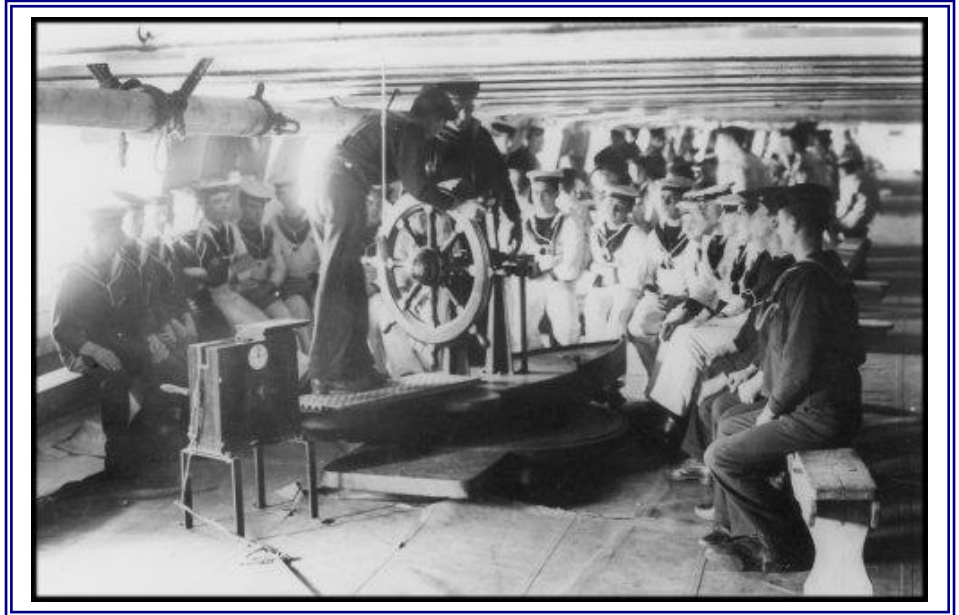
When at sea, furling and unfurling sails may have been required a dozen times in a day especially in rough weather. Each main yard would require ten – five on either side of the mast.

Patriotically captioned *The making of a British 'Tar'* this photograph was staged on board HMS IMPREGNABLE in 1896. Although 25 years have elapsed since Henry Westaway TRETHERWEY had been a Boy Seaman on board IMPLACABLE, little would have changed.

Henry served 3 months on this ship as an Able Seaman in 1877 and my maternal Grandfather Frederick KNOTT joined her in 1899.

Every Seaman in the Royal Navy was expected to stand his turn at the helm. This simple device mounted on a model hull was the beginning of that training.

The Boys would not yet have seen the huge steering position on an Ironclad when more than a dozen men would be needed to steady the four wheels in a storm.



*Off Torpoint with Morice Yard in the background.*



Swinging the lead was the only way that the Captain could know the depth of water beneath his keel. It was a demanding and responsible task to call the depths accurately from this precarious perch.

Handling a cutlass was no less dangerous, but seamen were expected to form boarding and landing parties, so the drills were an essential, regular routine.

## A Question of Seagoing Experience

Throughout this narrative I have attempted to recreate a picture, albeit a very hazy picture, depicting life on board one of Her Majesty's Training Ships for Boys. Yet, I have not mentioned the method used by the Navy to translate the intense classroom instruction given on a static, floating school, into the reality of a fully rigged warship straining under the influence of the wind.

Each Training Ship was allocated a seagoing tender, usually a Brig or the slightly larger Sloop and *IMPLACABLE*'s tender was the *SEALARK*, which at 319 tons was under the command of Lieutenant James Croke in June 1867. There were only two other Officers on board, a 2nd Master for navigation and an Assistant Surgeon. All the Tenders seemed to be manned in the same way and there were three others in the immediate vicinity. *SQUIRREL* a sloop of 428 tons was attached to the *IMPREGNABLE*; another larger sloop, the *LIBERTY* at 447 tons was attached to the *GANGES* in Falmouth and the *BOSCAWEN* at Portland had the 358 ton Brig *FERRET*.



The sailing season began in April and lasted for 6 months. New Boys joining in the winter, as Henry did, were NOT allowed to go aloft until April in the Training Ship and they were not expected to be ready to venture onto the Tenders until they had completed 9 months of their training. This would have denied Henry an opportunity to cruise on the *SEALARK* before the ship went to her winter moorings in the Dockyard in October 1867 and the additional six months wait for the 1868 season would explain the unusually long 19 months which Henry spent on the *IMPLACABLE*.

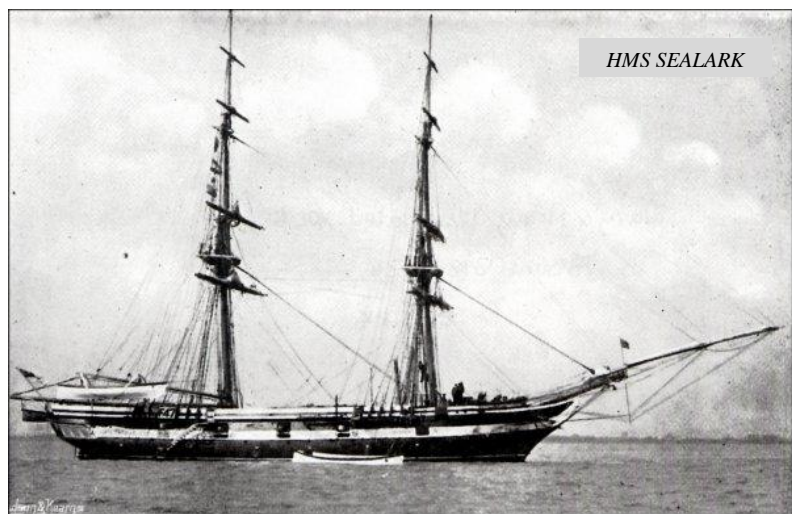
The *SEALARK* was the smallest Tender and could only carry 65 Boys but, the general principle was that batches of upto 100 Boys were taken to sea for cruises lasting as long as 6 weeks. The daily reports of Naval shipping movements in the local newspaper record their comings and goings and it is fairly obvious that they were in the habit of visiting each others' ports. Knowing the Navy as I do, this would have meant the organisation of some inter-ship sport and there is a record of a race between FIVE Tenders starting from Plymouth Sound on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1878.

By this time the Tenders had different parent ships but it is interesting to note that the *SEALARK*, now Tender to the *GANGES* in Falmouth, got away to the fastest start, but it was the *LIBERTY*, Tender to the *IMPLACABLE*, which won the race in convincing if controversial style.

For the duration of the cruise the Boys literally became the crew of the ship, as there were very limited numbers of Instructors present. They were divided into Watches and Messes in exactly the same way as any other man o' war; Fo'c'sle Boys: Foretop Boys: Maintop Boys and Quarterdeck Boys were names instantly recognisable to any seaman. The day started early, at 5 a.m. with breakfast at 5.30 a.m., dinner at noon; tea at 4 p.m. and supper at 7 p.m. They were well fed and

each Boy received a weekly ration of 11lbs. of bread, 12ozs of sugar, 5ozs of chocolate, 7lbs. of a variety of meats and 5lbs. of potatoes.

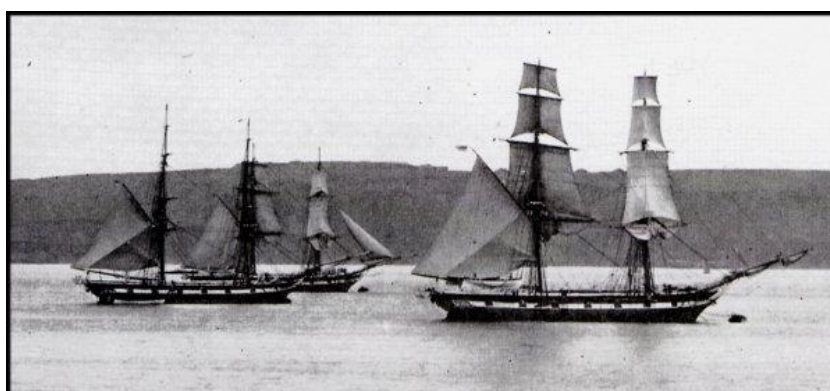
The working day consisted of every conceivable activity that a Seaman would be called upon to perform, activities like reefing and furling sails; unbending, shifting and bending sails; sending up and down and shifting spars; sounding; steering; signalling and even rescue drills (saving). All of this demanded knowledge,



agility, confidence and even bravery and that was the function of the sailing Brigs. They were there to develop that confidence, so that a man could go aloft without endangering himself or his shipmates. Of course for Boys going to sea for the first time there was a lot of seasickness to contend with. It was also common practice for the men to work barefoot at sea and this gave rise to a large number of sore and damaged feet among the Boys. This inevitability explained the presence of an Assistant Surgeon on such a small vessel

and emphasises the point that the Navy committed a great deal of care and attention to them during this part of their essential training. No one dare send a Boy aloft who was seasick. He was in danger of loosing his grip in a dizzy bout of nausea. Neither would they risk a pair of raw feet on the rope ladders until those feet had become hardened to the task.

So if the training cruises of 1868 followed the same pattern as those of 1897, then Henry would have joined one of the first cruises of the new season. The completion of this part of his instruction would bring him almost to the end of the beginning. On the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1868 he became 16 years old with automatic promotion to Boy First Class. Less than two months remained of his time on the



*Training brigs moored in Plymouth Sound*

*IMPLACABLE*, which rarely carried more than 20 Boys of this superior rank. Henry would have been issued with his first full sea kit and awaited his turn for his draft.

Many of the Boys simply moved further up the Hamoaze to the Gunnery Ship *HMS CAMBRIDGE* and this would have been the draft for many of his friends. Another group would have found themselves in the Training Squadron, a fleet of large, lumbering ships chasing each other up and down the English Channel with more time spent in an English port than at sea.

Henry, however, found himself with a more unusual draft. The name on the slip of paper he was handed was one he had not heard of. It was **HMS TERROR** and he was ordered to join her in Bermuda. His heart skipped a beat as he excitedly shared his news with his messmates.

## *Henry Westaway Trethewey*

It is the autumn of 1868 in England

Henry leaves Devonport on the Sloop ECLIPSE bound for Bermuda

Spend nine months with him on the Guard Ship TERROR

Sail with him to Halifax on the Devonport Frigate PHOEBE

Enjoy a glimpse of life on the Flagship ROYAL ALFRED

Join the Gun Boat MULLET and sail with her in northern waters before returning to the West Indies

Henry becomes an Ordinary Seaman on the homeward voyage in 1870



When Henry left Devonport, he didn't know when he would see England again. Perhaps it didn't matter to a 17 year-old in search of adventure. His first taste of life at sea lasted four weeks short of TWO YEARS.

This story would be incomplete without a knowledge of some of the events that were making the newspapers during Henry's first seagoing draft to a foreign station during 1868 to 1870

Did Henry know anything of them? Did he hear about the towing of the huge Floating Dock to Bermuda? Did he hear of the enormous interest inspired by the activities of the Flying Squadron? Did he realise that riot and rebellion, disease and accident were never far from him?

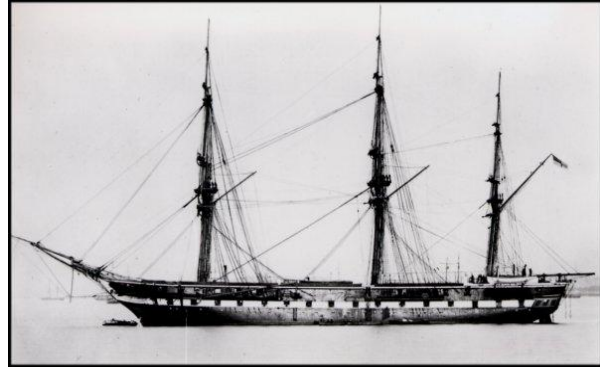
And what of Bermuda and Halifax? Did he spend time ashore? Did he like them or loathe them? And what did he do with his spare time?

If only we knew.

# A voyage to BERMUDA

## A Mysterious Omission

On Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> August 1868 a report appeared in the local newspaper explaining that a Boy First Class had been lost from the BRISTOL on her homeward voyage to Plymouth. She had crept into harbour on Monday and as soon as contact had been made with the shore, the story of the tragedy spread through all the other ships. The BRISTOL was a member of the Training Squadron officially known as the Channel Squadron. She was returning from Gibraltar when at a position approximating to 41°N & 10°W, William Bunker lost his footing on the main topmast, the highest point on the vessel, and plummeted into the main chains which catapulted him into the sea. His scream was heard by all on deck and two junior officers dived into the sea without hesitation. They were at his side within minutes only to find him already dead from his injuries. So the body of one more British Seaman, only 17 years old, was committed to the deep with full naval honours and Henry was graphically reminded of the dangers he would face as he left the comparative safety of the IMPLACABLE.



Although they were used to the idea of long drafts in those days, Henry could not have known that it would take him away from Plymouth for just two days short of 100 weeks. He knew only that he had been ordered to join the TERROR, which was moored permanently in Grassy Bay, Bermuda where it acted both as a Guard Ship to the Dockyard and a focal point for dispatches to the squadron of warships patrolling that vast area.

The start of this next phase in Henry's career is very unclear as the all-important information is missing from his record, begging the question, "*how did he get there?*"

Strangely we have differing versions of his service record which were written at different times during his career and it is interesting to note that the only discrepancy in the chronology is associated with this first draft. One version shows him joining the TERROR on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1868 whilst another shows the 25<sup>th</sup> August. This discrepancy is quite unusual as the accuracy of the record keeping in the Royal Navy was almost beyond reproach. However, a discrepancy does exist with no obvious explanation as to the method used in joining the TERROR in Bermuda on the other side of the Atlantic on the day after he was discharged from the IMPLACABLE in the Hamoaze in Devonport. We must look elsewhere for a possible answer to this puzzle.

There were normally only two methods used for transporting new crewmembers to their ships on a foreign station. The most frequent practice was for seamen to be carried on a ship in passage to the intended destination as a '*supernumerary*'. Henry's service record shows that he must have done this on at least three occasions and two of these occurred during this first overseas draft. These periods were quite short. In Henry's case one was a mere 17 days (on the PHOEBE from Bermuda to Halifax). The other was 48 days (on the ROYAL ALFRED, whilst he waited for the MULLET), but there is NO SHIP recorded for Henry's first voyage to Bermuda from Devonport.



The second method of reaching far-flung destinations was the use of troopships but this is even less likely from the evidence of the newspaper reports. There were three transports in Plymouth Harbour on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1868 - TAMAR: URGENT: HIMALAYA.

The TAMAR paid off on the 7<sup>th</sup> August, whilst the other two were heavily committed to troop movements which would take them nowhere near the West Indies. However, on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September the steam store ship MEGAERA was held in Plymouth Sound for a day in order to embark supernumerary officers about to join their ships on the South American Station. This voyage was unlikely to have followed a course for Bermuda, so it would seem that this option was not the one used for Henry's passage. The pages of the *Western Daily Mercury* soon revealed the ship that we were looking for.

The ECLIPSE was a new wooden, screw driven sloop and she had only recently been completed in Sheerness Dockyard. At 1755 tons and 212 feet long she carried a crew of 180. After only a couple of months in service she had been ordered from the 'Particular' to join the West Indies Station. She arrived in the Sound from Sheerness late in the evening of Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September. Her Captain carried specific orders to, "*embark supernumerary Boys for disposal in the Squadron on the West Indies Station*". This is quite explicit and Henry must have been listed among them. She set sail on the morning of Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September 1868.<sup>2</sup>

So we have found the ship that was the most likely transport for Henry to reach Bermuda, but what of the discrepancies in the dates of leaving IMPLACABLE?

I am inclined to think that the later date of the 25<sup>th</sup> August is the most likely date because there is one further factor that I have not previously brought into the equation - LEAVE!

It is my understanding that leave was not given once a ship was on a foreign station and neither did a ship berth alongside a quay for one simple reason - desertion. It is therefore, interesting to note that the inclusive period between the

6<sup>th</sup> and the 25<sup>th</sup> August is 20 days. Exactly the same period exists between the 25<sup>th</sup> August and the 13<sup>th</sup> September, the day that the ECLIPSE sailed for Bermuda and this was the same period allowed for Christmas leave. If it is correct to surmise that the Christmas leave was given in advance as an 'embarkation leave' then we are left with two distinct possibilities.

First, if Henry's appointment to the TERROR took effect from the 25<sup>th</sup> August, after he had been on leave from the IMPLACABLE, then we would have to account for the missing three weeks before he embarked on the ECLIPSE. On the other hand, if he had taken his leave from the 25<sup>th</sup> August, but was shown as appointed to the TERROR, then we would have no such problem in accounting for lost time. We would be left with the simple clerical omission from his service record - the voyage on the ECLIPSE - and this is the missing piece of the jigsaw.

This wooden vessel with a ram bow was later classified as the smallest of the Navy's corvettes. Her guns were outdated muzzle-loaders. She carried two slide mounted 7-inch guns amidships and four truck-mounted 64 pounders, two at either end of the waist. However, she was a new ship on a new deployment and she was destined for the place that Henry needed to go. The ECLIPSE must have been Henry's passage vessel and the few extra hands, even if they were relatively inexperienced, would be most welcome on the North Atlantic crossing. No sightings of the ship were recorded over the next few weeks, but it was not the last that we would hear of the ECLIPSE.



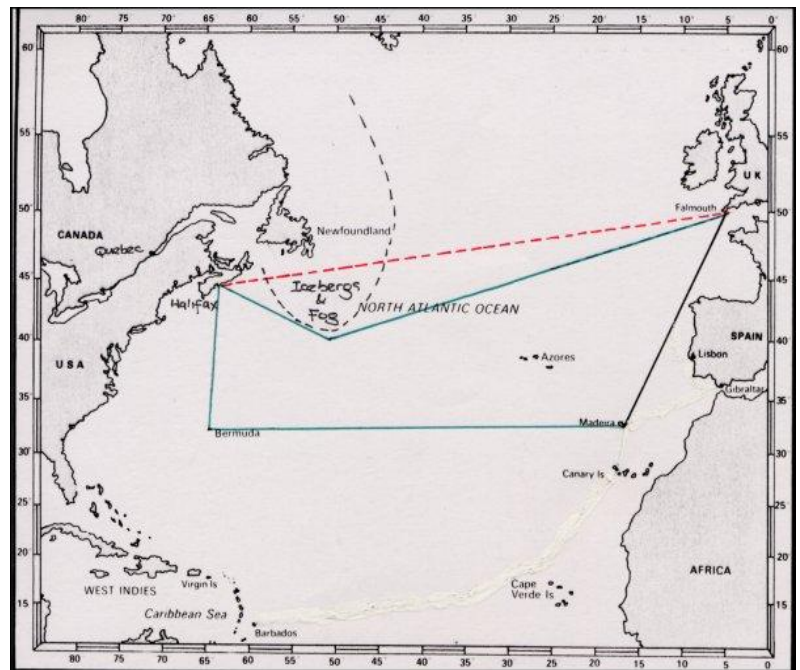
*TENEDOS, sister ship to the ECLIPSE, built in Devonport between 11-11-1867 and 13-5-1870 and seen here in 1872 in Jennycliff Bay.*

<sup>2</sup> WDM Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September and Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 1868.

