

# A Passport to Empire



## Henry Westaway Trethewey

It is December 1870. Henry has left Devonport's static Flagship ROYAL ADELAIDE for a new ship - VANGUARD

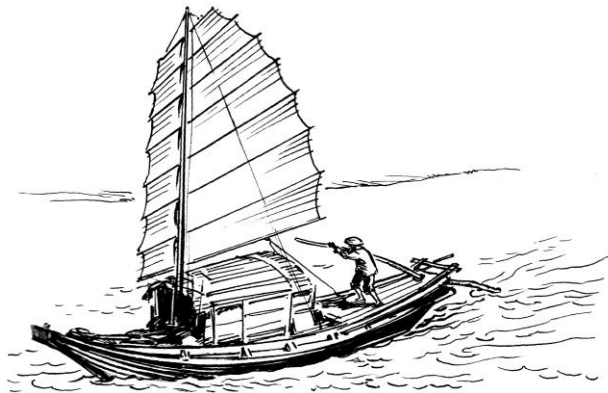
It doesn't last and the whole crew is transferred to a sister ship IRON DUKE. Unexpectedly her intended role is changed and she is ordered to the Far East as Flagship to the China Station causing Henry to marry in haste.

This story describes the IRON DUKE's transit of the new Suez Canal and the activities of the ships of the squadron in their skirmishes with pirates and their survival of a major typhoon

Henry visits Hong Kong and spends time on the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE

He thumbs a lift on the gun boat THALIA and spends a month on board cruising the coast of Formosa before transferring back to the Flagship in Japan.

Henry returns to England on the Flagship arriving in Devonport in May 1875 after nearly four years away only to find that he had a son whom he never saw.

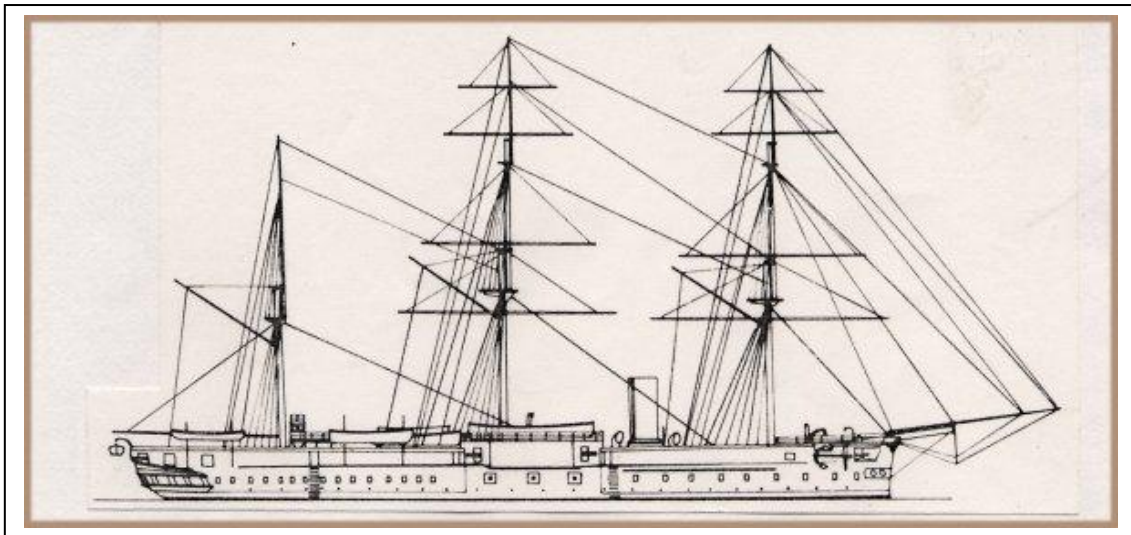


A warship was nothing more than a gun platform and the 1860s saw the development of the debate between a turret and a battery. The advantage of the battery was that it could be accommodated along the sides of the ship and would not interfere with masts and rigging. By this date however, the concept had been reduced to a small central battery, which still allowed the broadside, beloved of the old style officers, but could be potent on BOTH sides of the ship simultaneously. In the period up to 1867, sixteen ships were built, all individually different, but the seventeenth ship, PENELOPE, included the first steam driven propeller. These machinery spaces together with the need for coal and water bunkers competed with the space occupied by the battery with its ever expanding guns and argument ensued. Iron over wood; battery over turret; steam over sail. Inevitably mistakes were made, some disastrous, whilst high level intransigence caused waste and obsolescence.

In 1869/70 the AUDACIOUS Class of four ships appeared at Plymouth and these became the largest number of true sisters in the 'black fleet.' At 280 feet long they were on the small side and were intended as second class iron-clads for service abroad where they might meet French or other foreign iron-clads. They were the first to have their battery on two decks. The battery consisted of six 9-inch MLR guns on the Main Deck without embrasures and four 6-inch MLR guns above them firing through embrasures and the whole structure overhung the guns on the Main Deck.

Henry was not a gunner. He was a sailing man.

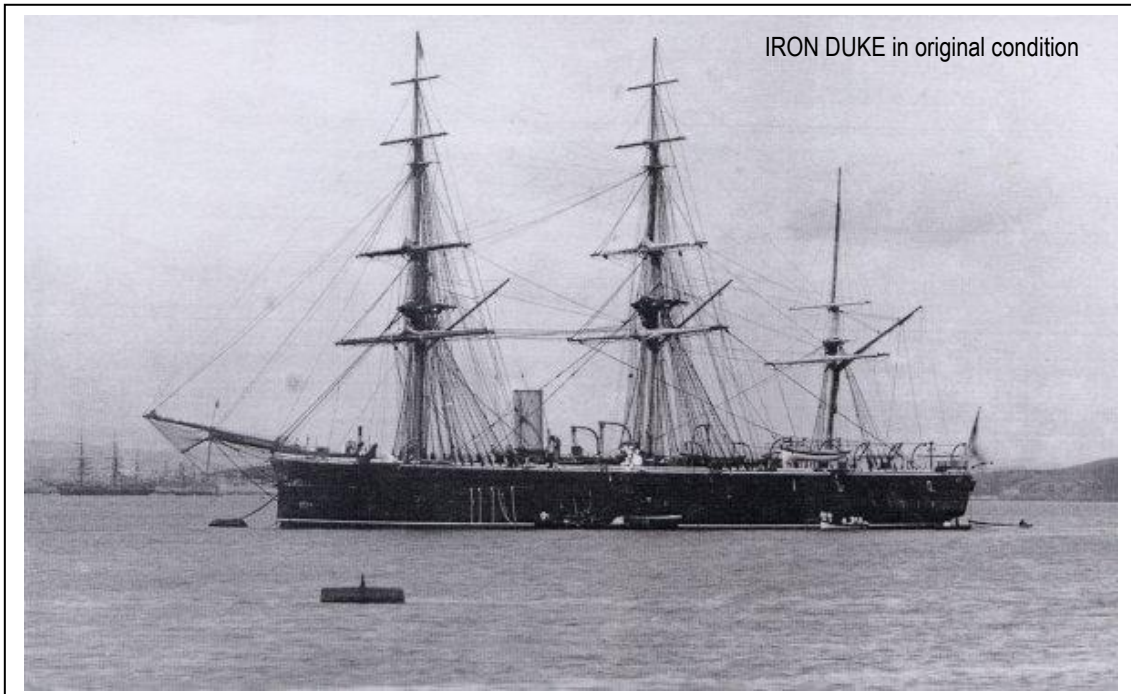




**AUDACIOUS class central battery ironclads**

**Displacement:** 5909t light, 6010t load  
**Dimensions:** 280ft pp x 54ft x 22ft 7in (85.34 pp x 16.46 x 6.88m)  
**Machinery:** 2-shaft, 2-2 cyl HRCR, 6 rectangular boilers, 4020ihp = 13.2kts (*Audacious*); 4830ihp = 14.09kts (*Invincible*); 4270ihp = 13.64kts (*Iron Duke*); -ihp = 14.5kts (*Vanguard*)  
**Armour:** Belt 8-6in with 10in-8in wood backing, battery 6in bulkheads 5in  
**Armament:** 10-9in MLR, 4-6in MLR, 6-20pdr BL saluting  
**Complement:** 450

Name	Builder	Laid down	Launched	Comp	Fate
AUDACIOUS	Napier, Glasgow	26.6.1867	27.2.69	10.9.70	Sold for BU 1922
INVINCIBLE	Napier, Glasgow	28.6.1867	29.5.69	1.10.70	Foundered in tow off Portland 17.9.14
IRON DUKE	Pembroke DYd	23.8.1868	1.3.70	21.1.71	Sold for BU 1906
VANGUARD	Laird, Birkenhead	21.10.1867	3.1.70	28.9.70	Sunk in collision with <i>Iron Duke</i> 1.9.75



## The Trials and Tribulations of a New Ship

---

Three of the four ships in a new class of Central Battery Iron-clad were frequently reported in and around Plymouth Sound during 1870 with the fourth ship INVINCIBLE featuring very occasionally. Henry didn't reach Plymouth until late July and he may have accumulated some leave for his long sojourn in the western Atlantic, but he had his mind focused upon life on the Flagship of the C-in-C Plymouth. The three AUDACIOUS Class ships were of little interest to him, but they were high on the list of priorities for the officers of the Keyham Steam Reserve.

All new ships and those that had received a major refit, were put through their paces by this team of professional engineers before they were accepted into Royal Naval service from the ship builder or the Dockyard. It was no different in my day. It was a part of our job to present the machinery for inspection, trial and acceptance. It was a very demanding time, fraught with tension and anxiety and it would have been little different in 1870. These meticulous inspections were very important for a new ship as the machinery was often new in both design and manufacture and the trials were extensive and exhaustive in order to reveal any hidden defects or deficiencies in both design and materials.

All three of these new ships had been built in different ship yards, but the two that will feature in this story were separated by only eight weeks. VANGUARD had been launched at Lairds of Birkenhead on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1870 whilst the IRON DUKE had been built at Pembroke Dockyard and launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> March.

It would be strange indeed if the Royal Navy were not anxious to have these new ships commissioned and on active service at the earliest opportunity and the *Hampshire Advertiser* suggested that both VANGUARD and IRON DUKE had been put into dock on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August to prepare them for commissioning. However, that same Friday's *Tavistock Gazette* was much more pessimistic.

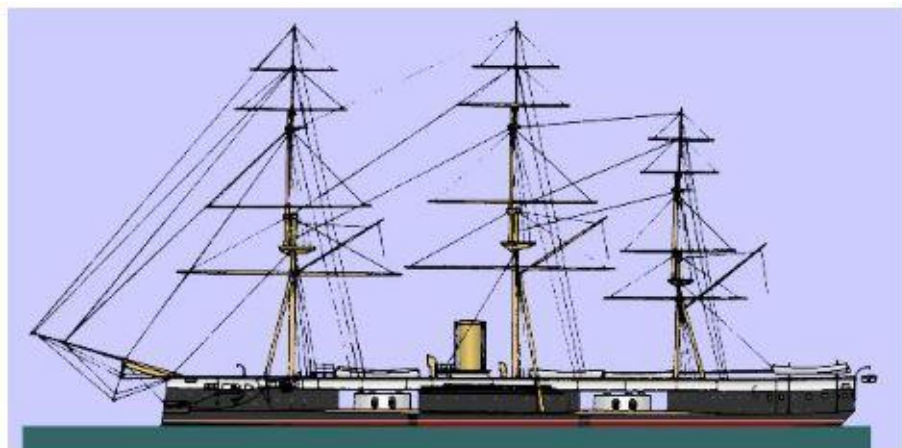
It said that.

It is feared that all three ships will be delayed in fitting out for want of water tanks and bread tanks of which there are none in store to fit them. Those which should have been fitted were sold three or four months ago.

The report also alleged that the Royal William Yard was critically short of provisions that would prevent them from going to sea, even if the tanks had been available. What a sorry state!

There was another new ship at sea that was attracting some considerable attention in August 1870. She was the turret ship CAPTAIN which had been commissioned in April 1870 after having been launched a year previously at Laird's shipyard at Birkenhead. The CAPTAIN was with the Channel Fleet in Gibraltar when they began to make their way home. It wasn't long before they ran into a late summer storm in the Bay of Biscay when they were off Cape Finisterre. The storm was viewed by other officers in the fleet as 'unexceptional,' yet the CAPTAIN disappeared in the early hours of Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 1870. No one saw what happened during the hours of darkness.

The turrets can be clearly seen in this diagram, but the overall appearance has an uncanny resemblance to the AUDACIOUS Class which led to their careful scrutiny as the VANGUARD had been built in the same shipyard in the same period.







Contemporary newspapers did not have banner headlines in those days, simply a heading and on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September every paper in the land carried something similar to - **The Loss of The Captain** – and all of them were writing reports based on the Admiralty’s public announcement dated ‘Sept 9.’ It said,

The following distressing telegram has been received at the Admiralty, by way of Vigo, with the deepest regret.

**From Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, Her Majesty’s Ship LORD WARDEN, off Cape Finisterre. 7<sup>th</sup> September 8 p.m.**

**I very much regret to have to send you painful intelligence.  
Her Majesty’s Ship CAPTAIN, must have foundered in the night.  
She was close to this ship at two this morning.  
Sudden SW gale with heavy squalls.  
At daybreak the CAPTAIN was missing.  
This afternoon her boat (or boats) and spars found.  
All have unfortunately perished.  
The INCONSTANT sails to you with report.**

Further intelligence will be communicated when received.  
It is reported that Captain Cowper Coles was on board at the time of this terrible calamity. The second son of Lord Northbrook, the Hon. Arthur Baring, was one of the Midshipmen.

This was a **‘Great Naval Calamity’** as one newspaper headline described it. It certainly was a tragedy of huge enormity for the naval community in Portsmouth where the ship was based. Every seaman in the service would have been affected by it in some way and Henry was one of those seamen. It certainly would have been the talk of the mess for weeks as this was no ‘one-day-wonder.’ Eventually there would be an inquiry.

After initially believing that all the crew went down with the ship it was of some small consolation to read that 18 men from the Middle Watch managed to save themselves. They were assembling soon after midnight, when the ship was struck and as she turned over on her starboard side, she sank by the stern in three minutes. The fortunate survivors all found themselves close to a pinnace that was riding out the storm and they managed to bring the pinnace to shore near Corunna soon after 1 o’clock on that fateful Wednesday. They were brought home to Portsmouth by the VOLAGE landing again soon after 1 o’clock on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September - one Officer (the Gunner) and 17 men.

Initially the newspapers were very positive and patriotic, a necessary sensitivity towards the survivors and the bereaved. This ship was a new ‘wonder of the age’ and she had performed all her trials successfully, but there was (as there always is) a small, but influential group of sceptics and now there was a small band of witnesses.

It is too easy to become absorbed in the vast amount of detail that this tragedy generated and I include a brief synopsis simply because it was a major tragedy that reverberated throughout the service. Indirectly it had an effect on the VANGUARD and the IRON DUKE and their sisters and consequently it had an effect on Ordinary Seaman Henry Trethewey and that will become clear as I proceed.

The obligatory Board of Inquiry was not complimentary. It said,

The inquiry into the ships loss found that she had sunk due to the design and construction of the ship.

*‘Before the Captain was received from her contractors a grave departure from her original design had been committed whereby her draught of water was increased about two feet and her freeboard was diminished to a corresponding extent, and that her stability proved to be dangerously small, combined with an area of sail, under those circumstances, excessive. The Court deeply regret that if these facts were duly known and appreciated, they were not communicated to the officer in command of the ship, or that, if otherwise, the ship was allowed to be employed in the ordinary service of the Fleet before they had been ascertained by calculation and experience.’*

During the inquiry it was discovered that there was insufficient supervision of the weight of material being added to the ship during construction which by its completion had increased by 750 tons over its designed displacement. This led to the centre of gravity rising by 10 inches rendering the vessel unsafe. Concerns about her tendency to instability were raised during her initial trials, but these were dismissed. The height of the masts was considered to be excessive which in turn carried an excess of sail area and therefore weight of canvas. This latter consideration was the direct result of the intransigent attitude of the ‘sailing Admirals’ who refused to countenance any reduction in canvas in spite of the ship being fitted with twin screws. CAPTAIN was destined to sink before she had even left the wharf at Birkenhead.

## How did this affect the VANGUARD?

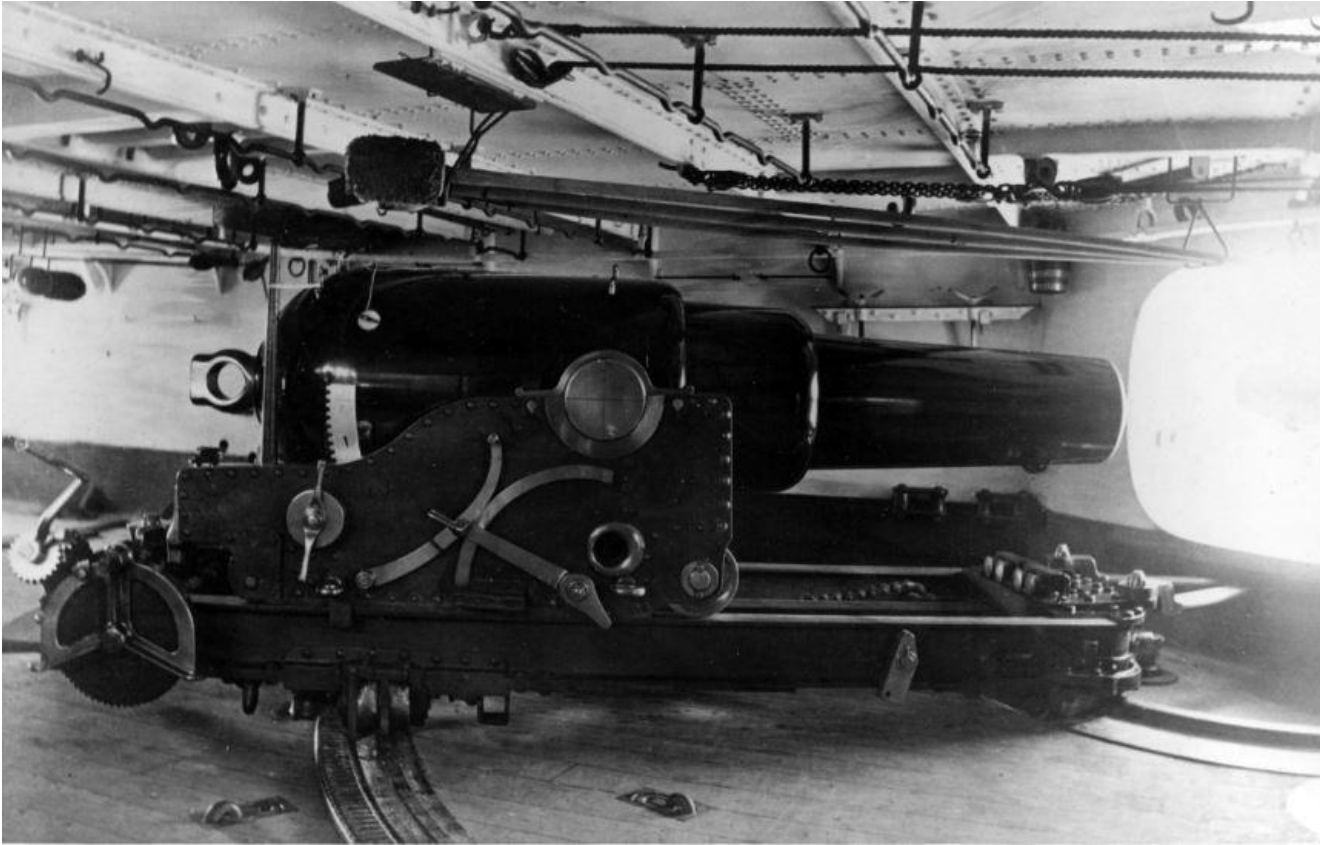
---

Following the usual programme of sea trials that included full power for a specified time, full speed over the measured mile and steering trials at differing speeds and the consequential periods in dock and alongside the Dockyard wharf to rectify the defects that had been uncovered, the officers of the Keyham Steam Reserve declared that they were satisfied that the VANGUARD was ready to join the Royal Navy.

On the day that Plymouth was waking up to the shocking news of the loss of the CAPTAIN, the *Army & Navy Gazette* for Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September, reported that the VANGUARD had been brought alongside the Gun Wharf to ‘receive her complete armour.’ This must have been a daunting task as the navy’s main armaments were beginning to creep upwards in size. VANGUARD, in line with her three sisters, carried four 6-inch MLRs (*muzzle loading rifled barrel*) and six 9-inch MLRs one of which is illustrated here carried by the IRON DUKE. The barrel was a standard barrel weighing 12 tons which was found on fortifications throughout the Empire and manned by the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA). It was also common on Royal Navy vessels mounted upon a wooden truck, but this mounting had a carriage that was completely new, yet was still recognisable to those who resisted change, unlike the two turrets fitted to the CAPTAIN.

To complete VANGUARD’S armaments there were two pairs of 64 pounders at the bow and stern and there were six 20 pounder saluting guns, bringing the total weight of her main armament to more than 100 tons. One 9-inch shell weighed 254 lbs and had a range of 4000 yards. A sobering thought.





It would appear that VANGUARD was officially completed on the 28<sup>th</sup> September and this was followed by her commissioning on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October. This was a very formal ceremony during which the new crew of 500 officers and men was assembled in their divisions and their newly appointed Captain E.H.G. Lambert read out his 'commission' from the Admiralty. This ceremony concluded with a sharp tug on a line that unfurled a white ensign at the mizzen gaff after which, it was rumoured, she would join the Channel Fleet. I have seen many such ceremonies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and on these occasions the white ensign replaced the red ensign of the merchant service, under which flag the ship had conducted her acceptance trials. With a white ensign fluttering at the stern, she now belonged to the Royal Navy and the shipbuilder would be paid.

However, it was unusual to have a double commissioning as VANGUARD was joined by her sister AUDACIOUS which had received the crew of the PALLAS. Perhaps the authorities were mindful of the fact that AUDACIOUS was the first of class and had been in the water since February 1869 after her launch from Napier's shipyard in Glasgow and consequently she was the ship on which all the defects associated with a new design, manifested themselves.

Commissioning in my time was a social occasion for the families of the crew, but in 1870 it was very likely to have taken place whilst moored to a buoy in the river. Meanwhile, on shore in the Keyham Steam Yard, the dockyard shipwrights and riggers were engaged in undocking the IRON DUKE after yet another session of defect rectification.

## A Bad Omen

---

Three weeks later, very little had changed and the fault seemed to lie with the weather as all three ships lay in the sound. IRON DUKE was trying to progress her machinery trials, but AUDACIOUS and VANGUARD were awaiting orders. It was still believed that VANGUARD would join the Channel Fleet at Portland, but it didn't seem to materialise. Under these circumstances the officers of any ship become concerned about the effects of boredom on the morale of their crew. Work, work and more work is often the answer, but that cannot be the order of EVERY day. On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October it seems that the officers of the VANGUARD decided to allow a families day (*something still very common in my time*), and this is often very well received by everyone.

The recent adverse weather in the Channel had probably caused ships of all kinds to take shelter in the Sound and among them was an American naval frigate named FRANKLIN. As the VANGUARD was a new ship it drew attention to itself and the American Navy Officers were curious to see the Royal Navy's newest offering. Somehow they received an invitation to visit the ship and this coincided with 'Families Day' and it was handled very badly.

The Master-at-Arms ordered the wives and friends of VANGUARD's seamen off the ship a half hour before time and as he was showing a group of American Officers around, several seamen hissed at him. For some reason known only to himself, the Master-at-Arms interpreted this as an '*insult to the American flag and its officers*' and one man was singled out for punishment. A seaman named Gill was given a flogging of 48 lashes.<sup>1</sup> Imagine that, especially as it had to be watched by the crew. That is not the best way to start a new commission and some of the more superstitious among the seamen would have seen it as a bad omen for the ship. There was also in London at this time, a small but influential group who were monitoring the statistics relating to flogging by identifying the ships and the senior officers who were more prone to condoning it. Any ship on the list would struggle to recruit a crew. The best thing for any ship was to be busy at sea and the Admiralty ordered the VANGUARD to sail on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>2</sup> Their public announcement included the words – the Admiralty is satisfied that there is no danger in the present condition of this class of vessel – but that veiled the work that was going on behind the scenes and the IRON DUKE would be the ship to receive the modifications.

## Was the VANGUARD a Safe Berth?

---

With the loss of the CAPTAIN still fresh everyone's memory there must have been crew members on board who were just a little nervous of their new berth and these fears had been put into print locally by the *Western Morning News*. The atmosphere among the naval population of Portsmouth had already turned from grief to anger and this report was repeated in the *Portsmouth Times & Naval Gazette* on Saturday 12 November. It read,

On the First Lord of the Admiralty will rest the responsibility, if in the case of the VANGUARD, the disaster which befell the CAPTAIN is repeated.

The *Gazette* concluded with its own observation.

It may be that the fears that are expressed are unfounded, but they do exist and to send a ship to sea without incontestable evidence of her safety is to court homicide, whilst to withhold the publication of evidence, if it exists, is downright cruelty,

Meanwhile the VANGUARD was on passage to the area where the CAPTAIN was lost.

## A Testing Voyage

---

In the week that VANGUARD left for her cruise, which was expected to last a month, the AUDACIOUS made two attempts to leave the Sound on Monday and Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> November carrying Supernumeraries for the VALIANT in Kingstown, Ireland (now Dun Laoghaire). The following day the INVINCIBLE left the Dockyard and shipped all her powder in the Sound before sailing for Hull where she was to be the Guardship. However, it was the IRON DUKE that attracts the attention of the press.

The Dockyard had received orders to replace the water ballast in her double bottom with 360 tons of SOLID ballast made of a mixture of scrap iron and Portland cement. This would increase her stability, but diminish her speed which would be further affected by the shortening of her masts.

---

<sup>1</sup> London's *Morning Post* Monday 7 November 1870

<sup>2</sup> *Western Morning News* Wednesday 9 November 1870



So in spite of the Admiralty's dismissive words, there was a potential problem and the press was aware of these remedial actions which look remarkably like the actions that would have saved the CAPTAIN. The only ones not aware were the seamen on the VANGUARD.

VANGUARD left Vigo on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November, but it was not until she had returned to Devonport that the detail of her cruise was published and it is worth repeating the report in the *Army & Navy Gazette* in full.<sup>3</sup> This showed unequivocally that she had been deliberately dispatched in the wake of the CAPTAIN to test her stability under similar sea-going conditions.

She entered Plymouth Sound in the afternoon of Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December with Captain C. Fellowes of the Devonport Steam Reserve on board. She had returned from an experimental cruise of thirty days duration, twenty three of which were spent at sea, including sixteen days of gales of wind and bad weather. The extreme roll of the ship was from 22° to leeward and 19° to windward in a very heavy sea, under the most trying of circumstances. The fact of her stability is fully established, but she is over-masted. The officers report that she worked her heavy guns with facility when no other ship would have been able to cast them loose and the guns on the upper deck battery were more than once worked in a gale of wind. In fact from what can be gathered of this trial, the ships of the Vanguard Class, when the alterations which have been suggested by the officers have been effected, will be a most formidable addition to the Royal Navy.

The VANGUARD remained in the Sound until the morning of Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December when she was brought up to the Dockyard and on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December she was put into dock 'to have her defects made good.'

The *Western Morning News* that was reporting her movements added to the former report that the crew would 'probably move to another ship' and this was the first hint of an unusual situation that was going to break in the New Year. The fact that she was now in the hands of the Dockyard also gave the ship's company the perfect opportunity to have some Christmas Leave, but one new crew member would not be among them. Ordinary Seaman Henry Trethewey had probably come on board when she tied up alongside the Dockyard Wharf and soon found himself in the 'watch aboard.'

## Henry Joins the VANGUARD

11 December 1870 to 31 March 1871

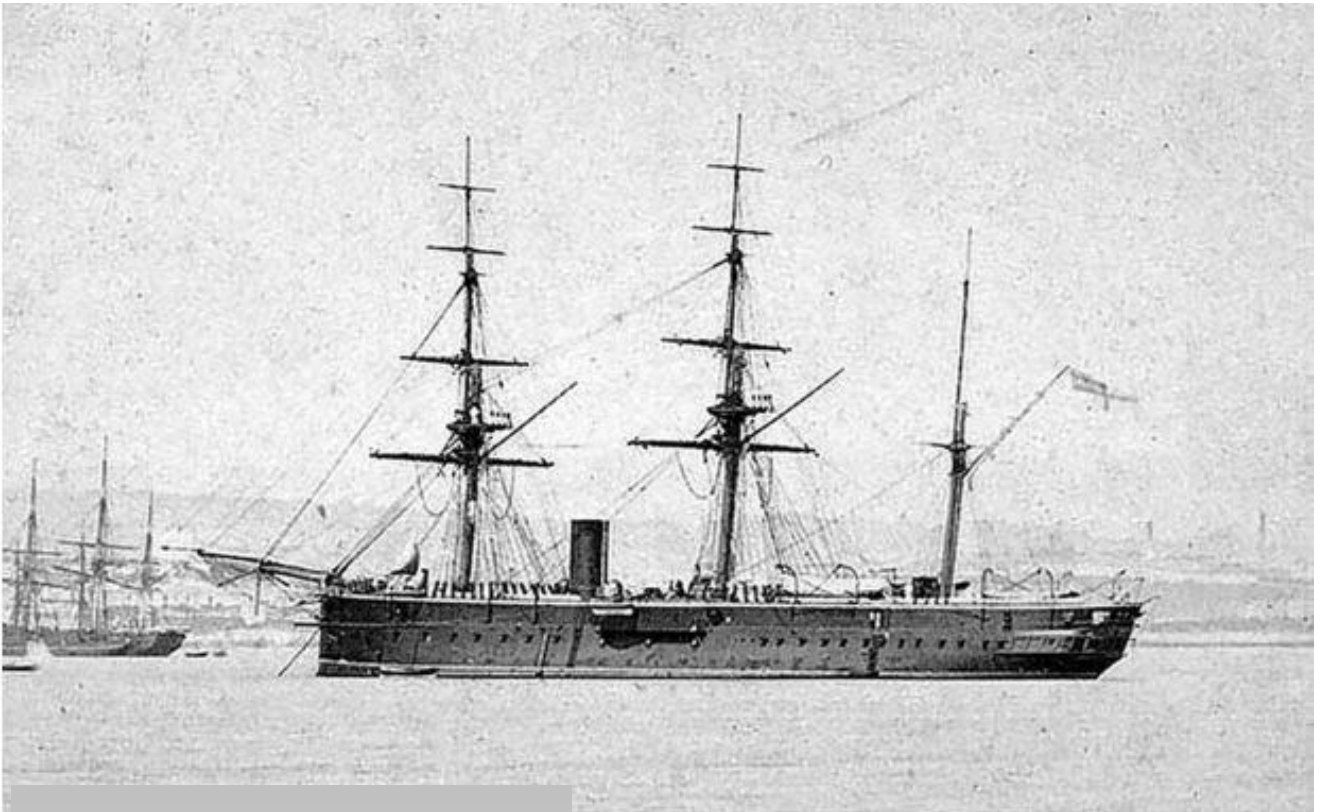
Anyone exploring their family history who is lucky enough to discover that they have an ancestor in the Victorian or Edwardian Royal Navy, will soon realise that there will be a service record for him. This record will include a list of ships and dates which begin to open up the story. What he won't realise is that these dates are often difficult to reconcile with what actually happened and my reader will have already noticed this anomaly in my account of Henry Trethewey. It was no different for the VANGUARD. His record shows a date of the 11<sup>th</sup> December, but she was at anchor in Plymouth Sound on that particular Sunday. However, that is the date that is shown in the Ship's Logs and that was the date from which the VANGUARD's Paymaster was responsible for Henry.

Although modern historians suggest that these four ships were intended for a leading role overseas, it is clear from the contemporary press that the protracted trials and later experimentation following the loss of the CAPTAIN, suggests that the Admiralty were very unsure of their intentions. To allocate INVINCIBLE to the role of a Guardship is very much to the point. This was normally the role of a retired or obsolete vessel often used as the command ship for the regional coastguard.

For now, VANGUARD was in dry dock and that was where she would stay until all the modifications that had been applied to the IRON DUKE had been completed in her. Ordinary Seaman Trethewey had a new ship after five months on the ROYAL ADELAIDE – but for how long?

---

<sup>3</sup> *Army & Navy Gazette* Saturday 17 December 1870



The VANGUARD is having her masts and yards reduced and her rig altered from ship to barque.  
*Shipping & Mercantile Gazette 27 December 1870*

The IRON DUKE is to have stump top-gallant masts, the studdingsail booms and the flying jib boom abolished and like the Vanguard the ship-rig altered to barque-rig

*Naval & Military Gazette 7 January 1871*

These two illustrations show VANGUARD before and after the work. The first photo shows that she is in commission, due to the white ensign, this dates it from Sept. to Dec. 1870. The shore-scene is unclear but could be from Plymouth Sound towards Cattedown.

The photo below has the north end of the Quadrangle of the Keyham Steam Factory in the background and must date from 1871. This same picture is also seen under the name IRON DUKE.



**HMS VANGUARD**



## Confusion Reigns

*The Shipping & Mercantile Gazette* published a revealing report headed 'Plymouth December 27' in which it stated that,

The crew of the VANGUARD is to be turned over to the IRON DUKE which will make an experimental cruise whilst the VANGUARD is having her masts and yards reduced and her rig altered from ship to barque rig.

As far as I can tell, the situation in which Henry found himself was unusual if not unprecedented. The VANGUARD was in commission and the names of the crew, including Henry's, were entered into that ship's Pay Book, but they were now the crew of the IRON DUKE, still being paid as if they were on the VANGUARD and that situation would continue until the VANGUARD was paid off.

However, it was essential that the modifications to the IRON DUKE should be tested, so it had been decided to replicate the trial cruise of the VANGUARD which had concluded just before Christmas. The complement of one of these ships was 450 and that number of seamen could not be plucked from thin air. VANGUARD's crew would be familiar with another ship of the same class and know what they were doing, even if she was now carrying a barque rig. The officers were also just as important as the seamen. They too, had become familiar with the ship's sailing characteristics and they also knew their men and their deficiencies. If they should encounter any kind of difficulty they should know how to handle it. However, they were not ready to sail just yet.

The official transfer of the VANGUARD's crew to the IRON DUKE seemed to occur on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January, as the alterations to her rig rapidly approached their completion. On Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January the IRON DUKE was in Plymouth Sound where adjustments were made to her compass, a procedure that was still practised during my time working closely with the compass section of the Dockyard in the 1960s and 70s. On Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January Captain Fellowes and the staff of the Keyham Steam Reserve made a final and successful trial of her machinery out in the Channel and on Wednesday afternoon 25<sup>th</sup> January she left the Sound on a month's cruise to Vigo and Lisbon, following in the wake of the CAPTAIN and now the VANGUARD, but carrying a massive tonnage in ballast and a significantly reduced spread of canvas. This would have resulted in a serious reduction in her speed under both sail and steam and I am sure that this would have engendered some dissatisfaction among senior naval officers.