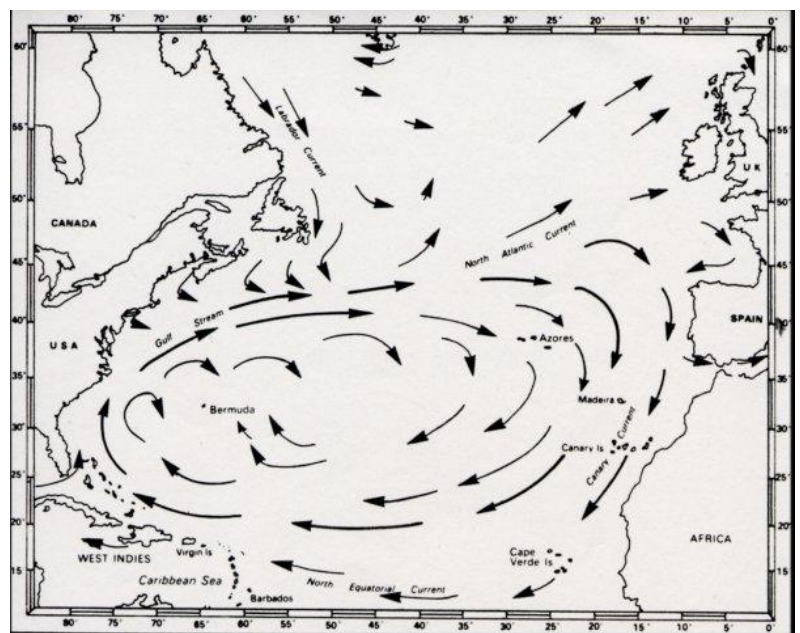
# Sailing Conditions in the North Atlantic Ocean

There were two routes followed by ships leaving Plymouth for the North American and West Indies Station.<sup>3</sup>

The northerly route took ships into inhospitable conditions forcing Captains into the reluctant use of their steam power. In 1867 two of the ships in the Squadron - PHOEBE and ROYAL ALFRED - took 22 and 25 days respectively to reach Halifax and each experienced a very rough passage. The PHOEBE recorded a distance travelled of 3179 miles but this is likely to have been the 'distance over the ground'. A glance at the chart below will show how dependent these crossings were on steam propulsion, as the winds and currents are very strongly against them.

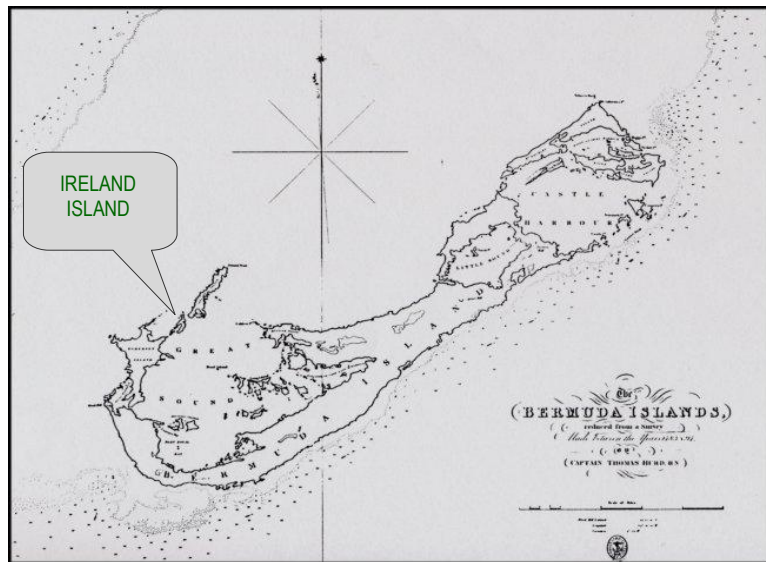


The southerly route or Trade Winds route is the traditional sailing route from Europe to the Indies and has been in regular use since 1493. A passage to Madeira can be favourable at anytime, but June and July afford the best chance of good weather in the Channel and Bay of Biscay. The Portuguese Trade Winds will have taken hold by this time, blowing at 10 to 15 knots from the north and they will be assisted by the Portuguese Current circulating southwards as far as the Canaries. If there is a worst time to make this passage, then it is in January, but only for the impreciseness in the winds and their lack of strength. From the tiny island of Madeira, standing off the Moroccan coast, to Bermuda is 1500 miles across the centre of the North Atlantic, which affords only light winds and currents, but it is also the hurricane zone from May until December. Erratic and volatile phenomenon, these are totally unpredictable and immensely destructive. Each year an average of ten Tropical Storms are certain to arise and half of these can reach hurricane strength, so a passage from Madeira to Bermuda and the West Indies must be treated with extreme caution.



<sup>3</sup> Diagrams from 'The Atlantic Crossing Guide' edited by Philip Allen

# B E R M U D A



Volcanic in origin, the remnants of three sunken craters form an image of a distorted boot print in the Atlantic Ocean. Bermuda is represented to the ill-informed, as one island when it is in reality more than 150 coral islets. 20 of these are inhabited and 7 form the principal chain.

Seafarers expect to locate it in the vicinity of 32° 20'N and 64° 25'W lying 570 miles east of Cape Hatteras in North Carolina. The nearest West Indian Island is some 800 miles to the southwest and Halifax, Nova Scotia is 868 miles to the northeast. Almost equidistant from each sphere of operations, its position was considered to be of great strategic importance in the event of our being involved in a conflict likely to prey upon our shipping.

## The Naval Base

---

When the Treaty of Paris recognised the United States of America as a new nation in 1783, the Royal Navy was left with bases in Halifax to the north and Jamaica and Antigua in the West Indies, but there was nothing in between. It was during the evacuation of British Forces from New York, that perceptive eyes fell upon Bermuda. This in turn led to some very detailed and intelligent surveys of the Island and its coastal waters and by 1795 there was considerable naval interest in the Island and its possibilities.

Right at the beginning it was recommended that a *“44 gun ship might be able to answer a number of useful purposes. She should come out laden with the most useful stores. The guns she mounted should be those most wanted for the defence of the Island. Her anchor should be a larger size than those of her own rate and she should bring out mooring chains and swivels for them. She should be placed close to the shore in Grassy Bay and well moored. Here she would serve the purpose of a Floating Battery and Guardship.”*<sup>4</sup>

The Island is barely a mile wide, but it extends for just over 22 miles in a long, curling hook. At its extremity and dominating the entrance into the Great Sound is Ireland Island. It was noted in 1795 that this island was *“wholly without inhabitants and of sufficient dimensions for the purposes of a Garrison, Arsenal, Hospital etc. without waste of land.”*

The onset of the Napoleonic Wars injected a more active interest in the establishment of a formal base and on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1809 Ireland Island was purchased for £4800 and the first construction contracts were placed. However for a number of years, progress with the base did not impress those with a discerning eye. After fifteen years of effort there were just 74 English and 54 local tradesmen, supported by 164 black labourers, but there were a number of small Yard vessels. A new source of labour was tapped in 1824, when 300 convicts arrived from England aboard the ANTELOPE and with them came 100 marines and junior officers to form the first significant garrison. During the next forty years, before penile exile was abolished in 1863, more than 9000 miscreants served some or all of their sentence on its

---

<sup>4</sup> Report by Captain Penrose RN dated 24 March 1795 extracted from 'The Royal Dockyard, Bermuda' page 25  
Map published 4<sup>th</sup> August 1827 surveyed by Captain Thomas Hurd RN

construction. Two thousand of them never left the island. The mass of humanity, sometimes as many as 1600 toiling in primitive conditions, was an ideal target for the death sentence handed out by the Yellow Fever.

When black slavery was abolished in the 1830's the population of Bermuda was about 10,000 and surprisingly the ratio of black to white was about 1:1. Consequently the growth of the

Dockyard and its importance as a base for the Royal Navy became the hinge pin of the local economy, but it was late in the 1840's before the Dockyard began to take on the appearance that would have been familiar to Henry.

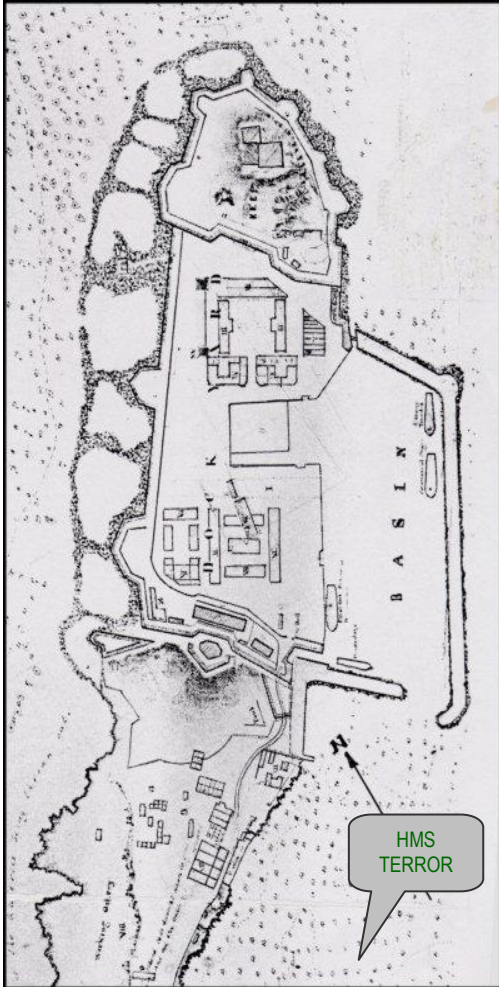
At the northernmost tip of Ireland Island was the early fortification known as The Keep and it was here in 1837 that the **Ordnance Department** began improving the facilities. It was not until 1849 that a series of buildings began to arise capable of replenishing ordnance stores that had previously only been possible at Halifax. The largest of these buildings, for the storage of gunpowder, embraced an intricate ventilating system and spark resisting features that would secure nearly 5,000 kegs of powder. At the end of 1853, the dockyard workforce succumbed to an epidemic of Yellow Fever that killed 38 of the 138 men it hospitalised and left the work incomplete. The buildings remained unfinished for 40 years and Henry would have seen them in that state.

When it was decided to move the **Victualling Yard** ashore from the two hulks ROYAL OAK and WEYMOUTH, the site chosen sat between the entrance into The Keep and the Boat Slip. This fine complex of buildings was ready for occupation in September 1853.

At the end of the Crimea War resources became available for the development of the **Dockyard** and this led to the construction of three fine storehouses between 1857 and 1860. Of these, the East Storehouse is the most impressive with its twin 100-foot towers, which captures the visitor's eye immediately upon entering the Dockyard Gate, but for

a view of the most impressive interior, a visit to the Sail Loft is essential. It is one immense room without pillars, designed for making or repairing the huge sails of the ships of the day. Yet it was the floor that attracted attention as it was made entirely of teak, to eliminate the splinters that could so easily damage an expensive sail.

The **North Basin** is comprised of the Breakwater lying off the Victualling Yard with its Coal Wharf supporting huge piles of bunker fuel and the Great Wharf adjacent to the Dockyard. This was the only refitting basin in Henry's day and the **TERROR** was moored some distance from its entrance. I have no doubt that during Henry's nine months on board the Guard Ship there would have been occasions when a boat was sent on some errand into the Dockyard and Henry could have been one of its oarsmen. On these excursions he would have looked upon many of the buildings and features that are still there to this day.



# Life on the **TERROR** in Bermuda

26<sup>th</sup> August 1868 to 20<sup>th</sup> April 1869

In some ways my title is an ambitious one, yet in another way, it is not. Let me explain. It is ambitious in the sense that I have found little or nothing written about the Royal Navy in Bermuda. The preoccupation of modern authors is with the physical evolution of the Dockyard and its buildings, which I have already summarised. The life of its inhabitants is left largely to the imagination. However, Henry's life, for the most part, was wrapped up in the naval routines and these were not influenced by the geographical location of the ship. These routines were dictated only by the time of day and the day of the week. So let us begin by trying to visualise the ship itself. What was HMS **TERROR** really like?

Again this has not been easy, as she seems to have been one of those ships that attracted very little attention, probably due to the fact that she was static in Bermuda for 44 years. However her origin was far from ordinary. She was launched in 1856 and her design had been based upon a design of French ship used during the Crimean War that had impressed the Admiralty. **TERROR** was one of a class of four ships, the others being the **AETNA**, **EREBUS** and **THUNDERBOLT**. They were armoured, floating batteries and the class represented an important step forward in the development of the Battleship. They were built of iron and were the first ships to combine an iron hull with armour plate AND steam propulsion.

Yet for all that, the **TERROR** displaced a mere 1971 tons and was capable of generating only 200 HP. She arrived in Bermuda in 1857 and that voyage was probably the only significant voyage she ever made, except the voyage home for scrap in 1901.

She had already exceeded her 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the Harbour, when she was recommissioned on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1868, but it would be another 10 months or so before Henry would step onto her deck. At this time, the **TERROR** supported an extremely small group of Officers and Captain Wainwright was her longest serving officer, having celebrated three years in command at her recommissioning. Only a Lieutenant and Navigating Lieutenant supported him, for strictly speaking her other officers did not share the Wardroom status. She had only three other officers. There was the Paymaster and his Assistant and the Chief Engineer, but I have not yet discovered now many men made up the crew.

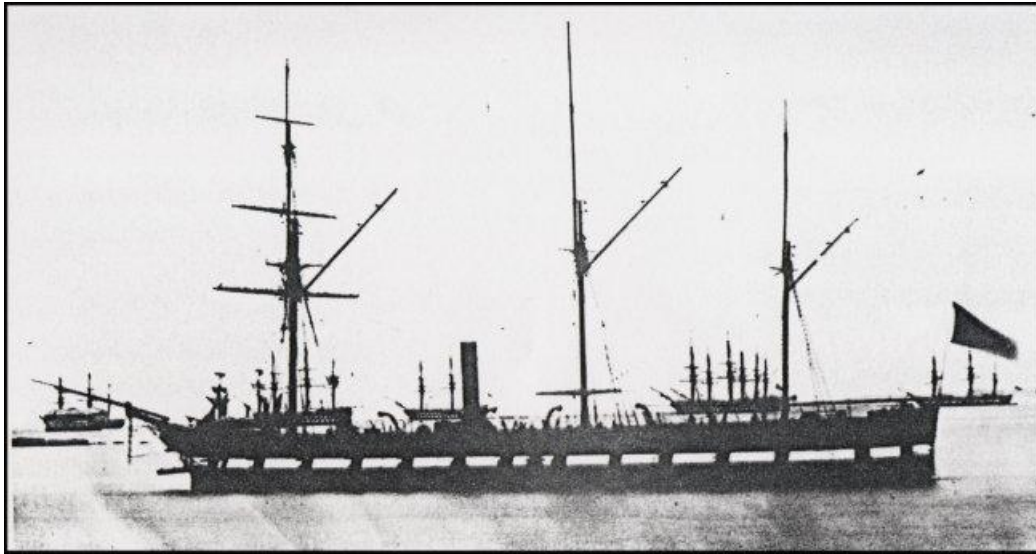
490 <b>TERROR</b> , 16. Iron.	
S. Floating Battery.	
Armour-plated.	
1971 Tons. 200 H.P.	
Bermuda.	
Captain .....	James F. B. Wainwright
	1 Jan 68
Lieutenant ....	Alfred J. Cheek ... 27 Sept 66
Nav. Lieut. ...	Charles W. Ross ... 12 Mar 68
Supernumeraries for service at Bermuda.	Capt. Mar. .... Gustavus
	F. Munro 5 June 68
	Lieut. Mar. .... Henry B. Isaacson .. 1 July 68
	Leaver H. G.
	Cross 1 July 68
Surgeon .....	
Paymaster ....	Henry Callaway .. 21 Oct 68
Chief Engineer	James Ryley .... 4 Aug 68
Assist. Surg. ...	Joseph Halpin .... 16 Sept 68
(Additional for service of Bermuda Yard.)	
Assist. Paym. ..	Harry Langworthy . 1 Nov 67
	George Davis ... .. 1 Feb 67
	(Supernumerary.)
	(Recommissioned, 1 Jan 68.)

The NAVY LIST December 1868

## Why was the **TERROR** important to Bermuda? \_\_\_\_\_

Sixty six years after the first proposal to moor a 44-gun ship in the Harbour, a subsequent Commander in Chief of the West Indies Station made an independent assessment of the naval measures that would be necessary in the defence of Bermuda. The Island was a complicated place to defend due to the number of islands and cuts or passages between them. Consequently, Vice Admiral Milne's memorandum, written on his Flagship HMS **NILE** on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1861, contained nine points. The first of these considered an attack on Ireland Island. He suggested that this might be attempted through "*Chub Cut or other of the small western entrances. In such a case the two Gun Boats and launches of HM Ships would be ready to act in shallow water. HM Ship **TERROR** and other vessels drawing less than 18 feet of water would go round the west of Ireland, pass up to Somerset (Island) and defend the outer entrances, or be prepared to act as circumstances might require.*"

It was his opinion that the responsibility for the defence of the Island lay squarely with its Forts and Garrison, supported by the *TERROR* and the two Gun Boats. He concluded that the Squadron's seagoing ships should not be detained in Harbour unless it was considered that the Garrison was incapable of discharging its duty.<sup>5</sup>



For this strategy to remain intact it was necessary to retain the *TERROR* in a more or less mobile condition. She would have needed her spars and rigging to remain in place and there is a poor photograph of her in this condition that must have been taken in the 1860's. It certainly explains the presence of a Navigating Lieutenant on her books in 1868. Charles Ross joined in March 1868, but ten years on, there seemed to be no further need for such a posting. Photographs of the *TERROR* are scarce, but those few that do exist generally show her upper deck almost entirely covered by awnings, her sailing gear reduced to the minimum and her funnel not visible. She is thought never to have left these moorings to the northeast of the arm (*in the foreground*) and directly in line with *The Cottage* (*left hand centre*). Between *The Cottage* and the Floating Dock visible in the Basin, the twin square towers of the East Storehouse built in 1857 are clearly visible.

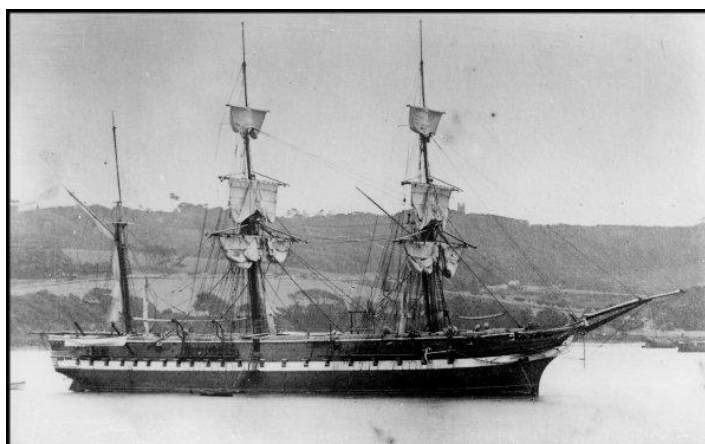


<sup>5</sup> 'The Andrew and the Onions' by Lt. Cdr. I. Stranack pages 36/37

## New Arrivals in the Autumn of 1868

---

The newspaper dispatches do not report the arrival of the ECLIPSE in Bermuda, but I can estimate it to have been in mid-October, as she is reported as having arrived in Kingston, Jamaica on Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> November. However, two months before Henry's arrival in Grassy Bay, another vessel had arrived from Devonport. The JUNO was a sister ship to the THALIA and she left Madeira with the Gun Boat VIXEN on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July and arrived in Bermuda on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1868 only to find that a crisis was in the making. It had been discovered that the entire stock of flour in the contractor's store was 'tainted' and the nearest port with flour available for the Royal Navy to purchase was New York. The JUNO left for the North American city on the 29<sup>th</sup> August and took five days to reach there.