## Another Ship and another Test Cruise

IRON DUKE returned to Plymouth Sound in the evening of Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February and the *Western Morning News* carried a full report of the voyage in its Wednesday edition. It said,

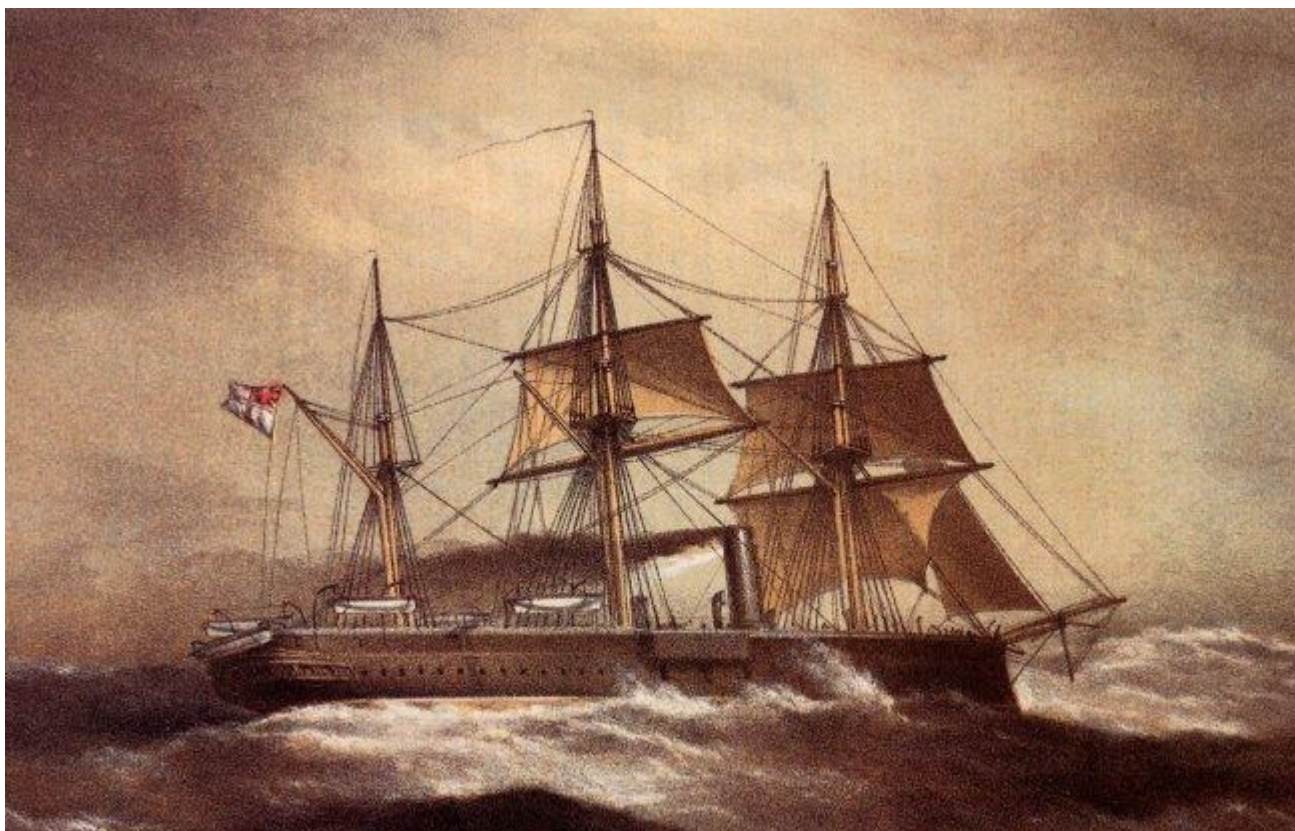
Some of the chief officers of the Admiralty entertained serious doubts as to the stability of this class and to set them at rest the IRON DUKE was sent on a month's cruise, her water ballast compartments having been filled with iron and cement and her rig altered, being now a barque instead of ship rigged.

The IRON DUKE left Plymouth on the January 25<sup>th</sup> and proceeded to Vigo where she arrived on the 30<sup>th</sup>. After staying there for three days she proceeded to sea in search of bad weather and was caught in a gale of wind on February 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> to southward of Cape Finisterre.

During that gale she is reported to have behaved admirably. She was under steam and carried a close-reefed main topsail, a reefed foresail, a main staysail and a topmast staysail. With press of sail she heeled over 20° to leeward and 10° to windward and during her trial was rolled over to 26°. On the 10<sup>th</sup> February she exercised at her ten 12-ton guns she carries.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> February she arrived at Lisbon and remained there a week before leaving for Bugio<sup>4</sup> and while there the *Enchantress*<sup>5</sup> came alongside on the 20<sup>th</sup> with Mr. Childers on board, who was however, too ill to come on board.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> the IRON DUKE left Bugio and has since been on her passage to Plymouth. She is manned by the officers and crew of the VANGUARD who think her superior to the latter vessel, particularly in steering. The officers and crew will shortly be transferred (back) to the VANGUARD which has been altered in her rig and is now ready at Keyham.



I believe that this gloriously evocative water colour<sup>6</sup> reproduces that report above, because the artist was active at the time of the event. IRON DUKE is shown under steam and carrying a main topsail (listed) a fore mainsail and a fore topsail (unspecified foresail), and a fore topmast staysail (listed).

Of course there has to be artist's licence in creating an eye-catching image and I believe that the sails are not shown reefed because that would have reduced the effect of the sails on the composition of the picture. The main staysail has been omitted because its position would have interfered with the representation of the funnel emitting black smoke. And crucially she is carrying the reduced mast height and yards characteristic of a barque.

## The Confusion Continues

It is difficult to say what was happening in the 'corridors of power' at the Admiralty in Whitehall, but for the seamen there was a lot of uncertainty with very little action and conflicting statements creeping into the newspapers. One naval phrase that began to appear was that she was 'in particular,'

---

<sup>4</sup> Bugio Island is SE of Madeira in the Desertas Archipelago

<sup>5</sup> ENCHANTRESS was the Admiralty Yacht

<sup>6</sup> The Artist was William Frederick Mitchell 1845 – 1914. He took commissions from Naval Officers





story line in a Jane Austin novel.<sup>8</sup> Edward Henry Gage Lambert married Renira Anna Purvis in the Fordingbridge District of Hampshire in the summer of 1865. She had been baptised in Whitchurch, Hampshire on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1841 to Richard and Helen Purvis and that was most likely to be the long term parish of her father.

However, there remains a very serious question concerning the validity of a commissioning of a Royal Naval warship under such peculiar circumstances. If only we could ask Ordinary Seaman Henry Trethewey. He was not on board, but neither had he gone home and I want to come back to Henry's evolving and complicated domestic situation a little later.

In a general sense I have already said that most of the heads of departments seemed to be ashore, but there are other interesting statistics revealed by the census. There were 86 Boys First Class aged from 16 to 18 years old. There were only 30 stokers led by 7 Leading Stokers, and only two had been left on board, so this was still considered to be a sailing vessel. There were 10 Midshipmen aged from 17 to 20 who would have to keep a very detailed diary of their daily life for inspection before eventually facing the rigours of the Lieutenants' examination. There were three names easily found on board that will feature in this story as it unfolds. They were Stopford Tracey, John Crews and Edward Hellings.

Page 1

*Iron Duke* 107

I.—LIST of the OFFICERS, MEN, BOYS, MARINES, and of all other persons on BOARD Her Majesty's Ship on the NIGHT of SUNDAY, APRIL 2nd, 1871.  
[See pages 30 and 31 at the end of the Book for entering those absent on the Night of April 2nd.]

Write, after the Name of the Captain, or Commanding Officer, the Names of the other Officers, of the Petty Officers, of the Seamen, of Boys, and of Marines; the Names of all other Persons on Board to follow.	RANK and RATING  State Rank of Officer, Rating of Men and Boys; Marines to be distinguished; also Passengers, Visitors and others.	CONDITION  Whether "Single," "Married," "Widower" or "Widow."	AGE [Last Birthday] of		WHERE BORN  Opposite the Names of those born in England, write the County and Town, or Parish. If born in Scotland, Ireland, the British Colonies, or the East Indies, state the Country or Colony. If born in Foreign parts, write the particular State or Country; and if also a British Subject, add "British Subject," or "Naturalized British Subject," as the case may be.
			Males	Females	
Henry F. Stephenson	Commander	Single	25	1	Broadstairs Kent
Charles Wallhouse	Senior Lieutenant	do	20	1	Waltham Hertfordshire
John A. Sigby	Lieutenant	do	23	1	Titchfield Norfolk
William F. Murray	do	do	22	1	Reading Berks
George E. Atkinson	do	do	23	1	Queensbury Yorkshire
Thomas D. Tennant	Assistant Surgeon	do	29	1	Leicester Leicestershire
Rev. Arthur C. Cook	Chaplain	do	38	1	Ireland
John L. Robinson	Naval Architect	do	21	1	Ireland
Herald H. Russell	Sub Lieutenant	do	21	1	New Zealand (British subject)
John MacLennan	do	do	20	1	Clifton Gloucestershire
John R. Kelly	do	do	22	1	Walthampton Hampshire
William E. Brown	do	do	24	1	Waltham Kent
Henry A. Malaher	Assistant Paymaster	do	21	1	Leamington Warwick
Stopford A. Tracey	Rating Lieutenant	do	22	1	Ireland
James Sawcut	Sub Engineer	Married	26	1	Weymouth (English Channel)

The comparatively young age of Commander Henry Frederick Stephenson attracted attention. He had been promoted Commander at the age of 25 in 1868 by Admiral Keppel. He was promoted to Captain before the IRON DUKE had returned home from China. He served in many high profile activities including a famous Arctic exploration and the Royal Yacht. He had a glittering career littered with honours and knighthoods, culminating in his attaining Admiral rank before taking the position of Black Rod in Parliament. He was never far from Royalty, serving Edward Prince of Wales as an equerry and was his principle naval advisor as King Edward VII. He was only six years older than Henry Trethewey, but what a formidable character he must have been on deck, even to Captain Lambert, who had been promoted Lieutenant in November 1846 and was, by comparison, totally insignificant.



<sup>8</sup> 1871 Census RG10 Piece 2136 Folio 47 Page 20

## *How Many Times Must We Go To Lisbon?*

The IRON DUKE was brought out of dock on the afternoon of Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April and she steamed (notice the wording) directly out to Plymouth Sound to embark her powder. Whilst that activity was taking place, the VANGUARD was re-commissioned by Captain Richard Powell,<sup>9</sup> but whilst it had the appearance of some specific purpose, nothing seemed to happen immediately.

On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April the VANGUARD was inspected in Plymouth Sound by Plymouth's C-in-C Admiral Sir Henry Codrington. Then, on the following Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April, both VANGUARD and IRON DUKE left the Sound at 10 o'clock on an experimental cruise under the supervision of Admiral Sir Sydney Dacres<sup>10</sup> who had embarked on the VANGUARD accompanied by Admiral Codrington, just before she sailed. It was a short cruise which returned to the Sound by 5.30 with both Admirals expressing their satisfaction at the result.<sup>11</sup> Two days later Captain Lambert was required to visit the Flagship ROYAL ADELAIDE in the Hamoaze for a more unpleasant task. He had to give evidence at the Court Martial of one of his Warrant Officer's on the IRON DUKE.

It is worth recording the report of the trial for the detail it contained. John Crews was the ship's carpenter and he was charged with having left the ship without permission on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April and been absent for ten hours. But there was a second charge that, he had lied to Captain Lambert concerning his whereabouts. This was, in naval terms, prejudicial to the good order and naval discipline of the service.

The court was convened on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April with Captain Coode of the ROYAL ADELAIDE as its President. He had sitting with him the commanders of the HELICON, DUKE of WELLINGTON, SEAGULL and CURLEW together with the fleet's Deputy Advocate General. The commander of the DUKE of WELLINGTON attracts attention for he was Commander John C. Purvis who had been lent to the VANGUARD and raises the question was he related to Captain Lambert's wife whose maiden name was also Purvis.

The court heard that on the night of the 5<sup>th</sup> April, the IRON DUKE was in Keyham Yard and her crew was in the hulk VENGEANCE, when Commander Stephenson sent for John Crews to speak with him. He was not in his cabin, so the ship was searched and he was nowhere to be found. The next morning he was met coming on board ship and ordered before Captain Lambert to explain his absence. Foolishly he said that he had been walking up and down the jetty, but the police on the Albert Gate had noted his departure and return.

Crews realised his foolishness and tried to plead his good record and loyal service over 25 years. He said that he had had a 'family occurrence of a very painful nature'<sup>12</sup> which preyed on his mind and that an old war wound received whilst serving in the Black Sea on the VULCAN caused him to lose his reason when excited and he had a medical certificate to support that assertion. Captain Lambert said that until that day in Keyham Yard, he had every reason to be satisfied with his conduct and the performance of his duties. This was supported by Commander Stephenson who had more knowledge of Crews and added that he was a 'zealous, hard working and efficient carpenter.'

The report concludes with the Court's judgment and in taking account of his long service and good conduct record, they ONLY sentenced him to forfeit two years seniority as a First Class Carpenter AND to be dismissed from his ship – and that is leniency, Victorian style.<sup>13</sup>

Two days later, on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April, both ships left Plymouth Sound on an 'experimental cruise' and they were not reported again until they arrived at Lisbon together on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> *Western Morning News* Tuesday 18 April 1871

<sup>10</sup> Admiral Sir Sydney DACRES was the Senior Naval Lord of the Admiralty (First Sea Lord)

<sup>11</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* Saturday 29 April 1871

<sup>12</sup> A Julia CREWS widow ran a greengrocer's shop at 58 Albert Road and living with her is an ex-Carpenter RN

<sup>13</sup> *Western Morning News* Friday 28 April 1871

<sup>14</sup> *London Evening Standard* Monday 8 May 1871



## *It's Official - A Competition Between Sister Ships*

It was 846 miles to Lisbon and a report in the *London Evening Standard* suggested that the ships were undergoing a competitive trial in order to determine which rig was best suited to the class of vessel, but if this was true then that would negate the apparent fact that both ships had already been converted to the barque rig in an effort to consolidate their stability. Their original ship-rig totalled 25,054 sq.ft. of canvas, but the barque-rig reduced it to 23,700 sq.ft., yet a reduction of 5.4% does not seem sufficient either in weight or area of canvas to have the effect that was thought necessary.

Since the loss of the CAPTAIN these two ships had been the focus of intense scrutiny whilst their two sisters AUDACIOUS and INVINCIBLE languished in solitary confinement as Guardships at Kingstown (for Dublin) and the Humber (for Hull). This was now the third time that either VANGUARD or IRON DUKE had been sent to the area where the CAPTAIN was lost, but this time they had both been pitted against each other. It was to last for two months and there are only three reports of visits to ports in that time and one of those was an emergency.

After three days in Lisbon, the ships left together on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, but five days later one of the ships had to put into Vigo for an 'examination and repair of her bearings' suggesting that steam was being used, but which ship it was is unclear as different newspaper reports feature different names.

Although similar to one another, the four ships were not identical in their machinery department. AUDACIOUS had a different propeller from the other three and IRON DUKE had a different rudder from her sisters. Henry's ship IRON DUKE had a vertical, reciprocating engine driving each shaft, fed by six box-shaped boilers. She had achieved 13.64 knots during her machinery trials on the 2 November 1870, faster than her sisters by a small margin, but could she retain that ribbon?

On Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, both ships were reported to have called at Queenstown, Ireland (now Cobh for Cork) in order to replenish their coal bunkers. The ships had a full capacity of about 460 tons and replenishment was a filthy task, but it seems that they left again later that day. They were reported arriving in Plymouth Sound in the evening of Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June and the VANGUARD exchanged salutes with the Flagship as the C-in-C Admiral Sir Henry Codrington had only returned from leave that day and re-hoisted his flag in the ROYAL ADELAIDE.<sup>15</sup>

It was the *Hampshire Telegraph* that published a comprehensive account of the 'competition' between the two ships and it was written by '**Our Special Correspondent**' unnamed. Whoever he was, he had a detailed grasp of the situation and he began his account with a technical description of the ships and the events that led to this unusual excursion. He highlighted the fact that the confidence of all seamen, no matter what class or rank, had been shaken by the loss of the CAPTAIN. He said it was commonplace to hear the question – *I wonder how much it will take to turn her over?* - and it could not be ignored.

He continued by recounting VANGUARD's trial cruise in October during which it was found that she sailed well without ballast, but her steering was abominable and this was attributed to her balanced rudder. However the first three or four days at sea were an anxious time, until it was established that she was over-masted. This conclusion was enacted on the IRON DUKE and at the end of January she undertook a test cruise with ballast and a reduced rig, but the opinion remained that she carried too much top sail and considering the weight of the gear, there was insufficient room on deck to work the ropes. Whilst on her cruise she met with a significant gale and found that her steering was easy compared to that of the VANGUARD.

At this point 'Our Special Correspondent' began his detailed description of the various competitive trials which must be recorded in spite of my uncertain knowledge of some of the terms and phrases. As a precursor, I would like to introduce the men who had to work so hard on the yards and rigging in a competitive spirit, which was never hard to find on a Royal Naval Ship.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Western Morning News* Monday 26 June 1871

There were no mast men on the ship on Census night. All of them had dispersed to their homes as many of them were married, but not all of them. May I introduce the two Captains of the Fore Top, Andrew Mackay (30) and George Harvey (28) with one of their 2<sup>nd</sup> Captains Edward Johns (26). Moving to the main mast, please meet the two Captains of the Main Top, Thomas Lynch (40) and Mike Condon (28) with their 2<sup>nd</sup> Captain Thomas Scoble (34) and the first bachelor among them. Towards the stern stood the Mizzen Mast and the two Captains of the Mizzen Top were William Ash (31) and Henry Paull (31) who didn't seem to have a 2<sup>nd</sup> Captain. These were the men on whose shoulders the responsibility rested to carry out the orders of Boatswain Henry Cooper (45) bellowing from the deck below, above the noise of the wind in the rigging, or standing in the 'green,' as the sea was called, swirling about his feet.

I am certain that this list is not complete as there were two watches and the ship may have been below complement. I would have expected more 2<sup>nd</sup> Captains, but their tasks were not always aloft. Much of the work was done on deck, hauling ropes that tightened or loosed sails or swung the yards around to catch the wind. The men were all barefoot and when an order to reef the sails was given there was a frantic scramble up the shrouds and over the futtocks to the higher echelons of their designated mast. Henry Trethewey was a member of one of those teams led by a man whose rank equated to that of a Leading Seaman. Unfortunately that is the closest I can get to Henry at his daily work as an Ordinary Seaman at sea, but thanks to 'Our Special Correspondent' of the *Hampshire Telegraph* I can describe the quiet furore that enveloped Henry as his ship, IRON DUKE, competed with VANGUARD, when every order was executed in silence.

OSC said that the first trial, a sail trial, took place on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April and lasted for two hours, but this date is a day earlier than my previous sources stated. The ships were sailing under all plain sail at about 7 knots in a Force 7 wind and the IRON DUKE beat her sister by a about a 1000 yards to windward (*wind behind and a following sea*), but the VANGUARD fore reached (*sailing into the wind and waves*) IRON DUKE by 1200 yards. It was found that VANGUARD steered very badly, but the IRON DUKE's steering improved as sail was taken in. However, she had an odd peculiarity in that her screws did not revolve (*known as feathering*) until the speed reached 4 knots, whilst VANGUARD's screws rarely revolved at all.

It soon became clear that the IRON DUKE was the far superior sailing vessel in any combination of sail state and as the breeze freshened she had to take in sail. With all plain sail and close hauled she reached 8½ knots and on one occasion in a Force 7 wind, under topsails only and on smooth water she reached 10½ knots. The VANGUARD managed to match IRON DUKE's speed, but she had all sails set. However, VANGUARD had the better of IRON DUKE in very light winds.

Seemingly satisfied with the results of the sailing tests, the attention now moved below decks to the engines and boiler room for a full power trial of eight hours continuous steaming. In this trial VANGUARD had the better of her sister. After eight hours, she was 7½ miles ahead of IRON DUKE with a speed of 12½ knots maintained in both ships for the first four of those eight hours at which point the VANGUARD hauled ahead when the IRON DUKE could not maintain steam pressure. It was concluded that the difference in the design of their screws had cost the IRON DUKE one knot in speed, something that was not realised during her proving trials. Yet for all her speed, the VANGUARD consumed less coal. The full speed trial distance was 98 miles and the VANGUARD consumed 30 tons of coal to IRON DUKE's 38 tons, but it was also said that the temperature in the stoke-holds (boiler rooms) was 'very great,' a sobering thought for the small band of engineers, engine room artificers and stokers on both ships.

The conclusions drawn from this 'competition' were that the ships were unrivalled both as sailing and steaming warships. Both ships tack (*changing course into the wind*) easily and quickly with IRON DUKE taking 3 minutes to the VANGUARD's 4 minutes. In wearing (*changing course before the wind*) the IRON DUKE took 5¼ minutes to VANGUARD's 6½ and a steam driven circle was achieved 'very quickly,' but note that the emphasis of the writer remains in empathy with sailing.

With both ships safely anchored in Plymouth Sound on Saturday evening 24<sup>th</sup> June, there was time to relax and take stock of what had been achieved. Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June was Henry Westaway Trethewey's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. He would not have much time to himself, but I wonder what he did?

By the following Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July a number of newspapers were carrying reports of the trials that we would have called a 'wash-up' – discussing details of what had happened and what had been learnt. This was different from the statistics already included in this story, so I have included the details to complete the picture, but the visit of Admiral Sir Henry Codrington to the VANGUARD on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June was also reported. He wanted to hear at first-hand what had been achieved and to inspect the ship. I have no doubt that he and Captain Powell were joined by Captain Lambert from the IRON DUKE and a very interesting discussion was held around the Captain's table.

The two ships had been away for 57 days and 47 of those were spent at sea. 606 hours had been spent under sail and 206 hours under steam with another 38 hours under steam and sail together. My arithmetic suggests that this is 850 hours when 47 days is 1128 hours. What happened to the missing 278 hours? Notwithstanding this small anomaly, the focus of the trial had been stability and the VANGUARD was described as being 'very stiff.' Her greatest roll was 17° and the steady heel of the ship never exceeded 11°. She fired a gun on the weather side when heeling 10° with no detrimental effect and all these facts together encouraged her officers to express their complete confidence in her sea-going qualities. She was a comfortable and stable ship.<sup>16</sup>

However, it was revealed that two men had fallen over the side of the VANGUARD during their activities – one of them on the bar at Lisbon and another far out in the Bay of Biscay, but both men were quickly located and rescued.

On Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, the IRON DUKE recovered her anchor and with steam up she began to make her way into the Hamoaze only to be ordered to return to her anchorage. Why this happened is unclear and it was Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July before she was given permission to come up to a buoy in the Hamoaze. After a quiet weekend moored in the river, she was moved into the basin on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July where she sent down her topmasts and topsail yards to await a place in dry dock. Her crew was moved out of the ship and accommodated in the old hulk VENGEANCE where they had been before. She had been launched in Milford in July 1824 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Rate of 84 guns and she had been in Devonport since 1860 as a Receiving Ship, but in 1870 she was hulked which meant that all her remaining masts and rigging were removed. It was like living with Nelson's crew, but it served its purpose and it could have been a lot worse.

The layout of the Keyham Steam Yard in 1871 was quite straightforward. Three docks on the east side led from the South Basin which was known to me as 2 Basin. Beside it, to the north, a caisson entrance led to the North Basin (3 Basin) a large basin in front of the huge rectangular Steam Factory. At the northern end there was a small, triangular boat basin with an entrance from the river. It was alongside this basin that the VENGEANCE was moored with the INDUS on her outside which was Devonport's Guardship and Flag of the Admiral Superintendent of the Dockyard. This was the remnants of the entrance into Keyham Lake and the men of the Keyham Steam Reserve were based here. Eventually this quay would become the south wall of the new tidal basin designated No.4 Basin.

An arrangement similar to this was a common sight in the 1950s and 60s when Accommodation Ships were moored in 5 Basin in the North Extension. When I saw them as a familiar part of the Dockyard scene, they were ships that had passed their prime and had been cast aside to eke out their usefulness before being sold for scrap.

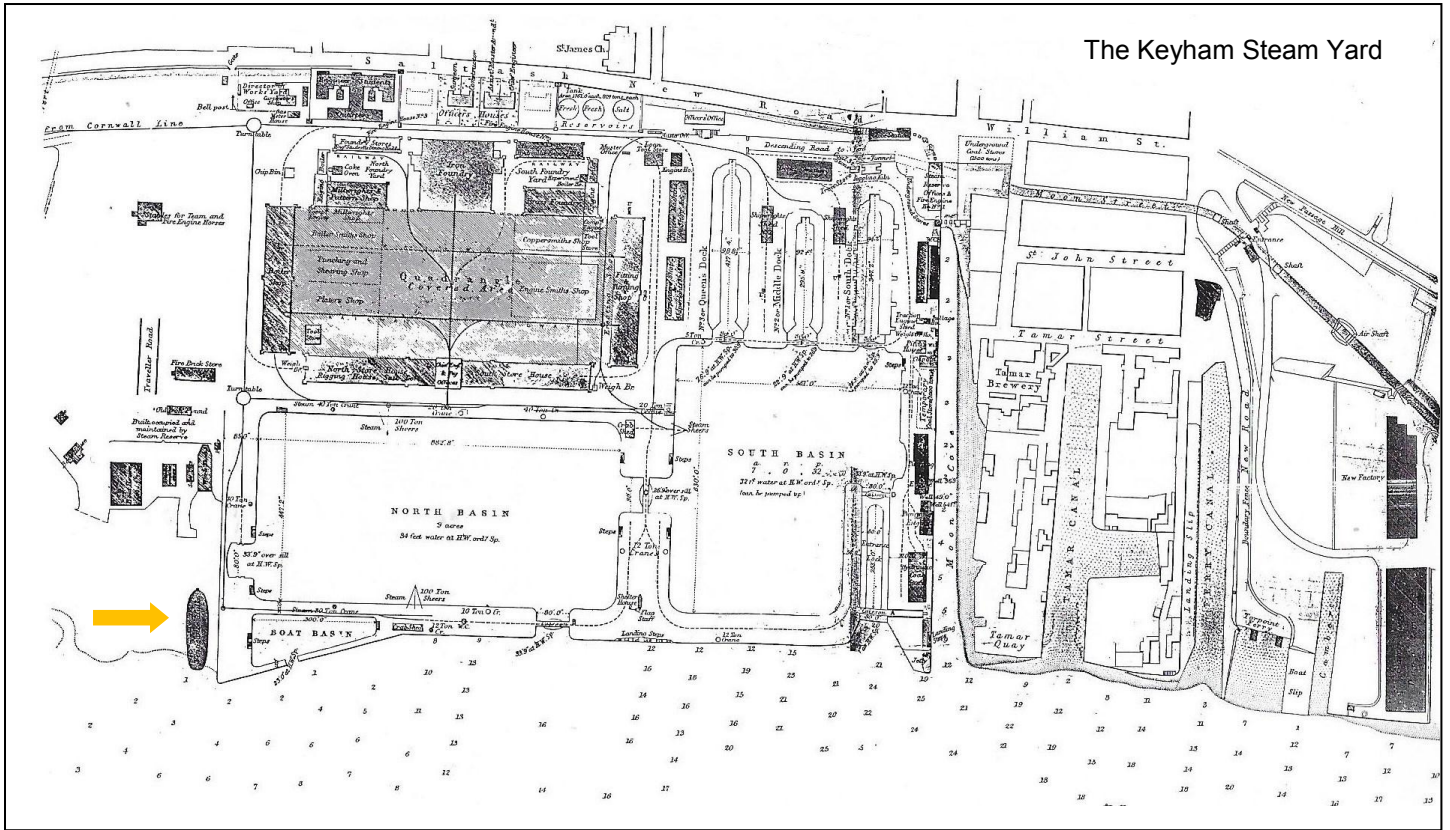
It was Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July when the news broke. While the crews of IRON DUKE's sister ships learnt that they were expected to play 'musical rounds' swapping ships to become Guardships around the coast of Great Britain, their Lordships in London had found a task for IRON DUKE. She was to proceed to China as Flagship.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> *Portsmouth Times* Wednesday 1 July 1871

<sup>17</sup> *Shipping & Mercantile Gazette* Monday 17 July 1871





The map above is dated 1879 and shows VENGEANCE moored at the end of the Boat Basin (arrow). A later revised version dated 1885 shows INDUS alongside and outboard of VENGEANCE. Naval Historian Lt. Cdr. Ken Burns suggests in his history of the dockyard that the two ships were there in 1866.

In front of the mooring of the VENGEANCE are buildings marked 'Built and maintained by the Keyham Steam Reserve' and although the INDUS was nothing to do with them, all naval staff were allocated and paid by a ship.

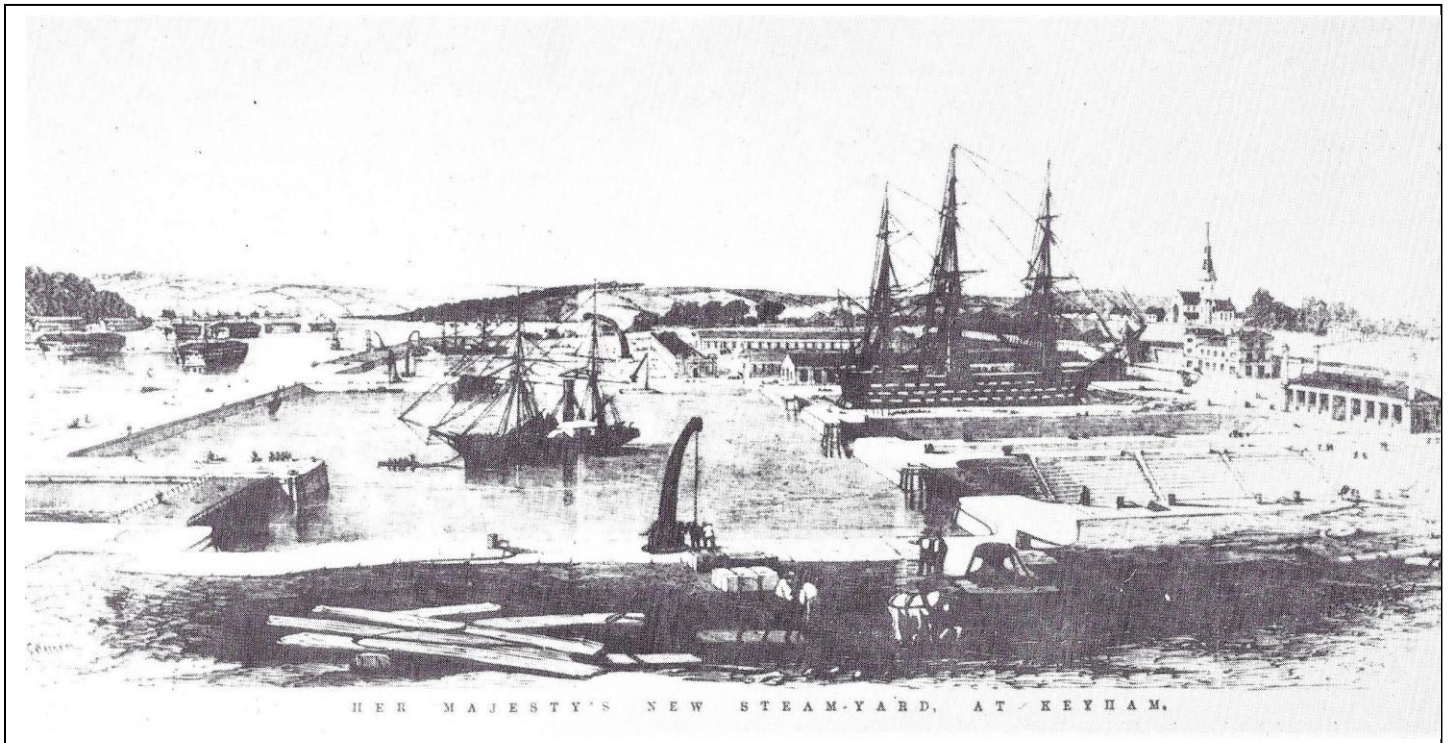
The docks (top centre) were three different sizes. Numbered 1 to 3 they were also known as South, Middle and North Docks. The largest was North Dock also known as Queen's Dock for the docking of HMS QUEEN in 1853 signified the opening of the complex. It was 417 feet long, Middle Dock was 295 feet and South Dock was 347 feet. Even the entrance lock into 2 Basin could be used as a dock as there was an entrance from the river into 3 Basin.

The etching below shows QUEEN in the dock and must represent the year of the opening of the Keyham Steam Yard in 1853.

The view looks directly north, up river and over South Basin and North Basin towards Keyham Lake. It also looks across the three docks on the right which, as yet, are devoid of any buildings. The entrance lock into South Basin (2) can be seen protruding into the left of the illustration.

The church on the right skyline is St. James the Great which was destroyed in the blitz of 1941.

This is the area that would have been familiar to Henry Trethewey when serving on board VANGUARD, IRON DUKE and SIRIUS and on the occasions when he left the yard he could only do so by the Albert Gate.






# Henry's Life Ashore

On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 1871, Henry was on his second day out from Bugio in the Maderia Islands on his way back to Plymouth. IRON DUKE would not reach the Sound until Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February, by which time Henry's mother, now Ann Taylor, would have been in her grave for three days. This sad situation prompts a whole series of questions. When did he find out and who told him? Could he leave his ship? What was his relationship with his mother and step-father?

Samuel Taylor was with his wife when she died. It looks as if it was very sudden and very quick. She was buried in Ford Park Cemetery on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February 1871. This is where her first husband's parents had been buried just a few short years before. It was a private cemetery, but Samuel was a Master Mariner so should not have been short of money.<sup>18</sup>

FD 450368


  
**CERTIFIED COPY** of an ENTRY  
**Pursuant to the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953**

1871. DEATHS in the District of <i>Saint Andrew</i> in the County of <i>Devon</i>									
No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
413	<i>Twenty first February 1871 16 Well Street</i>	<i>Ann Taylor</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>57 Years</i>	<i>Wife of Samuel Taylor a Master Mariner</i>	<i>Rupture of an Artery producing internal Haemorrhage</i>  <i>Certified</i>	<i>S. Taylor present at the death 16 Well Street Plymouth</i>	<i>Twenty first February 1871</i>	<i>James Butler Registrar</i>

The house in Well Street was only four streets to the west of Cambridge Street where Henry's Grandparents had lived, but it was not a house he was familiar with. In fact Henry had lived in a great many houses, but it is unlikely that he called any of them 'home.' His mother had returned to the locality before 1861, but she didn't settle at any one address. So, where was Henry to go when he had leave from his ship? Where would Henry call home? Five weeks after his mother's burial, it was the night of the census and it is known that Henry was not on board the IRON DUKE on that night.