*JUNO seen here drying sails off Cremyll below Rame Church circa 1868, possibly having just returned to Devonport after visiting the North Americas for three months during July to October 1868.*

As this was a warship and not a commercial vessel, she would not have had any holds in which to load the flour. I can only surmise that it was returned to Bermuda in bags, as deck cargo with the attendant risk of ruining it all with seawater should she encounter rough weather. On her return to Bermuda she wasted no time in unloading her precious powder and was soon under way again with the Station's invalids and supernumeraries on passage to England and Plymouth Sound, where she arrived on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

However there were two more ships that had voyaged from Devonport and reached Bermuda ahead of the ECLIPSE, but they had left Plymouth Sound together some six weeks before Henry, on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> July. The IRRESISTABLE was a rather antiquated sailing ship, whilst the VIPER was a Gun Boat manned by a crew from Portsmouth and they reached the Island sometime before the 20<sup>th</sup> September. It is not clear what purpose the IRRESITABLE was intended to serve, as she was treated as one of the non-mobile members of the Squadron. However, with two Gun Boats now on station in Bermuda, the presence of the VIPER and the VIXEN reminds us that Admiral Milne's strategy of 1861 was still in force.

## Same routine, different faces

---

If there is one feature common to all ships of this period, no matter what their size, it is the vast expanse of openness on the Upper Deck. It was a working deck, clear and open to the sky, where the ship was navigated and steered, where yards, sails and running rigging were handled and where boats and anchors were lowered and hoisted. Even though the TERROR was a stationary vessel, the drills and evolutions of a ship at sea were still demanded of the crew. The wooden deck was made of teak planks 8 inches wide and 4 inches thick and this tremendous area of timber was scrubbed and holystoned until it shone white in the sunlight. The Upper Deck was enclosed by bulwarks seven feet high, which almost completely obscured any view from the deck. This feature served no real purpose as it was a relic from the days of sail when it was needed to protect the men working the Upper Deck cannons. Along the top of the bulwarks were the hammock racks covered by canvas toppings where the matelots stored their hammocks when not in use. The entire crew lived on the deck beneath, the Main Deck.

Henry was familiar with the joining routine by this time. The first and most important action was to present himself to the Paymaster, Mr. Callaway and to have his name entered in the Ship's Register. Henry was allocated No. 495 and that gives some indication of the size of the crew, in spite of the relatively small number of officers. With such a large number of men on board, all needing to live, work, sleep, eat and entertain themselves, all warships were subjected to a rigid system which gave a crewman an allotted place to live and work. Acceptance and tolerance of this situation were important, but Naval discipline ensured that he stay in that place.

The entire crew lived in Messes and each Mess had a table which could be triced <sup>6</sup> up to the deck head when scrubbing out the mess deck, or removed altogether at action stations or when coaling ship. Every Mess then had two benches, one for either side of the table and a crockery rack on the outboard bulkhead. This contained a basin, plate and spoon for every man in the mess together with a rum tub, a bread barge and an assortment of cans and kettles. EVERY item was clearly and indelibly marked with the Mess Number and any losses had to be made up by the members. However each man was expected to use his own 'Seaman's Knife' at table.

Every aspect of life on board was governed by written instructions in the Admiralty Orders and that extended even to sleeping. In the deck beams above the mess area were the hooks for the hammocks spaced at the regulation interval of 24½ inches. Invariably these hammocks were so tightly packed that there was nothing left for '*swinging room*' so it was just as well that the TERROR had long since left the unease of the wallowing roll in an ocean swell.

Someone who had lived in such conditions and had recorded his experiences wrote,

"The bare bleakness of the mess deck with its long range of plank tables and stools had as little suggestion of physical ease as a prison cell. It was damp and chilly in a cold climate and damp and hot in the tropics. It was swept by searching draughts when the ports were open and nearly pitch dark when they were closed. It was dimly lit at night by tallow candles inside lamps at long intervals. The seaman was always in a crowd by day or night. He swallowed his bully beef or pea soup at a mess table so congested that he had barely any elbowroom and scarce space to sit. He washed himself twice a week on deck at the same time as he washed his clothes in the two tubfuls of cold water which formed the allowance for the whole mess, in the middle of splashing, noisy mob at other tubs all around."<sup>7</sup>

In trying to visualise the images created by these few words, it is very easy to lose sight of the fact that the Main Deck was NOT the preserve of the messes alone. The messes had to be fitted around the principal purpose of the ship, its gun battery, but it did not end there. The Main Deck steering position, funnel casings, capstans, water tanks, galley and the several hatches leading to the deck below, all had to be accommodated. But there was one further feature on a Victorian warship that is now long forgotten, which added to the heat, the noise and the smells. It was the array of pens and coops for the great variety of livestock that were kept on board to provide fresh eggs, milk and meat for a ravenous crew.

It was not only space that was in short supply. Free time was also a precious commodity. Every day of the week was governed by the 'watch' which changed every four hours, whether at sea or in harbour. The first watch was from 8 p.m. until midnight, but the afternoon watch between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. was split into two 'dog watches' so that no man had to stand the same watch every day. Traditionally these were the hours of recreation, when the sailors relaxed. Dancing to a battered accordion and a rasping song was not uncommon, but it was more likely that the men would resort to some sedentary craft like quilting or embroidered pictures. Scrimshaw etching on bone or making models of ships were popular pastimes. Some men cut hair whilst others tried to pen a letter to parents or a wife at home, some relaxed playing cards or just slumped into an exhausted sleep.

This brief respite in a very long day, full of hard physical labour, was soon over. The Victorian sailor had to get used to the long wait until after Sunday dinner, before he was

---

<sup>6</sup> TRICE – Dictionary definition '*pull up and secure with rope*' – origin of term '*in a trice*' or '*instantly*'.

<sup>7</sup> Description by Admiral George Ballard on joining the RESISTANCE in the Channel Fleet in 1877.



allowed time that he could truly call his own. What then? Did they go ashore? Hamilton lay five miles across the Great Sound and they would need a 'liberty boat' to get there. Did Henry succumb to staggering from bar to bar with his arms around his Messmates?

# Headlines from the Station 1865 - 70

There is little doubt from the reports in the British press that Halifax and Bermuda were little more than staging posts or safe havens. The action took place among the dozens of Caribbean Islands that lay more than 1000 miles to the south of Bermuda and twice that distance from Nova Scotia. Once in the Caribbean there were numerous exotic harbours in which to anchor, but it was Jamaica and Port Royal in particular, that was central to all the Royal Navy's activities.

## Gun boats sent to quell riots in Jamaica

## Naval Lieutenant hangs 126 troublemakers

In June 1868 there were 10 predominantly static ships scattered from north to south at four permanent locations. Five steam gunboats \* were at all of them, including the Great Lakes

HALIFAX Nova Scotia  
GREAT LAKES Canada  
BERMUDA  
JAMAICA

PYRAMUS 5th Rate receiving hulk & CHARGER \*  
CHERUB \* at Lake Huron & HERON\* at Lake Ontario  
IRRESISTABLE Sailing ship & **TERROR** Floating battery  
SPITFIRE Steam tug boat & ALBACORE\*  
ABOUKIR Receiving ship & ONYX\*

## Officers of the ECLIPSE struck down by Yellow Fever

### Captain dies before reaching Halifax

*Admiral shocks Establishment with a 'fast track' promotion.  
Lt. Dacres leapfrogs 500 others to take coveted Commander*

1868  
Flagship  
Armour Plated iron clad  
**ROYAL ALFRED**  
Frigates  
CONSTANCE: DORIS: **PHOEBE**  
Corvettes  
FAVORITE: JASON: NIGER  
Sloops  
BARRACOUTA: CODELIA: GANNET  
NIOBE: ROYALIST: SPHINX  
Gun Vessels  
DART: **MULLET**: PHILOMEL: MINSTREL

*HMS HERON should never have left Lake Ontario  
Crew ordered home from Jamaica after Gun Boat found unseaworthy*

**LAPWING** relieves **ECLIPSE** in the blockade of Nassau. Four pirate ships captured

## Gunboat Diplomacy

---

The huge Empire over which Queen Victoria presided evolved a style of diplomacy, which was at times brutal, but more often heavy handed and it became known as Gunboat Diplomacy. At the slightest sign of unrest, the civilian autocrats of the '*colonial service*' thought the solution lay simply in summoning the presence of either a detachment of '*Redcoats*' or a Navy Gunboat. They were usually sent without a moment's hesitation. The potential for unrest was widespread but the superior weapons and sheer size of the military machine of the ruling powers was usually enough to crush any rebellious spirit in a matter of days. The West Indies featured in the headlines more than the northern Americas, but the American War of Independence of 1812 was the very reason which had caused Bermuda to evolve from a simple careening beach into a modern Naval Base.

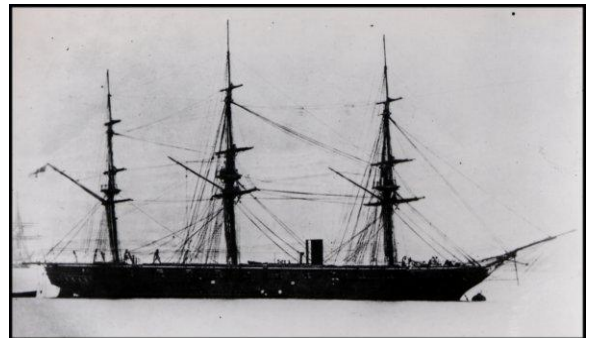
During the decade, which embraces our story –the 1860's, it would be inappropriate to ignore an incident that occurred in 1865. The Jamaica Rebellion, like many other rebellions, was crushed in a matter of days, but the manner of its control sent shock waves across the British Empire.

## The Jamaica Rebellion

---

The formula for rebellion has been well tried and tested. Poverty, unemployment, the high cost of food and a collapsing economy all need just a trivial spark to release the explosive tensions.

The summer of 1865 was hot and dry and the majority of the Negro population was in dire straits because of the drought. On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October a small disorder in the town of Morant Bay got out of hand and a riot turned to massacre. Troops were sent overland from Kingston with the support of the gunboat WOLVERINE and her crew. Two more tiny gunboats – NETTLE and ONYX – were ordered to make the long journey from Bermuda. It would be their only action, but the young Lieutenant commanding the ONYX would live into infamy as a result.



WOLVERINE 1864

When calm had been restored, Governor Eyre expressed his satisfaction to the Legislature. He singled out Lieutenant Herbert Brand of the ONYX for the highest praise "*for the unceasing and valuable services rendered by the little gun boat under his command.*" This naïve praise was totally misplaced, for Lieutenant Brand's actions became the subject of a Court Martial and later a Royal Commission. The revelations brought shame on the reputation of Her Majesty's Royal Navy. In his memoirs Admiral Fitzgerald recalls Lieutenant Brand.

*"He was a bumptious midshipman who bullied his juniors and later gained an unenviable notoriety through an abnormal zeal for hanging niggers."*

During ten dark days at the end of October 1865, with little experience of court procedure, Lieutenant Brand sentenced 126 people to hang and this included FOUR women. His brother officer from the WOLVERINE sentenced ONLY ONE! Thirty three more unfortunates received between 50 and 100 lashes and the eventual revelation of these atrocities incensed public opinion in Great Britain. It seemed that the Colonial Governors were advocating and condoning the totalitarian oppression of their subjects whilst democracy was being preached at home.<sup>8</sup>

This incident occurred before Henry Trethewey had joined the Royal Navy, but it is almost certain that the activities of Lieutenant Brand would have been common knowledge on the Station in 1868 when Henry arrived – just three years later

---

<sup>8</sup> Précised from 'Send a Gunboat!' by Preston & Major pages 76-82

## Yellow Fever on the ECLIPSE in July 1869

---

When Captain Henry Harvey and Boy First Class Henry Trethewey stood on the deck of the ECLIPSE and watched Rame Head disappear from view on that September day in 1868, they little suspected that one of them would not experience the joy of seeing it again.

Summer in the tropics can be as dangerous as it can be exotic. The ECLIPSE was engaged in the enforcement of the blockade between Cuba and America and was moored off the island of Nassau at the beginning of July 1869, when her officers began to feel ill. One by one they fell victim to the bites of the mosquito carrying the dreaded disease – Yellow Fever. Captain Harvey died in his cabin on the 19<sup>th</sup> July.

Realising the danger that faced them and in spite of the poor physical condition of the officers, the crew took the initiative, weighed anchor and headed for the northern latitudes of Halifax. The voyage took ten days of hard sailing. Fortunately only three of the crew had been afflicted and there were no more cases after their third day at sea. However, it is easy to imagine the situation that prevailed, when all the officers lay in their bunks in varying states of delirium.<sup>9</sup>

The illness is caused by a virus carried in the blood of monkeys and transferred by a troublesome mosquito prevalent on the northeast coast of South America and to a lesser extent in Central America and the Southern States of the USA. Once the incubation period is passed, usually five days, the illness progresses in three unpleasant stages, but death is NOT a foregone conclusion. Many sufferers recover only to find to their surprise that they have gained a lifelong immunity to re-infection and this might have been the underlying reason for the crew remaining unscathed.

It is difficult to say in this narrative what actions were taken to contain the outbreak on board ECLIPSE. Victims require immediate isolation behind mosquito netting to prevent it spreading to others. They need to be nursed carefully with some understanding of the different phases of the illness and each symptom treated to minimise its effect, particularly in the last stage, if death is to be prevented. For Captain Harvey, nothing prevented his death, but by the time that the ECLIPSE reached safety in Halifax, all the officers were convalescent.

## The Admiral's Prerogative

---

Captain Harvey's death inevitably created a vacancy at a very senior level, which had to be filled. The structure of the hierarchy in the Royal Navy is such that every position is defined and has to be occupied. It is perhaps fortunate that the deaths on the ECLIPSE were restricted to just one, as every promotion leaves a vacancy below it. The Admiral's problem required several names to be recommended and he had total authority over individual careers on his Station.

The announcement came on the 9<sup>th</sup> August. Admiral Mundy's decision to promote Commander Nicholson from the Flagship ROYAL ALFRED into the Post Captain's rank for the ECLIPSE was perhaps quite straightforward, but the choice of a name to fill the now vacant position of Commander on the Flagship was much more contentious. Leonard Dacres was a Lieutenant of barely three years seniority, but it was this young man who attracted the Admiral's favour. He passed over the heads of upwards of 500 brother officers to take the coveted position and a place on the Admiral's staff. A contemporary newspaper report of the day was shocked by the decision, yet it noted that, "*this fortunate young gentleman is the son of one of the Lords of the Admiralty*"<sup>10</sup>

Henry had already left the Flagship before the ECLIPSE reached Halifax, so he escaped any repercussions that this 'undue' promotion might have had on the daily life of the Lower Deck.

---

<sup>9</sup> WDM Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August 1869

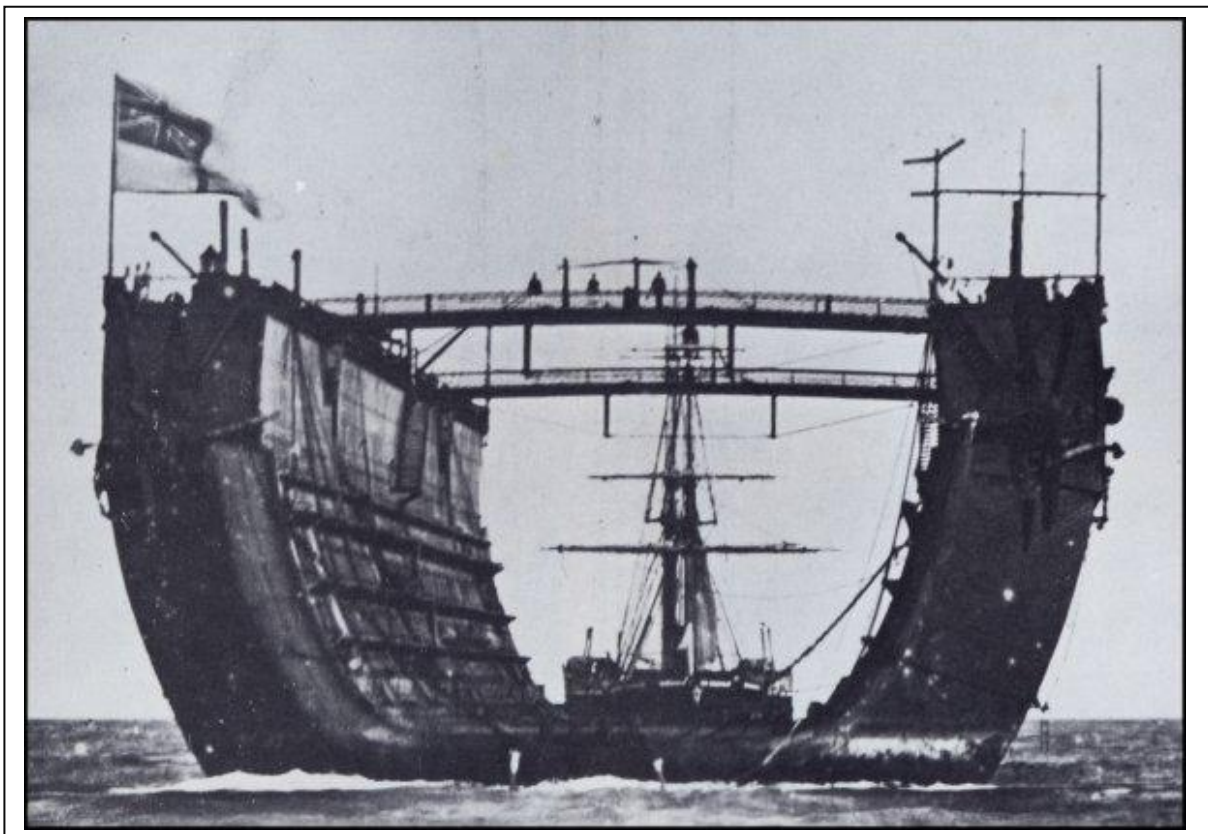
<sup>10</sup> WDM Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 1869

## The epic story of the Bermuda Floating Dock \_\_\_\_\_

This story begins in August 1866 when the first sections of a new Floating Dock were laid down in the shipyard of Messrs. Campbell, Johnstone & Co. of North Woolwich (Millwall). The project occupied 1400 workmen for the next two years and when she was launched on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1868, Henry was just 11 days away from his own departure for Bermuda. From the outset this 'vessel' was described as 'A MONSTER'. Everything about her broke records. The Ropery at Chatham Dockyard was given the task of making three of the largest rope cables ever made. The finished articles each weighed 7 tons. They were 101 fathoms in length (606 feet) and 26 inches in circumference and were to be used for the tow itself.