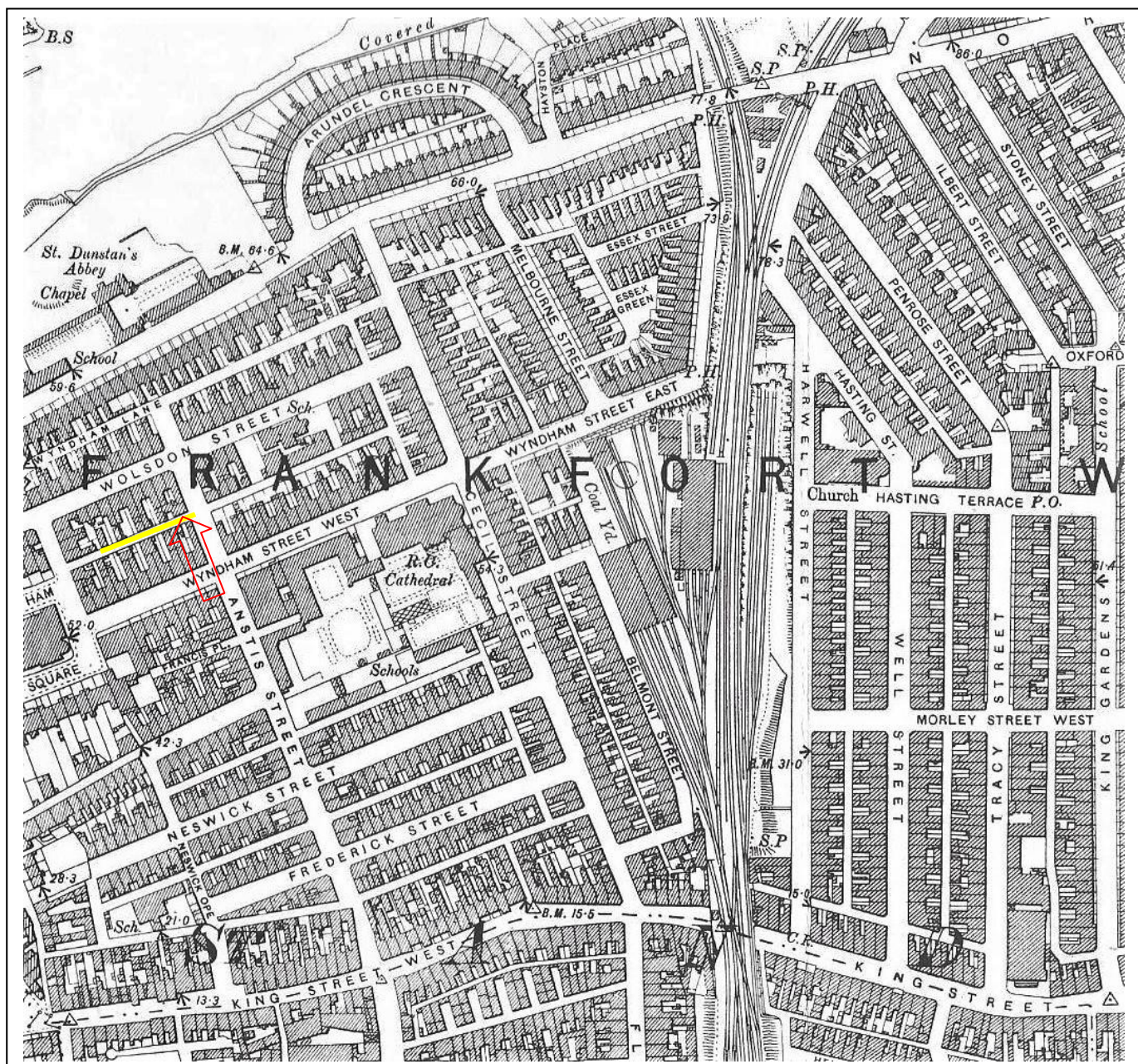
Anstis Street was only a short walk from Well Street through the King Street railway arch. Two of his three brothers were in the house. Only Alfred was missing. He was nearing the end of a foreign draft to Cape Town where he was the coxswain of a pinnace attached to the Cape's storeship INDUSTRY.

1189	Anstis Cottage	1	James Osborne	Head	Man	35	Milnwright Iron Steam-Factory	Devon	Marsh
			Martha E. do	Wife	Man	36		do	Newton Abbott
			Flora H. do	Daughter	Man	10		do	do
			Anna E. do	Daughter	Man	7		do	Plymouth
			Ann M. do	Daughter	Man	5		do	Leavesport
			Reginald J. do	Son	Man	5		do	do
			John Parker	Head	Man	31	Cabinet Maker	do	St Austell
			Thyphonia do	Wife	Man	28	Basket Maker	do	Plymouth
			John H. do	Son	Man	10	Scholar	do	do
			Fredrick P. do	Son	Man	5	Scholar	do	do
1190	Anstis St	1	Henry Washburn	Head	Man	18	Seaman Royal Navy	do	Plymouth
			Charles do	Brother	Man	16	Naval Apparatus Royal Navy	do	do
			Samuel do	Brother	Man	13	Errand Boy	do	do
			Henry Washburn	Head	Man	29	Policeman	do	Beddison
	John do	Wife	Man	24	Dressmaker	do	do		

1871-RG10 /2177 Folio 155 Page 74

<sup>18</sup> 1861 Census and several times in crew lists to 1869





Tryphena Parkin, butter dealer, was Henry's elder sister. She may have been the eldest surviving family member and was the natural mother figure for the three younger boys, especially as Samuel was now living with her and working as an errand boy. Charles also worked as an errand boy before his mother agreed to him joining IMPREGNABLE in June 1870. His new occupation is described as a 'Naval Apprentice' and that is curious as it should have led to him becoming an Engine Room Artificer, but did he really have to go through all that sail training first? I would not be surprised!

The streets ensconced between North Road West at the top, King Street at the bottom, and hemmed in by the considerable railway infrastructure of the South Devon Railway was an area in which the various members of the Trethewey Family lived during the 1860s. Charles had joined the Navy from an address in Harwell Street that can be seen parallel to the carriage sidings on the east and Alfred would soon marry and move with his wife to the locality.

Anstis Cottage was found by the Enumerator after he had recorded 60 houses in Wolsdon Street and found another in a lane behind No.35. Then he recorded Anstis Cottage followed by No.1 Anstis Street and this was followed by a house behind No.10 Wyndham Street. This makes the location of the family probably on the north side of the lane highlighted in the shadow of the Catholic Cathedral. What a weekend that Census weekend would have been with the family all in one place exchanging stories of their exotic experiences to the wonderment of Samuel and Tryphena's two boys.



## Courting? Marriage? How can that happen?

At the end of March 1871 Henry had spent a month at sea on the VANGUARD and by the end of April he would leave for another two months at sea on the IRON DUKE. In between he had spent time on board at anchor in Plymouth Sound or in the Hamoaze. There had even been time living on the hulk VENGEANCE. What is not clear is how much of this time could he count as leave? How often could he get away from his ship and spend time with someone else?

This is a difficult, but essential question to answer. Devonport was his homeport, but he had spent very little time there. Yet the romantics among us will say that it takes only a moment to know that you have met someone special. Had he met such a girl? *'Yes, there was a special Plymouth girl'* – although I cannot say for certain when they met. Jane Amelia Browning figured very large in his life and on that April night she too was at home with her family.

## Meanwhile, over in Amity Place

In a street not a mile away from Anstis Cottage lived an elderly couple with their 18-year-old daughter. **Henry Browning** and his wife **Ann** originated from Ottery St. Mary and although they were both 60 years of age they were still working together as a tailor and tailoress. I have always thought it possible that they had a shop at the heart of Plymouth's 'rag trade,' but I have nothing to link *'William Browning Tailors'* at No. 39 Old Town Street with our family. It was just two doors away from the Bedford Vaults, which sat at the point where Saltash Street parted company with Old Town Street and was one of five tailors on the street. It was also very close to STIDSTON's, Plymouth's first department store. Unusually their daughter, **Jane Amelia Browning**, described herself as a *'scholar'*,<sup>19</sup> but later information would seem to suggest that this was very far from the truth.

Jane's home at No. 6 Amity Place was a crowded house with seventeen people from five families sharing its living space. Two doors away, in No. 8, the situation was not much better. If anything it was slightly worse, as TWENTY FIVE people from five families, shared that house. Jane's elder brother Henry was one of those families. At 25 years old, he was a carpenter and with his dressmaker wife they already had two young sons. I mention this family deliberately for this Henry Browning eventually became quite prominent as a well-reputed local builder.



6 AMITY PLACE is the house in the centre of the picture, whilst No.8 stands next to the 2-storeyed house on the left and also has a bay window.

It was four weeks between census night and the departure of the IRON DUKE for her two month cruise with the VANGUARD. During that brief sojourn, how much time did Henry spend with Jane trying to get to know each other? How long had they known each other and how had they met? Obvious questions which deny an answer, but the IRON DUKE's return at the end of June instigated a rapid chain of events which is quite astonishing for two people so young.

<sup>19</sup> *My father recalled his grandmother as a lady who was 'refined, aloof and meticulous about standards of behaviour'*

## Under sailing orders


During April the crew had gained the impression from the local press that the IRON DUKE was destined for a 'cushy number' as Devonport's Guardship, but that changed after the trials with the VANGUARD. Rumours had been buzzing around the mess decks for days. The Dockyard shipwrights and riggers were adept at picking up gossip and the word was that the work they were doing was getting her ready for a long commission on the China Station. Then one of the Portsmouth ratings opened a letter from home to find a small cutting from the *Portsmouth Times* dated 22<sup>nd</sup> July. It read,

**The Iron Duke, 14, armour-plated ship, Captain E. H. G. Lambert, has been selected to proceed to China to relieve the Ocean, flagship of Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Kellett, commander-in-chief on the China station, and she is being fitted with all despatch.**

She was to be the new Flagship of Rear-Admiral Charles F. A. Shadwell CB and when the gossip reached Henry he knew the seriousness of this situation. He knew that once the ship had slipped her moorings and left the cosy confines of the Hamoaze in Devonport, he would not see his new love for a very long time. This was quite a dilemma. In fact he must have been so serious about his relationship that he had to ask Jane to marry him and she accepted his proposal.

## A hasty wedding ceremony

They were both nineteen years old when they stood before William P.H. White, Plymouth's Registrar conducting the marriage ceremony. It was Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> August 1871 and Henry must have had special leave from his ship. It might have been no more than a 'weekend pass' requiring him to be back on board early on Monday morning, but it might also have been the summer leave due to him prior to the ship's lengthy deployment. Either way, Henry was not leaving England's shores before he had married his 'sweetheart'. He even inflated his age slightly to make it look a little more respectable, as none of his family seems to have been present to witness the event. This was a Browning affair. Both Jane's father and her older sister Emma witnessed the Register in which Henry had given his home address as Neswick Street. This is one more street in the locality already discussed, but at the time of writing I have no idea who might have been resident there.

**CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE**  **Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON**

Application Number 4173 A

Registration District of Plymouth

1871. Marriage solemnized at The Register Office  
in the District of Plymouth in the County of Devon

No.	When married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or profession	Residence at the time of marriage	Father's name and surname	Rank or profession
<u>1871</u>	<u>Tenth August 1871</u>	<u>Henry Westaway Trethewey</u> <u>Jane Amelia Browning</u>	<u>20 years</u> <u>19 years</u>	<u>Bachelor</u> <u>Spinster</u>	<u>seaman R.N.</u> <u>—</u>	<u>Neswick Street Plymouth</u> <u>6, Amity Place Plymouth</u>	<u>John Trethewey (seaman)</u> <u>Henry Browning</u>	<u>Stone Cutter</u> <u>Tailor</u>

Married in the Register Office according to the — of the — by Certificate before me

This marriage was solemnized between us, Henry Westaway Trethewey in the presence of, Henry R. Browning Wm. P. H. White Registrar

Jane Amelia Browning of us, Emma Browning W. Harrison, Deputy Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Marriages in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON, under the Seal of the said Office, the 8<sup>th</sup> day of August 1871.

MB 291791

This transcription implies that Jane signed the Register which now seems unlikely

the Marriage Act 1949. Sub-section 3 of that section provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Marriages in the District above mentioned, shall be received as evidence of the marriage to which it relates without any further or other proof of the entry, and shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid. or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of it to be false without lawful authority.

One week after Henry's marriage to Jane, the IRON DUKE was prepared to enter dry dock, but first the ship that was already occupying it had to be removed.<sup>20</sup> LORD CLYDE was an iron cased wooden frigate, built in 1864 with a ram and she was the same length as the IRON DUKE at 280 feet, but she was in the Dockyard with one insurmountable problem. As Flagship to the Mediterranean Fleet, she had run ashore at Pantellaria Island off the south west coast of Sicily and badly damaged her wooden hull and she had been sent back to Devonport for repair. The shipwrights found that she had been infested with a particularly virulent form of fungus and nothing they did could cure it.<sup>21</sup> She was still at Devonport when IRON DUKE returned in 1875.

As August progressed the pace quickened. During the three consecutive days following the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1871, all her senior officers took up their appointments and all hopes of a final few hours ashore were dashed. Captain Lambert had been replaced by Captain William Arthur who arrived on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> August and the following day the IRON DUKE was released from dock and moved out to the sea wall on the River Tamar. On Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September Rear-Admiral Shadwell hoisted his flag on board the Gunnery Ship CAMBRIDGE and exchanged salutes with the IRON DUKE before removing his Flag once again and going home for a spot of leave. He was gone for ten days and during his absence the ship had been authorised to draw from the Dockyard Stores all the charts she was likely to need as Flagship of the China Station. She was now under orders to sail and on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September she moved out into the Sound where she anchored to make final preparations. She was not alone in the Sound for the sailing tenders LIBERTY: SEALARK and SQUIRREL were there to keep her company.

On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September she made final adjustments to her compass and in the early evening IRON DUKE weighed anchor. Using her engine to round the Breakwater Light, the men were sent aloft to man the yards and to wait for her to slide gently along the Cornish coastline. Henry was one of those men. When her head came clear of Rame and everyone on deck could feel the Channel breeze on their faces, Captain Arthur gave the order, "*Make sail.*" The shouts of the Petty Officers from the deck pierced the dusk as the men in the yards let go the canvas in response. The ship was alive and already the timbers were complaining loudly in response to the wind and the tide. A thousand miles in front of Henry, lay Gibraltar and the beginning of a new adventure.

## It's a long wait for a letter

Saturday was a busy day in the streets of the Old Town. Only a few people would have been taking the air on Plymouth Hoe. Some might have noticed the indistinct shrill of the bo'sun's pipe as sails fell limply from the yards of a distant warship, outward bound. Those who stopped to gaze at the often-repeated sight would not have noticed Jane standing still and silent with tears in her eyes as the graceful, newly painted white hull, slowly slipped out of sight beyond Penlee Point. Jane was a bride of only 5 WEEKS yet she didn't know when the ship was coming back. This was real heartache and the reality of being a sailor's wife in the days of Empire. Jane returned home to No. 6 Amity Place with a heavy heart. She could do no more than settle back into a life which had barely changed, in spite of her now being a married woman. One thing, however, was different. She could now expect to receive an occasional letter. It wouldn't happen often, but they would come. She would look forward to learning of the strange and wonderful sights in far-off lands and the exploits of her beloved Henry and perhaps she could tell him in return that he had left something of himself behind.

It didn't take too long for Jane to realise that she was pregnant, but although it was both exciting and frightening, it was also a great sadness that Henry would not see his baby. He would be a boy by the time that Henry returned and how would she decide what to call him without Henry around to discuss it?

When Jane's baby was born in July 1872, the arithmetic did not make sense. In the unlikely event that Jane had been with Henry on the night before the IRON DUKE sailed then there were 312

---


<sup>20</sup> *London Evening Standard* Saturday 19 August 1871

<sup>21</sup> *The Metal Fighting Ship in the RN* by E.H.H. Archibald page 12



days between that night and the baby's arrival, because 1872 was a Leap Year. That length of time is far too long. A full term baby should arrive between 37 and 42 weeks and 42 weeks in Jane's situation amounted to 295 days and not the 312 days to his date of birth. SEVENTEEN additional days (and it could have been more) is not insignificant, it is serious as there was no possibility of caesarian section in those days. It could have resulted in the death of both of them, but it didn't - at least not yet.

**CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH**



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
Application Number 10802610-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT					PLYMOUTH				
1872	BIRTH in the Sub-district of Charles				in the County of Devon				

Columns:- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
289	Twenty third July 1872 St Dunstons Place	Charles Henry Browning	Boy	Henry Browning	Jane Amelia Trethewey formerly Browning	Mariner R.N. and Gunner	The Grandd of Jane Amelia Trethewey mother to Quilty Place Plymouth	August 1872	Wm Clement Registrar	See 186

When Jane felt strong enough to visit the Registrar's Office, five weeks had passed. It was Friday 30<sup>th</sup> August and when Mr. Clement asked Jane for her signature, she had to admit that she couldn't write. That response throws a completely different perspective on this narrative as I have imagined Henry and Jane exchanging letters and I now know that that was impossible – or was it? Often in these cases there is someone else close at hand who can read and write a letter for you and the choice of name for Jane's son makes me wonder whether it was Henry's brother Charles who was sensitive enough to realise the value of his help. Is that the reason Jane chose Charles Henry Browning for the names of her new baby? It was a really diplomatic choice, but was it a nod to Charles whose help in standing in for his absent brother was really appreciated. Or was it something else? Something no one would ever know, but many might suspect especially those with a head for numbers and who asked the question – how could this baby be so long overdue?

It was not until I discovered this birth that I realised that Jane was illiterate. I had always taken the view, quite wrongly, that Jane was a girl of her time. Education among girls was quite normal and few went without it. Her family were seemingly not poor being artisans in a trade that was always in demand. So, how did this come about and did Jane learn to read and write as an adult? A possible role for Charles in Jane's education is conjecture. In August 1871 he was a Boy First Class on the LORD CLYDE in Devonport Dockyard, but in April 1872 he was discharged from the service as medically unfit. It is not known what he did subsequently as he disappears from the record, but it is not impossible that he was a part of Jane's life during this critical, but brief interlude.

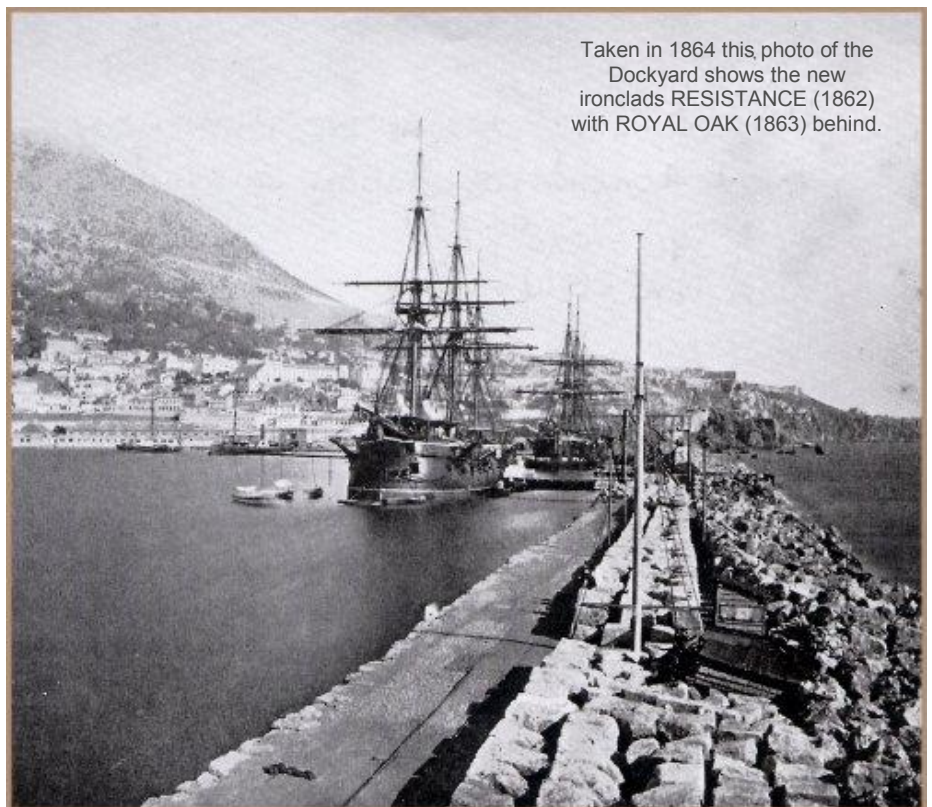
However, there is another perspective to this story and that is the existence of a brother to Nelson Harry Trethewey, my grandfather. It had always been assumed by his family, my father included, that Nelson senior was an only child and that was one of the motivations for my involvement in family history in 1978. I was determined to prove that this could not be true as it was so unusual. After nearly 40 years of occasional searches I had never found another sibling and as I look back I wonder why? That sibling was there all the time and it wasn't his birth that I uncovered, but his burial and there can be no doubt about that event, although my reader will have to be patient.

## First stop, Gibraltar

---

Jane would not have included newspapers among her daily chores, but had she been able to read, she could have kept reasonably upto date with Henry's progress on the IRON DUKE through the pages of the *Western Daily Mercury*, the same newspaper that has supplied the information to me some 150 years later. News of Her Majesty's Ships was always brought home in the lockers of any Royal Navy ship that happened to be returning to the shores of England. It was haphazard and it took time, but there was no other way. On Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October 1871, the Naval Intelligence column of the WDM reported that, '*IRON DUKE left Gibraltar for China via the Suez Canal on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September.*' That was fourteen days after leaving Plymouth Sound, but that was sailing – slow and unpredictable.

The class of four ships to which IRON DUKE belonged was intended for Foreign Service, but to say that they were designed for it is to overstate the case. In spite of being fitted with two forms of propulsion, neither form was particularly effective. AUDACIOUS, INVINCIBLE and VANGUARD all had balanced rudders which seemed to make them 'unmanageable' under sail, whilst the IRON DUKE had a conventional hinged rudder, but none of them would expect more than 8 knots in a fresh breeze. During her time in Devonport Dockyard, IRON DUKE had been reduced to a barque rig with nearly 24,000 feet of canvas, yet even this apparently generous sail area would not stretch to 200 miles each day Their twin screws and six boilers could produce a speed of about 12 knots, but they could not sustain it for more than three days without a need to replenish their coalbunkers. So a long passage was not easy or straightforward and made nonsense of their primary purpose. As they were new ships, the IRON DUKE was the first to be put to the test and her sailing qualities became patently clear during the long voyage to the Far East.



Taken in 1864 this photo of the Dockyard shows the new ironclads RESISTANCE (1862) with ROYAL OAK (1863) behind.

I had estimated that she would average 10 knots and 240 miles per day, but in reality she achieved only half that figure. This makes it clear that she relied entirely upon sail in the open sea and only used her engines when entering or leaving port. The boilers must have been lit with steam available and if that had been the case she would have been depleting her coal stocks for very little gain. Gibraltar should have been reached in a little over four days. She should have arrived late on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September, but it was nearer to the following Sunday when she finally cast her mooring ropes ashore.

What luxury, to have a few days on 'the Rock'. I think that Henry may have been here before, but this was no holiday. They may have encountered gales on the way across the infamous Biscay and sustained damage to the sailing rig. Or perhaps, they had encountered engineering problems that



needed attention in the port. However it was the needs of the ship that came first and only after all the work had been completed to the Bosun's satisfaction could Henry and his messmates think about a 'run ashore.'

## October in the Mediterranean

---

Gibraltar to Port Said – approx. 1920 miles



Valetta Harbour, Malta in 1882 with MONARCH in the foreground and INVINCIBLE behind.

This would have been about eighteen days sailing, but no Naval ship would by-pass MALTA. The *Western Daily Mercury* confirmed that a telegram had been received announcing the arrival from Plymouth Sound of the IRON DUKE at 11 a.m. on Monday the 9<sup>th</sup> October 'bound for India via the Suez Canal.' It was virtually impossible to avoid Malta, situated as it was, almost exactly half way between Gibraltar and Port Said. To be exact, it was 991 miles from Gibraltar and 936 miles from Port Said and this rocky, flat-topped island barely 90 miles across, sat almost in the middle of the seaway at the narrowest part of the Mediterranean. Every visitor to the Grand Harbour in Valetta is impressed and I am sure that Henry was no exception. The harbour was the focal point for the Navy's activities in the Mediterranean and in those days that meant a considerable presence.

The stopover lasted only two days before the IRON DUKE set sail once more on Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup> October for Port Said, which was almost a week away. Three days into the passage, in the early hours of Sunday morning, the light sleepers on William Barry's messdeck noticed that something was wrong. Barry was the Admiral's coxswain and held in very high regard by his messmates, but their concerns soon turned to shock at the discovery that he was dead. The Officer of the Watch was sent for and he immediately summoned one of the ship's surgeons. John Caldwell was on duty that morning although he was Surgeon to the Royal Marines on board, but there was nothing anyone could do for Barry and the entry was written into the Log<sup>22</sup> that

*at 2.40 a.m. William Barry, Admiral's coxswain, departed this life, suddenly.*

Rear-Admiral Charles Shadwell didn't look up from his breakfast when Flag-Lieutenant Frederick Dicken entered his day cabin. He always came in at about the same time each morning and gave the Admiral a brief synopsis of the sailing conditions overnight. This morning he didn't. He leant over the Admiral's shoulder and in a quiet voice stated that he was the bearer of some

---

<sup>22</sup> Ship's Log ADM 53/10352 – 9 Jan 1871 to 16 Jan 1872



unexpected news. The Admiral stopped eating and laid down his knife and fork. He didn't speak for several minutes, but then asked for the Officer of the Watch, the Surgeon and the Chaplain to attend him in his cabin in half an hour and to acquaint him with the circumstances surrounding William Barry's death.

It was a sombre group that gathered in the Rear-Admiral's cabin. Each, in turn, related his involvement in the discovery of William Barry's demise and each expressed their sadness at the loss of a skillful and totally dependable coxswain. He would be a hard man to replace, but Captain Arthur would be asked to shortlist three men and the Admiral would make the final choice. Shadwell turned to the Rev. John Edwards and said,

*Of course you will make the necessary arrangements for a burial? Shall we say 5 o'clock?*

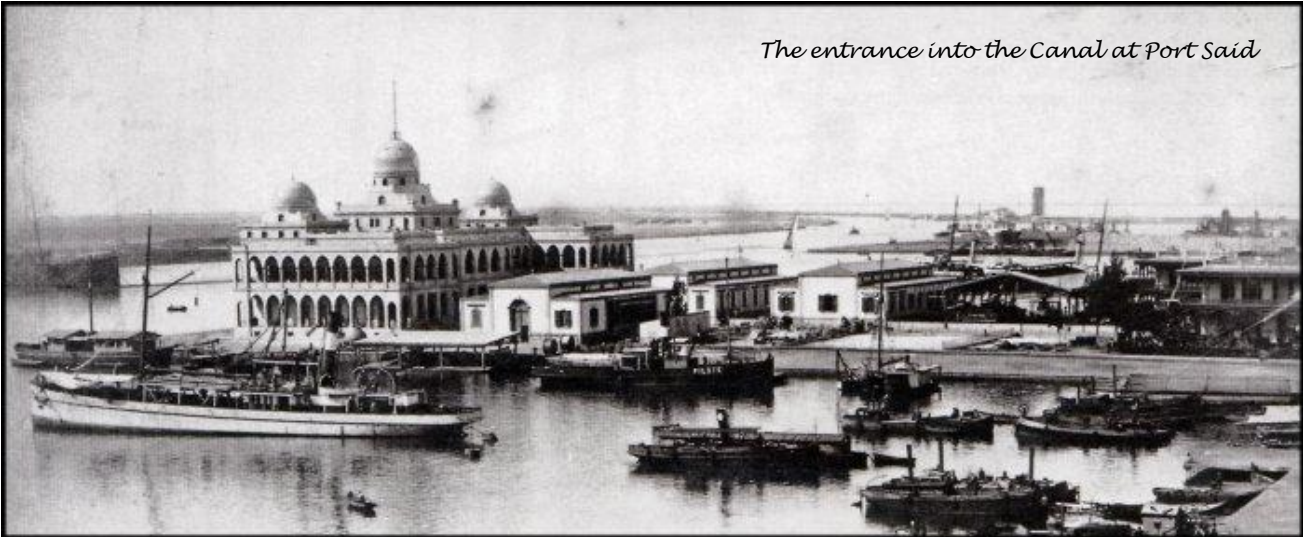
The Chaplain nodded and added that before supper he would supervise the auction of Barry's belongings at the foot of the main mast and later he would write to his family after gleaning their details from the Paymaster.

The men on the messdeck hated this task, but someone had to do it. It was the least they could do for a well-liked and respected messmate. The Gunner, Mr. Eales had given them sufficient shot to sew into the bottom of the hammock that would become William's shroud and the Navigating Lieutenant Stopford Tracey had given permission for the men to borrow a Union Flag from the flag locker to cover his body.

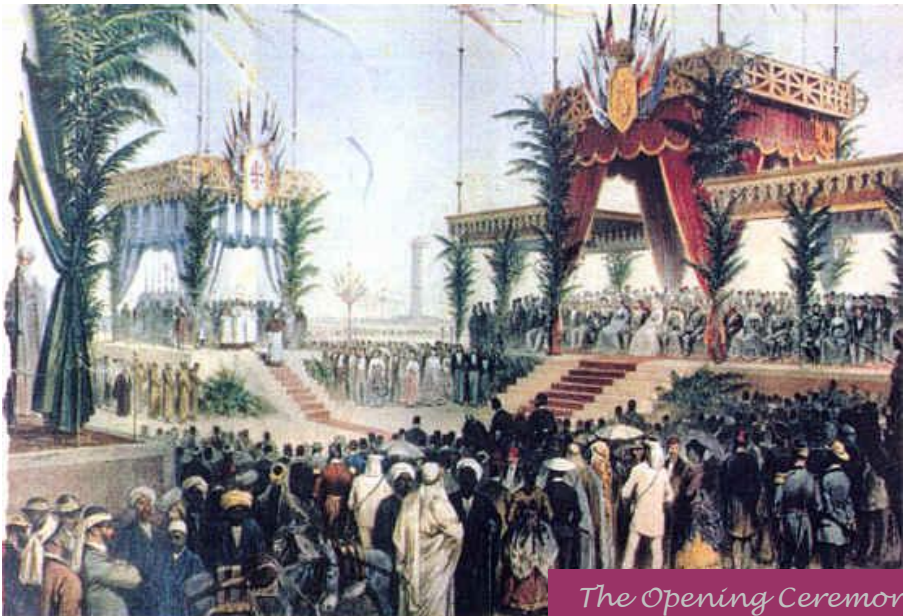
Just before the appointed hour, William Barry's body was brought from the sick bay, where it had lain during the routines of the day. His messmates gently laid it on the wooden planks that had been lashed to edge of the deck in front of the starboard forward bulwark doors, which were now standing open. They draped the Union Flag over his body and silently stood on either side. At 5 o'clock sharp Captain Arthur gave the order to *'Heave to'* and the yeoman energetically ran a single flag aloft. It was the letter 'R' – a red flag with a yellow cross – and to all who could see it, it said, **'Way is off my ship.'** The crew did not need to be summoned. It could so easily have been one of them. They owed it to their shipmate as they stood and listened quietly to the Chaplain reading from the Prayer Book. As he reached those telling words *we therefore commit his body to the deep*, many of the hardened seamen could not watch as his messmates hesitantly lifted the plank and William Barry's body slid over the side. Only the melancholic notes of the 'Last Post' broke the silence as the Royal Marine bugler brought the ceremony to an end. It was now the Bo'sun's task to get the ship back to normal. Rear-Admiral Shadwell called for the Rev John Edwards to attend his cabin after the service. He expressed his gratitude to the Chaplain and commented encouragingly about the behaviour of the men. He took a guinea from the pocket of his frock coat. *Add that to the kitty at the auction*, he said.

Three days later, just as the Forenoon Watch was coming to an end, the crew on deck could see that Port Said was clearly visible. At 12.20 p.m. the IRON DUKE stopped and saluted the Egyptian flag with a 21-gun salute, which the Egyptians returned. This little diplomatic nicety was essential in the present political circumstances. The British Government had vehemently opposed the building of the Canal and throughout the ten years of its construction there had been numerous critical cartoons in the British press. The French, on the other hand, were just picking themselves up after the Franco-Prussian War and they could see what the British had singularly failed to appreciate. The Suez Canal would be vital to the expansion of both trade and Empire. The fact that 4000 miles could be saved on a journey from India to Great Britain seemed to be lost on the British bureaucrats, but the Royal Navy strategists were not as slow witted as the British politicians. The IRON DUKE had arrived in Port Said to put their theories to the test. They were probing the reaction of the Egyptian and French authorities to the presence of a major warship from a rival power and they were testing the efficacy of the Canal's systems. Was the Canal navigable to large vessels? How deep was it? What problems might they encounter? With the IRON DUKE, they were just about on the limit.

*The entrance into the Canal at Port Said*



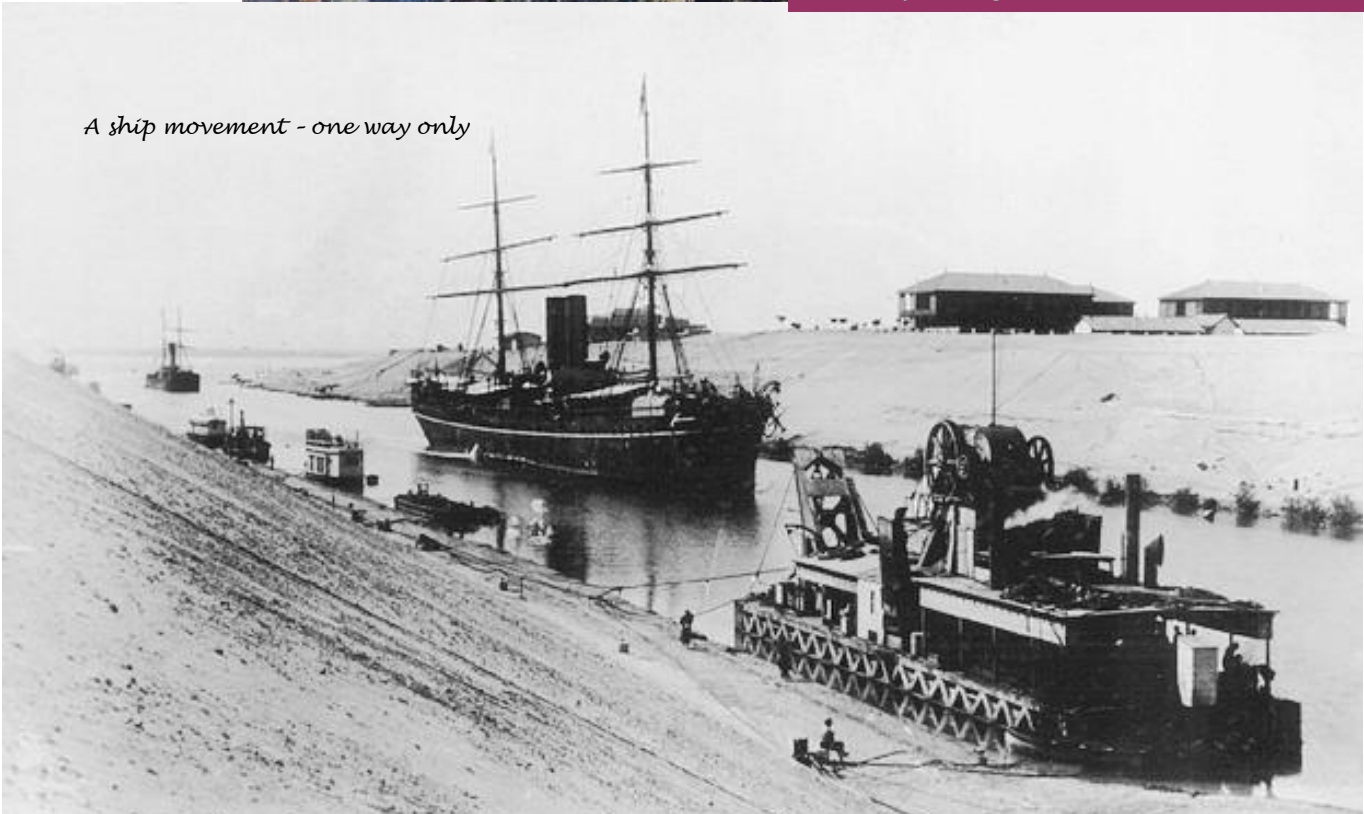
Suez Canal



Port Said

*The Opening Ceremony 17-11-1869*

*A ship movement - one way only*





## Down the Canal

---

Port Said was a teeming, chaotic port and Henry could sense an increase in the tension among the officers as the warship anchored to await instructions for entering the Canal. All the waiting ships were surrounded by hundreds of tiny ramshackle craft, rocking violently under the weight of natives shouting and gesturing unintelligibly at anyone who showed themselves along the ship's side.

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October was devoted to 'trimming the ship.' This was an unusual activity and required the seamen to drag the ship's heaviest objects into temporary positions whilst the captain was rowed around the ship to assess her attitude in the water. Ideally she should have been dead level or possibly slightly stern down, but although the IRON DUKE was considered to be of a very shallow draft for her weight, she still drew almost 23 feet of water and there was barely another 24 inches to spare beneath her keel. Normally this would have been just enough, but it was known that the combination of two twin bladed propellers with her hinged rudder did not provide adequate steerage in shallow water.



This is thought to be HMS MALABAR one of five troopships on the England to India run. She should carry a black line around her hull to identify her. The canal is not new judging by the vegetation, but the photo may date from about 1875. Alfred sailed home on her during December 1875 from his ship BITTFERN in the Mediterranean.

The IRON DUKE was due to enter the Canal early on Friday morning. The Canal Company's Agent had already given orders that they would not be allowed to proceed under their own power, so the crew was ready to take the towrope on board when the Canal Company's tug appeared at 6 a.m. A second, small tug was secured aft to help to steady the stern if the rudder was having little effect. The IRON DUKE entered the Canal at 8 a.m. Their speed was barely a walking pace and at noon they were only making 3 knots. Seven hours later, at the end of the afternoon watch, the Log records that they were *'10 miles from Ismailia'*

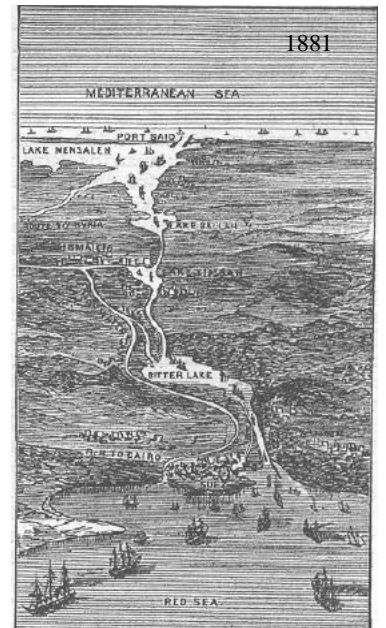
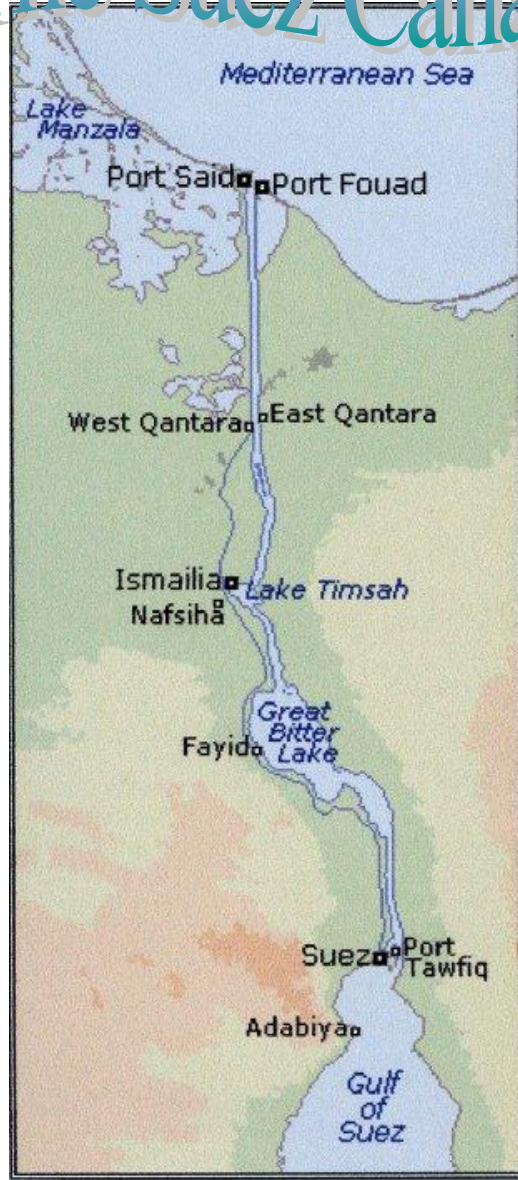
At 8 p.m. – after 12 hours of effort – the IRON DUKE was secured to bollards on the canal bank that were marked **36.3 miles from Port Said**. As no movement was allowed after dark, an average transit took 54 hours.

With the sails furled and the ship languishing behind a tug, there was no need of Henry's skills. He rather wished that he had a reason to go aloft. He would then be able to look out across the desert from his elevated perch in the yards and perhaps the Petty Officer would not notice that he was just a little slower than usual accomplishing his task. Here on deck, however, he was under an even more strict scrutiny. He would have loved to have stood and watched the strange sights slipping past on the banks of the Canal, but the Navy has no time for idle hands. There was always something to clean, or paint or tidy away, but I have no doubt that Henry managed to catch a glimpse of the Middle East through the scuppers.

Saturday morning was an early start, for the Bitter lakes were still almost 30 miles away. She cast off from her moorings at 5.45 a.m. and within two hours she was approaching Lake Timsah. Here the ship had to deviate from its straight line and the IRON DUKE was notoriously unhandy in these circumstances especially with little way on her. Orders were given to cast off the stern tug and to



# The Suez Canal



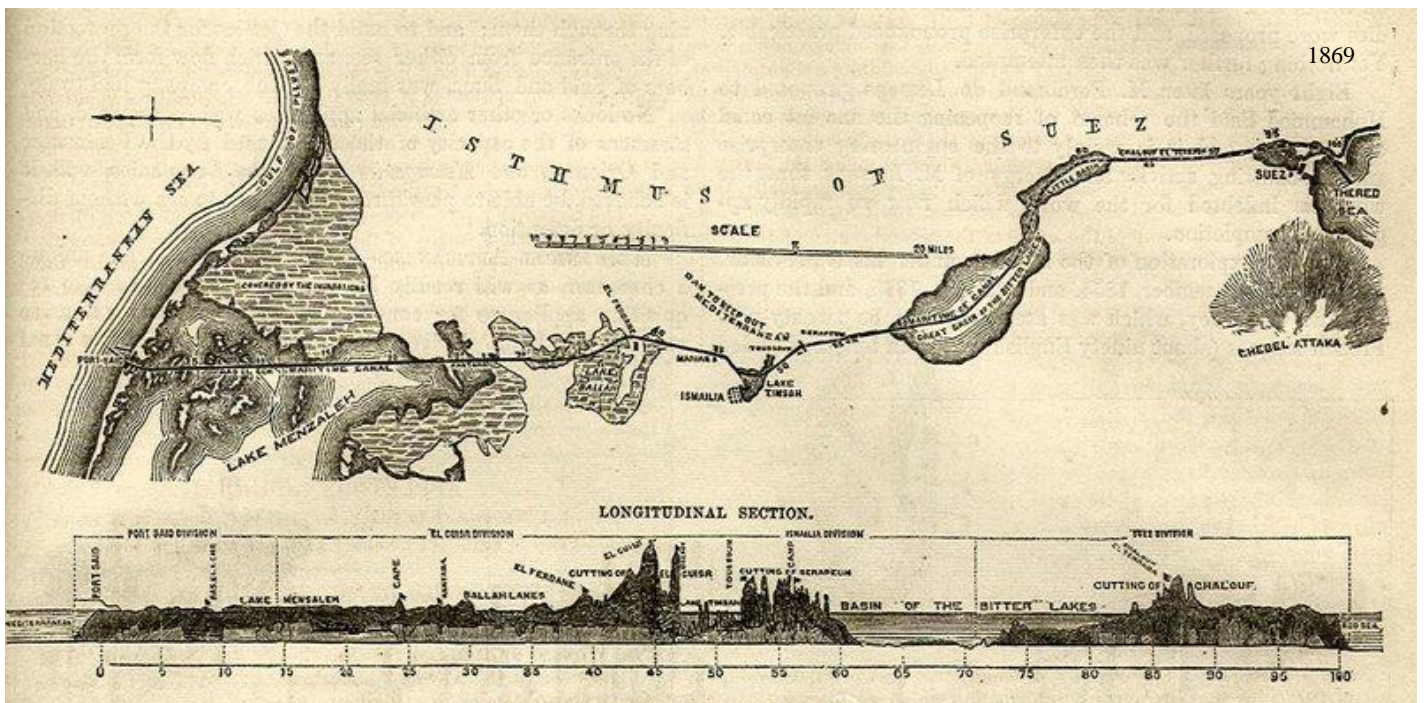
## STATISTICS

Work began  
25 April 1859

Canal opened  
17 November 1869.

Built by a French construction  
company headed by  
Ferdinand de Lesseps.

101 miles (168 Km) long  
190 ft wide (58/60m) at the surface  
72 feet (22m) wide at the bottom  
26 feet (8m) deep





secure it alongside whilst the ‘ROBERT/ALBERT’? continued to struggle up ahead. Tempers were fraying at the lack of progress when it was suggested that SHEARWATER should add her weight to the tow, but it had barely any effect on the speed of the IRON DUKE.

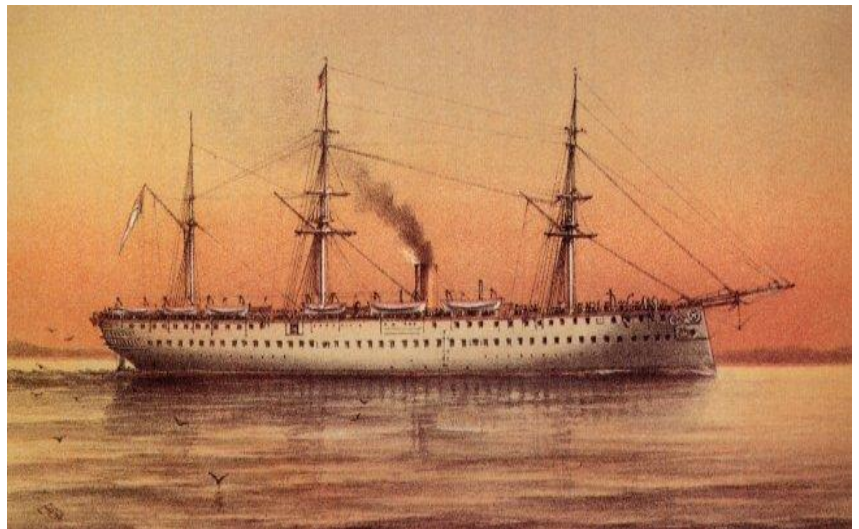
There was good reason for the SHEARWATER to be in the vicinity. She had been launched on the 17 October 1861 at Pembroke Dock as one of 13 vessels in the ROSARIO Class of wooden screw sloops which were the last wooden sloops to be built for the Royal Navy.<sup>23</sup> She displaced 811 tons and was 160 feet long by 30 feet in the beam with a crew of 140, but her draught of 15 feet made her suitable for the role that she now played. In 1869 her eleven guns were reduced to three and she was commissioned into a surveying role in the Mediterranean and when she encountered the IRON DUKE in the Suez Canal, Captain George Nares was engaged in surveying the Red Sea and the Gulf of Suez (July 71 to May 72) following the opening of the canal.

At noon the disorderly procession reached the entrance into the Great Bitter Lake and at 4 p.m. the SHEARWATER parted company with the Flagship. At 6.45 p.m. that evening IRON DUKE cast off her tugs and secured to the canal bank for the last time. She was now 78 miles from Port Said with just 22 more miles to go.

She passed out of the Canal and into Suez Bay at 9.15 a.m. on Sunday the 22<sup>nd</sup> October after successfully negotiating the 100 miles length of this impressive engineering feat.<sup>24</sup> As her passage through the Canal was reputed to be the first transit to be made by one of the Royal Navy’s capital ships, it attracted little public attention.<sup>25</sup> However, she was in no hurry to leave Suez. Her ‘*departure for Singapore*’ was not scheduled until Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> October and there may have been a reason for this. HMS CROCODILE was another of the Navy’s five white-hulled troopships and she was travelling hot on the heels of the IRON DUKE. Although she had left Malta seven days after the ironclad, she reached Port Said in just four days, so that whilst the IRON DUKE was at the south end of the Canal, the CROCODILE was just arriving at the top. They met in Suez, when the troopship anchored there on Tuesday the 24<sup>th</sup> October, but it was only a single overnight stop.

The CROCODILE was engaged in a trial passage from Portsmouth to Bombay together with her sister ship SERAPIS. Each had been given a supply of coal from a different source so that the Admiralty could determine which source of coal proved to be the most efficient with the lowest consumption. Although their destination was identical, their ports of call were different. By the time that both vessels had arrived in Port Said, it was already clear that the SERAPIS with her Welsh coal was performing better than the CROCODILE with her half/half mix from the Yorkshire and Welsh coal fields.

It was hot in Suez as Henry looked across at the new arrival. He knew it was the CROCODILE from the unique yellow band around her hull. They were a familiar sight to most Navy men and greatly respected for their speed and seamanship, but tonight the golden ‘Star of India’ on her bow was glinting in the rays of the dying sun. Henry was thinking of home and his new, young wife Jane. He had already been at sea for 38 days and there was still a very long way to go. Perhaps it was time to write another letter.



<sup>23</sup> Devonport built sloops were – PETEREL, ROYALIST, AFRICA, BITTERN and CYNTHIA and Alfred had a draft to BITTERN.

<sup>24</sup> WDM Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October 1871 and Ship’s Log ADM 53/

<sup>25</sup> Ships of the Victorian Navy by Conrad Dixon p70

## The Red Sea and Arabian Sea

---

Suez to Aden 1310 miles (Gulf of Suez 200 miles)

The IRON DUKE reached Aden on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November and one erroneous report (*WDM Wednesday 29-11-1871*) says that she left again within two days, on the 7<sup>th</sup> November. However a later more detailed report stated that she '*proposed leaving again on the 8<sup>th</sup> November bound for Trincomalee to fill up with coal*'.<sup>26</sup>

Aden to Trincomalee 2200 miles

Ceylon sits in the Indian Ocean like a drop of sweat dripping from the tip of that hot and dusty continent. Aden was separated from Colombo by 2100 miles and this could mean upto 21 days sailing in the blazing sun of the latitudes astride 10°N. The IRON DUKE was not heading for Colombo, the capital and commercial port of Ceylon, she was making for the Royal Navy's Base on the island, Trincomalee. This harbour was on the northeastern tip close to 200 miles further around the coast and another two days sailing. No date has emerged from the newspapers concerning her arrival and departure from here, but it must have been towards the end of November.

Her stay must have extended beyond the customary two or three days for the task of coaling ship was an unpleasant task in the heat. It was treated as an 'evolution' in which ALL the hands took part. The coal was brought on board by hand, possibly carried in bags from the coal wharf. Once alongside the ship the bags were hoisted in through the gun ports, then wheeled along the Main Deck on trolleys to the coal chutes and emptied into the bunkers below. Men stood ready with shovels (*as in the picture*) to trim the coal evenly. The Main Deck was, of course, the men's living space and although the guns were covered in canvas to protect them from the dust, the same could not be said about the men or their messes. It was not long before everything was black with a thick layer of dust. Both ship and men



were in a terrible state and it took a lot of scrubbing to return the messes to a habitable condition once again. The only compensation for the men while coaling ship was the freedom to wear whatever they liked and a relaxation of the '**NO SMOKING**' rule.<sup>27</sup> It would not surprise me to find that their stay ran into a week, to allow for this cleaning-up operation and to give the crew some rest and relaxation after a filthy job in a humid, clammy climate.

The details of the stay in Ceylon were lost in the emerging plans for the meeting and handover of command of the two Admirals in Singapore. The first dispatch came from the outgoing Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Kellet in which it said that he would be relieved of his command in China by Rear-Admiral Shadwell in Singapore on or about the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> December after which Admiral Kellet would proceed OVERLAND to England.<sup>28</sup> This latter statement proved to be interesting and unusual, but also wishful thinking, for on the 1<sup>st</sup> November whilst still in Hong Kong Vice-Admiral Kellet suffered a heat stroke which rendered him unconscious for 48 hours.

---

<sup>26</sup> WDM Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 1871

<sup>27</sup> Precised from Chapter 2 of the 'Warrior Story' page 21/22

<sup>28</sup> WDM Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 1871

The dispatch went on to say that 'he rallied on the 5<sup>th</sup> November (just as the IRON DUKE was arriving in Aden) and was sufficiently recovered to lead his friends to hope that he would be able to proceed to Singapore in time to meet his successor'.<sup>29</sup>

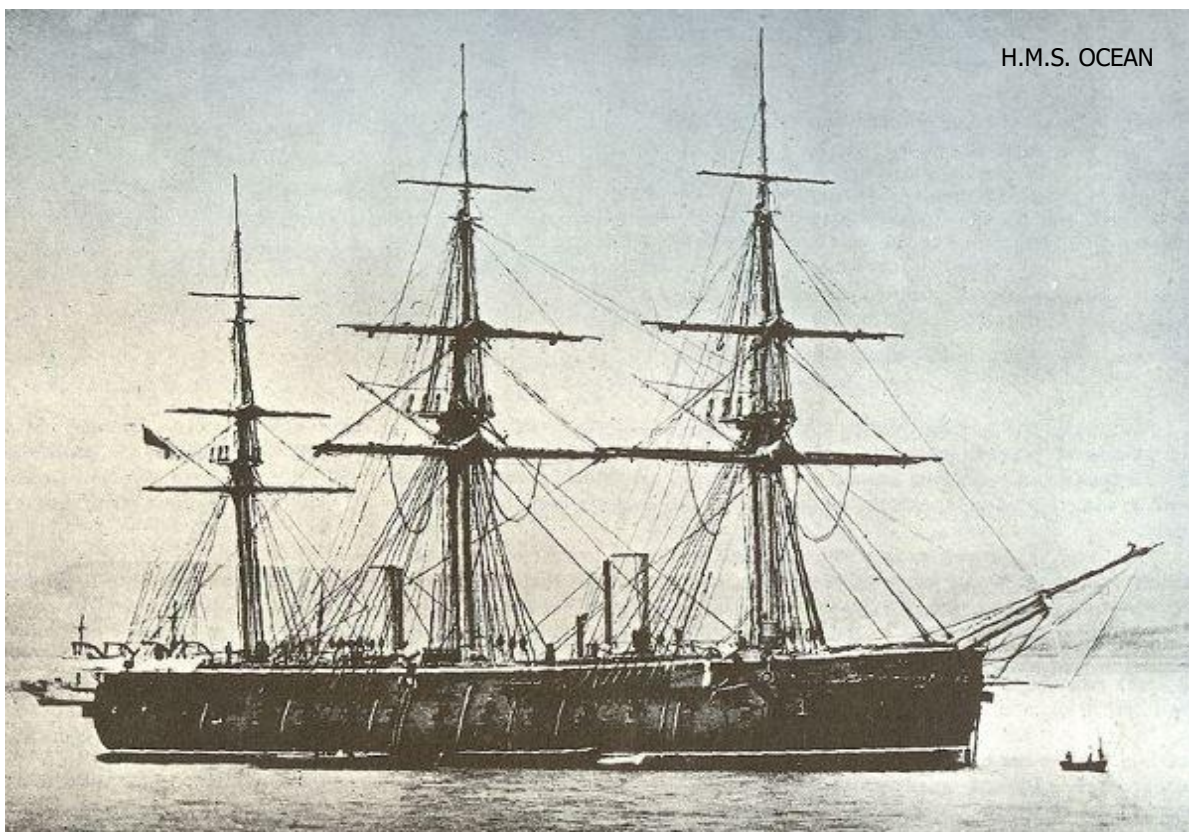
## Two Admirals meet at last

---

Trincomalee to Singapore 1700 miles

On Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1871 the Admiralty published this statement.

*'A Telegram from Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Kellett dated Singapore 19<sup>th</sup> December 1871 @ 2.35 p.m. was received at the Admiralty this day @ 4.25 p.m. announcing that the IRON DUKE with Vice-Admiral Shadwell on board had arrived at Singapore on the 14<sup>th</sup> inst. and Sir Henry Kellett had transferred the chief command on the following day. He would leave by English packet on the 20<sup>th</sup> December and that his own health was excellent'.<sup>30</sup>*



I can only assume that Vice-Admiral Kellett had arrived in Singapore on his Flagship HMS OCEAN as she had been ordered home, but it soon became apparent why he had chosen to make his own arrangements for his return to England. The OCEAN had arrived on the China Station from Devonport in October 1867 by a very unorthodox route. It had taken her four months to sail from Gibraltar to Rio de Janeiro and from there around the Cape of Good Hope to Hong Kong. With the blessing of the Lords of the Admiralty, Captain William Hewett V.C.<sup>31</sup> was determined to return to England along the reverse path and set a record for his ship. This Devonport built, twin funnelled ship would be the only ironclad ever to traverse this route in BOTH directions under sail. She arrived in Simon's Bay South Africa on the 16 March and Plymouth Sound on the 2 June 1872.

---

<sup>29</sup> WDM Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> December 1871

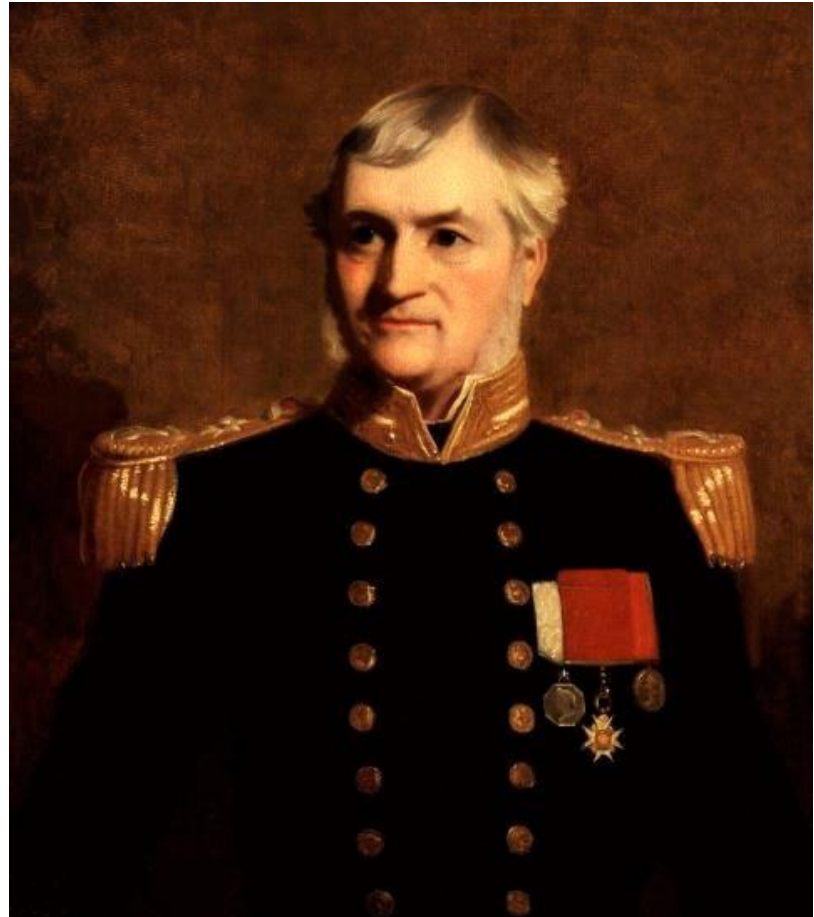
<sup>30</sup> WDM Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1871.

<sup>31</sup> Awarded a VC at Sebastapol in 1854 for preventing the capture of a land-based gun.



The handover between the two Admirals, on the 15<sup>th</sup> December, inevitably contained an element of formality. There would have been a formal protocol to follow, but it was also a significant social occasion. It is interesting to consider which ship would have taken precedence. It has to be remembered that Shadwell was a Rear-Admiral whilst Kellett was a Vice-Admiral, so it might follow that Shadwell left the IRON DUKE and was welcomed aboard the OCEAN with full naval honours. It must also be remembered that Kellett was the C-in-C until he relinquished that command, so Shadwell was obliged to attend his superior officer for the ceremony of handing over the command to him. Once that was done, the roles were reversed and they could relax and enjoy a less rigid formality. They had five days in which to discuss the politics and the hot-spots of an enormous area. Kellett's clerk would have turned over copies of all his Admiral's reports that had been sent to the Admiralty. They would have shared dinners and fine brandy in each other's day cabins

Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Kellett had just passed his 64<sup>th</sup> birthday (2<sup>nd</sup> November) whilst Charles Frederick Alexander Shadwell was just approaching 57 on the 31 January. A comparison of their careers suggests that Shadwell had the edge on Kellett as the former had reached Flag rank eight years quicker than his senior officer. Shadwell had also accumulated nearly 20 years experience in the Far East and was lame as a result of a wound he received in an attack on the Peiho Forts in north eastern China in June 1859. Kellett's knighthood (KCB) came on the 2 June 1869 whilst C-in-C China Station, so Shadwell could look forward to receiving his elevation sometime in the near future (and unlike Kellett, he was already a CB). Vice Admiral Sir Henry Kellett died on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1875 in Clonacody, Tipperary County Ireland, but he left his name in Hong Kong with Kellett Island,



Kellett Bay and Mount Kellett, which have been or soon will be, erased from the new Chinese maps. A replica of his portrait by Stephen Pearce can be seen in the National Portrait Gallery

*Friday 15 December 1871*

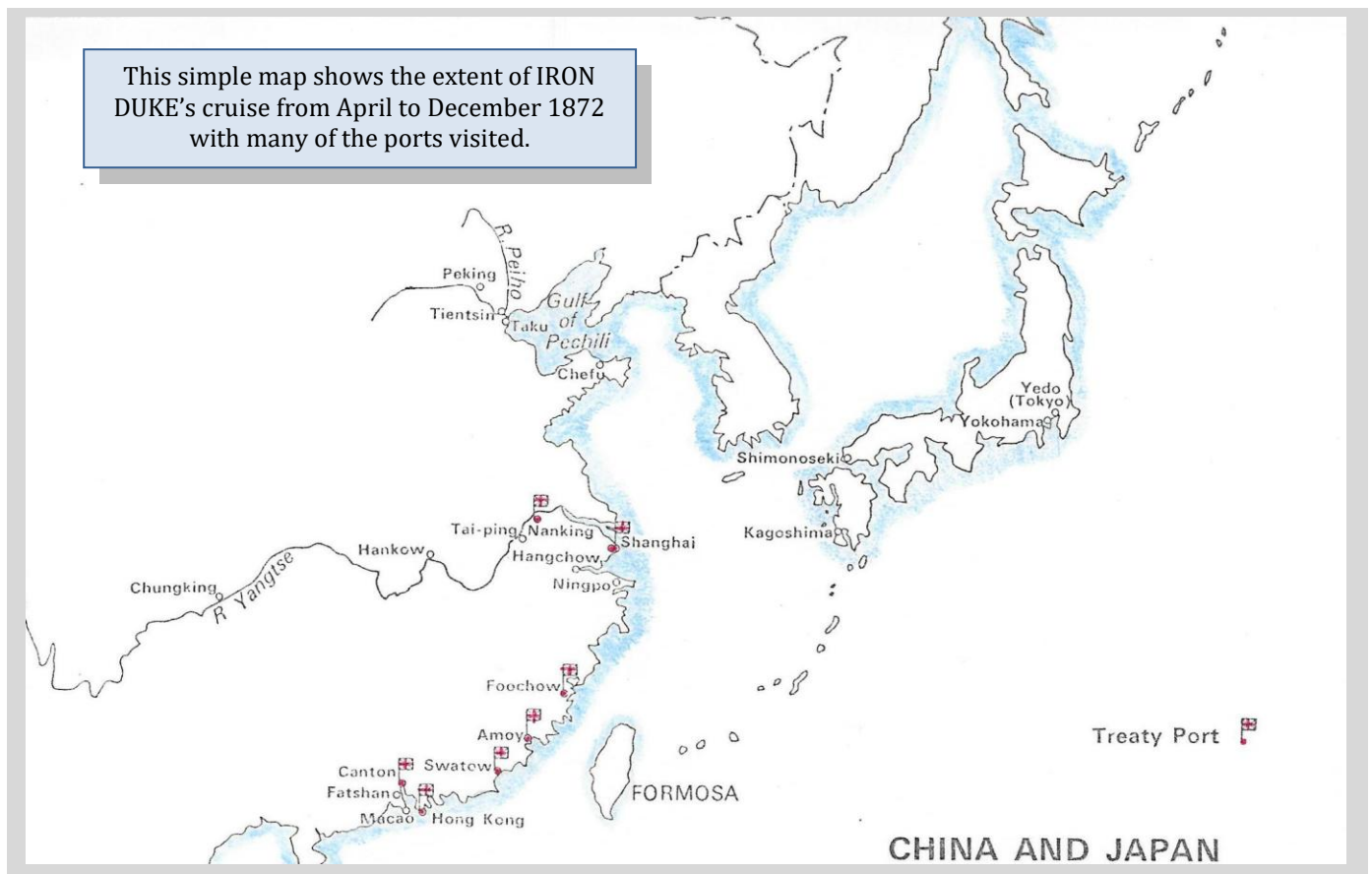
After an outward voyage of almost 90 days and more than 8000 miles of the world's oceans, Ordinary Seaman Henry Westaway Trethewey had arrived in Singapore, but it was not the practice of the Royal Navy to spend Christmas Day languishing in harbour. On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> December the hands were piped to their stations for leaving harbour as the Navigating Lieutenant Stopford Tracey worked out a course that would take them north along the Malay coast to Penang – a 5 day voyage arriving on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1871.

# The CHINA STATION

At this point in our story it is pertinent to introduce an overview of the China Station by asking,

- 1 – What was the extent of the command area?
- 2 - What ships composed the China Fleet at the beginning of 1872?
- 3 – What did the Flagship do on the China Station and where did she go?

**1** The Command Area extended from Penang on the Malay Peninsula through the South China Sea to Hong Kong and taking in Sarawak, but not touching the East Indies now known as Indonesia. From Hong Kong the coastline of China was seemingly endless and crossed over 20 degrees of latitude from about 22°N (Hong Kong) to 42°N at Yingkow on the coast of the northernmost province of Liaoning. However, much of the flagship's energy was also expended around the coasts and ports of the Japanese islands of Kyushu in the south (for Nagasaki) to Hokkaido in the north (for Hakidate). It is also interesting to record that a number of geographical features were named after Admirals Kellett and Shadwell and these will be highlighted as the story progresses.



One simple and not very obvious source of information comes from the Navy List which delineates every officer on board the IRON DUKE with his function. No less than 44 officers from the 89 officers listed, were not a part of the crew of the IRON DUKE and among them were the 4 Surgeons and 5 Assistant Surgeons, only three of which belonged to the Flagship. One Surgeon was destined for the Lock Hospitals in China (Hong Kong) whilst another was heading for the RN Sick Quarters in Yokohama. He would be joined by an Assistant Surgeon whilst another was allocated *'for service with the British Legation in Japan.'* So it would not be unreasonable to expect to find the IRON DUKE heading for Japan at the first opportunity.

2 Several newspapers featured monthly or bi-monthly listings of all the Royal Naval ships in service at their different stations, or their designated task if they were not allocated to a station. I have chosen to use the *Naval & Military Gazette* and its listing published on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1872 showed 26 ships not including their Flagship – IRON DUKE.

As this period as at the edge of photography, identification of individual ships is not easy. Contemporary documents cannot always be trusted for their accuracy and the ‘small ships’ of the Royal Navy attracted little interest from later historians. So rather than show an alphabetical list I will break the fleet into three parts.

1 - The major ships were the corvettes that were designated brig/sloops until 1862. These were all wooden screw driven hulls of varying displacements and carried more guns than the gun boats.

Name	Launch Date	Description
BARROSA	1860 Mar 10	Wooden hull screw driven 1700/2302 tons 17 guns
JUNO	1867 Nov 28	Wooden hull screw driven 1462/2083 tons 6 guns
RINALDO	1860 Mar 26	Wooden hull screw driven 951/1365 tons 7 guns
ZEBRA	1860 Nov 13	Wooden hull screw driven 951/1336 tons 7 guns – SOLD 20 Aug 73 at HK

2 – The Gun Vessels - Modern historians place these insignificant craft into classes which is not strictly accurate. They were built in batches in different shipyards and vary considerably. However, I will follow the modern convention for ease of recognition as they are mostly from two groups. The **ALBACORES** were older and smaller, whilst the **BEACONS** were almost new and more than double their displacement. Unless stated otherwise the gun vessels had screw driven wooden hulls.

<b>BOUNCER</b>	1856 Feb 23	232 tons 2 guns
<b>COCKCHAFFER</b>	1855 Nov 24	232 tons 1 guns – SOLD 1872
<b>DOVE</b>	1855 Nov 24	232 tons 3 guns – SOLD 1873
<b>FIRM</b>	1856 Mar 22	232 tons 2 guns – SOLD 1872
<b>GRASSHOPPER</b>	1855 Dec 8	232 tons 2 guns
<b>OPOSSUM</b>	1856 Feb 28	232 tons 4 guns – HULK 1874
ALGERINE	1857 Feb 24	299 tons 1 gun - SOLD 1872
LEVEN	1857 Mar 7	300 tons 3 guns of the ALGERINE Class – SOLD 1873
<b>AVON</b>	1867 Oct 2	467/603 tons 4 guns composite hull twin screws
<b>DWARF</b>	1867 Nov 28	465/584 tons 4 guns composite hull twin screws
<b>ELK</b>	1868 Jan 10	465/603 tons 4 guns composite hull twin screws
<b>HORNET</b>	1868 Mar 10	465/603 tons 4 guns composite hull twin screws
<b>MIDGE</b>	1868 May 21	465/603 tons 4 guns composite hull twin screws
<b>TEAZER</b>	1867 Apr 28	465/603 tons 4 guns composite hull twin screws
<b>THISTLE</b>	1868 Jan 25	465/603 tons 4 guns composite hull twin screws
CURLEW	1868 Aug 28	665/802 tons 3 guns of the PLOVER Class
RINGDOVE	1867 Sep 4	666/774 tons 3 guns of the PLOVER Class

3 – The miscellaneous ships that often accompanied a fleet on a foreign station

ADVENTURE	1855 Feb 19	Storeship – iron hull screw driven 1593 tons – named RESOLUTE at launch
NASSAU	1866 Feb 20	Survey ship converted from gun boat 695/877 tons 4 guns from July 1866
PRINCESS CHARLOTTE	1825	Receiving Ship – First Rate 104 gun ship of the line
SALAMIS	1863 May 9	Dispatch vessel paddle driven wooden hull of 835/985 tons 2 guns
SYLVIA	1866 Mar 20	Survey ship converted from gun boat 695/865 tons 5 guns from Oct 1866



The first three reports from the China Station published in the *Hampshire Advertiser* in 1872<sup>32</sup> showed their disposition as the year 1871 came to a close and Vice-Admiral Kellett relinquished his command. There were SIXTEEN vessels named and ELEVEN of them were gunboats or **steam gun vessels**, as they were officially designated. These were,

CURLEW	Cdr Boyle - left Hong Kong for Shanghai
MIDGE	Cdr C. Rising - at Nagasaki from Shanghai on 2 Nov 1871- left Nagasaki 8 Nov for Tientsin
OPOSSUM	Lt. Cdr. Hope - under refit at Hong Kong
DOVE	Lt. Cdr. Dunlop - at Woosung for river (Yangtse) service
THISTLE	Cdr H.K. Leet - left Hong Kong for Nagasaki on 9 Nov 1871
DWARF	Cdr Walker - at Amoy
COCKCHAFER	Lt. Cdr. Smith - at Ningpo
HORNET	Cdr D.G. Davidson - re-commissioned on 8 Nov at Hong Kong with volunteers from OCEAN
ELK	Cdr Noel Osborne - re-commissioned on 8 Nov at Hong Kong with volunteers from OCEAN
FIRM	Lt. John Hext - at Woosung
TEAZER	Cdr R. Blomfield - at Singapore on 26 Nov 71 after cruising off Malacca – to be replaced by HORNET.

These gunboats were the essence of Empire and stories about their part in the policing of British interests around the world have become a romantic folklore, yet they were nothing to look at and rarely remembered by name. There were six classes built from 1854 to 1857 totaling 162 vessels with the largest class being the ALBACORES at 98 vessels. They were modest in size at 232 tons and they carried up to four guns – 1 x 68 pounder; 1 x 32 pounder and 2 x 24 pounders and they could only manage 7½ knots. The China Fleet in 1872 contained six of the survivors from this class, whose days were numbered. COCKCHAFER was sold during 1872, DOVE was sold at Shanghai in 1873 and OPOSSUM became a hospital hulk in 1874 possibly at Hong Kong.