After her launch she was brought to the Medway and was moored in Salt Pan Reach, two miles from Sheerness for the winter. It was intended to leave her quietly there until early Spring, but within 2 days of her arrival a viciously strong gale had got behind the huge bulk of the Dock and caused it to drag its anchors. Every Rigger in the Yard was sent out to the Dock on their arrival for work in the morning, to relieve the exhausted sailors deployed at the height of the gale.<sup>11</sup>

In her day, her dimensions were awesome. She displaced 8,200 tons. She was 380 feet long with an entrance 84 feet wide. She was designed to accommodate Ironclads weighing upto 11,000 tons, 370 feet in length and 25 feet in draught and when she was finally completed during May 1869, the Admiralty decided to commission her as HMS BERMUDA with a Staff Commander in command of a crew of 82. The plan to tow the Floating Dock from Sheerness to Bermuda was a huge and complex task, needing a great deal of co-ordination in days when we would have thought communication difficult, if not impossible. Ships had to be assembled from many locations and urgent, vital repairs had to be undertaken and completed promptly. Huge stocks of coal had to be embarked for the sheer scale of the undertaking was as enormous as the Dock itself.



<sup>11</sup> WDM Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September and Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September 1868.

The NORTHUMBERLAND and the AGINCOURT were selected as 'tugs' for the first leg of the journey. Both ships were virtually new in 1869 and both ships were huge by the standards of the day. Each had five masts, weighed over 10,000 tons and was over 400 feet long. Both ships arrived in Plymouth Sound on the morning of Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1869 in the company of the BLACK PRINCE from Greenock.

The BLACK PRINCE and the WARRIOR were sister ships and they had been selected to take over the tow at Madeira and complete the passage to Bermuda. They were only marginally smaller than the first two vessels, but they were nine years old and their seakeeping qualities were already well tried and tested.

On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June the NORTHUMBERLAND moved into Plymouth Sound, after rectifying some defects in the Dockyard and the Navy's largest paddle driven warship, the TERRIBLE, left for Sheerness on an errand she had made several times since the launch of the Floating Dock. The BLACK PRINCE had departed on the previous day for Madeira with a huge quantity of coal on board. Her sister ship WARRIOR was still stuck in Portsmouth Dockyard frantically trying to complete her list of defects,<sup>12</sup> whilst the preparations began to quicken their pace.

On the following Tuesday (22<sup>nd</sup>), everything was ready to begin pumping 6000 tons of water from the Dock's ballast tanks. Steam tugs began to assemble around her, for they would have the responsibility of easing the Dock from her moorings in Stangate Creek, down Sheerness Harbour to the Nore, where the Naval Warships could be attached safely. However, let the correspondent to the Western Daily Mercury continue the story in his own words.

*"The LOCUST and the BUSTLER were lashed on the port side, the MONKEY and the ADDER on the starboard side, the SCOTIA and the ANGERIA towing ahead. The SHEERNESS steamed some distance in advance, piloting and clearing the way. In company were the BUZZARD, MEDUSA, WILDFIRE and TERRIBLE. Everything being thus in readiness, and the utmost precaution having been taken to insure the safe passage of the Dock through the comparative shallow waters of the upper harbour, the cables were slipped at precisely 4.20 a.m. on Wednesday morning (23<sup>rd</sup> June) in the calmest of weather. Progress was of necessity slow, but by 5.30 a.m. the convoy rounded Garrison Point Fort a distance of nearly four miles from the creek where she had been moored. Although the hour was so early, a great concourse of spectators had assembled, among them were Vice-Admiral Warren C-in-C at the Nore, Captain the Hon. A. Cochrane, Superintendent of Sheerness Dockyard and nearly all the chief officers of the port and garrison. On arriving at the Nore, the ironclads NORTHUMBERLAND and AGINCOURT were waiting with steam up ready to commence the task of towing the Dock to Madeira. The Dock was taken under the stern of the NORTHUMBERLAND and at once made fast to one of the immense hempen hawsers constructed especially for the purpose. The tugs were then 'cast-off' and a second hawser passed from the NORTHUMBERLAND to the stern of the AGINCOURT and secured. The TERRIBLE took up her position at the stern of the Dock to assist in the steering. The total length of this 'procession' was upwards of 3,400 feet (2/3rds of a mile). While the preparations for the final start were being made the Admiralty Yacht ENCHANTRESS hove into sight to the accompaniment of salutes from the Sheerness batteries. On board were Mr. Childers M.P., the First Lord and other Lords Commissioners. At this point Captain May of the NORTHUMBERLAND and senior officer of the squadron, assumed command for the voyage to Madeira. Navigating Lieutenant George Brockman, the Queen's Pilot directed the squadron to the Downs, the Dock itself being under the management of Mr. Barnaby the Admiralty Overseer who has with him a crew of 70 sailors."*

On Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June the HELICON, a dispatch vessel, was sent out into the Channel from Devonport to watch for the passing of the Dock. The LAPWING, a ship about which we will read more during this account, joined her later, in the evening.

---

<sup>12</sup> WDM Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June 1869

By Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June the eye-witness account of the departure of the Dock was further enhanced when the WDM published the text of the Admiralty's own memorandum to the officers involved in conducting the operation. It was the basic framework of instruction around which the officers had to make their own judgments and decisions and gives a detailed insight into whole process.

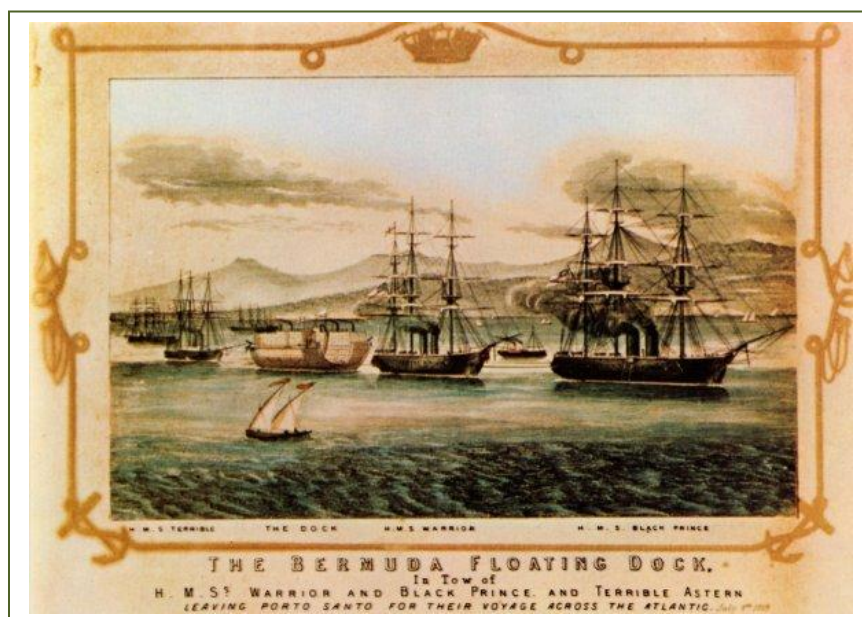
*“The WARRIOR and the BLACK PRINCE were to proceed to Madeira on the 16<sup>th</sup> June using steam as economically as possible and sail whenever practicable. They were then to take on coal to 900 or 1000 tons each, if the senior officer should consider the larger quantity desirable. As the anchorage at Funchal is in very deep water and very close to the shore, it is not considered advisable to make the transfer of the towing ships in that roadstead. Instead the roadstead at Porto Santo offers no objection.<sup>13</sup> The two ships when completed with coal should be at the anchorage not later than the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of July ready to receive the BERMUDA.”*

In the event, both ships arrived together in Madeira on the 1<sup>st</sup> July and they arrived in the company of the *'Flying Squadron'*. I have written a little about this separate operation already, but it is interesting to note that the ships BRISTOL, LIVERPOOL, ENDYMION, LIFFEY and SCYLLA accompanied the WARRIOR and the BLACK PRINCE and made an impressive flotilla. Certainly their stop in Madeira was brief, for they were under way again on the very next day, just as the HELICON arrived with news. She had parted company with the Dock at Cape Finesterre and at that time she was making good progress, sometimes as many as 6 knots. The Floating Dock BERMUDA arrived in Porto Santo exactly as planned on the 4<sup>th</sup> July with her own small fleet in attendance. The transfer of the tow to the WARRIOR and the BLACK PRINCE must have taken place without incident for it was reported that they had passed off Madeira on the very next day.

The NORTHUMBERLAND and the AGINCOURT, their task now complete, were ordered to pass as much coal as they could to the TERRIBLE and the LAPWING and to refill their own bunkers from stocks in Madeira. This in itself was no mean feat, in order that the convoy could be sighted under way on the next day. They could be proud of their achievement in every respect. Nothing like this had ever been attempted before and they had achieved the first leg of the voyage without incident in just **ELEVEN** days and they now deserved a short break. The ships were reported to be still in Madeira on the 7<sup>th</sup> July but on Thursday morning 22<sup>nd</sup> July they entered Plymouth Sound *'after a very pleasant voyage with light winds and fine weather all the way.'* The following week NORTHUMBERLAND entered dock for repairs and AGINCOURT left for Sheerness.<sup>14</sup>

So the second and final leg from Madeira to Bermuda was under way. The Admiralty Memo instructed that the *'BERMUDA should be towed on a track nearly approaching the one laid down on the chart by the Hydrographer. The convoy of ships should use sail and economise on steam as much as possible, the TERRIBLE keeping astern to steer as before.'*

The Admiralty was obviously very nervous about the final arrival in Bermuda and the TERRIBLE was expected to play a crucial role. The Memo had a great deal to say about this role and it hinged upon the hope that



<sup>13</sup> Porto Santo is a smaller island about 50 miles NE of Madeira

<sup>14</sup> WDM Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> August and Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> August 1869

she had barely used her steam power during the long passage. Everyone concerned with the passage knew that the TERRIBLE had potentially the most difficult task. It had been said that her essential duty was to counteract the yawing of the Dock which, if allowed to develop, would need all of her steam power to counteract the adverse motion. It was a 'no-win' situation. With her engine motionless she was in no position to counteract the likelihood of yawing, yet with her engines functioning the convoy would be losing time and the TERRIBLE would be depleting her coal bunkers.

For the arrival in Bermuda the Memo was explicit. It said that *'the TERRIBLE would secure alongside the Dock on arrival at the entrance to the inner waters of the roadstead. The Admiral of the Station will have ordered all available paddlewheel steamers to be in readiness to take the Dock, aided by the TERRIBLE, through the narrows of the prescribed anchorage. There is nothing to prevent the Dock warping if needed as steam power can be applied to four capstans. Orders will be sent to the BERMUDA to provide for the contingencies that may occur in getting so large a mass through so narrow a passage, but we may rely upon fine weather and upon the skills and resources of those to whom the duty falls.'*

On Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August 1869 a telegram arrived in Devonport from the Admiralty. It was brief and to the point. It read, *"Bermuda Dock anchored off camber 31<sup>st</sup> July. Towing Squadron returning home."* So it was over. The Dock had reached Bermuda safely. Henry wasn't in Bermuda to see it. He had left less than four months previously. He was somewhere at sea on patrol on the Gun Boat MULLET, but I am sure that he followed the news with interest.

The WARRIOR and the BLACK PRINCE stayed in the Island barely 48 hours once their charge had been released. The BLACK PRINCE outran the WARRIOR on the return passage home, arriving in Plymouth Sound on Sunday morning 22<sup>nd</sup> August. She beat her sister ship by a whole day, but the WARRIOR did not stay in the Sound. Her passage did not end until Captain Boys handed her over to the Gunnery School at EXCELLENT in Portsmouth. The BLACK PRINCE remained in the Sound until Wednesday discharging her gunpowder and on Thursday she was brought into the Dockyard and put into No.2 Dock. The *Western Daily Mercury* reported that *'the detachment of Marines lent for the voyage to Bermuda were landed at the Dockyard yesterday and marched to barracks. The extra seamen were returned to the LION.'*

So let us leave this epic story on the deck of the strangest of the craft in the convoy, the paddle steamer TERRIBLE. Commander Earle brought her home on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September. On board she carried all the naval and military invalids and supernumeraries from the West Indies Station. She thought she was going to be put out of commission for a well-earned rest. She was wrong. Three days later she was due to leave for Pembroke, Glasgow and Greenock carrying stores, but she didn't get under way until Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September. A hundred years later it would be the WARRIOR that would be associated with the 'epic tow' and the TERRIBLE? What was that?

## More Comings and Goings

---

The Admiral on any of the overseas stations faced a huge responsibility in decisions that were not entirely restricted to those concerning the men serving under him. Sometimes they concerned the ships themselves. The HERON was a tiny gunboat that had been stationed on the Canadian Lake Ontario from July 1866 until October 1868 when she was ordered to sail for Jamaica.

Her new role patrolling the coastlines of both Jamaica and Cuba hid the fact that she was deteriorating badly. Her rotting hull lasted less than another year. In September 1869 her unseaworthiness forced Admiral Mundy to order that she be paid off at Port Royal in Jamaica. She had been in commission for 3 years and 5 months, but her crew was now effectively marooned without a ship. They were ordered to return home at the first opportunity, but with the added observation that, *"the opportunity is not likely to arise for some time."*

They must have just missed the BRISTOL, who was passing through the area from Bahia in Brazil after being relieved by the PHOEBE. She was bound for England with the invalids and supernumeraries from the *'Flying Squadron'* and she arrived in Plymouth Sound on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> September 1869 having made the entire voyage in a little over six weeks with fine weather all the way. Among her passengers was Lieutenant Claud Harding, newly promoted from the PHOEBE and she was also carrying fourteen invalids and eight supernumerary seamen.

I have never been quite clear of the travelling conditions for these 'extras'. The officers were always classified as *'passengers'* and perhaps the *'invalids'* were confined to a sick bay by their afflictions, but what of the supernumerary seamen – were they expected to work? I cannot imagine it otherwise. Every ship seemed to carry its quota of 'extras' and a group of about 20 seemed to be about the average number. This movement of men, whose careers were in the process of change, was never ending and the same could be said of the ships.

Throughout the latter part of 1868, at neatly spaced intervals, ships arrived in Plymouth Sound after leaving the Squadron. They can be summarised as follows,

GANNET on 23<sup>rd</sup> September – JUNO on 22<sup>nd</sup> October – SPHINX on 23<sup>rd</sup> November – CONSTANCE in December, whilst the NIGER appeared at Woolwich Dockyard also in December. In April 1869 the JASON was ordered home and the DORIS and FAVORITE had arrived in Portsmouth by the end of that year, but every homecoming ship needed a replacement.

The LAPWING was a new 'Plover' Class Gunboat of 755 tons. It took less than a year to build her and she was launched at Devonport on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1867. At 170 feet long with a beam of 29 feet and a crew of 90, she commissioned for the first time on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1868 – Henry's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. He probably saw her from the IMPLACABLE. A year had passed and she had now successfully completed her first task of escorting the Floating Dock to Bermuda. After their safe arrival in the Island, her orders were not to return to England with the others, but instead to head for the West Indies and to take up station off Nassau and engage in enforcing the blockade between America and Cuba. That had been the task of the ECLIPSE before the Yellow Fever struck, but before the year was out LAPWING had gained a considerable reputation for her success in this operation. She had captured no less than four illicit blockade runners and disarmed 296 *'filibusters'* as the reports describe them, but better known to us as pirates. I have no doubt that the 'fearless British seaman' enjoyed the occasional show of strength and the opportunity to chase, corner and board such pirate ships, but there was another motive driving their enthusiasm. PRIZE MONEY! Every man and boy on board was hoping to make their fortune.

Of course every ship joining or leaving a Station was morally obliged to carry the domestic mail as well as Official Dispatches and this essential service was not left entirely to the Royal Navy. All the oceans of the world were criss-crossed by passenger carrying mail ships often referred to as 'packets.' The SEINE was one such vessel and a common sight along the coast of South America and among the islands of the West Indies. She called in to Jamaica on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1868 and when she arrived in Plymouth Sound three weeks later it was announced in *The Times* newspaper that she was carrying 85 passengers – 46 sacks of mail – 1482 packets of cargo and

**\$2 million in TREASURE**



# Sailing with a Naval Hero

21 April to 8 May 1869



It was now 1869. After nearly nine months of comparative confinement, Henry's turn came to leave the floating battery tethered in Bermuda Harbour. He was probably relieved. It was a monotonous life of rigid routine on what was a floating naval barracks and it was often oppressively hot inside its iron hull. His draft note stated 'MULLET' but Henry knew that she was not anchored in the Sound. He knew the system by this time and the arrangements for joining her were best left to his superior officers. Instructions were not long in coming for there was a ship anchored in the bay. She had been lying offshore since the 6<sup>th</sup> April, when Henry found his name listed among those supernumeraries to be embarked upon PHOEBE. On the **21<sup>st</sup> April** he hurriedly packed his kit and bade farewell to his messmates. The next day the PHOEBE's white hull eased out of the harbour in search of the liveliest airs to speed her northwards to Halifax.

Henry was glad to feel the heaving deck beneath his bare feet again and he breathed a sigh of relief. Sailors in every era have always known their ships and the reputations of their captains, for this was the essence of gossip shared almost daily around the messdecks of the Fleet. Henry probably received the name MULLET with no more than a little curiosity and some relief. She was not a ship to raise eyebrows. Commander Edward Kelly was dependable, but not in the same category as Captain John Bythesea of the PHOEBE. He was an action man. He was a man admired among men. He was the holder of a Victoria Cross and Henry would have the opportunity to work on the same deck as a Naval Hero.

PHOEBE was a Devonport built ship having been launched from No.4 Slip on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1854 after nearly six years in the building. She then lay abandoned for another five years before it was decided to fit her out with steam propulsion. She was the last of a series of ten ships rebuilt at Devonport in this way and she was commissioned for the first time in September 1862. She was a large and well-armed vessel. Her 3584 tons and 240 feet length accommodated 30 guns and a crew of about 250 officers and men.

Following a spell in the Mediterranean and a refit at Devonport, she recommissioned for the West Indies Station on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1867 under Captain John Bythesea V.C. It was inevitable that she would constantly attract attention with a man such as this in command. She left Devonport on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1867 and arrived in Halifax 22 days later after covering 3179 miles. Two weeks later she sailed for Bermuda and made the 800-mile passage in just four days. Following another two-week respite, she set off for Jamaica on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November where she arrived nine days later. This voyage totalled 5429 miles and was just the beginning of her deployment.<sup>15</sup>

For most of 1868 she spent much of her time circulating the islands at the southeastern extremity of the patrol area. Observers on the Barbadoes: St. Vincent: Grenada and Antigua had become familiar with the cut of her jib dragging itself over the horizon. The PHOEBE's pattern of cruises continued until the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1869 when she left the Barbadoes under full sail with orders to make for Bermuda. Initially she had been allocated the ignominious task of gathering up all the invalids and supernumeraries for transportation to Halifax and thence to England. This did not please Captain Bythesea. This was not his style at all.