Of the remaining seven gun vessels listed above – six of them (AVON is missing) belonged to the 18 strong Beacon Class of 1868, whilst the seventh one listed was an odd one out, CURLEW was a member of the Plover Class, which, although made entirely from wood, was 200 tons larger and 20 feet longer than her smaller sisters in the Beacon Class. These were all of a composite construction, that is, an iron keel and frames covered by wooden planking.

Although most gun vessels were built in private shipyards all around the country, Devonport Dockyard built two ships for the Beacon Class (FLIRT & FLY) and two for the Plover Class (LAPWING & SEAGULL).<sup>33</sup> This meant that none of them were identical, but the displacement of the Beacons was about 600 tons for their 155 feet length and 25 feet beam. They carried one enormous 7-inch gun, together with an equally impressive 64-pounder, supported by two 20-pounders and they could make almost 10 knots in good sailing conditions.

The next aspect that stands out from the list is the ranks of their ‘Captains.’ FIRM is the command of a Lieutenant and is the only one in that category. The other three were commanded by Lieutenant Commanders. This was a rank that separated senior Lieutenants – those with at least 8 years seniority – from the rest of the Lieutenants. The rank had its own uniform, but it only displayed the two broad rings of a Lieutenant on the sleeve until the extra thin ring or half ring was added in 1876. So a Lieutenant Commander was a Commander in waiting. He could have his own command, but it was by definition ‘smaller’ and that is exactly what the ALBECORES were – smaller. The Beacon Class was twice the size and therefore demanded that a Commander took charge of its complement of 80 officers and crew.

<sup>32</sup> Saturdays 6 January, 13 January and 3 February 1872 all page 8

<sup>33</sup> FLY and LAPWING both joined the China Station in 1874 during Henry’s time.

## The Gun Vessels of the China Fleet

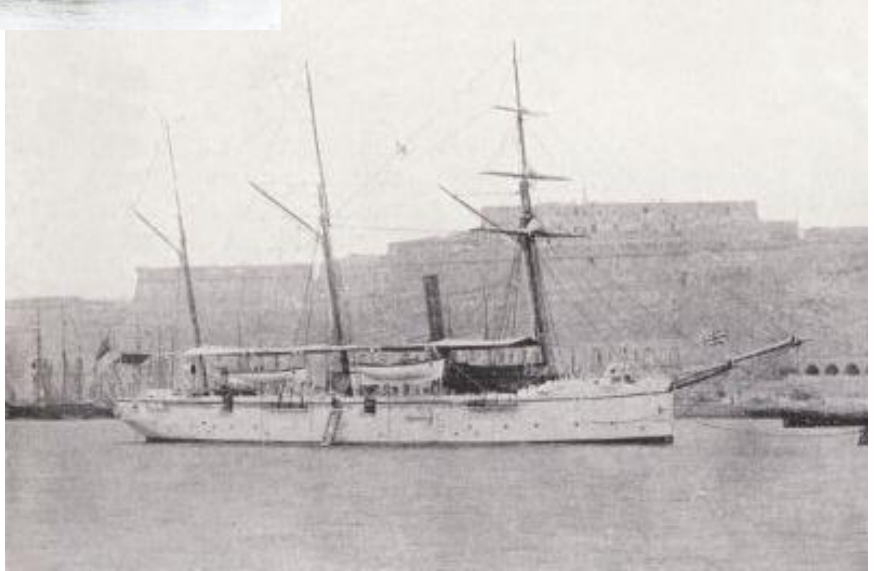


### ALBACORE Class 1855-56

Above is COCKCHAFER with her pencil thin funnel standing out between masts devoid of yards.

Right is ALBACORE the lead ship of the class. Her hull has the white colour of a ship in the Far East and she has a deck awning rigged along her full length.

The square yards on her foremast are different from COCKCHAFER.



### BEACON Class 1867-68

The photo right is an image of TEAZER and her much prettier 'clipper' lines and square rigged fore and main masts are plain to see, but the fore and aft sails make it more like a barque which in England was often called a Jackass Barque. However, this is not the image that springs to mind when the word 'gun boat' is used to describe them.



RINGDOVE of the PLOVER Class (left) had two 40-pounders in place of the single 64-pounder of the Beacons and is ketch rigged on the main and mizzen similar to the barquentine rig favoured by the French.

3 And so we come to my last sub heading – what did the IRON DUKE do on the China Station? When we were last on board IRON DUKE it was Christmas Day 1871 and she was heading north through the Straits of Malacca for Penang where she arrived on the 28<sup>th</sup> December. Rear Admiral Shadwell obviously wanted to begin his tour of his new station from its most westerly limit – Penang in Western Malaya.

The China Station was effectively three distinctly different situations with one underlying objective – TRADE. These three areas were Western and Eastern Malaya ruled by the sultans, the massive expanse of China which had lost its dominance of the region and Japan which was a closed society under pressure from the outside world to open its doors to trade. But although Britain was not alone, modern historians dub this period in British influence as the *Imperialist Century* (1815-1914) as Britain dominated the economies of the region and unofficially adopted the role of global policeman.

Unfortunately as the West Indies was all about sugar and consequently slaves, then China was all about opium and the British intention to force the drug trade on to the Chinese market against the wishes of the mandarins of the ruling dynasty. Two wars with Britain, known as the Opium Wars, were the result. The First Opium War was fought between 1839 and 1842, and the Second (also known as the Arrow War) from 1856 to 1860. These Wars led to a series of treaties, beginning with the Treaty of Nanking (signed with the British on August 29, 1842), which ended the First Opium War; the Second Opium War led to the Treaty of Tientsin (actually a series of agreements with Britain and France ending the first phase of the conflict, and signed in June 1858) and the Convention of Peking (three treaties, with Britain, France, and Russia, respectively, signed on November 14, 1860). Known collectively as the “unequal treaties,” these were only three of a number of such “agreements” foisted on an unwilling China and rightly seen as a low point in the country’s history.

The Treaty of Nanking ceded Hong Kong Island to Britain in perpetuity and stipulated that five ports were to be opened to foreign trade: Canton (Guangzhou), Amoy (Xiamen), Foochow (Fuzhou), Ningpo (Ningbo), and Shanghai. These became known as Treaty Ports or Concessions and were the first in an ever-increasing series of settlements that spread themselves across the country. Towards the end of the 19th century, as the Western countries demanded still more concessions from China, the number of Chinese treaty ports grew from 5 in 1842 to more than 50 by 1911.<sup>34</sup>

The Treaty Port system began in Japan in 1854 after Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the United States Navy sailed a fleet of gunships into Edo (now Tokyo) Bay and forced the Japanese to allow U.S. merchants into their country. America’s presence and to some extent its success, was astonishing in the context of it being a very small, young country with a very small navy, but other Western nations rapidly followed the British and U.S. examples and gained treaty port privileges for their own citizens not only in China and Japan but also in Vietnam, Korea, and Siam (Thailand). The Japanese, having less trade appeal and a stronger military force than the Chinese, were better able to withstand this pressure, and in that country only six ports were opened to foreign trade and residence. No more than two or three ports were ever opened in the smaller countries.<sup>35</sup>

Of course this was an evolving process of ‘high politics’ often conducted by individuals with little understanding of the Chinese or Japanese mentality and they were half a world away from the Parliament in Westminster. It was not until 1870 that Singapore and Penang were linked to London by telegraph via Bombay and Suez and that was just twelve months prior to the arrival of the IRON DUKE. Despite a poor start, Hong Kong became the service centre for the south China ports and the longstanding focus of the Royal Navy, whilst Shanghai’s success at the mouth of the Yangtse River to the north became its alternative, secondary base. However, it was not just about trade, but access for its citizens and ultimately both had to be protected. This section began with Rear Admiral Shadwell taking the IRON DUKE up the Malacca Strait to Penang and that is where the story resumes in a very different political climate and a centuries old tradition of piracy.

---

<sup>34</sup> The Journal of Urbanisation

<sup>35</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica



## Malaya – Setting the Scene

---

The Malacca Strait is a 550 mile long direct route between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean squeezed between Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. It varies in width from over 150 miles in the north at Penang, to just over 30 miles in the south through the Straits of Singapore. It is and always has been a direct trading route plagued by pirates operating from both coasts.

Penang Island in the north of the peninsula was the first settlement to be secured through a treaty with Kedah (in Perak) in the late 18th century. Singapore, with its even more favourable trading location in the south, followed through a treaty with the Johore Sultanate in 1819. Malacca had already been surrendered by the Dutch and this arrangement was formalised through the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, which led to the creation of the British Straits Settlements of Malacca, Penang, and Singapore. These seats of British administration aimed at controlling the piracy and enabling maritime trade to function effectively as spices were the global currency of the day until tin was found in Perak in 1820 and Selangor in 1824.

The British and Dutch empires effectively drew a demarcation line along the strait, agreeing to fight against piracy on their own side of the line. This line of demarcation would eventually become the modern-day border between Malaysia and Indonesia. Increased patrolling and superior seafaring technology on the part of the European powers, as well as improved political stability and economic conditions in the region, eventually allowed the European powers to significantly curb piracy in the region and by 1872 Rear Admiral Shadwell was the new boy ‘in town.’

Charles Frederick Alexander Shadwell<sup>36</sup> had been born in Melksham, Somerset on the 31 Jan 1814. He joined the Royal Navy as a boy of 13 years old in 1827. At 24 he was promoted Lieutenant and eight years later raised to Commander on the 27 June 1846. His Post Captain’s promotion followed on the 25 February 1853 and he had been in the flag rank of Rear Admiral for barely 12 months before his appointment to IRON DUKE. He had already had three commissions in the Far East in three different ranks. From 1841 to 46 he was a Lieutenant in FLY which spent much of its time surveying in the East Indies. In 1850 he was commissioned in the SPHINX for the East Indies and found himself in the Burma War of 1852. In 1856 he commissioned the HIGHFLYER as Captain and took part in the Second Opium War. He saw the capture of Canton in 1857 and two years later he was at the destruction of the Peiho Forts in which he was wounded and forever afterwards very lame.

Yet despite this long service in all spheres of the Navy’s role, he was never seen as a warrior. He had the temperament of a student and was deeply embedded in the study of nautical astronomy and published a number of papers on different aspects of the subject. For this he was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Society in 1861 to add to his C.B. awarded in December 1853.



From the 1 April 1867 the three strategically located port cities of Penang, Malacca, and Singapore came to be ruled directly as the British Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements, having earlier been controlled as one administrative unit by the British East India Company.

---

<sup>36</sup> Photo courtesy of Bristol University Library and taken in Shanghai whilst Captain of HIGHFLYER c1856

In 1872 a statement of government policy sent to the Singapore Chamber of Commerce marked the rapid change in British policy in Malaya from noninterference to intervention. It said, "It is the policy of Her Majesty's Government not to interfere in the affairs of the Malay states unless it becomes necessary for the suppression of piracy or the punishment of aggression on our people or territories."

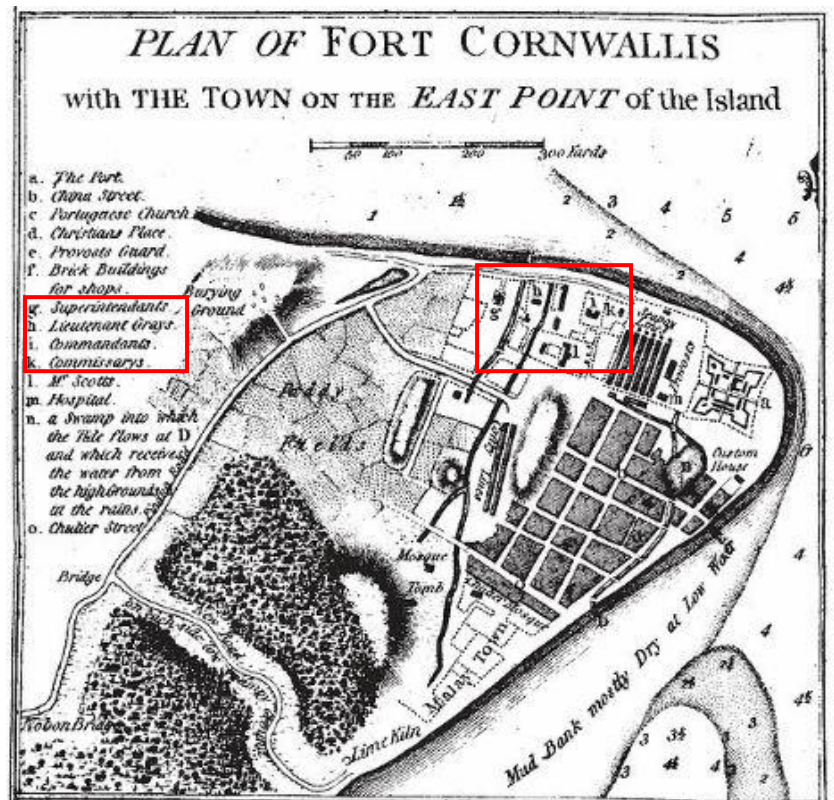
So, the appearance of the imposing outline of the IRON DUKE at any port meant that Rear Admiral Shadwell was the man whose presence represented the authority of the British Government. He was diplomat and warrior, negotiator and strategist and together with his senior officers led by 41 year old Captain William Arthur they would not tolerate any infringement of that policy.

## From Penang to Hong Kong

The Prince of Wales Island or Pulau Pinang in the State of Perak is more commonly known as Penang and the island sits three miles off the coast of the peninsula in the Strait of Malacca. Its (only) town and port in 1872 was George Town, built on a prominent nose of land jutting eastward towards the mainland with Fort Cornwallis at its tip. It had been established in 1786 for the East India Company and was now approaching its first one hundred years of trading.

January was the driest and sunniest month of the Malayan year with temperatures regularly above 80°F, but the crews working in the Far East soon learned to rig spare sails to direct any breezes below decks and awnings were rigged whenever possible. However, water replenishment was the main problem and the first consideration whenever they touched a new port. Henry's naval papers describe his complexion as fair skinned, a trait I have inherited, so I know the misery that he could experience when continuously exposed to an unrelenting sun.

New Year's Day 1872 was not celebrated in those days, but the Navigating Lieutenant Stopford Tracey would have done well to have noted it. It was Leap Year and that would affect his calculations when the time came. His Captain probably accompanied Admiral Shadwell ashore to introduce themselves and their most likely destination was the small group of houses on the north shore. This is where the drinks, polite





conversation and dinner parties would have given opportunities for the main players to sum each other up and to learn of the difficulties that were being experienced in the region.

After a week at the port, IRON DUKE was due to leave Penang on **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January 1872** and head 200 miles south to Malacca. At the same time other ships were exchanging positions as the HORNET had re-commissioned under Cdr. D.G. Davidson and was ordered to relieve TEAZER (Cdr. R.M. Blomfield) at Singapore of her duties in the Straits of Malacca. The sloop ZEBRA (Cdr. Hon. A.D.S. Denison), which had completed some machinery repairs in Hong Kong, was ordered to replace Captain Robinson in the RINALDO in the Straits where he had been for some time.<sup>37</sup>

Contemporary maps of the area are quite scarce and Malacca has a rather puzzling location which does not seem to have any geographical feature that would make it a natural choice for a harbour or anchorage. Instead it is akin to Brighton facing the English Channel. IRON DUKE did not stay there long as within six days of leaving Penang she was at anchor off Singapore on **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January**.<sup>38</sup>



I have little doubt that Rear Admiral Shadwell's first call ashore was to the residence of Sir Harry Ord, the Governor of the Straits & Settlements, as there was a power struggle raging in the Royal House of Perak. Sultan Ali had died in 1871 and his anticipated successor, Raja Abdullah, was bypassed for not attending his funeral and Ord was intent on keeping him from the sultanate. However, these conversations would not have been heard on the deck of the IRON DUKE.

At this point I am wishing that I had access to a Journal that rests in the National Maritime Museum. Its author is unnamed, but it covers the period of the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1871 to the 19<sup>th</sup> August 1872 and the most likely writer was one of the three Midshipmen that joined her on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 1871.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 3 February 1872

<sup>38</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 6 March 1872

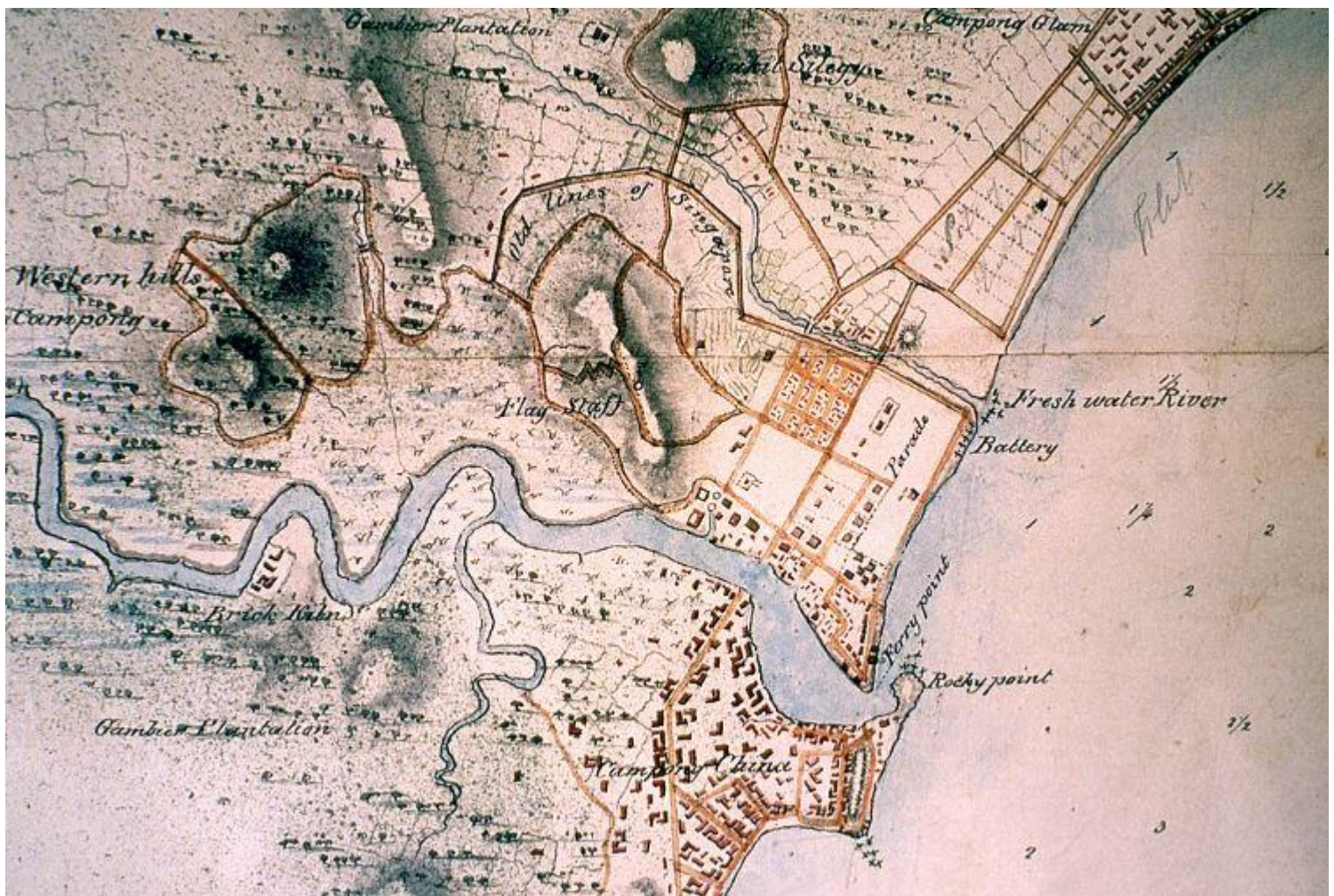
<sup>39</sup> Walter Fitz-Simons – William White – Frank Bone



Midshipmen were encouraged to keep a detailed journal as a part of their training and the 16<sup>th</sup> September was the day 'the Duke' left Plymouth Sound. This book together with the ship's Log would be invaluable in adding colour to the bland, brusque statements in the English press.<sup>40</sup>

The mouth of the Singapore River, as the Chinese saw it, was shaped like the belly of a carp. To them that meant it was auspicious and any business venture in the area was guaranteed success. Boat Quay was the result and in 1842 the Chinese shop houses became a seething mass of activity as hundreds of sampans and bumboats jostled for space. Thirty years from its inception, the IRON DUKE would have anchored a comfortable distance offshore and been immediately surrounded by a flotilla of bumboats shouting for the attention of anyone in a position to buy what they carried. The 'Duke's' boats would have been put in the water to act as water taxis for those who found it necessary to go ashore and the Admiral's gig would have been among the first of them, but it would have been hot and humid work for those manning the oars as Singapore is not noted for its breezes.

All the government buildings and western residences were opposite Boat Quay on the northern bank with Fort Canning on Government Hill behind and not far beyond that, the Sultan's Palace. It would be helpful to illustrate the location, but as always, it is difficult to locate contemporary illustrations. However the map below dates from 1825, just six years after the founding of the colony and makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the island. The Government residences are just appearing within the grid pattern to the north of the river, whilst Boat Quay with China Town (Campong China) behind it, is evolving on the south bank

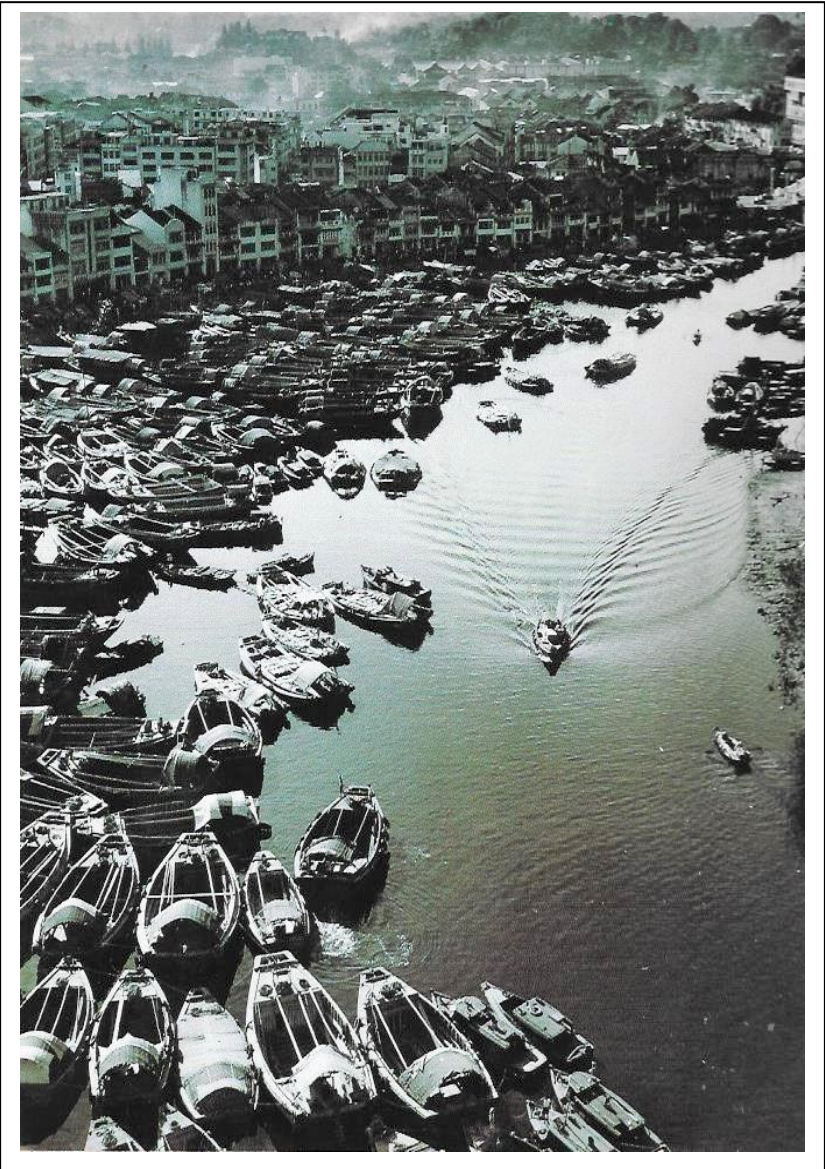


<sup>40</sup> National Maritime Museum Ref. JOD/238





The two images on the previous page are actually one image split in two, because of its excessive size. It was also coloured, but not in the most helpful hue. It was a double page spread of 55 cms. by 32 cms. in a strange sepia colour that did not translate well, but it formed the opening pages of a chapter headed a History of Singapore in a lovely coffee table book<sup>41</sup> we brought back from the island following our visit in March 1999. It perfectly illustrates my opening paragraph and can be dated to a period between 1842, when the shop houses were built on Boat Quay (image 2) and 1855, when the first church of St. Andrew was demolished (image 1). The vantage point is Government Hill where the best in society met to relax, illustrated by the young officer in the Royal Garrison Artillery from Fort Canning with his family (the fort was behind the viewer in image 2). The anchorage where the IRON DUKE would have been is clearly seen in the first image. However, by 1872 there would have been much more development and the church would have morphed into the cathedral of St. Andrew opened in 1861. Of course the painter has his customer in mind and everything is spick and span including China Town in the second image, which in reality would have been an untidy shambles of ramshackle shacks.



The *Hampshire Advertiser* carried the news in early March that ‘the Admiral intends to leave Singapore on the **22<sup>nd</sup> January (Monday)** for Hong Kong via Labuan and Manila.’ IRON DUKE had rested at anchor off Singapore for eleven days and that meant it had embraced two Sundays which was the only day on which the seamen were allowed free time following a Sunday religious service and dinner. It has never been clear to me whether or not a ‘run ashore’ was allowed or even sought by the men. No doubt those who indulged in artistic handicrafts would have been inspired by the oriental scene, but many of the young men would have been lusting after women fuelled by drink from the local brews and there was never any shortage of that. A look at the ship’s Paybooks would reveal any desertions, but the majority of men would be satisfied with a change of scene for a few hours.

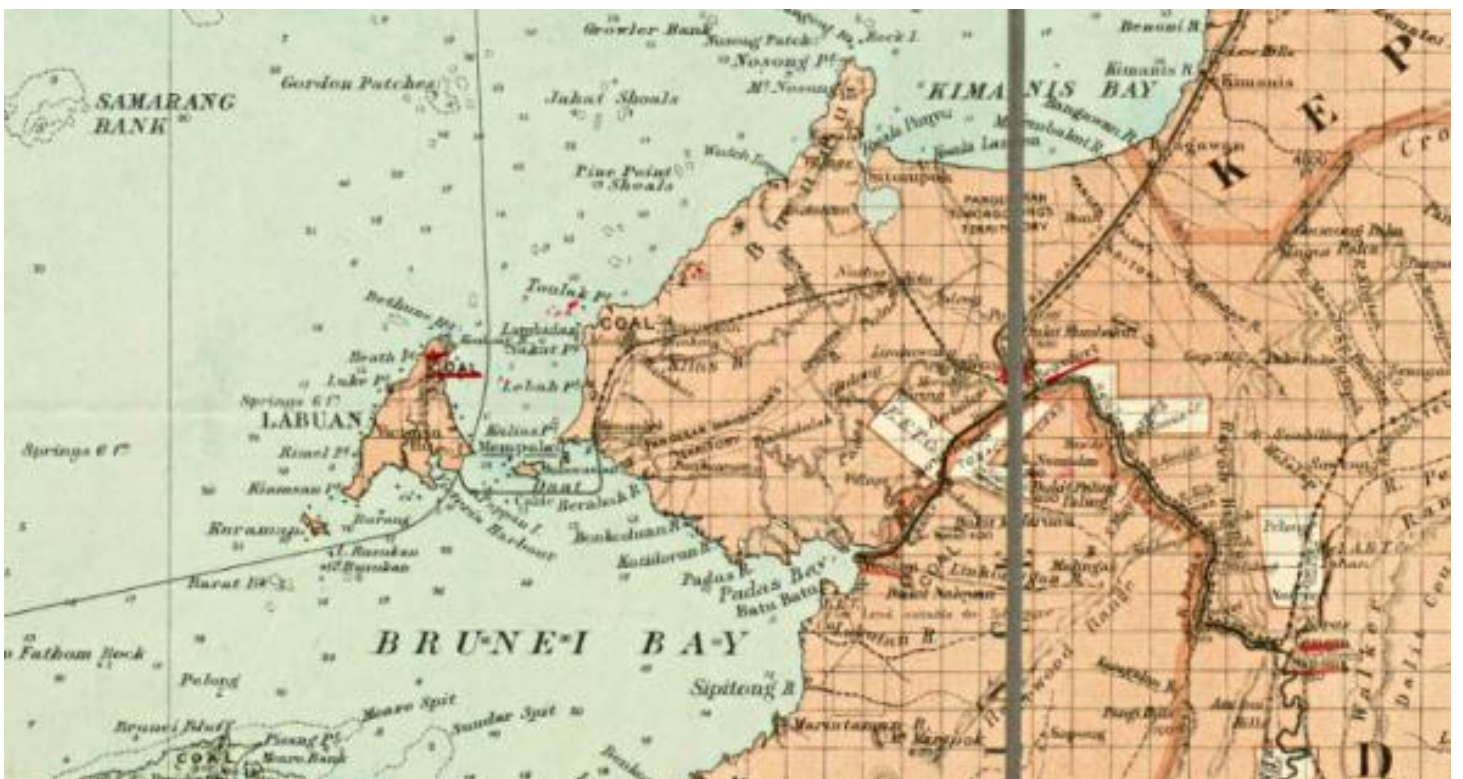
I must admit to having never heard of the tiny island 864 nautical miles from Singapore and only 38 square miles in area. At 6 knots sailing speed it would have taken IRON DUKE 6 days to reach Labuan. In 1872 it was a British Crown Colony, but its story began in 1841 with the Rajah of Sarawak, an Englishman called James Brooke. He had established a firm footing along the north western coast of Borneo and was actively engaged in the suppression of piracy. As a result he persistently promoted the island to the British Government and urged them to establish a naval base

<sup>41</sup> *Over Singapore* published by the Archipelago Press in 1993

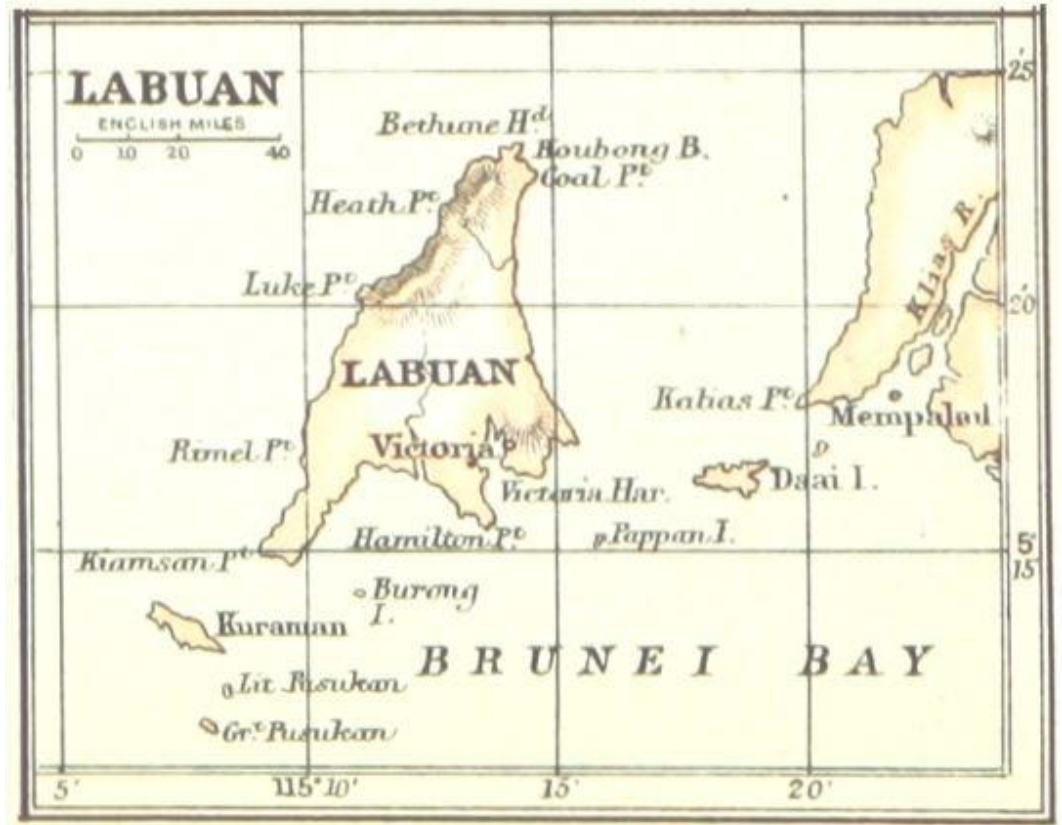


there. Eventually the Admiralty was moved to order not one but two Admirals to investigate its potential. Brooke was appointed as a diplomat to Brunei and instructed to persuade the Sultan not to enter into any treaties with any other country whilst the island was being considered as a British interest. During 1845 the Admirals concluded that it was a very favourable place with a lot of potential especially for its coal deposits. With the emergence of steam driven ships it would have made a lucrative bunkering station. Some even saw it as a second Singapore and towards the end of 1846 Brooke was able to draw up the Treaty of Labuan with the Sultan of Brunei. Two years later it became a Crown Colony with James Brooke as its Governor.

Unfortunately the coal mining enterprise failed and British investors withdrew their money, leaving the machinery and the Chinese workers abandoned. But the Chinese soon reinvented themselves as traders and the island's exports of edible birds' nests, pearls, sago and camphor gradually became the island's lifblood. Twenty four years later this island was an essential call on Rear Admiral Shadwell's list and a visit to the Sultan of Brunei could not be ignored. After all, the Palace of Light and Faith on the banks of the Brunei River was not too far from the town of Victoria on Labuan.



The name of Labuan is derived from the Malay word for a harbour and probably refers to the eternal value of Victoria Harbour. Roughly triangular with its long side facing the South China Sea, it commands the entrance into Brunei Bay and is about 6 miles from the coast of Eastern Malaya (the name in the days of Empire). Its town of Victoria is situated on a deep, well sheltered harbour facing south east.



It is a low lying island surrounded by coral reefs and apart from the main island it includes six smaller islands to the south whose names have changed over time. On the map illustrated they are Burong, Daai, Kuraman, Pappan, Greater and Little Pusukan, but a modern map will show Burung, Daat, Kuraman, Papan together with Rusukan Besar and Rusukan Kecil.

IRON DUKE 's stay during those last days of January would have been towards the end of the typhoon season which did not impinge on Labuan, except for making it slightly wetter, and the IRON DUKE'S next leg towards Manila was beautifully timed to avoid the possibility of encountering a typhoon. Who said they knew nothing in the old days?

As Labuan was quite an important stop, diplomatically, I would suggest that she stayed at anchor there until Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February, before she left for a 5-day passage to the Philippines scheduled to arrive during Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February. It has to be remembered that these were the days when tradition and respect were of paramount importance and a passage would never have begun on a Sunday. The Rev. John Edwards was Chaplain to the IRON DUKE and during the week he taught navigation to the Midshipmen and any other seaman willing to improve his position, but there are no reports of her progress to validate my assertion, so this inevitably is calculated guesswork. It is, however, interesting that these 800 mile hops should be so evenly spaced to get the Duke from Singapore to Hong Kong in the most agreeable manner.

If my reader could sit back for a moment and imagine a very large plate being dropped from Heaven and shattering into a myriad of pieces on the ocean below, then that would be the Philippines. It is 740 nautical miles to Manila its capital and with favourable airs IRON DUKE would reach Manila before the weekend – but why Manila? This was no holiday cruise.

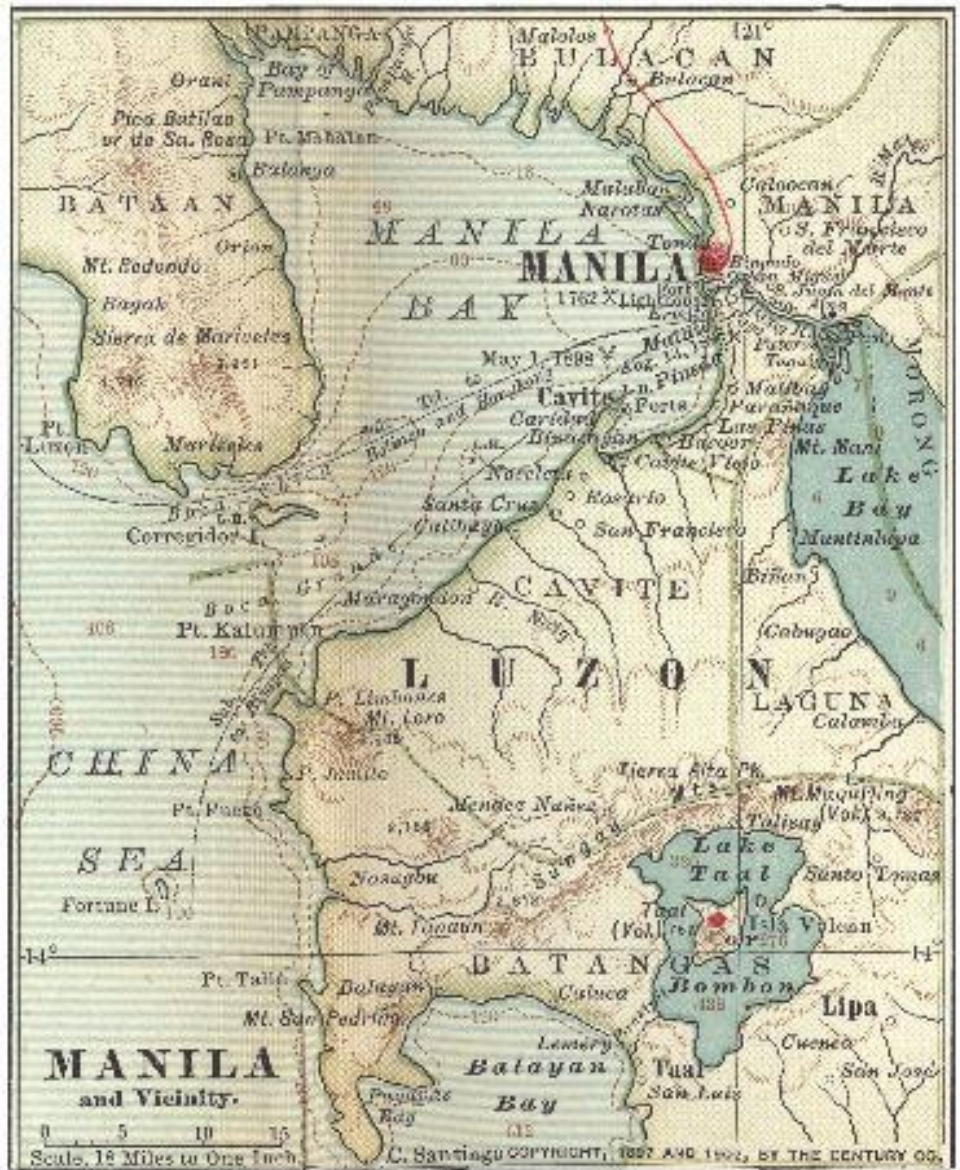
At the time of the IRON DUKE's arrival, there was trouble, political trouble had come to the boil and it had begun in 1863. It was not caused by the earthquake that hit the area and destroyed Manila Cathedral. It was caused by the Education Reform that had opened their system of higher education to Filipinos. The islands were under the direct rule of Spain and had been since 1821, but in 1868 Queen Isabel II was deposed and a new liberal Governor was appointed in the following year. General



Carlos de la Torre introduced the right to free speech and the freedom of assembly and this new atmosphere that pervaded the islands enticed King Leopold I of Belgium to offer to buy the islands. Of course liberalism does not suit everyone, as often the greater majority of people silently resist change. The next Governor was on their side and he cancelled all his predecessor's liberal reforms. With the two sides now polarised, rebellion broke out in 1872 around Cavite just to the south of Manila on the awesome, great bay into which the IRON DUKE had gently eased herself.

The entrance is eleven miles wide, but divided into two channels by Corregidor Island. The southern, wider channel is almost never used, whilst the northern channel is just two miles wide. Once inside the sight is incredible. It is almost completely landlocked. Its circumference is 120 miles and its widest diameter from the north-west to the south-east measures 36 miles and it was here that the 'Duke' dropped anchor in a climate guaranteed to reach a sultry 82°F during the day.

The IRON DUKE arrived three weeks after the Cavite Mutiny of the Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January. Cavite was the location of Fort San Felipe, a Spanish military arsenal and it was here that about 200 locally recruited colonial troops together with a number of labourers mutinied in the belief that it would lead to a national uprising. It didn't and it was quickly and ruthlessly crushed by the reactionary Governor. He used the incident as an excuse to clamp down on those intellectuals who had been calling for Government reform and three priests were hastily tried and executed. Inevitably this made them martyrs to Filipino nationalism which had to wait until 1896 for the Philippine Revolution.<sup>42</sup>



On the date of the mutiny the IRON DUKE was in Singapore and she would have been on passage to Labuan or even already there before a fast dispatch vessel could find her, but I have little doubt that Shadwell was acquainted with the incident when Lt. Stopford Tracey brought his ship through the entrance into Manila Bay.

<sup>42</sup> Extracted from www.Britannica.com and other websites



The Governor of Manila is presented as a very hard and uncompromising character and it is interesting to reflect upon any possible meeting between him and the Rear Admiral. After all, Spain was not exactly top of the British friendship stakes yet the Philippines were a significant, international trading nation and could not be ignored. And if they had met, I wonder what they said.

On the ship's complement published in the Navy List there are seven names listed 'for disposal' – like a load of old junk. None of the names have a rank and three of them are in italics with the word 'Manila' in brackets. Two of the men Thomas Bate and Edward Robinson could have joined at Singapore as they have joining dates of the 28 Nov and 8 Dec 71 respectively. George Spain, however, had joined on the 15 April – 10 months previously. I wonder who they were and what was their mission in Manila? It could have been the sole purpose of the 'Duke's' visit to the island, simply to drop them off.

However, a second reason for visiting Manila may have been the presence of the NASSAU (Cdr. W. Chimmo) that had resumed surveying 'the zulu seas.'<sup>43</sup> She had arrived in Manila from Hong Kong on Christmas Eve and Rear-Admiral Shadwell was very interested in surveying and seems to be determined to meet all of his ship commanders, but the area being surveyed remains a mystery.

This entire progress has been based upon 17 words written four pages previously. The only reliable corroboration for my estimated schedule is to be found in the Ship's Log, as no reports have found their way into the newspapers. The geographical features and political backgrounds are fact. The dates of the IRON DUKE's progress are not. However, there is one other aspect that needs to be addressed and that is a consort. It is very unlikely in the naval tradition that a Flagship would proceed anywhere unescorted. Again this information is lacking, but there is one distinct possibility – RINALDO.

She had been in Singapore at the same time as the Flagship having been relieved in the Malacca Strait by the ZEBRA. She had left Singapore four days before the IRON DUKE, on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January with orders to join the flag at Hong Kong<sup>44</sup> and she is reported<sup>45</sup> to have arrived at Hong Kong on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 'from Labuan.' If that is accurate then she was there with the IRON DUKE, but did not make the passage to Manila. We will also see that the date of the IRON DUKE's arrival in Hong Kong is vague and imprecise and as a consequence the possibility that RINALDO accompanied the IRON DUKE all the way is very real.

Manila was one of those ports whose trade attracted all the large trading nations of the world. Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai are three more, but in each of these ports it might be expected to find a warship from France, America, Russia even Japan and on those occasions there were naval niceties to be observed. However, a British warship would attract the attentions of those who wanted to keep track of advances in naval technology - what was new and how was it being used and IRON DUKE was a 'new' ship? As my story progresses there will be examples of this situation.

As the IRON DUKE prepared to leave the vast expanse of Manila Bay with the knowledge that the exit was very narrow and sailing conditions in a landlocked bay, no matter how large, were likely to be unpredictable, my thoughts turn to the 'Duke's' steam propulsion and another facet that has never had a proper explanation. It was a fact that she was a good sailing vessel and could make 10 knots under sail and using that sail saved coal – lots of it. So, did they keep the boilers lit, but not used? If so, that also burnt coal. Not to light them would mean lots of stokers and engineers with nothing to do and that would never do – not in the Royal Navy. As she headed out of Manila Bay I am sure there was a head of steam and the screw was turning. It was safer that way as they slid between Corregidor Island and the Bataan Peninsula and out into the South China Sea. As Lt. Stopford Tracey set a course for Hong Kong Island he glanced at his chart table calendar. It was Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February and they should see Hong Kong on Saturday forenoon. It was 862 nautical miles.

---

<sup>43</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* published 20 March 1872

<sup>44</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* published 20 March 1872

<sup>45</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* published 13 April 1872

## Two Months in Hong Kong

---

Hong Kong – perhaps the most famous, even infamous of the British colonies in the Far East brought the Royal Navy to its shores in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century and it arrived in defence of the opium trade. No one would state that in so many words, but Canton was the centre of trade with the west and enterprising British traders had found a ready market for India's opium among the Chinese population in spite of it being illegal. The Chinese tolerated the situation for a remarkably long time, but in 1839 it came to a dramatic halt when an Imperial Commissioner arrived in Canton to put an end to the trade. Within a week the merchants were either arrested or fled and over 20,000 cases of opium were destroyed. Macau, to which the traders had retreated, would not accept them, so they set up a temporary sanctuary on Hong Kong. It was here that the Royal Navy ships began to assemble 'in defence of British interests,' but it was over a year before there were seventeen ships off the island and planning an 'intervention.'

The result was the bombardment of the forts at the Bogue, the narrow approach to Canton on the Pearl River. This brought the Chinese to the negotiating table, but the result was bizarre. Rear Admiral George Elliot was in command of the naval forces and he was allowed to take possession of Hong Kong island which he did formally at a landing on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1841, but nothing was ever signed. However, their action did not meet with home government approval and Elliot together with his second in command, were called home in disgrace. His Chinese counterpart fared no better. He was sent to Peking in chains, but the new history of Hong Kong set in motion a complex story that has no place here. Our story begins thirty years later.

The date of the arrival of the IRON DUKE in Hong Kong is not known accurately. *The Hampshire Advertiser* suggests that 'she was expected to arrive in Hong Kong, on return from a cruise, on the 18<sup>th</sup> February,' yet this wording is guesswork on the part of the copy writer. *The Army & Navy Gazette* was clearer, but simply reported that IRON DUKE was at Hong Kong on **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February**, so we will have to be satisfied with that information. *The Naval & Military Gazette* (a different newspaper) reported her arrival in the following manner, but note – there is no date.<sup>46</sup>

**IRON DUKE, 14, double-screw iron ship, armour plated. The "China Mail," noting the arrival at Hong Kong of H.M.S. Iron Duke, with Rear-Admiral Shadwell, C.B., from Manila, says, the vessel is a fine specimen of naval architecture, and has a complement of 501 men all told. She is a double-screw steamer of 800 horse-power, and is armed with ten 12-ton guns, and four Armstrongs. As she steamed into the harbour, a salute to the Admiral was fired by the Princess Charlotte, followed by a similar compliment from the American, Russian, French, and Italian men-of-war, which was returned by the Iron Duke.**

The tone of the report suggests that the IRON DUKE had impressed casual observers from the press, but the presence of four other nationalities of warship makes it certain that she would attract the attention of more informed naval observers. However, she had arrived safely and Commodore Shortt on the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE could look forward to a fine mess dinner and an opportunity to learn a great deal of the world outside.

It is also time to remind my reader of the subject of this story – it was Ordinary Seaman Henry Westaway Trethewey, a young man who was just 19 years and 8 months old. In his short life he had already seen Bermuda and the West Indies, Nova Scotia and Portugal and he had now travelled half way around the world to Hong Kong on the edge of China. In between voyages he had found time to marry, but his wife had barely known him before he was gone again. Yet he left not a word to record or describe a life that would have seemed exotic to many others. Instead, we have to follow his ships

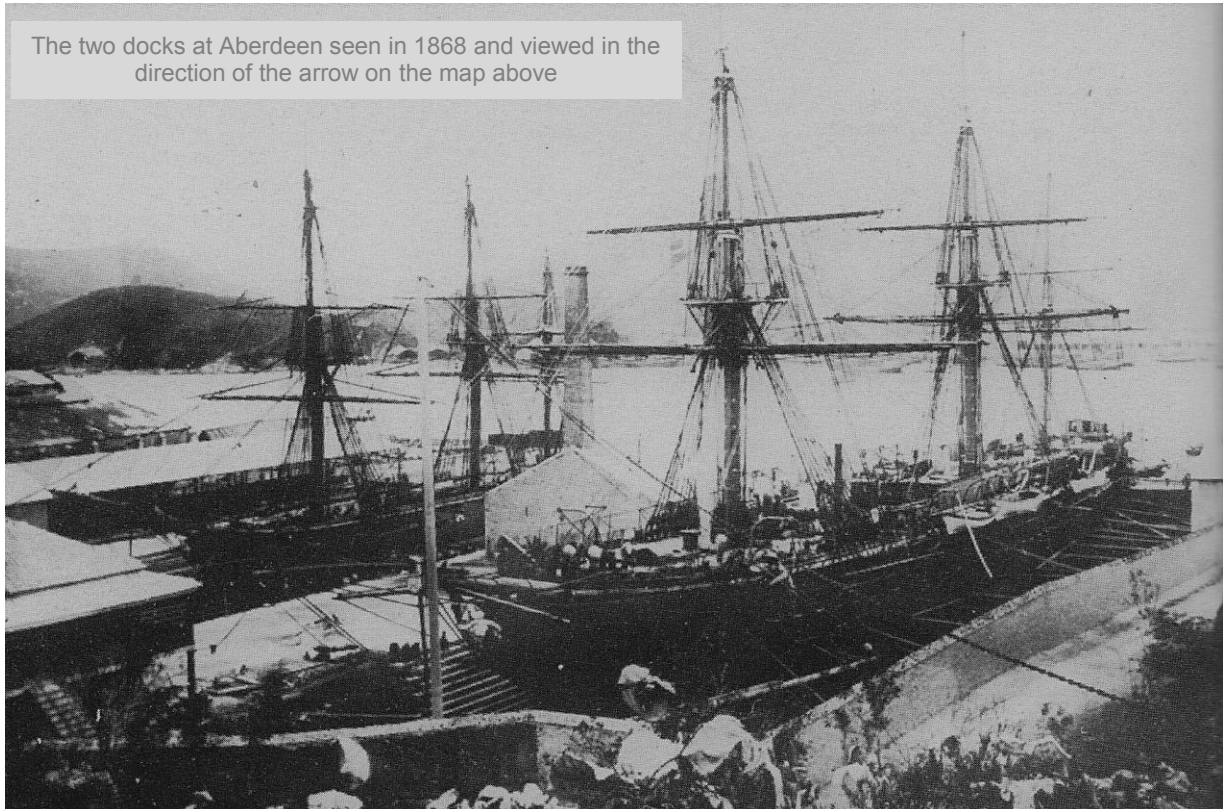
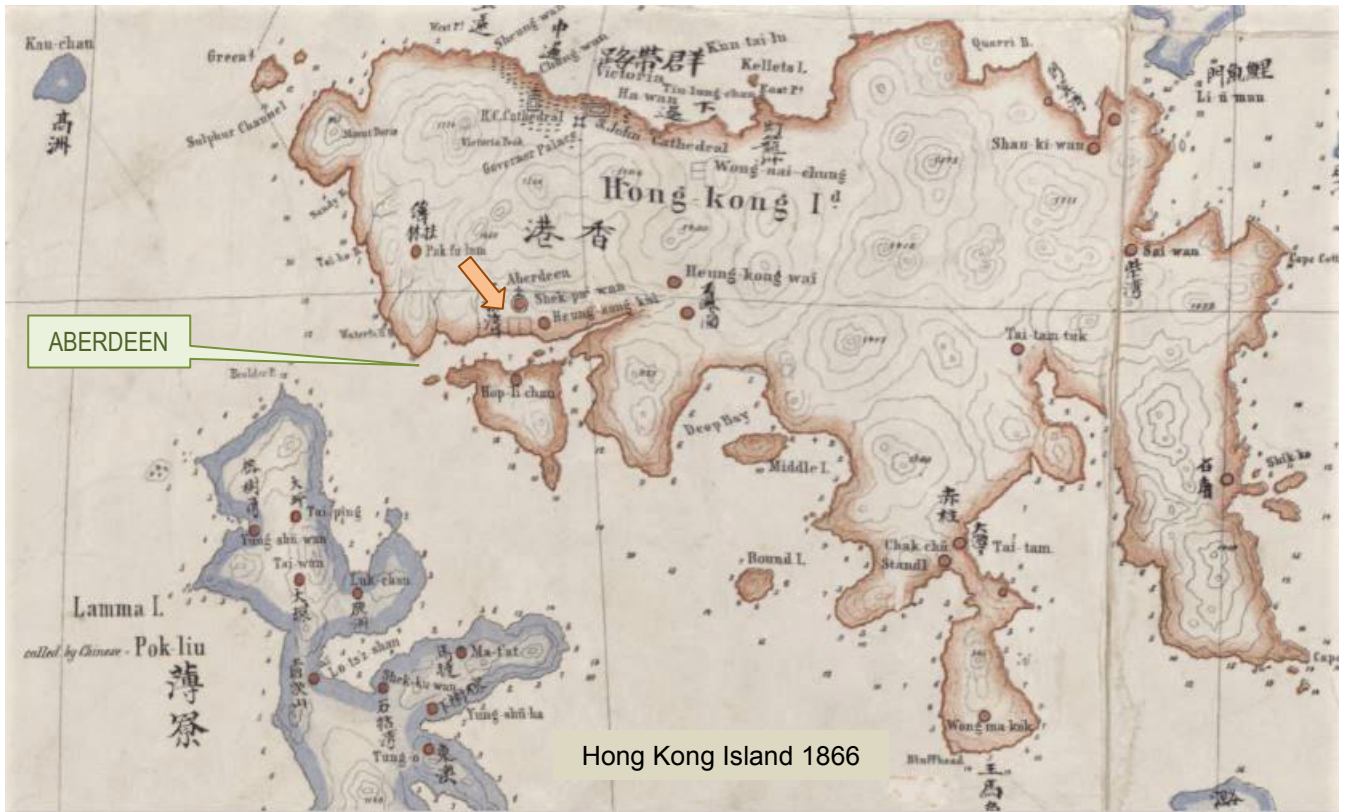
---

<sup>46</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* published 6 April 1872



and where the Admiral decreed that they should go, then that is where Henry was found. He was a number in a Pay Book – No. 173 Book 5 and as far as the Royal Navy was concerned he had a Rate and a Mess and he worked under the Articles of War. Beyond that they were not concerned.

Allowing for the extra day in February, as 1872 was a Leap Year, IRON DUKE moved around to the south of the island to a small fishing village the British had appropriately named Aberdeen. It was here that two docks had been built and it had been decided that IRON DUKE would benefit from a spell in dry dock. Both the map and the photograph are contemporary with the Duke's arrival.



IRONDUKE had been in the water for a little over six months since her last docking in Devonport's Steam Yard. In itself, that is not excessive, but she was a long way from home and had sailed half way around the world. Facilities at Aberdeen were not comparable with Devonport, but it was exceptional to find a recognisable dock, so far from home. As a sailing ship she would have been self sufficient with all the skills and spares readily available. As a steamer, that was a different matter, so it made sense to keep on top of the wear and tear on shafts, bearings, boilers, furnaces, pumps and all the other hard metal paraphernalia that went with a modern warship. Docking also allowed the exterior of the hull to be cleaned and painted. Always considered to be essential for a Flag Ship, it was also essential for speed through the water and to remove the drag that weed and barnacles created. It also allowed the propellers to be inspected together with the rudder, but it would have been a test of engineering skill if any of them needed more than superficial attention. Henry Trethewey would have been busy. He could have been aloft among the rigging when he was not on deck cleaning or painting. He may even have been one of those unfortunate seamen detailed to scrub the ship's bottom. After all, a lot of men would be needed for that job – and there would have been a lot of earthy jokes about the 'Duke's bottom' from those who avoided the unpleasant task.

She left the dock on **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April 1872** and the tiny paragraph in the newspaper<sup>47</sup> suggested that it was Rear-Admiral Shadwell's intention to leave Hong Kong on the **18<sup>th</sup> April** for northern China. Trawling newspapers looking for the movements of the ships on the China Station soon makes it clear that the role of a newspaper report had not reached Shadwell's understanding and independent observers and correspondents in the Far East were rare. One such rarity was the Hong Kong correspondent of the *London & China Telegraph* who wrote rather indignantly that,

The successful docking of the IRON DUKE in this remote dependency of the British Empire does not seem to have met with the attention that its importance publicly deserves. The fact that efficient dock accommodation exists at Hong Kong for ships of 3700 tons burthen, must be perfectly appreciated by all persons without argument, or further illustration.<sup>48</sup>

On Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April 1872 an impressive corvette headed out of Plymouth Sound under the command of a newly promoted Captain Henry Woollcombe. THALIA had commissioned in Devonport only one month previously, but she was now on passage for Malta with Supernumeries for the Mediterranean Fleet. Once they had been discharged, Woollcombe's orders were to continue to the China Station to relieve her sister corvette JUNO and she would have to travel a very long way to find her. She was stationed at Shanghai and Captain Baird was designated the Senior Naval Officer North China, but on the 4<sup>th</sup> March, whilst the IRON DUKE as in dock, JUNO's officers organised a 'sham fight' between her crew and a group of 'local volunteers.' The report does not explain who these 'volunteers' were, but this was a typical and useful exercise that broke the monotony and added a touch of 'enjoyment.' This is how it was described in the *Naval & Military Gazette*;

Landing from their boats on the banks of the Soochow Creek, the blue jackets drove off the volunteers who retired skirmishing, whilst their artillery retired to the Sinza Road firing at long range. All, however, was in vain. The blue jackets came on in a single column firing volleys as they advanced and in spite of every effort by the skirmishers, they advanced with fixed swords and met the volunteers drawn up to welcome them in an open field where there were sundry casks of beer and tables covered with bread, cheese and sandwiches. Around these the fight resumed as 300 thirsty men struggled to hold a glass under a tap. Soon, all were satisfied and the casks emptied and the order was given to fall-in for the return march with the men-o-war in front and the volunteers following the band at the rear. The Bund was reached at 5 p.m. and after firing a few volleys alternatively kneeling and standing, the men were dismissed. The affair was considered a complete success.

---

<sup>47</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* Saturday 01 June 1872

<sup>48</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* Saturday 08 June 1872



## Iron Duke goes North to Japan

---

When it was intimated that the IRON DUKE 'would go north' following her docking, the statement added that the SALAMIS, RINALDO and TEAZER would accompany her, whilst the ELK, ADVENTURE and OPPOSUM would remain in Hong Kong. On the **24<sup>th</sup> April** the Duke was in port at Amoy, opposite Formosa, with the RINALDO and on the 7<sup>th</sup> May she arrived at Shanghai, a day after the SALAMIS had arrived from Foochow. Of course, 'going north' meant only one place – JAPAN.

Japan had recently become the focus of international diplomatic and trade activity since it was forced from its self-imposed isolation in the middle of the nineteenth century. Japan's ruling Shoguns represented a weak, feudal system, unable to control all its own domains, much less defend the nation against a threat from the Western powers. This threat materialised in 1853 with the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and a squadron of the U.S. Navy (including a ship named *Plymouth*) demanding that Japan open commerce with the West. The result was a series of "unequal" treaties in which Japan was forced to concede special economic and legal privileges to the Western powers.

One such trade agreement was the 1858 Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and the Empire of Japan. The treaty opened the ports of Nagasaki, Kobe, Yokohama, Tokyo and Hakodate to trade, and granted extraterritoriality to foreigners. Several opponents of the Treaty were displeased with this apparent assault on Japanese sovereignty and plotted to have its negotiator assassinated in 1860. That assassination triggered a succession of events, starting in 1862 with an assault on the British people in Japan. Failure by the Satsuma clan to respond to British demands for compensation resulted in the Anglo-Satsuma War between the United Kingdom and the Satsuma Domain. The people's trust in the Tokugawa Shogunate plummeted and a fever swept Japan to restore rule to the emperor.

Yoshinobu Tokugawa, the 15th Shogun, implemented restoration of imperial rule in 1867 in the hope that his shogunate could be preserved and allowed to participate in the future government. However, a group of middle-ranking samurai were determined that Japan should not share China's fate and were convinced that modernisation depended on abolishing the centuries old feudal order. They overthrew the military government of the Shôgun in 1868 and set Japan peaceably on a course of radical modernisation intent on returning political power to the Imperial Court, which ultimately led to the Emperor moving his capital from Kyoto to Tokyo, then called Edo.

Reports of IRON DUKE'S movements are brief, but the first indication that her objective had been Japan appeared in the *Hampshire Advertiser*<sup>49</sup> when it said that, IRON DUKE, SALAMIS, dispatch vessel, RINALDO, screw steam sloop and TEAZER, composite gun vessel, were visiting different ports in Japan, but the first port of call on the western tip was Nagasaki which was reached on **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May**.

This was a very leisurely cruise taking in a vast area in very small bites. The pattern seemed to be one or two days on passage followed by a week or two in harbour, so it was not until the 10<sup>th</sup> June that 'the Duke' left Nagasaki for Hiogo. This place name no longer exists and this is quite common from the days of Empire when the British coined their own names or variations of a name which were often simply Anglicised phonetics. Hyogo is now a prefecture in which Kobe is the capital city and in 1872 this is probably where they were headed. It was **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July** by the time they reached Yokohama and by that time the SALAMIS is reported once again as IRON DUKE's consort.

The RINALDO had reached Yokohama on the 28<sup>th</sup> June, one week before the IRON DUKE and this may have been deliberate as RINALDO had a very special duty to perform. The Mikado (Emperor) had arrived to embark on his Japanese Flag Ship and the RINALDO was required to recognise his presence with a 21-gun salute. It occurs to me that if the RINALDO and the IRON DUKE were in company, then Shadwell had hung back and delegated it to RINALDO. I suspect a little game playing. These were the days when the British attitude to foreigners was supercilious at the very least. The

---

<sup>49</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* Saturday 20 July 1872

Mikado was a mere upstart when compared with Queen Victoria and her Royal lineage, but the RINALDO represented the Queen, as did any warship in a similar situation and they did observe the ritual diplomatic niceties. It was in the British interest to recognise and encourage this new Emperor.

On the same day that RINALDO reached Yokohama, the JUNO arrived in Nagasaki from Shanghai and her place was taken by the CADMUS arriving from Hong Kong on the 4<sup>th</sup> July. However, JUNO didn't stay and after a brief respite left for 'a cruise' a euphemism for a 'nose around under confidential orders,' whilst the CADMUS eventually joined the Admiral's squadron in Japan.

Two men were aboard the IRON DUKE in Devonport in March 1871 who were still on board in July 1872, because their destination was Yokohama. One was Assistant Surgeon Henry Macdonnell who was appointed to the Sick Quarters in Yokohama, implying that the Royal Navy had some form of permanent presence on shore there. The other was Edwin Wheeler M.D. who had been appointed to the British Legation. This is a good example of a different attitude towards the concept of time that existed in those days. Patience was not a virtue, it was a necessity.

And in the context of time I have to keep reminding myself, and consequently my readers, that this is meant to be a story about Henry Westaway Trethewey, Ordinary Seaman on the IRON DUKE. It is unfortunate that I have nothing to illuminate Henry's personal story, yet the query persists. Did he have any contact with home? My reader might recall that on an earlier page I discussed his new wife Jane and in July 1872 they had been parted for almost a year when she gave birth to a son on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July just when Henry was about to leave Yokohama. When the THALIA left Plymouth Sound on the 27<sup>th</sup> April with orders to relieve the JUNO, she was undoubtedly carrying mail for the China Fleet, but here we are in July – three months later – and they still have not met. If there had been a letter or two on board for Henry it could not have included the news of the birth of Charles as that was still to come, but it would have been some form of contact with home.

The one ship that is constantly mentioned as an escort to the IRON DUKE was the SALAMIS. As a dispatch vessel driven by large paddle wheels, she would have been fast with a shallow draft. She had the function of 'running errands' for the Flag Ship, but she had another role that would soon become apparent in this story.



SALAMIS believed to be pictured in Valetta. Her paddle box can be seen just in front of the after funnel



It had been reported that IRON DUKE would leave Yokohama 'at the end of the month' (July) and head for Hakodate on the northern island of Hokkaido. Situated on the extreme southerly tip of the island on the Strait of Tsugaru, it was the only port on that island which was open to foreign ships and it is quite clear that Rear-Admiral Shadwell wanted to see the entire extent of his responsibilities on the China Station. It was his intention to stay there for two weeks, but there is no detail published that

provides an insight into the real purpose of these visits. Reports of his movements are also very confusing as the Lloyd's List – normally the trade standard – suggests dates that seem untenable.

They report that the IRON DUKE arrived back in Yokohama from Hakodate on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August which was a sailing impossibility, as it is 2½ days sailing each way at 10 knots. However, taking the various reports together, the visit to Hakodate may have been shorter than originally thought as there is little doubt that the ships of the Admiral's squadron began to reassemble in Nagasaki by the 25<sup>th</sup> August. They would rest there until the first week in September and then disperse to various locations ordered by Rear-Admiral Shadwell and summarised in the *Hampshire Advertiser* – left.

**THE CHINA STATION.**

The following intelligence has been received from the above station :

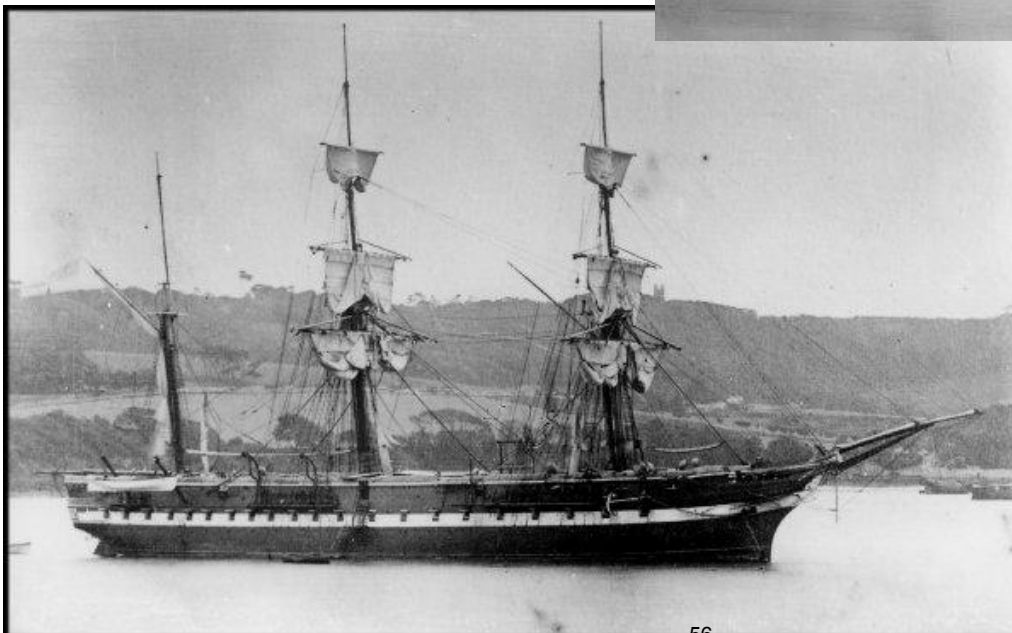
The **IRON DUKE** 14 guns, 800 horse-power, and 3774 tons, under the command of Capt. Arthur, and carrying the flag of Rear-Admiral Shadwell, C.B., F.R.S., Commander-in-Chief of the China station, returned to Nagasaki on the 25th August.

The **Cadmus**, screw corvette, Captain W. H. Whyte ; the **Thistle**, 4 guns, double screw composite gunvessel ; the **Juno**, 6, screw corvette, Captain J. K. E. Baird ; the **Salamis**, dispatch vessel, Lieut.-Com. S. S. Smith ; and the **Teazer**, 4, double screw composite gunvessel, Commander Hon. J. T. Fitzmaurice, also arrived at Nagasaki in company with the flagship. These vessels had orders to proceed to different parts of the China command in the first week in September, when the Admiral was to proceed to Chefoo, *en route* to Tientsin or Peking, at one of which places he would meet and confer with Her Majesty's Minister, Mr. Wade.

The **Sylvia**, 5, screw gunvessel, Commander St. John, had arrived in Nagasaki harbour, for the purpose of making a further survey of the harbour where the steamer **Oregonian** struck.

SYLVIA was launched from Woolwich in March 1866 as a CORMORANT Class gun vessel mounting 4 guns, but she was completed as a Survey Ship displacing 865 tons. She went directly to the China Station where she worked for 15 years on five commissions until 1880 returning only once to Sheerness. Commander Henry St. John was her CO for eight years 1869-77

This top quality photograph of JUNO drying her sails in Barn Pool off Mount Edgcumbe is very rare, but launched at Deptford in Nov 1867 she displaced 2083 tons and carried just 6 guns. She was in China from 1868-79.



THE CHINA STATION.

The following intelligence has been received from the above station :—

The Iron Duke, 14 guns, 800 horse-power, and 3774 tons, under the command of Capt. Arthur, has left Chefoo for Nagasaki.

The Cadmus, screw corvette, Captain W. H. Whyte, was at Shanghai.

The Thistle, 4 guns, double screw composite gunvessel, Commander Leet, was at Tientsin.

The Salamis, dispatch vessel, Lieut.-Com. S. S. Smith, with the flag of Vice-Admiral Shadwell, C.B., F.R.S., Commander-in-Chief of the China station, was at Shanghai on the 24th of October, having left Nagasaki on the 21st. The Admiral intended to leave Shanghai on the 21th for the ports on the Yangtse.

The Barossa, 17, screw corvette, Captain L. J. Moore, was ordered to return to England.

The Curlew, 4, double screw vessel, Commander Boyle, was at Tientsin.

THE CHINA STATION.

The following are the position of Her Majesty's ships on the above station according to the last advices :—

The Dwarf, 4, double screw gunboat, Com. Bax, was at Foochow.

The Elk, 4 guns, gunvessel, Commander J. B. Barnett, was at Amoy.

The Hornet, 2, double screw composite gunvessel, left Singapore on October 5th for Sarawak and Labuan.

The Iron Duke, 14 guns, 800 horse-power, and 3774 tons, under the command of Capt. Arthur, was to leave Nagasaki on October 26 for Woosung and Shanghai.

The Zebra, screw sloop, Com. Hon. A. D. S. Denison, left Singapore on October 28 for Malacca, Klang, and Langkat.

The Salamis, dispatch vessel, Lieut.-Com. S. S. Smith, with the flag of Vice-Admiral Shadwell, C.B., F.R.S., Commander-in-Chief of the China station, was visiting different ports.

The Midge, 4 double screw composite gunvessel, left Shanghai on October 24th for Hongkong, to pay off and prepare for recommission, and her officers and crew were to be transferred to the Adventure.

The Curlew, 4, double screw vessel, Commander Boyle, was at Tientsin.

The Juno, 6, screw corvette, Captain J. K. E. Baird, arrived at Nagasaki on October 17, twenty-two days from Hongkong.

*These two extracts from the Hampshire Advertiser are dated one week apart  
21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> December 1872*

As I have already said on more than one occasion, dates are erratic. My reader will notice that neither report is dated at its source and the dates in the text are two months separated from the date of their publication. For example THISTLE is known to have arrived in Tientsin on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, but the former report states that she is already there, which would be true if taken as read with no date shift. However, before the squadron disperses from Nagasaki this is an opportune moment to look at the place they were using to gather.