373 PHOEBE, 35. S. Frigate.	
2896 Tons. 500 H.P.	
North America and West Indies.	
Captain	John Bythesea . . . . . 2 May 67
Commander	William G. Annesley 20 Oct 68
Lieutenant	Francis S. Clayton . . . 6 May 67
	John H. Vidal . . . . . 6 May 67
	Lawrence G. A. Roberts
	1 May 67
	John H. E. Parker . 24 Apr 68
Nav. Lieut.	John A. R. Petch . . . 2 May 67
Captain Mar.	P. M. C. Croker . . . . . 9 May 67
Lieut. Mar.	James H. Price . . . . . 9 May 67
Chaplain	Rev. Andrew C. Risk 17 May 67
Staff Surgeon	John Ward (a) . . . . . 2 Dec 68
Paymaster	Charles A. Shapcott 28 Feb 69
Naval Instruct.	William W. Lane, RA
	9 Nov 67
Chief Engineer	Robert I. Wilson . . . 13 June 67
Sub-Lieut.	Claud Harding' . . . . . 9 May 67
	James O. Burgess (act)
	28 Aug 68
Nav. Sub-Lieut.	Henry Bayndiam (act)
	9 Dec 67
Assist. Surg.	Duncan McN. Johnston, M.D.
	8 June 67
	Frederick McClement, M.D.
	(act) . . . . . 8 June 67
Assist. Paym.	Hugh B. Edwards . . 6 May 67
	John D. Taylor . . . 17 Sept 67

The NAVY LIST March 1869

<sup>15</sup> 'A Journal of the Proceedings of the Flying Squadron' by William Haynes dated 1871

# Flashback

It was the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1854 in the Baltic. Britain was in conflict with Russia and Lieutenant Bythesea was aboard the ARROGANT under the command of Captain Yelverton. The ship was one of a number of ships with orders to lay siege to the fortress of Bomarsund, when Lt. Bythesea was ordered to take a party ashore in search of provisions on the nearby Isle of Wardo. Whilst in conversation with one of the farmers, he learnt that a consignment of important dispatches from St. Petersburg were due to pass that way and the thought occurred to him that they ought to be intercepted. With his Captain's permission he took a Swedish speaking sailor and a small boat and they hid among the bushes on the shoreline. They were so accurate at pinpointing the landing place in the darkness that the Russian Officer in charge of the armed detachment actually trod on Bythesea's hand in disembarking. With a single stroke of luck, the officer decided to march the troop away from the beach leaving two sailors to the task of unloading the heavy waterproof bags from the boat. Seizing his opportunity, Bythesea and his companion leapt into the boat and took command at gunpoint. The hapless Russian sailors were released on another islet – without their boat – and the crew of the ARROGANT celebrated this small, yet daring incident.

Queen Victoria was pleased to award her new decoration – 'For Valour' – to Lieutenant Bythesea. Three were awarded in the Baltic during 1854 and this was the second, but it was a sobering coincidence that two of the three medals should go to the crew of the ARROGANT.

Four years later and now Commander Bythesea, he was in the midst of the action once again. His ship CRUISER was on the China Station and in company with several others on the 28 November 1858, they were 700 miles up the Yangtse River when they came under fire from one of the heavily armed fortresses on the river bank. It did not take long for this battery to be silenced and Bythesea was at the heart of the action.

Barely six months later another action with fortresses at the mouth of the Peino River resulted in a great loss of life among British seamen and extensive damage to their ships.. Bythesea was on hand to assist in a punitive counter-attack. Fortunately he had the advantage of a detailed survey of the Gulf of Pechili and he was able to recommend a landing place in Talienwan Bay for a large force of 12,000 British and Indian troops to storm ashore.

The crew of the PHOEBE must have believed that they were returning home, for that was her orders. They had left Rame Head behind some 20 months previously and they were becoming anxious for a sight of it again, but that is to deny the unexpected and John Bythesea's ability to attract it. A sequence of events was beginning to unfold in PHOEBE's homeport that would have repercussions for her planned voyage home and it would take her crew by surprise. A small fleet of warships was being assembled in Devonport with the declared objective '*to show the flag on a circumnavigation of the world.*' This was a new initiative named the – *The Flying Squadron.*

After five days at sea, PHOEBE arrived in Halifax Harbour on the 27<sup>th</sup> April. Henry did not leave her immediately, for there was still no sign of the MULLET. However, for a ship allegedly under orders to sail for England, PHOEBE lay in the harbour at Halifax for a suspiciously long time. After ten days alongside Henry was suddenly ordered to join the Flagship and he left the PHOEBE on the **8<sup>th</sup> May**. There must have been a change of plan. Whatever it was, it must have been the reason for Henry's transfer to the ROYAL ALFRED. The PHOEBE remained alongside for a month, attending to all those essential defects that afflict any working ship. The PHOEBE needed to be in good shape. She had been given an important role to play in an important Royal Naval Expedition. She would NOT be going home.

# Life on board the FLAGSHIP in Halifax 9<sup>th</sup> May to 26<sup>th</sup> June 1869

The *Flying Squadron* was due to leave Plymouth Sound on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1869 and the first leg of the voyage was planned to provide an escort for the phenomenal task of towing the enormous Floating Dock to Bermuda via Madeira. At Madeira, the two squadrons separated and the second leg of the *Flying Squadron's* voyage was intended to carry them across the mid-Atlantic to the Brazilian coast and the port of Bahia. It was the PHOEBE's task to meet them at that port and to release the BRISTOL to return to England with the inevitable invalids and supernumeraries. As Henry settled into his monotonous and exacting routines on the Flagship, he would have seen the PHOEBE leave on the 7<sup>th</sup> June with just a hint of regret that he had not been allowed to stay with her and to share in that exciting adventure.

Bahia was more than 5000 miles from Halifax and the PHOEBE would need all of the next two months to reach that port ahead of the *Flying Squadron*. True to form she accomplished the voyage in 46 days. She averaged 5 knots and 115 miles per day and arrived with an ample ten days to spare, before the magnificence of the Squadron hove into view on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1869.

At this point in my story we must leave the *Flying Squadron* and return to the Flagship on which Henry had unexpectedly found himself. I must admit that I expected to find frequent reference to the Flagship in the dispatches, as she was the focal point for all the activities of her own Squadron. I was wrong. During 1868 the ROYAL ALFRED seemed to make only one excursion from her base port, when she navigated the St. Lawrence River as far as Quebec in the company of the BARRACOUTTA. They arrived in the city on the 11<sup>th</sup> September and nine days later they were joined by the little Gun Boat PHILOMEL. No movements at all were reported during Henry's brief stay on board during May and June 1869. I can only surmise that she very rarely left her anchorage in Halifax. This example completely negates the statement of one author,<sup>16</sup>

*"As Flagship of the North American and West Indies Station, she showed the Flag from Labrador to Trinidad during two long commissions."*

My conclusion is that she behaved much like any Flagship in home waters and that Henry stayed on board a stationary ROYAL ALFRED for as long as it took the MULLET to reach Halifax from her previous deployment in the West Indies.

So what was it like to be onboard the ROYAL ALFRED? One thing was certain. There was not another vessel like her. She was unique. A private contractor in Portsmouth called J. LARGE & A. ABETHELL had built the last timbered hull to be built in Portsmouth. She had begun building on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1859 and was launched on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1864. When she officially completed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1867, she was classified as a *'Central Battery Ironclad'* a classification that had drastically changed since her inception. When her keel was laid, it was intended that she should be a 90-gun, wooden ship of the line, but she finally emerged as a steam, screw driven ironclad with armour belts protecting her central gun battery of five 9-inch guns on each side. This is another good example of the muddled thinking that was abroad in the Admiralty at a time when ship design was rapidly evolving.

At 273 feet long and 58 feet in the beam, she displaced 6707 tons. She had an enormous sail area of almost 30,000 square feet and this could

422 ROYAL ALFRED, 18.	
S. Ship.	Armour-plated.
4068 Tons.	800 H.P.
Flag Ship.	
North America and West Indies.	
Vice-Admiral	Sir G. Rodney Mundy
Flag-Lieut.	Hon. Horatio N. Hood
Secretary	James W. M. Ashby, CB.
Clerk to Sec.	Colin Campbell
(Asst. Paym.)	
Captain	Hon. Walter C. Carpenter
Commander	Henry F. Nicholson
Lieutenant	Richard Sheepshanks
Hon. Archibald R. Hewitt	
Leonard Dacres	14 Jan 67
Dundee C. Stuart	14 Jan 67
Additional	John W. Brackenbury 14 Jan 67
Staff-Comm.	Robert W. Foster 28 Aug 68
Nav. Lieut.	John F. Barnes 31 Aug 68
(Additional for disposal)	
Chaplain and	Rev. Walter R. Arthy, M.A.
Nav. Lieut.	16 Jan 67
Capt. Mar. Art.	Enbale D. Thellwall 24 Jan 67
Lieut. Mar. Art.	Charles H. Hallett 24 Jan 67
Lieut. Mar.	John A. R. McKechrie
Staff-Surg.	David L. Morgan, MD 14 Jan 67
Surgeon	William Richardson 24 Mar 68
(Additional for Service at Bermuda Hospital.)	
Surgeon	Richard C. P. Lawrence 1 Jan 68
(Additional in lieu of Asst.-Surgeon.)	
Paymaster	William Dewar 14 Jan 67
Chief Engineer	Richard Sheeman 15 Jan 67
Additional	Frederick J. Pope
for disposal	20 Mar 69
Sub-Lieut.	Reginald F. H. Henderson 30 Aug 67
Alexander Cochran	(act.) 6 Mar 68
(Act Lieut. 4 Dec. 1868.)	
Lewis F. Wells	14 Jan 67
Wilfred W. Glanville	(act.) 16 July
Edward P. Hume	(act.) 7 Nov 68
Cecil B. Palmer	(act.) 16 Sept 68
Nav. Sub-Lieut.	
Asst. Surg.	John Rodgers (act.) 9 Feb 67
Asst. Paym.	Leicester H. Edwards 28 Feb 69
Charles Harvey	30 Jan 67
Reginald O. Bray	10 Mar 68
Thomas Mitchell	23 May 67
Reginald G. Hodder	27 Feb 69
(Superannuary for disposal)	
The following Officers are borne as Additional for Surveing Service:—	
Staff-Comm.	James H. Kerr 5 May 67
William L. Scarsell	May 67
Nav. Lieut.	George Robinson 5 May 67

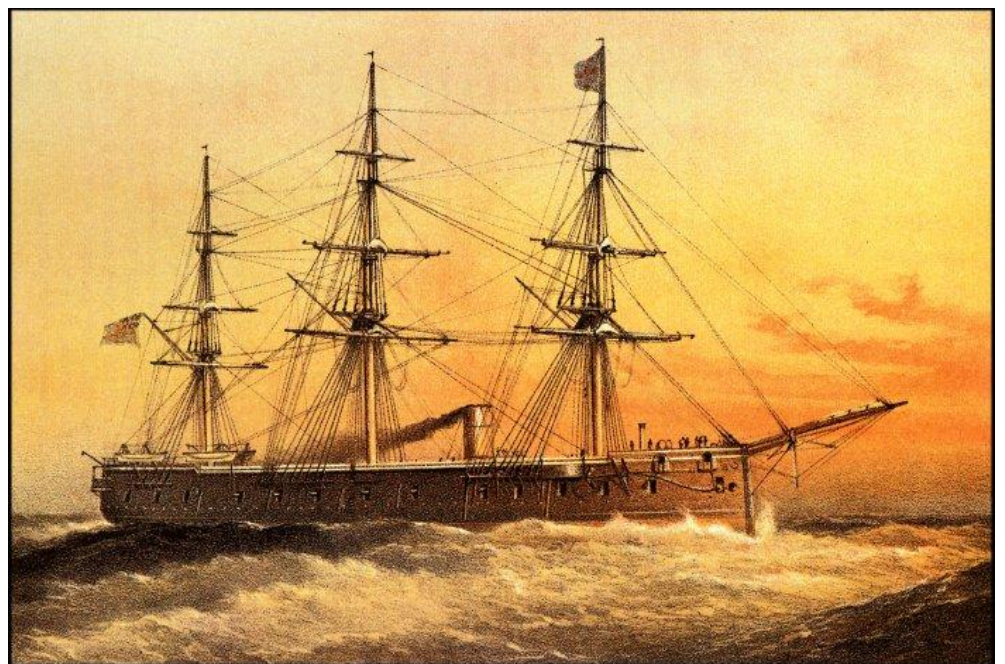
<sup>16</sup> 'Ships of the Victorian Navy' by Conrad Dixon page 86

propel her along at more than 12 knots. This was equally as fast as her steam engine could manage, but the rate of coal consumption and the limited capacity of her coal bunkers, restricted her to a range of 2,200 miles at 5 knots. This statistic was to afflict her maiden voyage across the Atlantic in the autumn of 1867.

Her passage to Halifax was not the sort of passage that any sailor wishes upon himself, especially when everything is relatively new. It took her 25 days of battling through some of the worst gales that the North Atlantic could arouse. She had to rely heavily on her steam power to keep her head into the massive seas that were being thrown at her and that tactic used precious coal. On reaching Halifax it was revealed that she had barely enough coal for another two hours steaming.

In spite of this unexpected trial, she was a fully rigged ship that quickly gained the reputation for being a fine sea-going vessel, although she did have a tendency to roll severely. Her speed under sail was prodigious and the 12.5 knots for which she became famous, occurred during a full gale when she ran with close reefed fore and main topsails and a single reef in the foresail.

It was the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1869 when the Assistant Paymaster entered Henry's name into the Ship's Ledger as 'No. 328 Boy First Class' in a crew of 609. His stay would only last for SEVEN WEEKS, but he could not remain onboard unnoticed. He had to have a number for everything he did. He would be allocated to a watch – starboard or port – he would be allocated a position aloft. He would be a



member of a numbered Mess, odd numbers on the starboard side and even numbers to port. He would have been given a numbered oar in one of the ship's several boats. He would have slept in a numbered hammock, which was stowed in a prescribed position in the hammock netting when not in use. He might even have had a numbered position in one of the gun's crews, but I think this unlikely, as Henry had not yet completed any formal gunnery training. A quick and retentive memory was essential in these circumstances in order to avoid the cutting edge of a Petty Officer's tongue and the possibility of having to stand before the Officer of the Watch to answer for any lapse in concentration.

Henry noticed it almost immediately. There was an air of tension on board. Everyone kept a wary eye on the Petty Officers and that started early when the Bo'sun's Mates ran to and fro along the Main Deck at 4.45 a.m. blowing shrill calls on their pipes and shouting continuously 'Rouse out'. Five minutes later the work began, scrubbing the Upper Deck. Everything and everybody was invariably soaking wet within minutes as scores of seamen got down on their hands and knees with their holy-stones and scrubbed to the barking of their superiors until a thin grey paste covered the deck. More water was then poured on the planks and the paste was swept away with stiff brooms until the white of the deck shone through like a fresh fall of snow. By this time it was approaching

6 a.m. and the order to *'Lash up and stow'* hammocks was expected. At 6.15 a.m. it was *'Cooks to the galley'* ready to serve breakfast to the Mess at 6.30 a.m. Half an hour to yourself at the Mess table without anyone standing over you, was something of a relief, but it was soon over. At 7 a.m. everyone had to muster in the 'rig of the day'. To get this right, everyone had to know EXACTLY what he was supposed to do next for the dress went with the task. At this muster the Midshipmen of the watch called the Roll and this was followed by half an hour of more scrubbing, cleaning and tidying. Even the copper lightning conductor on the main mast was polished.

At 7.30 a.m. came the first 'evolution' and for this the day of the week became the dominant factor as different tasks were done on different days. Normally these tasks related to replacing the gear aloft that had been sent down on the night before. Mondays and Tuesdays involved the Royal Yards. Wednesdays and Thursdays, it was the Topgallant Yards and on Fridays it was to prepare for action aloft by sending down the Topgallant Masts and all the associated rigging. After all of this frenetic activity, it was still only 8 a.m. and the next task was *'Hands to quarters to clean guns'*. Once this was done, all the rifles, pistols and cutlasses were assembled and cleaned. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, in response to a bugle call, the sailors put on webbing belts and fell in by companies to be inspected by their Lieutenants. Then on another morning, at the Officers' discretion, boarding and landing parties were exercised and this involved everyone down to stretcher-bearers and even the band. Following this sequence of drills, a drum roll cleared all hands off the Lower Deck, as the Senior Officers were about to put in an appearance.

It was now time for Commander Nicholson and his First Lieutenant to conduct their rounds after which they reported to Captain Carpenter that all was *'Ready for morning quarters'*. Once again a bugle sounded and the men fell in by Divisions to be inspected and reported *'correct'* by their Lieutenants. Prayers were then read from the Quarterdeck. The time was now 9.30 a.m. and by 9.45 a.m. Henry had been hard at it for five hours. It was now time for the Drills to begin. Henry was still classified as a 'Boy' so his life was dominated by instructors drilling him in everything that a seaman would ever need to know about going aloft and every drill was carried out in strict silence. The sailors' feet made the loudest noise .....And so it continued throughout the day.

## An exchange crew is on the way

---

After seven long weeks, Henry's last day on the Flagship was a Saturday. It was also the 26<sup>th</sup> June and the day before his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. Henry was totally unaware of the preparations that were underway in Portsmouth Dockyard for the relief of the crew of the ROYAL ALFRED. The new Flag Officer was Rear Admiral G. Wellesley and a new crew for the ROYAL ALFRED began to assemble with the commissioning of the REVENGE on the following Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

At noon on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, REVENGE took the Needles Passage from Spithead and saluting the Royal Standard as she passed Osborne, she headed down Channel under *"all plain sail with royals set."* Many of the ROYAL ALFRED's crew had been away from England for more than two years, but the ROYAL ALFRED herself was NOT coming home. An exchange crew was coming to her and it was the REVENGE who would make the return voyage to England manned by the crew from the ROYAL ALFRED.

Seven days into the voyage, it was announced in the newspapers that Rear Admiral Wellesley had been promoted to Vice Admiral following the death of Vice Admiral G.H. Seymour. This must have given him enormous pleasure to know that when he stepped onto the deck of the ROYAL ALFRED in Halifax as its new Flag Officer, he would at least have the same rank as the officer he was relieving, even if the Knighthood had not yet arrived. A position as Rear Admiral was now vacant. Henry knew the name chosen to fill it. It was Captain James Wainwright of the TERROR. The promotion left the Bermuda Station temporarily devoid of a Superintendent for its Dockyard, and the TERROR its Captain, but Henry Westaway Trethewey was not particularly bothered by all these high level manoeuvres. He was **SEVENTEEN** and the MULLET had arrived in Halifax.

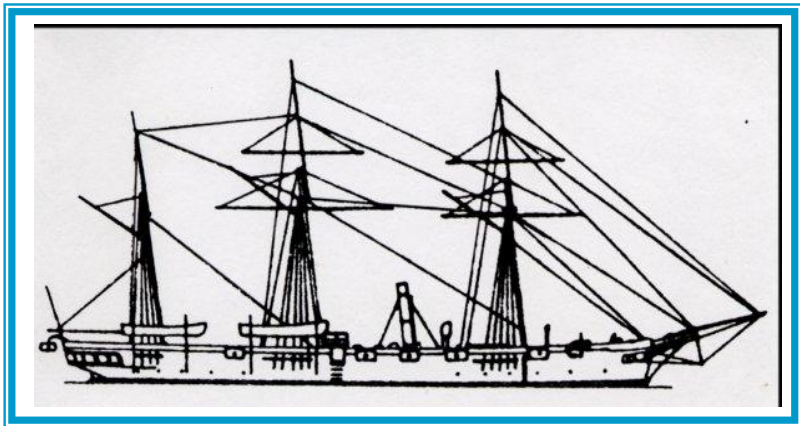
# Life on board the Gun Boat MULLET

27<sup>th</sup> June 1869 to 19<sup>th</sup> July 1870

One thing was certain in the Royal Navy, if the ships change the routines do not. Yet for all that Henry was glad to be off the Flagship, if only for its size. The MULLET was tiny in comparison and Henry was now No. 33 on the Ship's Book kept by Assistant Paymaster George Westcott.