In this period, ten years or so from their opening to foreigners, the places were little more than ancient villages with nothing approaching the sophistication of London or Paris or any other western city. Land had to be set aside for the foreigners to build, both warehouses and private dwellings and the first house in Nagasaki was built in 1863 by Tomas Glover, an influential Scottish merchant and it is still there for tourists to see. However, the settlement was at the end of a long, SW facing inlet, rather than a sheltered bay and the photograph shows the scene in the 1880s when little would have changed from Henry's visits.





## Where Next? North China of course

The IRON DUKE's last declared intention was to leave Nagasaki early in September and proceed 769 nautical miles to Chefoo (now called Yantai with a population of nearly 7m) and her departure was confirmed by the Lloyd's List as **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September**. Chefoo was opened as an international port with a newly built harbour in August 1861 and was dominantly used by the British and Americans to export, tofu, walnuts, soybean oil, peas and silk in exchange for woollen and cotton goods together with – yes you've guessed it – opium. In the 1850s it was a tiny fishing village, but within ten years it had 16 foreign consulates and a number of western style public buildings tidily laid out on a grid street pattern. The IRON DUKE's visit to the Gulf of Pecheli, where the Great Wall of China met the sea was, as it was in every port, a reassuring, even comforting presence to the traders and merchantmen, as pirates had been a fact of life on these coasts for centuries. Originally they were Japanese preying on the Chinese, but now they were Chinese seeking out the weak foreigners.

Henry Shadwell did walk the streets of Peking, but it is not known from where or how he made that journey. What is known is that the IRON DUKE returned to Nagasaki from Chefoo by early October.

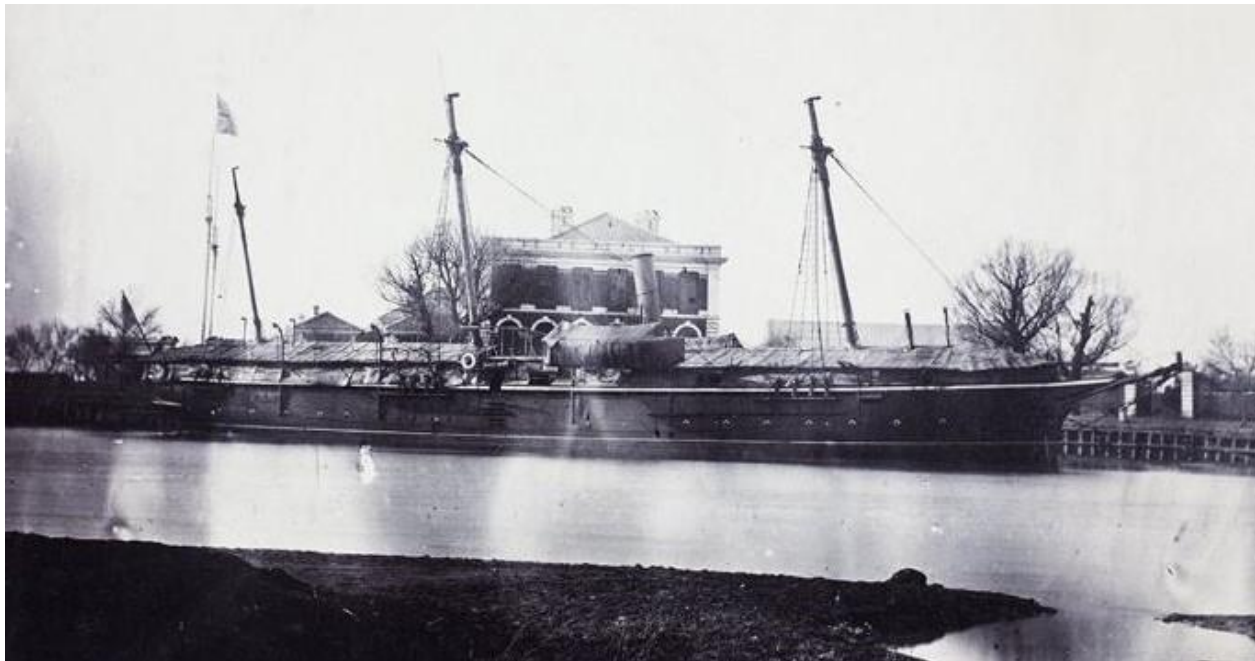


The view from Temple Hill towards Settlement Hill in the middle distance in 1900. The anchorage is on the left.

Before I move away from this area, it is worth noting that Tientsin (now known as Tianjin) although only at latitude 39°N regularly experienced quite hard winters with a daily temperature that stayed continuously below 0°C for almost three months, whilst the summers were hot and humid. In October 1872 this was the base port for the THISTLE whose task it was to cruise the general area of the map on the previous page, but the port's history was short and summarised as follows;

In 1856, Chinese soldiers boarded *The Arrow*, a Chinese-owned ship registered in Hong Kong flying the British flag and suspected of piracy, smuggling, and of being engaged in the opium trade. They captured 12 men and imprisoned them. In response, the British and French sent gunboats under the command of Admiral Sir Michael Seymour to capture the Taku forts near Tianjin in May 1858. At the end of the first part of the Second Opium War in June of the same year, the British and French prevailed, and the Treaty of Tientsin was signed, which opened Tientsin (Tianjin) to foreign trade. The treaties were ratified by the Emperor in 1860, and Tianjin was formally opened to Great Britain and France, and thus to the outside world.

The CURLEW, together with THISTLE, was known to be in Tientsin in October and it has been suggested that the THISTLE was laid up there during the winter months. This suggestion is supported by a contemporary photograph of her following her arrival on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 1872<sup>50</sup>. She has brought down and stowed her yards, top masts and rigging and her decks have been covered against any possible snow and she would stay in that condition until the following March. Being in commission, she still flies her Ensign at the Mizzen top, but one wonders how the crew was occupied.



During this period, which would have included the 21<sup>st</sup> September to the 1<sup>st</sup> October, no less than 20 junior officers joined the IRON DUKE in dribs and drabs. It is not clear from her movements where these men might have come from, almost on a daily basis, but 14 of them were marked *'for disposal'* so they would be taking passage back to Hong Kong and to the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE as Receiving Ship when their next move would be decided.

The IRON DUKE rested in Nagasaki for most of October and during that time the JUNO arrived on the 17<sup>th</sup> October after having made a passage from Hong Kong in 22 days.<sup>51</sup> The inference in the report was that this was a fast passage, but it was 1411 nautical miles and at 6 knots that should have been achievable in 10 days. On **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October 1872** the IRON DUKE hauled in her anchor and all hands went aloft to set sail for a return to Shanghai – 521 nautical miles distant.

<sup>50</sup> Bristol University Collection of photographs of Old China

<sup>51</sup> *Army & Navy Gazette* Saturday 14 December 1872



## Shadwell moves his Flag to Salamis

---

No time was wasted when once the IRON DUKE had laid her course for Shanghai on that October day. At 6 knots it was less than four days at sea and she would have reached the vicinity by the 30<sup>th</sup> October. Her destination was named as Woosung rather than Shanghai and although that is now a suburb of that great city, in 1872 it was a port in its own right 14 miles along the Wusong River. Its fort was the site of a British victory in the First Opium War in 1842 and its importance as a departure port for the burgeoning steamers led to the first telegraph station being established there. So, the reasons behind the choices that were being made on IRON DUKE's seemingly interminable itinerary can soon be detected.

SALAMIS had left Nagasaki on the 21<sup>st</sup> October, before the others and had reached the Chinese port three days later on the 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>52</sup> It was here that Rear-Admiral Shadwell struck his flag in the IRON DUKE and moved it across to the SALAMIS giving Lt. Cdr. Smith the privilege of his company as they set off to navigate the awesome Yangtze River. The paddle propulsion of this odd-ball showed off its advantage to great effect in the swirling currents of the meandering giant, possibly swollen by the rains of the typhoon season which had not yet passed.

Nanjing, as it is now known, was about 200 miles inland, but its distance along the river has defied discovery as the water borne mode of travel is now too slow to be used. The *Hampshire Advertiser* reported the Admiral's arrival as the 1<sup>st</sup> November and he proposed moving on to Hankow and Kinkiang two days later. Nanking, to use its Anglicised name, was termed the 'capital of the south' and Imperial Navy war junks frequented the river, but both the British and the Americans not only enjoyed a free rite of passage, but maintained a small fleet of gun vessels of their own to patrol the river. Nanking and Kinkiang boasted British Consuls, so these personages were inevitably on Shadwell's list of essential calls.

When SALAMIS moved on again, it was not to return to Shanghai, but to travel a further 600 miles inland to Hankow, a town that has been somewhat elusive. It seems likely that Hankow was one of three adjacent towns that were eventually merged to become the huge industrial city of Wuhan and now infamous as the epi-centre of the 2020 pandemic of Covid-19. There were fevers enough that were little understood in the 1870s and Europeans fared particularly badly in the humid, torrid conditions and Shadwell's own fleet took its toll as we shall see.

This foray of almost 1000 miles inland seemed to occupy most of November. In spite of the suggestion that SALAMIS would be back in Shanghai by the 15<sup>th</sup> November, it was the 6<sup>th</sup> December before there was a firm report of her in the port. Also noted were JUNO, RINALDO and CADMUS, together with gun vessels CURLEW and DOVE, but there is no mention of the IRON DUKE.<sup>53</sup>

On the 10<sup>th</sup> December, under the command of the Hon. Algernon Littleton, the SALAMIS thrashed out of Shanghai and set course for Amoy, 606 nautical miles to the south as commentators in the press began to note that she had travelled 10,000 miles in five months.<sup>54</sup> It is also curious to note that her skipper had changed to someone with a title, but this may be in error. The very reliable *Hampshire Advertiser* had predicted many weeks previously that the SALAMIS was not expected in Amoy (now known as Xiamen) for the Admiral's return to his Flag Ship, until the 20<sup>th</sup> December and that is now working through in practise.<sup>55</sup>

Christmas was now approaching and it was well known in this new model navy, that the ordinary crew man could become very sentimental on occasion, especially when they were a very long way from home on the China Station. The best place to celebrate the festival was at sea, when the watches and routines of the ship treated everyone the same. The cooks would do something special for the dinner plate and there would be plenty of music, singing and dancing. Even a concert was possible. It depended entirely on the talents of the men and in a crew of almost 500 there would be plenty of scope for talent to burst forth.

---

<sup>52</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* Saturday 21 December 1872

<sup>53</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* Saturday 1 February 1873

<sup>54</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* Saturday 8 February 1873

<sup>55</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* Wednesday 15 January 1873

## HONG KONG 1873 - Planned and Unplanned Changes

In this modern era, at the time of writing, New Year is often considered as a time of tidying up the past and laying the foundation for a new beginning. It seemed to be very much the same in Hong Kong in January 1873.

IRON DUKE arrived back in the roads of Victoria, between the island and Kowloon, on the mainland on **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> January 1873** to the news that the gun vessel BANTERER had been sold just two days before.<sup>56</sup> She was no great loss to the Navy. Built in 1855 she had been in the Far East since late 1857 and her wooden hull had now made her obsolete. She had even been sunk by the batteries of the Peiho Forts in 1859, but had later been salvaged, so she had served her purpose and her country and she was now someone else's problem.

However, there was a little more news that was brought by the Commodore on his visit to the Flag Ship that Rear Admiral Shadwell and Captain Arthur were very saddened to hear. Captain Lambert, IRON DUKE's former commander had died on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1872 at his home in Wiltshire at the indecent age of 47. He had command of IRON DUKE for eleven months from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1870 and on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1872 he had 'paid off' the CALEDONIA and he was well liked on all his commands. Doctors pronounced that he had died of 'gout of the stomach' revealing how little understanding the medical profession still had of the conditions they were called upon to treat.<sup>57</sup>

In fact illness and even death was not far from the IRON DUKE and was no respecter of rank or position. On the 19<sup>th</sup> January Lieutenant Edward Abbs of the IRON DUKE died aged 28. The ship's surgeon attributed it to an 'abscess on the brain,' but he was expected to say something to enter into the official documentation. There would be no thought of sending his body home. He would be buried in a military cemetery in Hong Kong, possibly the euphemistic Happy Valley that was inevitably filling with 'residents' who would never see home again.

Edward Cooper Abbs had been born in the summer of 1844 in Cleadon, Northumberland, but it was almost twelve months before he was baptised in the church of St. Nicholas, Newcastle-on-Tyne on the 25 July 1845. In 1861 he was a 17-year-old Midshipman on the VICTOR EMMANUEL, a ship destined to replace the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE in Hong Kong. One of five permanent lieutenants, Edward Abbs was the IRON DUKE's Gunnery Officer having come directly from 15 months at EXCELLENT, the Gunnery School in Portsmouth, followed by 11 months on CAMBRIDGE, the Gunnery School in Devonport. It was a promising career sadly curtailed, but his demise had created a vacancy. It was filled by the senior Sub-Lieutenant Gerald W. Russell, who presumably, had some knowledge of gunnery.<sup>58</sup>

The small world on board the Flag Ship on a foreign station was a microcosm of the world outside, except that there were no women. The Admiral had complete sway over the existence of every single individual under his command. In this situation, he had total authority over promotions and although Gerald Russell would be an Acting Lieutenant on paper, on board ship he was now Lt. Russell. He could look forward to more pay and confirmation in the rank would eventually come from the Admiralty. But Rear Admiral Shadwell had a much larger problem than one lieutenant.

Captain Arthur's second in command was Commander Hardy McHardy and he was ill, very ill and Shadwell had taken medical advice and decided to send him home. He left Hong Kong on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January. But that wasn't the end of the problem. Shadwell had two gun vessel commanders in Shanghai suffering from a fever that they could not shake off. Commander Noel Osborne of the HORNET and Commander Waird Boyle of the CURLEW were both invalided from their commands. So, Shadwell had not one, but three commanders to replace and that was no easy task. There would be so many officers in the command who would be jealously eyeing those vacancies, that the Admiral's

---

<sup>56</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 12 March 1873

<sup>57</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* 23 November 1872

<sup>58</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* 15 March 1873



actions would be scrutinised and gossiped about in any number of messes around the fleet.<sup>59</sup> His new commander was a straightforward move sideways, as Commander Wodehouse became Captain Arthur's second in command, but the senior Lieutenant on the IRON DUKE, Henry Digby, had the pleasure of being elevated to his first command as the CURLEW became his ship as Acting-Commander Digby.<sup>60</sup>

So, it can be seen that no one is indispensable. Men are easily replaced as the THALIA further demonstrated when she arrived in Hong Kong on the 31<sup>st</sup> January with entire new crews for both RINGDOVE and MIDGE, but where had she been in the eight months since leaving Plymouth? With their new crews safely on board, both gun vessels were re-commissioned on the 1<sup>st</sup> February for more 'action' on the China Station.

JUNO, the ship THALIA was to relieve, was in Japan, so Shadwell ordered her back to Hong Kong to pick up the old crews from the two gun vessels and return them to England. They were going home! BAROSSA was already on her way having left Hong Kong on the 4<sup>th</sup> February, but it would not be a speedy passage for the invalids and 'time-expired' men she was carrying. She was going around the Cape of Good Hope to Simon's Town and then calling at Ascension before laying a course for the Bishop Rock Light and Land's End. Yet, Shadwell had not finished with his permutations. RINALDO and TEAZER were in need of a docking and they had been ordered to stay in Japan and head for Yokoska where there were docks available. CADMUS, on the other hand, was sent instructions to leave Shanghai and cruise in the vicinity of Ningpo.<sup>61</sup> I wonder why?

Yokoska in Japan is incorrect. It should read Yokosuka and that is typical of the reporting of the day. Like most coastal settlements it had begun life as a fishing village and was on the western coast of Tokyo Bay about 15 miles south of Yokohama. In 1865 it was considered to be an ideal location to establish a shipyard, which by 1884 had become a major installation, but for the moment IRON DUKE would have to make do with the facilities available in Hong Kong where she was on **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February** undergoing her own refit.

## Promotion – a Medal and a Fresh Water Treatment

In the days of sail when the merchant fleet was beyond measure, anyone could walk up the gangway of a ship in port and ask for a berth on board. In theory he should have had a 'Seaman's Ticket' from the Board of Trade, but that wasn't always adhered to. If he was over 18 and could convince the bo'sun that 'he knew the ropes'<sup>62</sup> he had himself a job as an Ordinary Seaman. Such an event was as common as the day is long. Many prospective seamen just wanted to move from A to B and wanted to be paid for it. Once the ship got under way it was a different matter. Everyone in the crew would soon know whether he was a seaman or a landsman, the title that was widely, but unofficially used in this period. So where did this leave Ordinary Seaman Henry Trethewey? In a sense the Royal Navy was little different from the Merchant Navy. Anyone could join at any age. IF he was over 18 years old, he joined as an Ordinary Seaman and Henry Trethewey was an Ordinary Seaman because he was over 18. Now was the time to prove what the Royal Navy had taught him. He had gained 18 months sailing experience on the IRON DUKE to add to his time on the Training Ship IMPLACABLE. His ship was in harbour and the Boatswain was busy in a different way. He was not only sorting out defects and problems with the rigging and sails, but he was also assessing crew members, like Henry, for their performance and Henry had not let himself down. He knew the job and he did it well and the Bo'sun knew that too. After a few standard questions Henry was recommended for promotion to Able Seaman. With his Captain's approval endorsed by the Rear Admiral, the Paymaster, Mr. Alexander Thompson, would be instructed to alter the Pay Book to allow for Henry's increase in pay which took effect from **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 1873**. Henry would always remember Hong Kong for that single, simple reason. He now had 1/7d per day and 4d per day more than he had in January.

<sup>59</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 19 March 1873

<sup>60</sup> *Broad Arrow* 29 March 1873

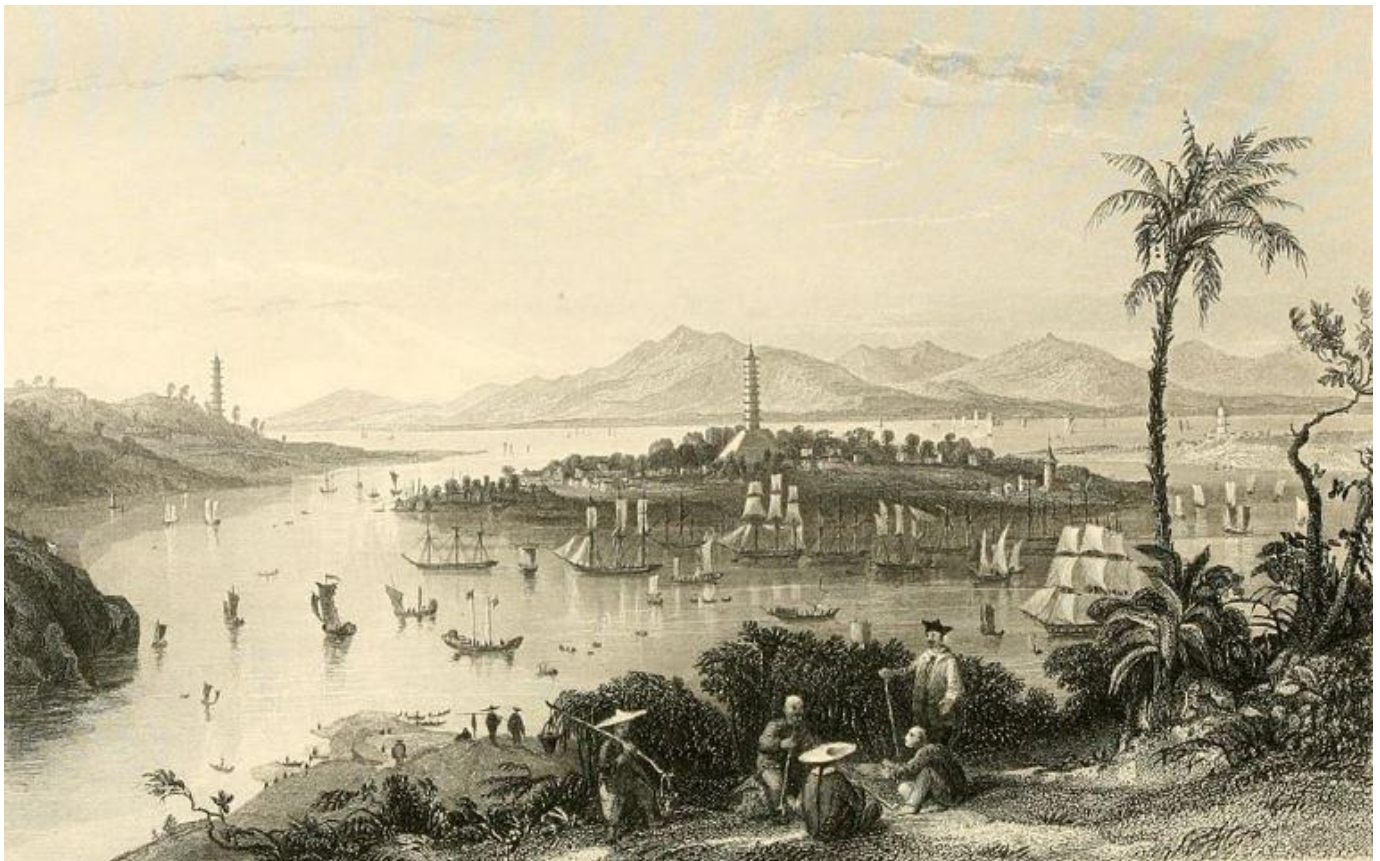
<sup>61</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* 22 March 1873

<sup>62</sup> This is the origin of the well used phrase.

The IRON DUKE was still in the Victoria Roads on **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February** as Shadwell was invited to make a formal inspection of the Chinese corvette AN LAN. She was only two years old and was quite large at 1258 tons and she was one of six vessels of the Fu Po class built in China, but she was sunk in an accident in the following year.<sup>63</sup> It is not recorded what Shadwell thought of her, but the Chinese crew manned the yards and fired a 3-gun salute when he left.<sup>64</sup>

During this lull in the Flag Ship's activity, Rear-Admiral Shadwell was contemplating a visit to Canton and that would entail the use of the paddler SALAMIS, but it was also suggested that the hull of the IRON DUKE would benefit from a spell moored in the freshwater of the Pearl River at a place named Whampoa Island. Inevitably this place featured in the First Opium War and as an island on the approaches to Canton, it was heavily fortified. There was a battle for it on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1841 for which the British claimed the victory, but it was now a mooring for those ships too large to reach the proximity of Canton (now called Guangzhou).

The concept of mooring in freshwater is one that I have not seen mentioned before, but I can understand the logic as the ship's officers and engineers worked to preserve the integrity of the hull. It has to be remembered that IRON DUKE was barely three years old and the principal on which she was built was still relatively new, so their experience with iron-clads remained somewhat basic. I would be very surprised if there was not a considered amount of experimentation taking place.



It is difficult to know the accuracy of this very attractive, but stylised etching of the island as there was little photography in the 1870s and modern images show a drastically changed environment. It is also difficult to elucidate the timings of the two separate and very different visits to Whampoa and Canton, but the information published in the *Broad Arrow* on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May read as follows;

---

<sup>63</sup> Wikipedia – List of Ships of the Chinese Navy

<sup>64</sup> *The Broad Arrow* 19 April 1873



His Excellency Sir Arthur Kennedy, Rear Admiral Shadwell and Commodore Shortt visited Canton on the SALAMIS, whilst the IRON DUKE and OPOSSUM proceeded to Whampoa to lie up in fresh water with the latter acting as tender. His Excellency received a visit from the Viceroy during his stay in Canton.

This was a very high level diplomatic mission as Sir Arthur Kennedy (right) was the seventh Governor of Hong Kong having taken office in the previous year on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1872, whilst the Viceroy was the Chinese regional governor whose predecessor attempted to put a stop to the opium trade. So, in all probability, that trade was one of the sensitive subjects on the agenda.



This stylised representation of Canton's waterfront can be dated from about 1850 simply because the black-hulled paddle steamer in the centre foreground belonged to the Hong Kong Steam Packet Company, but there would have been very little change between this panorama and the visit of Rear-Admiral Shadwell.

The small paragraph in the *Broad Arrow* concluded with an event which is important to the story without giving any indication of when it took place, but because it is a part of the report embracing the visits to Canton and Whampoa, it must have occurred in conjunction with them. It said that the Royal Humane Society's medal for gallantry had been conferred on Alfred Freeman, a seaman on the IRON DUKE, who had saved the life of a shipmate whilst the IRON DUKE was in Amoy in April of last year (1872). Admiral Shadwell presented the medal in front of the entire ship's company who had assembled to witness the occasion and Shadwell expressed the pleasure it had given him to present the medal. Unfortunately no additional supporting information has been found.

All of the activities described in the foregoing text must have occurred sometime between late February and the end of March until it was announced that the IRON DUKE with the flag of Rear-Admiral Shadwell would leave Hong Kong for Amoy on **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April 1873**. However, before that occurred I want to highlight one or two other movements that are worth recording in this story.

## Health and Hospital Ships

---

When the THALIA arrived in Hong Kong on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 1873 a point was made in some detail about the health of her crew. Today we might dismiss it as simply ‘good PR,’ but this was in a private letter from an officer which eventually reached the press. It did no harm as the 1870s was a time in which the Royal Navy was slowly and steadily improving ALL aspects of life in the service. The letter said that on arrival in Hong Kong they had only 20 men on the sick list from a community of 500 souls. They had been 100 days on salt provisions and 80°F in the tropics. On the day after arriving, 7 of the 20 men were sent to hospital, 6 remained on the sick list for a few further days and the remaining 7 were returned to duty. The seven men who went to hospital returned to duty within a fortnight.<sup>65</sup> THALIA was a ship which will feature significantly in this story at a later date, so her movements will be tracked in parallel with those of the IRON DUKE.

During 1872 any reference to a hospital usually referred to PRINCESS CHARLOTTE, which could not have been adequate or suitable for that function. However, there was a hospital ship in the harbour called MELVILLE which had been a proud 74-gun third-rate ship-of-the-line launched in 1817. Despite never featuring in the reports, there were no less than THREE ships named in the New Year as hospital ships that included the MELVILLE. The other two were the FLAMER and MEANNEE. The former, FLAMER was no more than a hulked, small gunboat of 1856, but the MEEANEE (correct spelling) was a little different. She had been built in 1848 as an 80-gun Second-Rate and named MADRAS. In 1857 she was converted to a screw driven ship and reduced to 60 guns, but ten years later she was lent to the War Department as a Hospital Ship. So although these ships began to appear in the notices of ships in port in 1873, they had, in fact, been there all the time. It is unlikely that the Navy used the MEEANEE as that was dedicated to the garrisons of soldiers in the vicinity. MELVILLE was the Navy’s ship, but sometime during the year she would be sold.

When the seven men from the THALIA ‘went to hospital’ they must have been transferred to the MELVILLE and in so doing the men would have been removed from THALIA’s Pay Book and entered into that of the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE. It is possible that MELVILLE had her own Pay Book, but without access to the Navy List I would assume that she did not. The Pay Book was a detailed record of who was receiving victuals (or board and lodging) and the accuracy of this seemingly petty bureaucracy was very important. Every ship had to account for its expenditure, but every man had to be accounted for every day in order to receive his pay, which was paid by the day.

## The Admiral and the Iron Duke Part Company

---

It is **Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April** and the IRON DUKE is at anchor in Amoy. It is the second time that the Admiral had arranged a rendezvous here with the SALAMIS. She arrived with the gunboat ELK the next day from Swatow (now Shantou between Hong Kong and Amoy to the south), but not before there had been another coincidental drama involving the gunboat DWARF. She had just arrived in the harbour on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> and her Assistant Engineer Mr. Broad must have come on deck for a breath of fresh air when he accidentally fell overboard, but he could not swim. Fortunately the incident was seen by Sub. Lt. Daniels and Mr. Worthington, the Gunner and they both dived in to assist Mr. Broad and succeeded in saving his life.

As the DWARF had been assigned to escort the SALAMIS with the Admiral, he went on board the DWARF on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April to conduct an inspection which he found much to his satisfaction, but he also took the opportunity to publicly praise the officers for their instant reaction in saving life and it would be no surprise to learn of more medals awarded by the RHS for saving life at Amoy.

It was Rear Admiral Shadwell’s intention to take the SALAMIS to the northern part of Formosa, Ningpo and Shanghai, after which the DWARF would return to Hong Kong for repairs, but the mission could not begin until the RINGDOVE had arrived with the Admiral’s mail from Hong Kong (which she left on the 14<sup>th</sup>).<sup>66</sup> Following his departure, the IRON DUKE would leave for Nagasaki.

---

<sup>65</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 26 July 1873

<sup>66</sup> *Western Morning News* 3 June 1873



## JAPAN? We Went There Last Year !

While Amoy was the focus of attention because of the presence of the C-in-C, the THALIA had slipped away from Hong Kong on the 28<sup>th</sup> March heading in the opposite direction. She had a rendezvous with ZEBRA at Singapore, so that she could relieve her of her duty in the Malacca Strait.<sup>67</sup>

With Admiral Shadwell safely on board the SALAMIS with his own schedule of visits, IRON DUKE left Amoy and made directly for Nagasaki. It was 1076 nautical miles and at 6 knots that was 7½ days and nights at sea. That did not bother Captain Arthur or his Boatswain as a good spell at sea would keep the men fit and happy and Able Seaman Henry Trethewey could put his new found responsibility to the test. The date of her arrival has not been found, but after a few days in port she sailed on another 844 nautical miles to Yokohama which she reached on **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May 1873** after a 6-day voyage,<sup>68</sup> but did she have a reason for being there? Yes. She had an appointment with the shipyard at Yokosuka to be docked. Perhaps the episode in March, lying in the fresh water of the Pearl River had some bearing on their problem.

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May was Queen Victoria's birthday and to the Admiral's shame it was announced that for the first time in ten years there was not a Royal Navy ship lying in Nagasaki Harbour to respond to the salute by the Japanese batteries in her honour<sup>69</sup> – but it was also the day on which Rear Admiral Charles Shadwell was advanced from a CB to KCB – He had been KNIGHTED.

When Yokohama opened up as a Treaty Port it attracted Western photographers to try to create a market for images of a way of life few people had ever seen, but within ten years the table was turned as Japanese artists began depicting their perspective of the Western invasion of their country. Just as the Americans and all the other traders could not stomach Japanese food, the Japanese could



not grasp western houses with the size of their rooms and the furniture that filled them. The best of the Japanese artists are to be found in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, but four are displayed here, beginning with the location of Yokohama as mapped in 1907 followed by a portrayal of the new town that was built for the western merchants when they thought they would be occupying Kanagawa the original treaty port. This was the Japanese way of monitoring the activities of the westerners.

<sup>67</sup> Hampshire Advertiser 4 June 1873

<sup>68</sup> Hampshire Advertiser 19 July 1873

<sup>69</sup> Hampshire Advertiser 30 July 1873





Above is the view of the harbour illustrated by a Japanese artist named Sadahide and portrays the frantic activity of a newly arrived ship. He draws from personal observation and the illustration right is simply called – SUNDAY. The picture below is called –The FUTURE. It was drawn in 1874 and depicts the first railway line in Japan from Tokyo to Yokohama.





## Drama at Shanghai

---

In the early hours of the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1873 an American steamer encountered a lifeboat containing nine men. They were the boatswain and eight crew members of a ship called the *Drummond Castle* which had been lost on a small islet in the Chusan group. When news reached Admiral Shadwell in Shanghai he ordered SALAMIS to go and search for the remainder of the crew and she left early on the following morning (1<sup>st</sup> June). She located the wreck at about 4 p.m. on the same day and embarked on a detailed search of the neighbouring islands looking for any sign of the missing men. Towards dusk a fishing boat came alongside carrying the captain and four other crewmen and Captain McRitchie was able to report that the remainder of his crew was in a village about six miles distant. SALAMIS went to this village at daylight the following morning and found another 18 crewmen and one child, but there were a number still missing from a third lifeboat. The officers of the SALAMIS learnt that the villagers had been exceptionally kind to the shipwrecked men having fed them and given them as much shelter as they thought possible. It was then decided that SALAMIS should steam around to the principal village in search of more information about the missing boat, but the information they gleaned concerned only the crew they had already found. So, the SALAMIS set off to return to Shanghai.

On their way back they encountered a junk with a boat in tow that had 11 men in it from the wrecked ship and together with all those already found the total was now 44 souls – the entire crew and passengers of the *Drummond Castle* – No one had been lost.<sup>70</sup>

The successful conclusion to this unexpected event meant that Rear-Admiral Shadwell could resume his itinerary with his flag in SALAMIS. She left Shanghai for Yokohama on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June intending to go by way of Kagosima and ports on the south coast. THISTLE followed her on Saturday, heading for Yokohama via Kobe, whilst CADMUS followed THISTLE at a discreet distance by leaving on the following Monday.<sup>71</sup>

So with the Admiral's departure, this small gathering dispersed leaving RINALDO to hoist her flag as 'Senior Officer Shanghai' and to carry out one small mission on Shadwell's behalf. She returned to the village where the main group of the crew had been sheltered carrying a gift of \$100 dollars for the head-man and a suitably inscribed and decorated plaque to hang in the temple where the men had been accommodated. Mr. Brendan from Her Britannic Majesty's' Consulate in Shanghai presented the money 'in gratitude to the villagers of Chusan for their kindly reception and hospitable treatment when their ship *Drummond Castle* was lost upon this island.' The idea of presenting the tablet was described as a 'happy one' affording a lasting memorial to the kindness shown by the villagers.

After such a pleasant mission, spirits were depressed on RINALDO's return to Shanghai. News was brought that the body of Charles West, the Second Captain of the *Maintop* had been found after he had fallen from the mast on the 12<sup>th</sup> June. He was buried in the Pootung Cemetery<sup>72</sup> after a number of his messmates followed his coffin to the grave.<sup>73</sup>



RINALDO 1860 to 1884

---

<sup>70</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph* Wednesday 30 July 1873

<sup>71</sup> *Broad Arrow* Saturday 9 August 1873

<sup>72</sup> 1859 to 1904 it once contained 1783 graves of foreign seamen – now part of Pudong Park

<sup>73</sup> *Broad Arrow* Saturday 23 August 1873

RINALDO was one of eight wooden, single screw sloops of the CAMELION (sic) Class that was originally intended to be sixteen strong. The eight that survived the cancellations were built in four dockyards, Portsmouth, Chatham, Pembroke Dock and Deptford and two were built in each yard. One of RINALDO's sister ships was the ZEBRA, recently relieved from her duty in the Malacca Strait by the THALIA. RINALDO had been built in Portsmouth and launched on the 26 March 1860, whilst the ZEBRA was Deptford built and launched on the 13 November 1860. Yet they completed just one month apart in May and June 1861 with ZEBRA coming first. In 1873 the whole class was on borrowed time and although RINALDO survived until 1884, ZEBRA was sold for breaking up in August 1873. She had featured only once among the ships of the China Station during 1873, when she returned to Singapore early in the year, but where she was when she was sold is unknown.

## Shadwell Returns to his Flagship

It had been over a month since Rear-Admiral Shadwell and the IRON DUKE had parted company. A ship in dry dock is no place to live even when it is the only place that can be called 'home.' A little of the Admiral's story has been reported, but nothing has been said concerning the work that was done to the Flagship. All that was now at end and the IRON DUKE was ready to leave Yokohama with the Admiral comfortably settled on board on **Monday 7<sup>th</sup> July 1873** and her next port of call was Nagasaki with the gun vessel THISTLE acting as escort.

As the commission evolved into its second year, it seems to the casual observer that it is entirely random – where shall we go next? Sort of thing – and it might have seemed like that to Able Seaman Henry Trethewey. What we cannot know are the diplomatic and political instructions that Shadwell was following and the naval intelligence he was receiving from the commanders of his gun vessels. These unsung and ostensibly insignificant vessels were deployed all around the Treaty Ports with sometimes two of them at some of the larger locations and they were the eyes and ears of Her Britannic Majesty in the Far East. Also present in most of the Treaty Ports were staff from the various British Consulates and they were in touch with the merchant traders and the masters of the hundreds of merchant vessels plying the area. The consular representatives became the middlemen, between the merchant and the Chinese or the ship master and the Royal Navy. Shadwell was at the centre of a great data gathering enterprise that did not even have the benefit of a voice link, everything went by mail, but his schedule was largely derived from it. It was not a case of where shall I go next, but where MUST I go next?