As he cast his eyes over her deck and up into the rigging, she reminded Henry of his last days in training on the IMPLACABLE, when he spent his qualifying weeks on the Brig SEALARK. Could it really be that it was only a year since he had been promoted to Boy First Class after his time on the Brig? It seemed like a lifetime had passed since then and today was his birthday.

So what was the story behind this little Gun Boat named MULLET? She was one of a class of twenty vessels named after the lead vessel PHILOMEL. They were completed, with one exception, between 1859 and 1862, but by the end of 1869, ten of them were no longer in service. Henry would not have been aware of it, but the MULLET was the only one of



the Class to be built at Lungle's Yard at Deptford. In fact, thirteen of the vessels had been built in Yards along the Thames including four ships at the Navy's own Deptford Ship Yard.

<b>331 MULLET, 5. S. Gun - Vessel.</b>	
430 Tons. 80 H.P.	
North America and West Indies.	
(Ordered home.)	
Commander...	Edward Kelly..... 7 Nov 67
Lieutenant ...	Christopher T. Francis
	6 Oct 68
Sub-Lieut....	George H. Bruce (act)
	30 July 69
Nav. Sub-Lieut.	James R. H. MacFarlane
(act) .....	9 Dec 67
Assist. Surg. ...	Peter Burgess, M.A., M.D.
	28 Sept 67
Assist. Paym. }	George B. Westcott
in charge. {	
	28 Aug 68

The NAVY LIST April 1870

Launched in February 1860, like her sisters, MULLET displaced 570 tons for her 145 feet length and 25 feet beam. She had a single screw driven by an 80 H.P. steam engine enabling a top speed of about 10 knots. Much more to Henry's liking was the small crew of only 60. Commander Edward Kelly had been in command of the ship since the 7<sup>th</sup> November 1867 and his Navigating Sub Lieutenant James MacFarlane had been with him almost all of that time. Among the four other officers were his second in command, Lieutenant Christopher Francis, the Assistant Surgeon and Assistant Paymaster and the newest member of the wardroom, Sub Lieutenant George Bruce who had joined just one month after Henry.

These little vessels were kept extraordinarily busy and could be found anywhere in the world. SEVEN ships of the Philomel Class, including the MULLET, were patrolling the coast of West Africa on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1867. Two of them, RANGER and SNIPE had been ordered home, but the remainder were 'to serve until 1870.'<sup>17</sup>

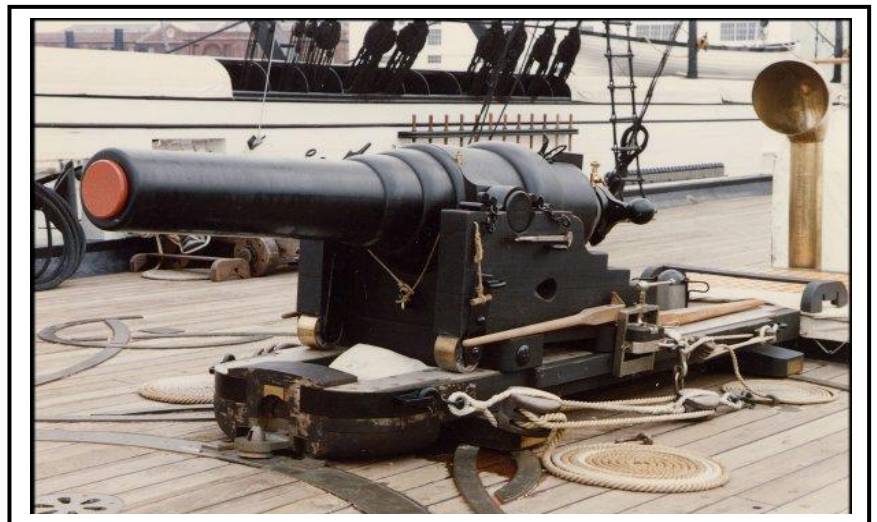
That didn't happen, for world politics was not a stable commodity and local tensions had a habit of flaring up at almost any time. MULLET embarked upon a new commission on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1867 and by March of the following year she was to be found within the islands of the West Indies. On the 6<sup>th</sup> July 1868 she was reported arriving in Port au Prince, the capital of Haiti on the romantically named island of Hispaniola. Where she had come from is unclear, but on the 27<sup>th</sup> July

<sup>17</sup> 'Send A Gun Boat' by Preston & Major using extracts from Parliamentary Papers, summarising all Gun Boats afloat.

she turned up at Kingston, Jamaica about 500 miles to the westward. It was the 6<sup>th</sup> September before she was reported again entering Kingston Harbour, but this time from Montego Bay on the opposite northwestern tip of Jamaica. She stayed in harbour at Kingston for a fortnight and then on the 17<sup>th</sup> September she left for Honduras almost twelve hundred miles away on the Central American Mainland and south of Mexico.

Under normal circumstances that would have been more than ten days sailing and sure enough on the 28<sup>th</sup> September she was reported making landfall at Belize. She must have stayed only long enough to embark fresh water, for she was on her way again the same day destined for *'the North East Coasts'*. It would be interesting to know the nature of Commander Kelly's orders, for whatever they were it took no more than six days to execute them. On Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup> October, the MULLET re-appeared at Kingston, Jamaica and after so many days at sea, the crew had earned a spell in harbour to relax and repair all the strains and tensions in both men and ship. Then on Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> October she left for a cruise in unspecified waters and reports of her movements ceased for six months until the 24<sup>th</sup> April 1869, when she was again noted in Kingston harbour. Sometime during the next 14 days she was ordered to Halifax. One month after Henry had left Bermuda on the PHOEBE, the MULLET anchored in Grassy Bay and the date was the 21<sup>st</sup> May

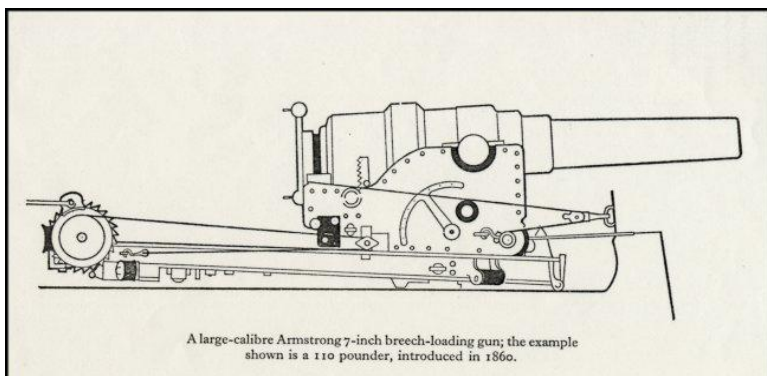
As a Gun Boat she carried two 24 pounder howitzers and two 20 pounder breech loaders, but it was the single, huge 110 pounder breech loading gun that dominated the open deck area. This was the reason for her existence. The Armstrong breech loading gun used solid shot with a 12 pound charge and at the gun's maximum elevation of 10° 37' it could fling that shot to a distance of 3,600 yards in 12.54 seconds.



Manhandling the gun was

extremely labour-intensive. One of the Junior Officers supervised the firings, but the gun's crew took its orders from the Captain of the Gun, a Petty Officer, who would prime, aim and fire the gun. All breech-loaders were loaded by unscrewing the breech lever, which was heavy enough to require two people to accomplish it. For this task the Captain of the Gun relied on his No. 2 to help

him, but it was also the No. 2's responsibility to work the elevating screw and lock and to cock the gun. However once the breech lever had been released, it allowed the breech to move back about an inch and freed the inner vent piece, allowing it to be lifted out by No. 3 and No. 4, the Vent Piece Men. Strong arms and teamwork were essential as this item weighed 136 lbs. and once clear of the gun, Nos. 5 and 6, the Loaders



A large-calibre Armstrong 7-inch breech-loading gun; the example shown is a 110 pounder, introduced in 1860.

were next to carry out their task. The 110-pound projectile was rammed into position followed by the powder charge or cartridge. These cartridge bags containing the gunpowder were brought from the Magazine Handling Hatch on the shoulders of the Powdermen. With the completion of this operation eight men had been involved, but a gun's crew could be as many as **EIGHTEEN** men

with the remainder being required to heave the massive 4 tons (85 cwt.) around the deck by rope and tackle. In such a small crew, Henry's youthful strength might have made him an automatic choice for the task.

An Armstrong breech-loader generally fired elongated shot, the forerunner of the modern shell and each one was 16 inches long. To fit the bore it was 7 inches in diameter with a lead outer case to take up the rifling in the barrel. These shells could have either a timed fuse or a percussion fuse in its nose to explode on impact and the nastiest of the rounds was the case shot which could be filled with shrapnel for use at close quarters against an enemy crew. As these guns represented the first significant development over the centuries old canons, these guns employed elaborate double rear sights with range markings for the various projectiles and there was an additional fore sight place half way along the barrel.<sup>18</sup> It was a formidable weapon. How often it was used, even during an exercise is unclear, but this was the reason for the Gunboat's existence. It was a deterrent.

The MULLET was still in Bermuda on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1869. It was a Thursday and they were making preparations to leave for Halifax when Robert Cleal, an armourer on the TERROR, fell overboard. Able Seaman William Wardell saw it happen and immediately dived from the MULLET to support him until a lifebuoy was thrown to him. Cleal was unconscious when hauled aboard the MULLET, but he later revived and recovered. This rescue led to the Royal Humane Society awarding Wardell a medal for gallantry and Henry would have soon been acquainted with the incident after joining MULLET just 17 days later, especially as he had spent so long on the TERROR.

## 388 days on the MULLET

The following text was created from the two logs that cover Henry's time on the Gun Boat<sup>19</sup>

The MULLET arrived in Halifax from Bermuda on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June and went right alongside the coaling wharf where she stayed until the next day. She then moved out into the harbour, dropped anchor and there she rode quietly for the next THREE WEEKS. It was the height of summer and Halifax was an agreeable place, but the only task for a Gun Boat in these northern latitudes was the rather tedious task of looking after the interests of our fishermen and sorting out the squabbles that erupted between them on the Grand Banks.

Henry's seventeenth birthday – 27<sup>th</sup> June 1869 – fell on a Sunday. Birthdays usually came and went without acknowledgement, so it was unusual to be able pass the day without any thought for the next working evolution. A draft to the MULLET was the Navy's present to Henry and I suspect that he was glad to be leaving the ROYAL ALFRED. Tomorrow was the Anniversary of Queen Victoria's Coronation and the Flagship was leaving harbour for a 2-day cruise.

One of Henry's first tasks on the MULLET on the morning of Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June 1869 was to empty the signal lockers and lay out the long lines of bunting to be hauled to the mastheads. All the ships in the harbour were dressed overall that day. It was the same sight all around the world. It never failed to attract attention. It was meant to. This was the visible symbol of the Queen presiding over her Empire.

Commander Edward Kelly finally received his sailing orders on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July. She was to leave Halifax for a cruise in the waters of Prince Edward Island. She slipped her mooring in the harbour just before noon and headed out along the eastern seaboard of Nova Scotia making for the Cut of Canso about 130 miles to the north east. This was a narrow channel that separated the main island from its northerly neighbour, Cape Breton Island, but they were not expecting to get there until the afternoon of the following day. They knew they were approaching the Cut when they saw the low, smooth contours of a rocky outcrop with the unmistakable shape of a lighthouse perched on a

---

<sup>18</sup> Summarised from Chapter 3 of *'The Story of the Warrior'*

<sup>19</sup> ADM 53/9599 & 9600



ledge and just out of reach of the pounding waves. The light had been there since 1854 and this was White Head Island. At the upper end of the Cut and they anchored for the weekend off the small settlement of Port Hood on the SW corner of Cape Breton Island.

On Monday 12<sup>th</sup> July the cruise began in earnest. The Log does not elucidate the reasons for the cruise, it simply records where she was throughout each day and what sailing rig had been adopted. It also recorded the unending list of bits and pieces that were *'lost overboard by accident.'* Everything from scrubbing brushes to a boat's oar. It all had to be reported to the Petty Officer as it could not be returned to the store from whence it had come. Every single piece would have to be accounted for at the end of the commission. Each would have a value and a 'Broad Arrow' stamped on it to deter any thought of theft. To be caught with such a piece would have meant disgrace and dismissal.

They cruised off Prince Edward for TWELVE DAYS before they anchored off Georgetown, on the island's eastern coast, on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> July. It must have been a pre-arranged rendezvous for they had the Flagship ROYAL ALFRED for company when they left for Hillsborough Bay and the island's main settlement Charlottetown on the Monday morning. They were still anchored off Charlottetown on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July when Vice-Admiral Munday boarded the MULLET at 9 a.m. sharp. The Log does not explain the reason for his visit, but he left again at 1 o'clock only to return once more at 4 p.m. Something must have been happening, for half an hour later the MULLET weighed anchor and left under her own steam without a single sail being set. She could not have gone far, for she moved up into the town's harbour on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> July and stayed there for the weekend.

George Bruce liked the cut of his new ship when he stepped into the Flagship's gig to be rowed across the harbour to the MULLET. Christopher Francis, the senior Lieutenant and James MacFarlane, the navigating Sub-Lieutenant, were both in the Captain's cabin when he was shown below by the Quartermaster. There were only two other officers on board and he would meet them over lunch, but it was a breath of fresh air to be away from stuffy, formality of the Flagship.

The next week was occupied on a passage from Charlottetown to St. John's, New Brunswick.

#### A word & sketch map of the places featured in the LOG With some typical distances

**Halifax** is located on the southern coast of Nova Scotia and is mid-way between Cape Sable on the south west corner and the **Cut of Canso** to the east.

Cape Sable to Halifax is 130 miles.

Cape Sable to the Cut of Canso is 265 miles.

On the north coast of Nova Scotia to the west of the Cut of Canso is **Pictou**.

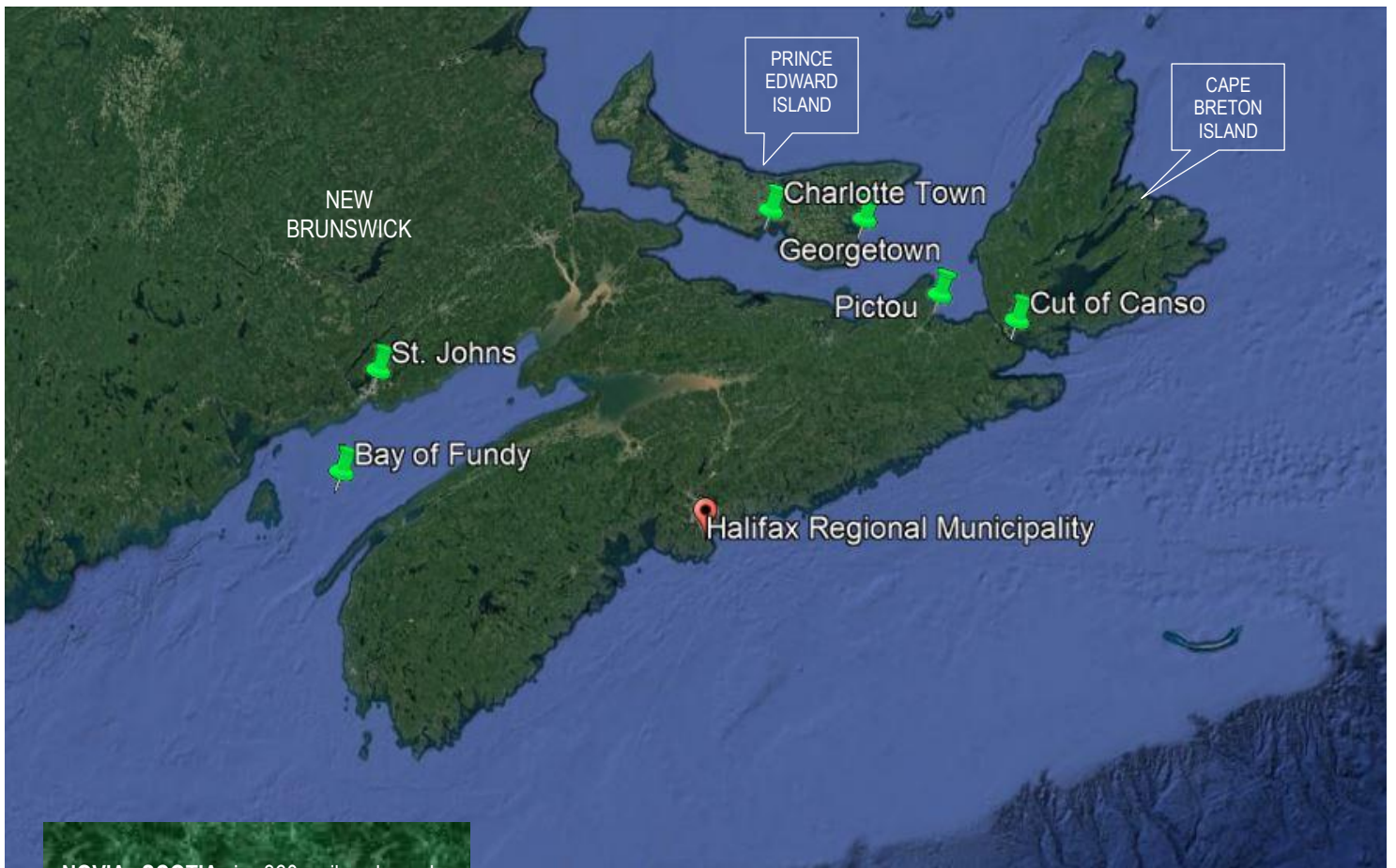
It is about 25 miles north east across the Northumberland Strait to Georgetown on Prince Edward Island.

**Prince Edward Island** is to the north of Nova Scotia and is accessed through the Cut of Canso. It also lies to the east of New Brunswick.

Prince Edward Island is 115 miles long with **Georgetown** at its eastern side and **Charlottetown** is its capital. It lies about 50 miles west of Georgetown overland but faces south at the head of a huge bay inlet from the Northumberland Strait.

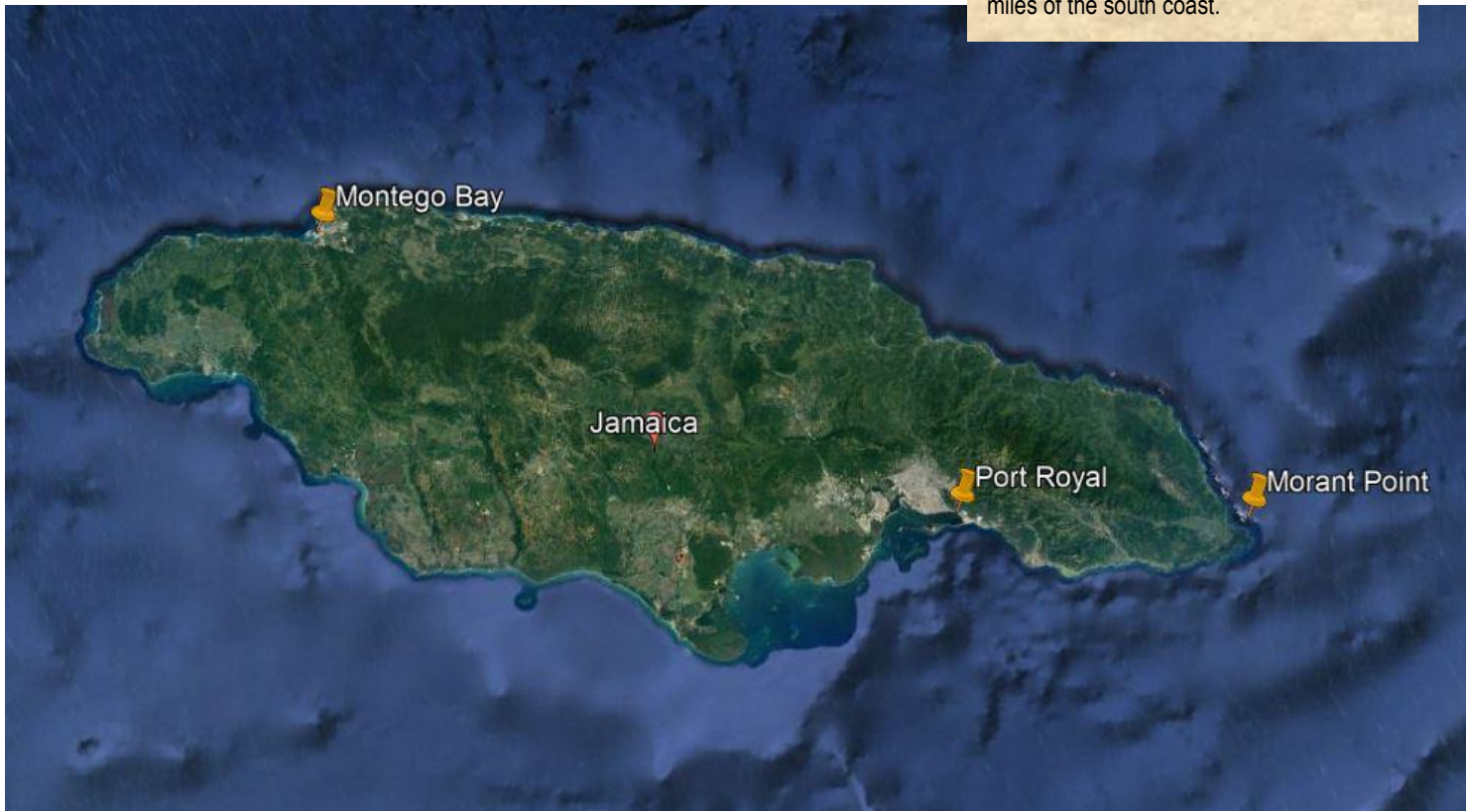
The **Northumberland Strait** separates New Brunswick from Prince Edward Island and is 15 miles wide.

**St. John's** and **St. Andrews** are on the southern coast of New Brunswick facing the Bay of Fundy which is 30 miles across to Nova Scotia.



**NOVIA SCOTIA** is 360 miles long by about 80 miles wide and covers over 21,000 square miles. Its smaller neighbour to the north east is Cape Breton Island covering 3400 square miles. Prince Edward Island lies to the north separated by the Northumberland Strait. The Cut of Canso is 1320 yards wide. The temperature varies from 24F to 66F and Halifax Harbour remains ice free,

**JAMAICA** is 146 miles long, but varies in width from 21 to 52 miles and has an area of just over 4250 square miles. CUBA lies 90 miles to the north and HAITI 118 miles to the east. The temperature is fairly constant at 74F to 86F. The north east trade winds create a windward side and to the leeward of the central Blue Mountains the climate is drier and warmer. There are many coral reefs or cays spread along 100 miles of the south coast.



## The movements of the MULLET - 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1869 to 19 July 1870

Monday 2 August - Charlottetown to St. John  
Thursday 5 August - 5.45 p.m. stopped. Pilot came on board.  
Saturday 7 August - 4 p.m. pilot came on board for St. Andrews.  
Sunday 8 August - 7 p.m. fired a gun as a signal to the pilot.  
Monday 9 August - Weighed and proceeded in to St. Andrew's Harbour.  
Friday 13 August - Left St. Andrew's for St. John and arrived same day.  
Monday 16 August - Left St. John for Halifax.  
Friday 20 August - Came alongside coal wharf at 7.45 p.m. (at Halifax?)  
HMS REVENGE<sup>20</sup> arrived at 5.20 p.m.  
Wednesday 25 August - HRH Prince Arthur came on board at 12.15 p.m.  
Crew manned the yards.  
Visited Fort Clarence, Fort Ives and two unnamed forts.  
HRH left at 4.50 p.m.

Saturday 4 September - Made a short voyage with REVENGE.  
Thursday 9 September - Left St. John for Pictou.  
Friday 10 September - Negotiated the Cut of Canso.  
Tuesday 14 September - Left Pictou for Georgetown.  
Wednesday 15 September - Cruising off Prince Edward Island.  
Thursday 30 September - Georgetown.

On the 4 October 1869 the St. Andrew's Light Station was badly damaged by a storm. A portion of the block on which the tower and keeper's house stood was carried away. The storm became known as 'The Tidal Wave' and caused extensive damage along the Bay of Fundy.

Thursday 21 October - Cruising in the Northumberland Strait.  
Thursday 28 October - Left Pictou for Halifax  
Sunday 31 October - Moored in Halifax Harbour.  
Tuesday 9 November - Slipped moorings in Halifax for a passage to Bermuda.  
Encountered a heavy gale. Rig close hauled.  
Making for St. Catherine's Point, Bermuda at barely 80 miles per day.  
Friday 19 November - Sighted Gibb's Hill Lighthouse at 6 a.m.  
At 4 p.m. came alongside coal wharf in the camber.  
Tuesday 23 November - Moved into Dockyard.  
Thursday 2 December - Secured alongside HMS VIXEN in the camber  
Saturday 25 December - XMAS DAY to HMS TERRIBLE<sup>21</sup> and read prayers.  
Thursday 30 December - Left VIXEN for Port Royal.

1870

Thursday 13 January - Moored to No. 3 Buoy at Port Royal at p.m.  
Saturday 22 January - Left Port Royal for Belize.  
Thursday 27 January - Arrived Belize.  
Saturday 5 February - His Excellency Lieutenant Governor Longdon came on board.  
Sunday 6 February - Passage to Owoa?  
Monday 7 February - Ship aground off Robinson's Point.  
Wednesday 9 February - Hove to at Porta Gaballos.  
Thursday 10 February - Made passage back to Owoa.  
Friday 11 February - Left Owoa for Truxilla. (*Modern spelling Trujillo and is mid-way along the north coast of Honduras.*)  
Monday 14 February - Left Truxilla for Port Royal

<sup>20</sup> The REVENGE left Spithead on the 22 July 1869 with a relief crew for the ROYAL ALFRED. It is not clear why the MULLET made a short cruise with her on the 4 September except to escort her on her way home.

<sup>21</sup> The accuracy of this name is in doubt. HMS TERROR was Bermuda's Guardship and I would assume that this is the ship in question. HMS TERRIBLE was a paddle-boat that had assisted in bringing the huge floating dock to Bermuda. She arrived on 31 July 1869 and immediately returned to Devonport arriving on the 6 September 1869

## FIRST LOG ENDS AND A NEW LOG IS OPENED

The next Log covers the remainder of the commission, records her time in the West Indies for just over 4 months before being ordered HOME. The Log was opened on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 1870 and on the first page there is a concise, but telling paragraph describing the sailing characteristics of the MULLET. It reads,

*(The) ship sails well with the wind abeam, abaft (of) the beam and close hauled. (She) stays well, but wears slowly. (She) rolls heavily, (but) rides easy at her anchors. (At her) greatest inclination (she is) just able to carry Royals. The best sailing point is (with) the wind a point abaft (of) the beam. Behaves well lying.*

Sunday 20 February arrived in Portland Bight (Off Port Royal)  
Found here HM Ships ROYAL ALFRED (wearing the flag of Vice-Admiral Wellesley C.B.);  
ABOUKIR; NIOBE; LAPWING; MINSTREL and BRITOMART.

Friday 11 March on passage to Santiago de Cuba 96 miles distant  
Saturday 26 March left Santiago de Cuba for Jamaica  
Sunday 27 March Morant Point Lighthouse is 101 miles distant  
Wednesday 30 March arrived at Port Royal

Friday 1 April left Port Royal for Morant Cays *south east of Morant Point.*  
Saturday 2 April at Morant Cays  
Sunday 3 April left Morant Cays for Port Royal  
Tuesday 5 April at Kingston  
Wednesday 13 April at Port Royal

Saturday 23 April *began a clockwise circumnavigation of the entire island of Jamaica*  
Sunday 24 April passing South Negril on the west facing coast of Jamaica  
Tuesday 26 April at Lucea - *a magnificent semi-circular bay facing north.*  
Wednesday 27 April left Lucea for Montego Bay  
Thursday 28 April at Montego Bay  
Saturday 30 April left Montego Bay for Port Royal  
Sunday 1 May Galina Point 26 miles distant  
Monday 2 May and 44 miles from Morant Point.  
Tuesday 3 May just 1¼ miles off Morant Point Lighthouse.  
Thursday 5 May at Port Royal.

Saturday 4 June *ordered to sail from Port Royal for home via Bermuda.*  
Sunday 5 June passing Pearl Point and St. Nichola Point.  
*These are probably in the Windward Passage between Cuba and Haiti.*  
Monday 6 June Gibbs Hill Lighthouse Bermuda lies 757 distant.  
Tuesday 7 June – 607 miles  
Wednesday 8 June – 512 miles  
Thursday 9 June – 399 miles  
Friday 10 June – 284 miles  
Saturday 11 June – 173 miles  
Sunday 12 June – 49 miles  
Monday 13 June arrived in the Camber at Bermuda.

Tuesday 14 June left Bermuda Camber for Spithead  
Wednesday 15 June Bishop Rock Lighthouse 2665 miles distant  
Friday 17 June - 2585 miles  
**Monday 27 June – Henry's 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday and promotion to ORDINARY SEAMAN**  
Sunday 3 July – 574 miles

Tuesday 5 July – 287 miles  
Wednesday 6 July they are 187 miles from the Telegraph Ship at Lat. 49° 21'N Long. 6°17'W  
Friday 8 July they were 110 miles from St. Catherine's Point Lighthouse IOW.  
Saturday 9 July arrived in Spithead.  
Sunday 10 July left Spithead for SHEERNESS  
Monday 11 July arrived SHEERNESS  
Tuesday 19 July at Sheerness  
Captain J.C. Wilson came on board and paid ship out of commission.

My reader may have noticed that during his time on the MULLET, Henry had travelled to almost every corner of the North America and West Indies Station. If there was anywhere that he had not been then it was the small islands of the Lesser Antilles, from the Virgin Islands to Antigua, Dominica, Grenada and Trinidad It is also worthy of note that the ship was not deployed to the area during the hurricane season (July to November). She was there only from January until June.

## What Happened Next?

The Naval system of Continuous Service was a decade old when Henry joined IMPLACABLE at the beginning of 1867 and it was intended to ensure that no seaman who had signed on for 10 years would be without pay during the entire period. This was an admirable concept, but it is sometimes very difficult to reconcile the movements of any particular seaman. In theory it meant that his name was always entered into a ship's Pay Book and as has already been seen with Henry's draft to the TERROR his passage on the ECLIPSE was not recorded because he was being paid from the TERROR, but his name would be found on the books of ECLIPSE as a 'Supernumerary for victuals only.'

As far as I can make out, the men were rarely paid whilst on deployment, especially overseas, as this was seen, in part, as a deterrent to desertion and theft among the crew, both of which were deplored by the service and the men alike. There was also a sensitivity within the Admiralty and society at large, that the men would squander the money on drink and gambling, yet it is hard to believe that the seamen had no money in their purses. The ship cleared its debt to the men when the ship was 'PAID OFF' and this was a formal, ceremonial occasion which concluded with the closure of the ship's ledgers.

The giving and taking of leave is also difficult to clearly understand in this period from 1860 to 1880. It was NOT a right, but a privilege in the gift of the Captain of the ship, so it was never uniformly consistent. There is no doubt that leave was given, as various musters have shown and men of good conduct who could be trusted, would be the most likely candidates to receive it, but what happened in a case like the MULLET that had been overseas for years and had just been 'Paid Off.' Surely men who had not seen their families for sometime were entitled to a few weeks respite?

Henry's time on the MULLET ended on Tuesday 19th July 1870 and he was due to appear on the ROYAL ADELAIDE on the next day, Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1870, but how could he do that from Sheerness? I think a clue lies within the paragraph which appeared in the *Hampshire Advertiser* on Wednesday 13 July 1870 (next page). Henry was not a 'supernumerary' from the TERROR, but neither was he from Sheerness where MULLET had commissioned on the 5 May 1867. It seems unlikely that Henry left the MULLET at Portsmouth with the others. He was a part of the MULLET's crew and was carried on her books for payment, therefore he would have been a part of the ritual enacted when a ship of the Royal Navy was PAID OFF.

The Mullet, screw gunvessel, Commander Edward Kelly, arrived at Spithead on Saturday morning, on her return to England, after completing a term of foreign service on the North America and West India station, and the same afternoon sailed again for Sheerness, where she is ordered to be dismantled and paid out of commission. A few naval supernumeraries from the Terror, at Bermuda, were brought home by the Mullet, and transferred from her to the flagship in Portsmouth harbour, previous to leaving Spithead for Sheerness.

On the 18 July 1870, London's *Morning Advertiser* published a synopsis of MULLET's commission and I have included its latter stages which supplements and corroborates the statements extracted from her Log and shows that Henry had joined her for the fishing season of 1869.

fishing season of 1869, at Newfoundland, for the protection of British interests. She afterwards visited St. John's, New Brunswick, and Halifax; and on the 13th January, 1870, again returned to Port Royal. On the 22nd she left the latter port for Honduras, and on the 25th of February had returned to Jamaica. In the following month she was ordered to proceed to Santiago de Cuba, and on the 23d of April returned to Kingston. She again left Port Royal on the same evening for a cruise round Jamaica, and returned on the 4th of May, having visited Lucca and Montego Bay, making the whole cruise under canvas. She left Bermuda on the 15th of June, arrived at Spithead on the 9th of July, and left the same afternoon for Sheerness, to pay off. Mr. George E. Scholes, engineer, and Mr. Gerald Aitken, gunner, have served in the Mullet throughout her commission.

I cannot end this brief episode in the life of a small gun boat without including this extract from the *Hampshire Telegraph* for Wednesday 6 July 1870 which suggests to me that the MULLET was one of those ships which are fondly remembered in the reminiscences of their crews and not all ships could claim that accolade.

The Mullet, 5, screw gun vessel, Commander Edward Kelly, is shortly expected to arrive at Spithead from Bermuda. She brings home several naval invalids, time expired men, &c. The ship during the period she has been in the West Indies has been remarkably healthy, and too much praise cannot be bestowed upon her surgeon, Mr. Peter Burgess, who has not lost a single man from sickness since she left the West Coast of Africa. The Mullet was commissioned at Sheerness on the 5th May, and left England at the end of the month for her station, the West Coast of Africa. Mr. G. E. Scholes, engineer, and Mr. Gerald Aitken, gunner, appear to be the only officers who have served in her during the whole of the commission.

## What Happened When a Ship was PAID OFF?

Henry's first sojourn on a Flagship lasted for just seven weeks in the early summer of 1869 whilst he waited for the MULLET to arrive in Halifax, but his time on the PHOEBE, that had brought him there, was even shorter at 17 days in spite of the passage taking less than 5 days. However, the crew of the PHOEBE believed that they were returning to their home port of Devonport. They had arrived in Halifax towards the end of April and in early June they were still there, so why were they not on their way home? Captain Bythesea had heard talk of a *Flying Squadron* that was to leave Plymouth Sound on the 19<sup>th</sup> June and before long he had orders to replace the BRISTOL in that Squadron at Bahia in Brazil, more than 5000 miles to the south.

It was 17 months later that six of the ships that comprised the *Flying Squadron* dropped anchor in Plymouth Sound once again. It was Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 1870 and the ships were LIVERPOOL (Flagship), LIFFEY, PHOEBE and SATELLITE together with the ENDYMION and PEARL. The following day the latter two ships set sail for their home port of Portsmouth whilst Admiral Codrington came from the ROYAL ADELAIDE to inspect the Devonport ships before they came up the harbour.

They had completed the longest voyage ever undertaken by a squadron of men o' war and they had travelled over 53000 miles on a complete circum-navigation of the globe, for which only 600 miles were steam driven. Their crews now needed a little patience before they were paid off. The PHOEBE and the LIFFEY were given that privilege first – on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November 1870 followed by the SATELLITE on the Thursday and the Flagship on the Friday and to mark the event this light hearted, cynical piece appeared in the *Cornish Telegraph*.<sup>22</sup> I include an edited version simply because it not only explains the system, but conveys a contemporary view of the atmosphere created by the 'Paying Off' of a naval vessel.

It (the squadron) hove in sight at a dull time and put into harbour at the birth of a crisis. Publicans had nothing to do; barmaids fattened alarmingly and cabmen groaned despairingly. The men in the Dockyard slept and the Gunner on board the Port Admiral's flagship ROYAL ADELAIDE nearly forgot the time honoured words – *if I wasn't a gunner I shouldn't be here – FIRE!* But its' (the squadron's) coming livened things up again, brightened despairing hopes, quickened the sense of the Admiral's gunner and changed the entire face of things appertaining to the navy trade and then came the week for paying off and with it the time for reaping a rich harvest.

Paying off is an event that Jack looks to as the next best thing to coming home. It means liberty, cash and.....rum. The days of the old sea-dog are gone. The modern blue-jacket gets drunk, drives about in cabs and seeks out the daughters of Circe. He even gets robbed now and then, but he does not light his pipe with bank notes as in the good old days of fifty years ago.

There is something lively about the last morning on board a man-of-war. There was something lively – very lively indeed – about the gates of Devonport Dockyard on three mornings this week. Liberty is the order of the hour and a broken down sort of discipline ensues. Paying off usually commences at ten o'clock after the men have been mustered in divisions at the break of the quarter-deck and the Captain has made a little speech – short, terse and salt – from the bridge. The Captain declares he is proud to have commanded such a fine body of men and thanks them for their good conduct. The men cheer the Captain, AND the

---

<sup>22</sup> *Cornish Telegraph* Wednesday 7 December 1870

Officers AND the Admiral and everyone down to the steward's cat and when there is nothing else to cheer, they cheer themselves.

The Paying Off commences now. It is conducted in the Captain's cabin with the Captain present together with the officer superintendent, purser and the purser's assistant. The men go below in divisions and there is a friendly interchange of chaff between the Captain and the best of the hands, who are usually the gunner's mates otherwise known as the 'sea lawyers' whose tongues are as long and as pliable as a big-bar cable.

The whole business does not take more than two hours, even for a large frigate and men, marines and boys alike 'heave away' for the shore carrying their small bundles and flush with grog which has been bailed out in double quantity.

On shore they are captured by friends, real and imagined, or assiduous cabmen. It is a lively scene about the dock gate, a scene of animation, excitement and hysterical jollity. All the cabs in the three towns are at the gate and in the next minute all are gone with not a cab to be seen.

It is impossible to say how much each man is carrying as the amount would depend on the length of the voyage, but men have been known, after a three year cruise, to land with £200 tucked into the buttoned top of his trousers.

Of course the ship that features in Henry's story is the PHOEBE and her Captain was John Bythesea VC RN. His Purser or Paymaster was Charles Sharpcote and Hugh Edwards was his Assistant, but Boy First Class Henry Trethewey, onetime crew member of the PHOEBE, was now Ordinary Seaman Trethewey of the ROYAL ADELAIDE and that brings the story back to his departure from the MULLET and his arrival on the ROYAL ADELAIDE in Devonport.

It is very clear from all the newspaper reports concerning the *Flying Squadron* and its paying off, that not every member of their crews had relatives waiting outside the dockyard gates. There were many seamen who hailed from both Portsmouth and Chatham, but they could not go anywhere until they had been accounted for in the musters and paid. It would have been the same for Henry's departure from the MULLET. Seamen in his position, not belonging to Sheerness, were gathered up after the ship had 'paid off' and directed towards a paddle steamer that had specific orders to carry the men back to their home port and this would have been spread across several days. It did not matter that he was not on the ship to which he had been drafted. The first entry in the Pay Book which would allocate him his pay number would also record the date on which he had 'appeared on board.'

However this is not the whole story. The Flagship at Devonport was also classified as a Receiving Ship and this meant that it was the focal point for all seamen who did not have a draft to a ship in commission. It was the responsibility of the Admiral's staff to deploy unattached crew members to any ship needing to add to its complement. All ships had an official complement and most ships operated below that complement for many reasons, but they could also seek to add to their crew from those carried on the Flagship and Henry was one of those seamen. The ROYAL ADELAIDE was not a seagoing vessel and would not have required a full complement of seamen, so although Henry was entered into her books for payment, he would likely have received that payment weekly or monthly and as a newly promoted Ordinary Seaman he was earning the princely sum of 1/3d per day – yes that is little more than 6 pence or 44 pence per week (8/9d).

Meanwhile Henry would have to earn that money and he would have been allocated to a mess and a watch and expected to do everything that was demanded of him.



# Devonport's Flagship ROYAL ADELAIDE

20 July to 10 December 1870

Henry was not unfamiliar with the atmosphere on board a Flagship, but his 49 days on the ROYAL ALFRED were exceeded by the 144 days on the ROYAL ADELAIDE and she was a very different ship conceived over fifty years previously. Her keel was laid down in Plymouth Dock in May 1819 and she was originally intended to be an enlarged version of the VICTORY to be named LONDON. She was a 'Nelson' era ship designated a 'First Rate Ship of the Line' carrying 104 guns on three gun decks, but no one was in any hurry to build her. It was nine years before she was ready to launch and the event was arranged to coincide with the visit of the Duke of Clarence (later William IV) on Monday 28 July 1828. His Duchess was invited to launch her and the ship was named the ROYAL ADELAIDE in her honour.

Seven more years passed before she was commissioned for the first time on Thursday 10 December 1835, when she was taken from the dockyard for the first time and moored in the Hamoaze. For three and a half years she flew the flags of successive Admirals until she was Paid Off in May 1839.

For twenty more years she lay ignored and unemployed at her moorings until April 1859 when she became Devonport's Guardship and Flagship to the Ordinary, a role she maintained until 1889. It was in this capacity, in 1870, that Henry joined her as an Ordinary Seaman. Photographs of her are rare, but two excellent portraits show her in all her useless magnificence.<sup>23</sup>



The artistic background in the portrait above is suitably nondescript, but the following portrait over the stern, features the obelisk above Cremyl and the massive storehouse at the Royal William Yard in the left hand distance.

<sup>23</sup> *Plymouth's Ships of War* by Lt. Cdr. K.V. Burns DSM published by the National Maritime Museum page 111



Where she was moored during Henry's time on board was initially unclear. In fact it has been something of a shock to discover that modern 'historians' who toy with Naval History are confusing the many good, late Victorian photographs of the IMPREGNABLE off Cremyl with the ROYAL ADELAIDE, which had been taken to Chatham sometime after 1891 when the Admiral moved his flag ashore to the VIVID.

The weekly reports of ships present in the harbour clearly show that the ROYAL ADELAIDE and the IMPREGNABLE were two individual ships, but there are two snippets among the reports that shed new light on the moorings of the Flagship during Henry's time on board. On Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1870, just two days after Henry had joined the ship, she was moved from her moorings off the Gun Wharf to her original moorings off Mount Edgcumbe.<sup>24</sup> Yet, without knowing where these 'original moorings' were, this statement is quite vague. Another report in October said,

Shortly before midnight on Wednesday (5<sup>th</sup> October 1870) the sentries on board the ROYAL ADELAIDE, flagship in the Hamoaze, perceived a fire to be raging in a portion of the Dockyard immediately opposite the spot at which the flagship was moored. An alarm gun was fired and in a very short time the Dockyard police aided by some boat loads of sailors were on the spot exerting themselves to extinguish the flames.

It was found that the fire was in a house detached from all other buildings immediately in front of the mast house. It was used for heating the iron hoops before they are placed on the mast, when by contraction on cooling the hoops bind the staves of the mast together. It was also used for burning all sullage and sweepings of the decks, the ashes of which are collected and conveyed to the wash pit when copper nails are picked out and returned to the store.

---

<sup>24</sup> *Western Morning News* Saturday 23 July 1870

The building was constructed in brick with a brick arch for a ceiling, but it appears that immediately adjacent, and in some places touching this arch was a roof of ordinary wooden beams covered with slate. There had been a fire in the house that day (Wednesday) for the usual purpose, but it had been carefully extinguished and the ashes raked away.<sup>25</sup>

The mast house was immediately to the south of the Grand Terrace and facing the end of the camber which led from the river to the boat pond and mast pond, but a mooring in the Hamoaze opposite that location (to the west) would place it in the centre of the wide sweep of St. John's Lake and completely different from the mooring off Cremyl and in sight of Mount Edgcumbe House as seen in the illustration below. However, there was one further clue that could add weight to the supposition that she was moored in position 'A' and that was the 1871 Census.

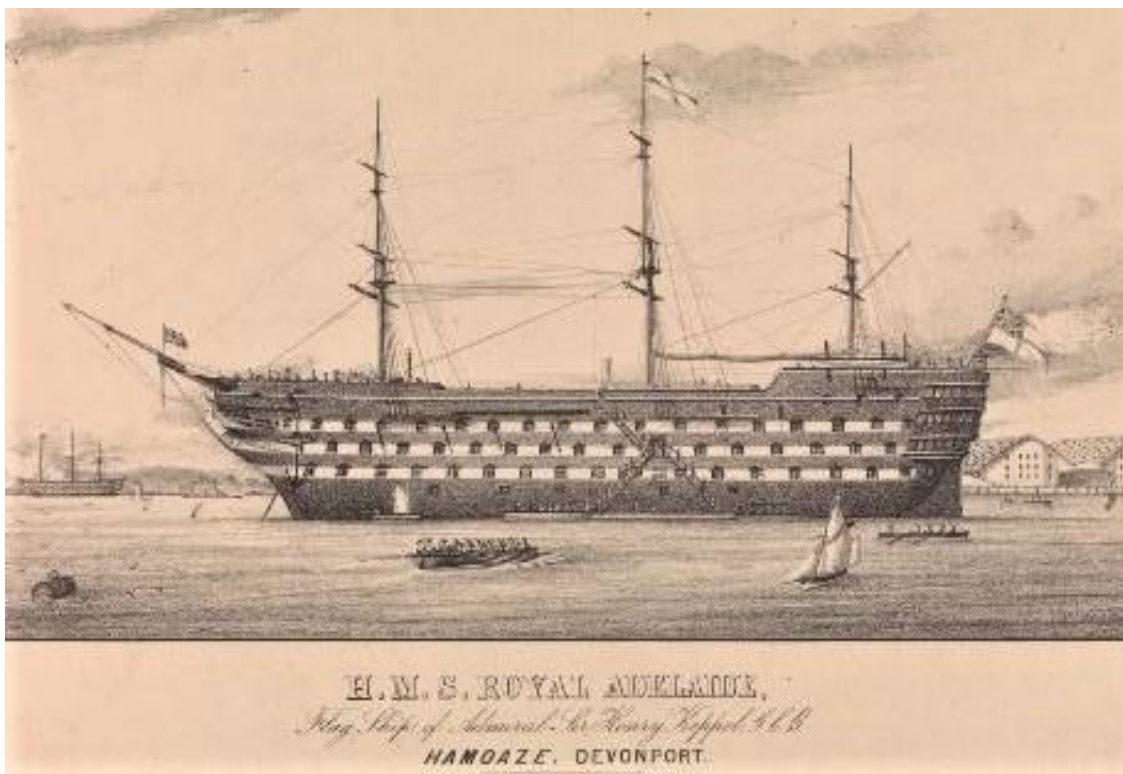


Admiral Sir Henry Codrington was at home in Government House, Mount Wise on the night of the census and if the ROYAL ADELAIDE was moored in the vicinity of Cremyl, then she would have been clearly visible from the front windows of the house, but it was a household with its 12 staff, from butler down to scullery maid, that 19 year-old Ordinary Seaman Henry Trethewey would not have recognised.<sup>26</sup>

161	Government House "Admirals"	1	Henry J. Codrington	Head	58	Admiral R. H. Full Pay	North Preston
			Leathem	Wife	58	do	Southampton
			Ann	Daughter	18	do	London
			Robert Kirkhope	Servant	do	do	do
			Edward Radcliffe	do	21	Butler (domestic)	Scotland
			George Gault	do	25	Butler do	do
			James Lawrence	do	22	Footman do	do
			George & Coak	do	22	Groom do	do
			Samuel Wolfe	do	22	Stall Boy do	do
			Janet A. Cook	do	22	Cook do	do
			Susan Roberts	do	27	Housekeeper do	do
						Ladies Maid do	do

<sup>25</sup> Western Morning News Friday 7 October 1870

<sup>26</sup> 1871 Census RG10 Piece 2130 Folio 19 Page 29



However, the illustration that must be the final arbiter in the debate concerning her moorings shows the ROYAL ADELAIDE flying the flag of Admiral Sir Henry Keppel and he succeeded Admiral Codrington in 1872. Crucially this titled engraving shows two buildings in the right background which are the Scribe Board and Mould Loft beloved of all woodworking shipwrights and close to the camber entrance. This would place her position less than 200 yards to the south of position 'B' and marked on the aerial view on the previous page

## Life on board the Flagship

There was no privacy in a ship especially one like the ROYAL ADELAIDE. On arrival Henry would have been allocated to a Mess and he would have been one of 23 members of that Mess. They would have eaten, slept and spent their spare time in close proximity to everyone else. However, they were spared living over the guns which would have been the lot of their predecessors. The ROYAL ADELAIDE'S 104 guns (32 on each gun deck) had been reduced to just 26 in total in 1870.

The 24 hour day was divided into watches which were not as critical as those in a sea-going warship, but they were not ignored. Routines are exactly that and the working day would have been the same on any ship as were the meal times, but a Flagship and especially this Flagship would have seen an endless stream of boats heaving backwards and forwards between it and all the other ships at moorings within the Hamoaze that were constantly changing. Beloved of artists, the small boat added colour and movement to any picture as can be seen below in the boat extracted from the picture of 1837. The ship would have had a number of small boats from the Captain's personal gig to longboats, whalers and dinghies and all would have needed oarsmen and a coxswain for the boat's crew. These men were usually selected for their strength and reliability, for their actions were frequently critical and hazardous to both themselves and to their boat. Imagine the daunting prospect of mooring a ship that is at the mercy of wind and tide from a small dinghy with ropes that were as thick as a man's thigh. There is no sign in Henry's record that he filled any of these functions until he joined the Coastguard for it would seem that Henry's talents could be found aloft along the yards.



The enlarged extract shows a boat with a decorated transom propelled by twelve oarsmen towards the Cornish side of the Tamar with the frames of ships under construction in the background and near the site of Mashford's Boat Yard. The boat is carrying an officer of the Royal Marines with a lady and there are two naval officers one of which could be a Midshipman acting as coxswain and in command of the crew. They are pulling away from the leeside of the Flagship, possibly being carried home to Mount Edgcumbe, after a social gathering on board as guests of the ship's officers. Yet not all journeys to and from the Flagship facilitated an enjoyable social occasion.

The Flagship was the focal point for Courts Martial with the captain of the ROYAL ADELAIDE acting as President of the Court on most occasions. Captain Trevenen Penrose Coode had been appointed to the command on her commissioning on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1869 and he served two Admirals, Codrington and Keppel, until 1875. How many Courts Martial he presided over beggars belief as the newspaper reports accumulate into an average of almost one every week?

The charges generally fell into three categories – drunkenness, refusing an order and absent without leave which was technically desertion – and they were usually held in the Captain's day cabin. Formality was paramount with three senior officers behind the table and an assortment of officers, petty officers and Royal Marine guards to escort the prisoner to and from his confinement on board the man's own ship. Three cases have been selected that are close to Henry Trethewey's own circumstances and in two cases the 'prisoner' might have been known to him. They were not chosen for their harsh punishment as every case would be considered harsh by the standards of today.

The first court martial that took place on board ROYAL ADELAIDE at her new moorings occurred on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> August 1870, just over three weeks after Henry had joined the Flagship. William Small was a Boy First Class, so he was 17 years old and his first sea-going draft had been the BLACK PRINCE, a sister ship to the WARRIOR, but he obviously couldn't take to the life and deserted his ship. It did

him no good. 12 months imprisonment with hard labour in Lewes Naval Gaol was his punishment, but he was not dismissed from the service, so he would have to face it all over again when he was released.

However, the court had not finished for the day after Small's judgement, as there was a second court convened to hear the charges against Royal Marine Private William Saunders of the Plymouth Division and serving on the Flagship. He had disobeyed RM Captain West and struck Sergeant Brooks and for that crime he was sentenced to two years imprisonment in Exeter Gaol with hard labour and dismissed from the service, so his life was in tatters.

During the next 15 weeks there were a considerable number of courts convened. Henry would have become used to the sights and sounds of immaculate dress uniforms and shouted orders until Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1870 when Ordinary Seaman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class James Bourke of the ROYAL ADELAIDE faced two charges of disobeying an order and striking the ship's corporal (the ship's policeman), who was his superior officer. He had already been in the cells since the date of the offence, the 12<sup>th</sup> November, but the Court sentenced him to two years imprisonment with hard labour in Exeter Gaol following which he was to be dismissed from the Royal Navy. Did Henry know him? It is possible, but Henry's time on the ROYAL ADELAIDE was coming to an end as he had been told that he was to join the VANGUARD on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December.

During Henry's last week on the Flagship, the Court was convened again on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December to hear the case against John Acton, a Boy First Class of the frigate PHOEBE. He had left his ship on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1869 in Melbourne, Victoria, on leave, but he never returned. This was a full twelve months previous to the trial, but desertion can never be ignored.

It transpired that he eventually signed on a merchant ship for the voyage home, but would not have held a Seaman's Ticket from the Board of Trade, as he should have done. I suspect that it was this omission that led to him telling one of the crew that he was a 'runaway,' perhaps hoping to garner some sympathy. He was arrested as he stepped ashore in England. He offered no defence, but simply pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment with hard labour in the naval prison at Lewes, but he was spared being dismissed from the service.

Although PHOEBE'S crew was a large one and Henry's time on board was quite brief, there is a possibility that John Acton was on board the PHOEBE during Henry's time on that ship, but there is no certainty. She had an enhanced crew during her circum-navigation of 524 seamen and marines with over 50 officers including a bevy of Midshipmen, but the number of Boys First Class, who were only seventeen years old, would have been quite small.

Henry had been earning a man's money now for almost six months and the life of an Ordinary Seaman on a static Flagship in Devonport's harbour was monotonous. It was one long round of scrubbing decks, polishing bright work and tidying ropes day after day with little to look forward to. The ROYAL ADELAIDE was the Flagship to the Ships in Ordinary which meant all those ships that were in Devonport's harbour or in the Dockyard and not in commission. Ships in commission found themselves within fleets like the Channel Fleet that spent their time cruising in the English Channel, or ships on a Station such as the one from which Henry had recently returned. But 1870 concluded a decade which had seen new and innovative ships join the ranks of the Royal Navy, inspired by the success of the WARRIOR and these ships were moving naval technology forward at an ever increasing pace.

The outlines of three of those ships had become familiar in Plymouth Sound since September – AUDACIOUS, VANGUARD and INVINCIBLE. New ships need new crews and Henry had been told to report on board the VANGUARD on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December 1870. Christmas was coming. It was time to move on.

## EPILOGUE

Henry has been in the service for nearly three years. He has had three promotions and seen his pay more than double, from 6d per day to 1/3d per day (Captain Coode received 10/- per day). He has scrubbed the decks and climbed the rigging of eight Royal Navy warships – IMPLACABLE, SEALARK, ECLIPSE, TERROR, PHOEBE, ROYAL ALFRED, MULLET and ROYAL ADELAIDE - and all of them were very different. Three of them never moved and two of them were the Flagships of Admirals. Henry had seen six large islands NOVA SCOTIA (almost an island), CAPE BRETON ISLAND, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, BERMUDA, JAMAICA and CUBA and that does not include the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight and the Isle of Sheppey. Yet Henry has not contributed a single word in his own hand.

This narrative is entirely factual and in large measure, chronological. The threads I have included in its composition, to create a cohesiveness, are entirely my own. What has been included or put aside has been my decision based upon my understanding of the events of the day. Contemporary newspapers provide a wealth of detail and there will be books I have not seen or read. Others approaching this same subject may see it differently. They might put their emphasis on different issues.

I was never a member of the Royal Navy so I have never been subject to its discipline and procedures, but I have worked closely with them for nearly 40 years on board ship and within the Royal Dockyard and I was always acutely aware of naval life and its effect on those who had to live within it. My grandfather and brother were naval officers and my mother and her brother were steeped in the naval tradition. I knew scores of Senior Rates and specialist Officers, some of whom I counted as friends.

On Saturday 11 August 2018 I saw Captain John Bythesea's VC in the Ashcroft Gallery of the Imperial War Museum in London. Henry might have seen it when his Captain put on his dress uniform to make a courtesy call upon Vice-Admiral Sir G. Mundy on his Flagship the ROYAL ALFRED when the PHOEBE reached Halifax on the 27 April 1869.

I knew only one person who knew Henry. It was my Grandfather, Henry's son, yet we never spoke of his father, as relationships in those days were not as relaxed and informal as they are today. Therefore I make no apology for Henry's story as I have set it down, but I accept that others might arrive at a different narrative.

26681 words  
11 March 2020