Therefore it is perhaps relevant at this point to look at the gun vessels in the fleet in the summer of 1873 together with their commanders. There had been some changes since January 1872, mainly due to the sale of the smaller and older ALBACORES and the DOVE and the LEVEN would join them later in 1873 (LEVEN was a slightly larger ALGERINE Class vessel at 300 tons and sold for breaking up).

DOVE	These 4 ALBACORES were not operational
OPOSSUM	The first two were at Hong Kong
STARLING	
WOODCOCK	
LEVEN	Lt. Cdr. A.W. Whish
AVON	Cdr. J. Patterson BEACON Class
DWARF	Cdr. Bax
ELK	Cdr. J.B. Barnett
FROLIC	Cdr. Buckie
HORNET	Cdr. O.S. Cameron
MIDGE	Cdr. T.F.G. Grant
MOSQUITO	Lt. Cdr. W.H. Bond
TEAZER	Cdr The Hon. J.T. Fitzmaurice
THISTLE	Cdr. H.K. Leet
CURLEW	Cdr. E.J. Church
RINGDOVE	Cdr. Robert Pitman

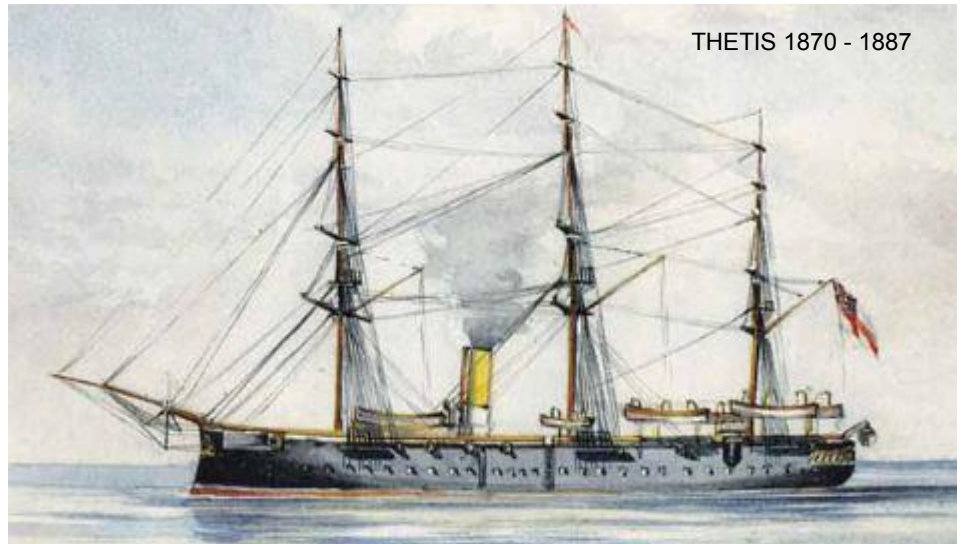


ELK



The LEVEN, like many of the other gun vessels, had been in China or the East Indies since soon after her completion in 1857. These vessels were rarely 'sent home' as the Admiralty preferred the practise of sending crews out to them. It might also be noticed that the commander of the MIDGE is no longer the temporary Acting Commander Digby promoted from the IRON DUKE when MIDGE's commander was invalided home. This was always the way when seniority was such a jealously guarded status. Commander Grant may have been on the THALIA or the other new ship on the station, THETIS, but Digby would get another chance.

THETIS was a wooden screw corvette slightly smaller than THALIA at 1380 tons with an armament of 13 guns. She was also quite new having been launched from Devonport Dockyard on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1871 and completed on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1873, so this was her first commission under Captain Thomas le Hunte Ward. She would remain a Plymouth ship with local crews of 220 until she was sold for breaking up by G. Pethwick at Plymouth in November 1887.



On the last day of June 1873 a Court Martial was held on the IRON DUKE. It was the first reported event of this nature, possibly suggesting that there was a good order and discipline among the fleet in general. However, Ordinary Seaman James Lock of the CADMUS had broken the mould and deserted. The report does not enter into any detail, but he was found guilty and sentenced to two years imprisonment leaving me to wonder how that was accomplished. CADMUS entered the dock at Yokosuka on the day that the C-in-C left Yokohama – to have her stern tube investigated.<sup>74</sup>

When the IRON DUKE left Yokohama on the 7<sup>th</sup> July, THALIA was at the western extremity of the station in Penang where she had arrived on the 28<sup>th</sup> June from Achun. 'The Duke' had left the DWARF in Yokohama. She had arrived on the 24<sup>th</sup> June from Hong Kong and FROLIC had taken her place arriving in Hong Kong on the 8<sup>th</sup> July. It was all a bit like musical gun boats, just as long as the Royal Navy was seen by the merchant skippers all around this vast region, they would be happy.

## A Mysterious Excursion

A favourite phrase used by the newspapers is to say '*according to last advices*' and my 'last advice' was to believe that 'The Duke' was heading for Nagasaki. Yet, on the 17<sup>th</sup> September one newspaper reports that IRON DUKE had left Yokohama to visit the ports on the north coast of Russia. The same newspaper then reports one week later that the IRON DUKE had arrived in Nagasaki on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1873.<sup>75</sup> This confusion was then exacerbated by another normally reliable newspaper advising that the IRON DUKE was destined for Liberia on the West Coast of Africa, to which it added that *her return to Nagasaki was expected by late October or early November*<sup>76</sup> – really?

Curiously her movements are only reported twice from the 4 October to the 29 November, suggesting that Russia may have been the destination. It was very hush-hush!

<sup>74</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 13 September 1873

<sup>75</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 17 & 24 September 1873

<sup>76</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* 27 September 1873

Let me recap on the information found so far. It was reported on the 30<sup>th</sup> August, that the IRON DUKE had left Yokohama on the 7<sup>th</sup> July, revealing that there was a 2-month interval in reporting events. In hindsight I think that report must have assumed that she was heading west for Nagasaki in consort with the THISTLE, unless, of course, the press was deliberately misled. It was the 29<sup>th</sup> November before there was any report of her again and then several newspapers carried the same story almost word for word, but in a style that still exudes secrecy and the interval between the events had opened out to 3 months. The reports can be summarised as follows.

The IRON DUKE, DWARF, FROLIC, THISTLE and SALAMIS arrived in Yokohama on **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September** (the date of the report) from Hakodadi and Stambu. Other reports simply state that they had arrived from Honduras. This is obviously totally incorrect as Honduras is in Central America when the report should have said Hokkaido – the northern island of Japan. This is another classic case of a mistake being copied and multiplied ad nauseum. Hakodadi was the only Treaty Port in the north and is now known as Hakodate, but Stambu is totally unknown. It is noticeable that DWARF and FROLIC make up the squadron, but in July DWARF had been left behind in Yokohama whilst FROLIC was in Hong Kong.

However, there was more to the report than an arrival of ships as it described how the squadron had encountered ‘heavy weather’ two days out from Yokohama on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September and all except the Flagship had suffered a loss of sails and boats. The SALAMIS, however, was not a sailing ship and she had suffered more serious damage to the drive shaft of one of her paddle wheels reducing her speed to just 6 knots. This allowed one correspondent to open up a contentious debate concerning the number of breakdowns in ships refitted abroad and reminding readers that SALAMIS had been in China since 1866. But was this a diversionary tactic? Where had the ships been? They had been away from Yokohama for two months and they had arrived back earlier than some had predicted, but had they been to Russia? Vladivostok is 534 nautical miles west of Hakodate. It was 3½ days at 6 knots. Did they go there? Only the Ships’ Logs would reveal that.

## **A Spate of Invalids and Rumours**

---

The suggestion that the ships on the China Station frequently ‘broke down’ is only a part of the story as the ships’ officers were in little better condition. There was a steady stream of officers being invalided from their positions at all levels and no less a person than Commodore Shortt was invalided from the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE. Of course a position as senior as that one could only be filled from England and that would take months, so a temporary solution was to move Commander Leet from the THISTLE and replace him with Lieutenant Digby, who was clocking up valuable command experience. In fact it was the IRON DUKE’s officers that bore the brunt of the moves in providing a Lieutenant for the FROLIC and a Commander for the MOSQUITO, yet it was not all seaman officers who were affected. The CADMUS needed a new surgeon and the SALAMIS was short of an Assistant Paymaster and both came from the Flagship. It was a sorry state of affairs and in interesting one, that there was such a steady stream of officers being invalided home. That situation might make an interesting study, but there was no such a remedy for the ‘Lower Deck’ men like our Henry. They had to stick it out to the bitter end.

It is also curious that soon after this wave of moves within the fleet, rumours started to circulate in the press in England about larger, more noteworthy moves and the first featured Rear Admiral Shadwell in mid-December. The *Hampshire Advertiser*<sup>77</sup> set the ball rolling by saying ‘*it is rumoured in naval circles that Rear Admiral Beauchamp Seymour will succeed to the command of the China Station on the promotion to vice-rank of Rear Admiral Shadwell.*’ This was followed in the New Year by a very detailed announcement from Chatham in the *London Daily News*.<sup>78</sup> It said that the REVENGE was to be temporarily replaced as Flagship to Queenstown, Ireland by the AURORA, whilst the REVENGE took an exchange crew out to the IRON DUKE.

---

<sup>77</sup> The Hampshire Advertiser 13 December 1873

<sup>78</sup> London Daily News 12 January 1874



Shadwell's promotion was inevitable for a 'job well done' on the China Station, but the rumour re-surfaced in another London paper during January. *The Globe*<sup>79</sup> suggested that Shadwell was earmarked for the Hydrographic Department, for which he was eminently suited and the appointment was for three years whilst Captain Nares was away with the CHALLENGER. This was echoed by the *Hampshire Advertiser* who went as far as to say that the post of 'Hydrographer to the Admiralty was vacant and it is rumoured that it is to be offered to Rear Admiral Shadwell.'

The story concerning an exchange crew for the IRON DUKE came from Chatham and it didn't materialise, but this was followed in February by another announcement from Chatham<sup>80</sup> that had a much clearer ring of truth about it. The AUDACIOUS, a sister ship, was to be withdrawn as Guardship at Hull and would arrive at Chatham Dockyard on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1874 to be fitted out as Flagship of the China Station. However, this was still a long way off and my story has lost sight of the IRON DUKE about which there were no reports between early September and late November.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> **December 1873** she is known to have been in the vicinity of Shanghai as Rear Admiral Shadwell was presenting prizes at the cricket ground to the Shanghai Volunteer Rifles. The IRON DUKE was anchored off Woosung, but the Admiral had shifted his flag to SALAMIS and returned to Shanghai. Whilst he was there he joined the British Consul Mr. Medhurst on a visit to a large arsenal about six miles up-river from Shanghai called Kao Chang Miao. It had been in operation for nearly five years and employed some 1300 Chinese natives supervised by foreign overseers. Among a range of items in production were iron gun carriages as well as Remington rifles, for both infantry and cavalry, complete with all the necessary ammunition. Of particular interest to the Admiral was the 26-gun steam frigate anchored in front of the arsenal. She was about 2-3000 tons and 400 H.P. and the Consul assured the Admiral that everything except the screw shaft and cranks had been made at the arsenal. She was not the first ship, but the fifth and a sixth ship was building on the stocks in an adjacent dock. Shadwell pointed out some defects in the rigging, but otherwise considered it to be a remarkable achievement.<sup>81</sup>

IRON DUKE left Woosung on the 10<sup>th</sup> **December** and must have spent Christmas 1873 in Hong Kong for she was reported leaving the island on the 30<sup>th</sup> **December 1873** 'for a cruise,' but this was not a casual cruise to work off the plum-duff. She was headed for Singapore with a very serious purpose.<sup>82</sup>

## A Spotlight on Pirates in the Malacca Strait

---

During December, whilst IRON DUKE had been resting in Hong Kong's roads, the gun vessel MIDGE had returned to Singapore from Penang where she had been for some time endeavouring to put a stop to the piracy that had made the waters in that area totally unsafe for normal commercial movements and her place would probably be taken by the THALIA<sup>83</sup> who was reported in Singapore on the 9<sup>th</sup> December having recently returned from Bangkok with the PLUTO. Conditions in Singapore at the time were dire as a cattle disease had decimated the animals and there was a great shortage of both milk and meat. Even the carts were being hauled by the coolies themselves.

A report from Singapore dated the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1874 stated that the Chinese pirates in the Malay Peninsula had become so powerful that their own headmen were alarmed at their power and were endeavouring to induce them to give up their row-boats and accept work. The row-boats pull from 20 to 40 oars each and besides these there were the fighting men that mostly come from Formosa. The THALIA had arrived back in Singapore from Acheen (Achun) and Penang on the 11<sup>th</sup> January and the IRON DUKE was expected on the 21<sup>st</sup> January and the report concluded by saying that there was no serious illness in any of the ships in that part of the station.<sup>84</sup> The IRON DUKE, however, was otherwise engaged elsewhere.

---

<sup>79</sup> *The Globe* 16 January 1874

<sup>80</sup> *Morning Post* 20 February 1874

<sup>81</sup> *The Broad Arrow* 24 February 1874

<sup>82</sup> *Western Daily Mercury* 23 February 1874

<sup>83</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph* 24 January 1874

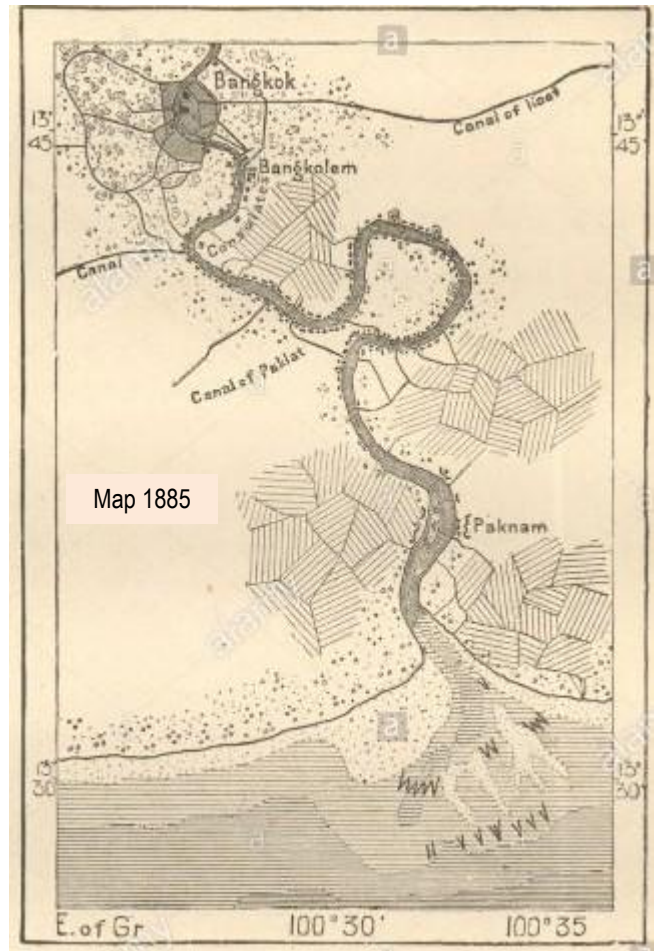
<sup>84</sup> *Western Morning News* 18 February 1874

## 1874 - The King and Aye

The IRON DUKE accompanied by the FROLIC and SALAMIS left Hong Kong on the 30<sup>th</sup> December and after a prosperous run down the coast with fair winds and cool weather arrived at the anchorage for Bangkok on **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January**. Bangkok itself is situated 20 miles up the river which is called Menam Chan Phya (now known as the Chao Praya or King River), but vessels of a large draught cannot get over the bar which obstructs the mouth and they have to anchor about nine miles from the shore, in all about thirty miles or thereabouts from the city. The MIDGE was waiting for us with the English mail which she had brought on from Singapore that morning. The Admiral shifted his flag into SALAMIS and with FROLIC and MIDGE in company proceeded for Bangkok. Leave was granted to half the officers at a time to go up and spend a day or two seeing the sights.

Thus began a description in the *Western Morning News* written by an unnamed officer from the visiting squadron. It occupied one entire column of the broad sheet possibly 20 inches long and its detail is that of an eye witness. Although **Able Seaman Trethewey** would have seen only a small part of this formal and colourful oriental occasion, its detail must be included.

It has already been said that THALIA and PLUTO were there on the 26<sup>th</sup> November and were possibly preparing the way for their C-in-C's visit, but there was/is also a festival in November celebrating the 'God of the River' which may have been used as a precursor to the visit. When she left Hong Kong with SALAMIS and FROLIC, IRON DUKE was said to be taking a cruise to Singapore via Siam (Thailand) and Manila. It was 1926 nautical miles to Bangkok and she did well to arrive in 11 days at 7 knots. Singapore was then almost 1000 miles to the south across the Gulf of Siam and the South China Sea which would have taken 6½ days sailing at 6 knots, but could the squadron reach Singapore by the 21<sup>st</sup> January as expected? We shall see.





The report by the anonymous officer continued; - the river is very deep presenting no difficulty of navigation, but is uninteresting for the banks are very low and covered completely by thick jungle so that it is impossible to see more than fifty yards inland. The only relief to the eye are the cocoa nut and areca palms which shoot up above the lower growing vegetation. At intervals are native houses built on piles to raise them up above the high-water mark of the periodic inundations. Here and there a temple is seen with its' light and graceful spire or tapering minaret, standing out against the sky.

There is very little life on the river until the city is reached, but once there the scene is very animated for there is a large water population living in floating houses which line the main river and its creeks. The floating houses are lightly built huts on bamboo rafts that are moored to posts driven into the mud and they move up and down the posts by means of large, loose rings of bamboo, as the water rises and falls. They are mostly shops selling cheap earthenware or fruit and they have canoes attached which make them quite independent of the shore. Morning is the time when most business is conducted and the yellow-robed priests with their shaven heads were seen paddling from house to house with a metal container in front of them for rice, fruit and cakes etc. which the people are obliged to give them. The number of priests is very large as everyone has to be one for a time, during which he is apart from the world. Even the King has been a priest. He is named Chulalongkorn, but he was crowned King Rama V on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1868. As he was only 15 years old, a second coronation was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1873 soon after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. This occasion must have dictated the presence of THALIA and PLUTO that has already been noted.



**On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 1874** it was the turn of Rear Admiral Sir Charles Shadwell to be at the centre of the formalities of the Siamese Court as he and his officers were presented to the Supreme King. Our naval officer writes; - the Palace was about two miles further up the river from the Consulate where the Admiral was staying and opposite which our ships were moored. As the Admiral stepped aboard the Consular barge, the FROLIC saluted with 21-guns which was returned by a field battery at the landing place. The Borneo Company had placed their steam barge at our disposal which towed the boats containing all the officers from the different ships in full dress uniform together with the Royal Marine guard and band in white sun helmets.

Shadwell and his officers were greeted at the landing stage by several nobles and a Siamese guard that presented arms whilst playing the National Anthem. They were shown to a line of carriages and driven to a Royal waiting room where they were met by the King's brother

and a second guard. During their wait they were served tea in exquisite china cups and saucers and offered cigars. The wait was short before they were called to attend the Audience Chamber preceded by heralds. The King was sat upon a chair, but some distance behind him in, a very subdued light, stood a raised throne which was difficult to see. Arranged on either side of him were both nobles and bodyguards standing absolutely motionless with drawn swords. After Shadwell had been presented by the Consul-General, the King said that he wished to meet all the officers privately and he got up and left. The Admiral and his suite had to leave the Audience Chamber and were led cross a courtyard and into another room with a much less formal atmosphere. The King then greeted every officer individually following which they were invited to sit on an array of sofas and chairs. Shadwell shared a sofa with the King and his interpreter, but the conversations were very brief. The King then asked to see the British guard of honour which had assembled beneath the Siamese Royal Standard floating from a flagstaff in the centre of a large green lawn. After a Royal Salute, the Royal Marine Band lapsed into a medley of pieces which included a selection from *La Grande Duchesse*,<sup>85</sup> which delighted the King. He addressed a few polite words to Rear Admiral Shadwell and withdrew to yet another Royal Salute, ending the audience. The naval party returned to their carriages which returned them to their boats and it was all over – or was it?

The officer writing the description could not resist detailing the uniform of the Guards, but adds that – *there was not a shoe among them; even the officers were barefoot!!* Well who'd have thought it?

On **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January** the FROLIC went down to the IRON DUKE with the first party of officers and a large number of the European community in Bangkok who wished to visit such a fine vessel and after lunch FROLIC took them back, together with the second party of officers wishing to visit the city. The writer obliquely suggests that these parties were 15-25 strong and stayed with a German hotel-keeper who 'made a fortune from the hungry and thirsty people he had to provide for.'

On that same evening the Admiral and his staff together with the captains of the vessels had the honour of dining with the King and his brothers several of whom spoke English although the King prefers his own tongue. He is a pleasant young fellow of 23/24 with liberal ideas and he no longer requires his nobles and ministers to 'kow tow' on approaching him. Two years ago he visited India and on his way we had the honour of receiving him on board H.M.S. IRON DUKE (*revealing that the writer was an officer on 'The Duke' and his piece for the Western Morning News suggests that he was local to Plymouth*). The day after the dinner the Admiral received a large gold medal weighing 4½ ounces whilst other officers on the Royal table received a silver medal.

It is now **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January** and a presentation to the Second King had been arranged, which was much like the first one, but with less elaborate ceremonial. He was a fine man of about 50 years of age with a pleasant face, but he has no power unless the First King leaves the country. He then rules in his place. He was dressed in Siamese costume, the close tunic of which was a gold cloth without a collar. He wore six orders all but one being apparently native. The exception was the French Legion d'Honor. He was accompanied by a sword bearer and an umbrella bearer and the former was a nobleman. The sword was a long, two-handed Japanese sword with a handsomely inlaid sheath and a bejeweled hilt richly mounted with emeralds and rubies. The umbrella bearer staggered under the weight of an immense crimson and gold affair on a pole nearly eight feet high and he had to keep immediately behind a man who was constantly turning around. The King takes a great interest in military matters and asked if our guard might perform some additional exercises. They obliged by performing the review and bayonet exercises very creditably. The Second King's own guard wore a different, but immaculate dress and all wore shoes.

The three days of ceremonial have been précised from the original, hopefully retaining the essence and the style of the writer who preferred to remain anonymous, yet Henry Trethewey would have known him on the IRON DUKE. It was time to move on and think about pirates.

---

<sup>85</sup> This was an Operetta in 3 Acts and 4 Tableux by Jaques Offenbach and premiered in Paris in 1867 and Australia in 1873



## Pirates and Politics on the Malay Peninsula

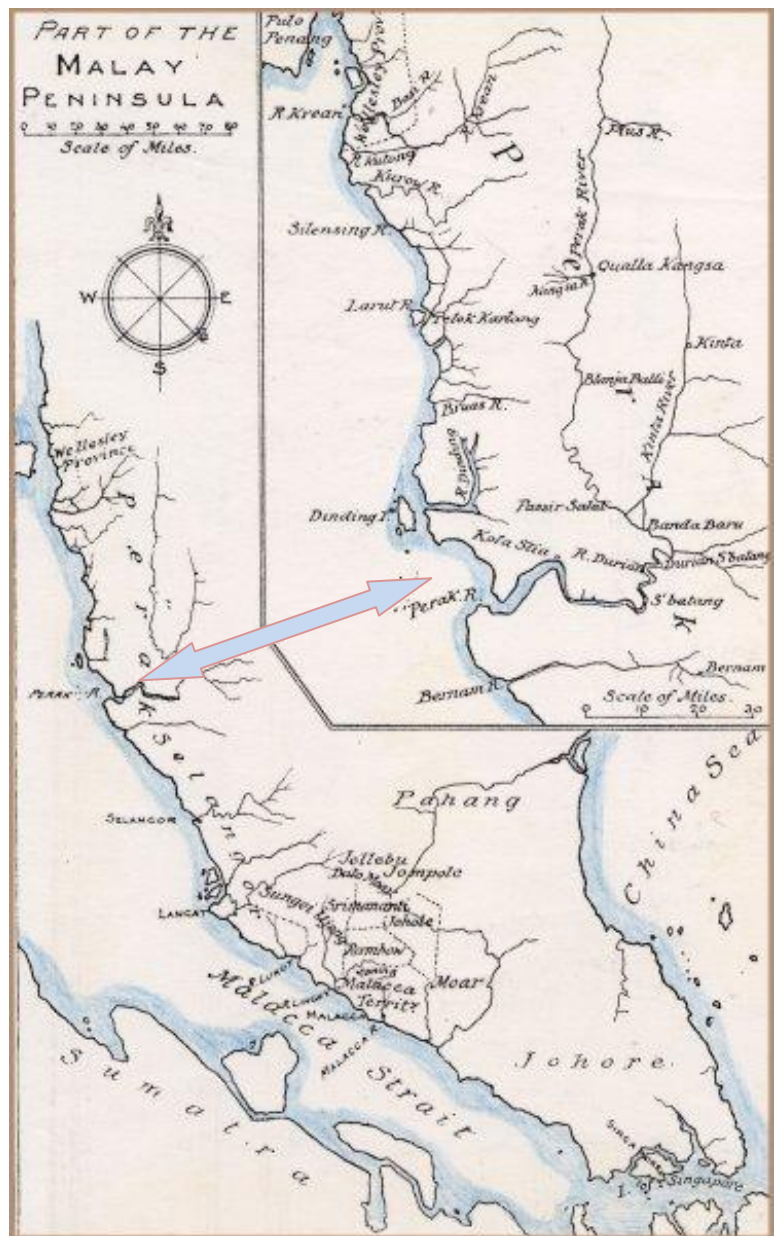
Perhaps it is my naiveté or even my ignorance of Empire politics, but I still find it extraordinary when the dates I extract from the newspapers for the movements of Rear Admiral Shadwell's Flagship IRON DUKE, so often coincide with a date of some significant alternative occurrence and it was never more true than during this period between 1873 and 1874.

1873 had been a bad year in the Malacca Strait for the activity of the pirates, but the pirates and the politics were often one and the same thing with Perak and Selangor being the two most lawless states on the peninsula. The Dutch added to the instability with their own war against the Sultan of Aceh in the north of Sumatra opposite Penang, as they sought and fought to extend their imperialist ambitions following the British decision to relinquish all interest in the island in 1871. Their first assault in March 1873 ended in failure, but when they landed 13,000 troops amid a cholera epidemic on November they added one more event to a growing unrest in the region.

It is fair to say that the pirates had always been there as this was a main trading route between the Far East and India, but British minds had been focused in the area since the 1840s as our trading links expanded with the proliferation of Treaty Ports in China and Japan. However, the internal politics of the area is complex and some would say petty, but the results of the local disputes were serious and effected trade and the first item on the new Governor's agenda was PERAK and the pirates of the Larut River.

Sir Andrew Clarke wasted no time following his appointment in November 1873 as Governor of the Straits and Settlements, but there were four elements to this complicated situation on which there had to be agreement. The first was a territorial dispute centred upon the Pangkor Islands. The second was a state boundary dispute over the River Bernam which was not accepted by the Sultan of Selangor. The third was a dispute concerning the succession of a Raja following the death of the ruling Raja, Sultan Ali in 1871. All of these disputes frequently involved local British Officers, particularly the Governor of Penang, but none of these concern this story.

The fourth dispute is even more complicated and had its origins in the tin mining industry on the Larut River basin that was dominated by the Chinese, who had devolved into two hostile factions – the See Kwans and the Go Kwans. Each group was adopted by one of the disputing Rajas and the province of Larut descended into a scene of conflict for the Sultanate of Perak. At this point I will resort to a contemporary account of the situation.



The long and detailed explanation in London's *Morning Post* continued;

Hostilities between the two Chinese groups broke out in 1862 and Raja Muntri took the side of the Go Kwans who became victorious. From that time he exercised a powerful control over the Chinese mining population until the close of 1871 when his authority began to wane. Early in 1872 fresh disturbances broke out that ended with the Go Kwans being expelled from Larut with a consequential loss of considerable property. The Go Kwans took refuge on Penang and began to plot their return.

In October 1872 a number of heavily armed junks left Penang secretly for Larut making it evident that a serious attack was imminent. Until this moment the Colonial Government had refrained from any active involvement, but now efforts were made to overtake the expedition before any fighting should take place, but this was unsuccessful. The fighting which ensued resulted in a very great loss of life and the expulsion of the See Kwans who, ironically, sought refuge on Penang. This was the group supported by the alternative Raja Muda, but the reality of this situation left both sides in the occupation of Larut with both of their Chinese headmen living on Penang. The See Kwans responded from Penang by blockading the mouth of the River Larut and disturbances were frequent and serious.

## The Pirates of Perak

The first incident involving a British merchant ship occurred in December 1872 with the attack on a British merchantman called, inappropriately, *Fair Malacca*. The captain reported the attack to the Harbour Master in Penang and ZEBRA and HORNET became involved. They identified and detained the attackers, but the British Governor of the Straits and Settlements in Singapore, Sir Harry Ord, would not intervene, so nothing was done. The *Morning Post* continued;

There was a growing fear that the unrest would spread to the island of Penang and this could not be tolerated. Governor Ord intervened and called a meeting of the two Rajas Muntri and Muda together with their Chinese headmen. It was suggested that the armed junks of both sides should surrender to the MIDGE, but the head of the See Kwans was sceptical and it was feared that rioting between the two sides would break out in Penang.

Sir Harry Ord, took two warships to Larut and instituted a search of the river and its tributaries, during which stockades were found occupied by Chinese and two suspicious junks which were taken to Penang. Ord was so pleased with the outcome that he declared Raja Muntri the legitimate ruler of Larut and that piracy was now at an end. It was a complete fallacy. Piracy resumed almost immediately and the boats belonging to the MIDGE were fired upon and two officers were wounded. For this outrage the See Kwans were punished by THALIA and the MIDGE, but the lesson they imparted was soon forgotten and the depredations of the pirates continued through the year.

The incident referred to in the last paragraph above has been expanded in some depth in two subsequent books which date the event to September 1873. The corvette THALIA had replaced the ZEBRA and her Captain Henry Woollcombe became Senior Officer Malacca Straits after his arrival in Singapore on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1873. She led the interminable patrols supported by two or three other ships, one of which was invariably the gunboat MIDGE as they attempted to clear the area of suspicious junks and intimidate the larger ones into leaving the area altogether.

In their 1967 book '*Send a Gunboat*' the authors Preston & Major describe the incident which began on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1873 as follows;

It began when Commander John Grant of the MIDGE decided to take his gig up river in the company of the local ruler's small schooner, in order to seize any boat carrying supplies that did not have the ruler's permission. At face value this seems to be a very high-handed and provocative act without any real justification other than support for the puppet ruler. No one seems to be quite clear about the motive. It has even been suggested that it was planned to deliberately provoke some opposition and to give the Navy the satisfaction of some worthwhile action. Whatever the real reason for the move, they got the action they were hoping for.

As the tiny boat and the schooner approached a stockade, the sailors saw two large twenty-oared boats pulling swiftly out of the creek. Grant ordered his gig to drive the Malays out towards the sea, but his plan was thwarted when the schooner's helmsman dashed below in fright,





MIDGE 1868-1907

allowing the vessel to ground on a mudbank. Grant's fourteen sailors and marines kept the Malays at bay with rifle fire and a rocket or two, while he tried to get the schooner off the mudbank. The guns in the stockade kept up a dangerous fire on the boats, but only two men were hit. The tiny force got away without further loss and was forced to withdraw to the MIDGE.

As soon as the tide allowed the gun vessel to cross the bar she returned to destroy the stockade. Grant had arranged to join his senior officer on the THALIA on the 19<sup>th</sup> September and the next day her boats joined those of the MIDGE for a counter-attack. The sailors had spent weeks rowing under the scorching sun or drenching rain, and the prospect of action excited them. As MIDGE took up her firing position, as close as she dared, the stockade opened fire. MIDGE's 7-inch and 64-pounder thundered back, and as the first clouds of smoke billowed across the water, the boats rushed forward. Suffering only two casualties, the sailors took the stockade by storm, but found that the defenders had fled into the forest. Later a second stockade was found and destroyed, but the landing party seems to have been content to spike the guns and burn three war-junks, for the nearby town of Matang was spared.<sup>86</sup>

A much earlier account of this incident, written in 1903 by the Naval Historian William Clowes, took advantage of the dispatches submitted by the participating naval commanders and puts a slightly different emphasis on that day's events. Without any explanation concerning the reasons for Commander Grant's presence in the river, it simply says that his two boats were set upon whilst searching a creek and the unprovoked attack was supported by gunfire from a 7-gun stockade. The two casualties were named in the text as Sub Lieutenants William Cresswell and Abraham Lindesay and one of them later died of his wounds.

Woolcombe took the THALIA to assist the MIDGE and they rendezvoused at the mouth of the Larut River. Over dinner in Woolcombe's cabin on the night of the 19<sup>th</sup> September the two senior officers shared their knowledge of the pirates' tactics. They also discussed the difficulties presented by the local waters and they planned their moves for the following day. Clowes continued;

On the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> September 1873, towed by the MIDGE and by the yacht of the friendly Rajah Muntri, the ships' boats went up the stream. At about 11 a.m., being near the fort, the stockade, and the three heavy war junks which belonged to the pirates, the boats cast off led by the THALIA's galley under Woolcombe in person and covered by the fire of the MIDGE, while, soon afterwards, the Rajah's yacht, brought up by Grant, steamed close to the fort and there anchored. The enemy

---

<sup>86</sup> *Send a Gunboat* by Preston & Major p108/110 Published 1967

fired briskly, but apparently the attack was delayed owing to the yacht drifting ashore under the Chinese guns. She was, however, got off, thanks largely to the energy of Gunner Alexander Ellis, of the THALIA, who gallantly laid out an anchor for the purpose; and soon after 2 p.m., the attack was most daringly delivered. The Chinese fought stubbornly, and being about 4000 in number, while only 150 seamen formed the assaulting party, they were a formidable enemy. At length they were driven from all their positions, and the fort, the stockade, and the three junks were taken possession of and destroyed, all the guns being spiked. The boats then proceeded further up the river in company with the yacht, burnt a fourth junk, captured a fifth and destroyed a second stockade; whereupon the pirate chiefs surrendered unconditionally with the whole of their forces. They had lost about 200 men in the fighting. The British had two people wounded, one mortally.<sup>87</sup>

These words were taken largely from contemporary documents and dispatches,<sup>88</sup> but the later account by Preston & Major is treated in a much less officious and 'colonial' tone. Indeed it concludes that the 'Larut Incident' was a Navy affair undertaken to work off the frustrations which all the officers and men felt at the boring and fruitless operations they had been engaged upon.<sup>89</sup> Boring and fruitless these operations may have been, but their adversaries were deadly serious. These were skirmishes in which everyone played his part, whether it was with the oar or the cutlass. No seaman was exempt and had Henry been present here or at any other unsung action, then he would have been in the thick of it.

These two descriptions paint a graphic image of the difficulties encountered by our seamen, who in general terms liked to be occupied and what better occupation than that for which they had spent many hours practicing evolutions. It was unfortunate if someone was injured or even killed, but not much time was given to dwelling on the consequences. Victories are won on the field, but the peace is in the hands of the politicians and there was a new Governor in Singapore and his name was Sir Andrew Clarke. The *Morning Post* continues;

The new Governor's first act was to build a police station in the island of Pangkor and to bring boats to the island, but this had no effect on the pirates, one of whom shot at the police sergeant and challenged him to a fight. The Captain of the Colonial Police responded by bringing a force of Punjabees against the See Kwands who were so thoroughly cowed that they sent a message to the Governor expressing their wish to 'give up their boats and everything within seven days.' This was encouraging and the Governor responded positively, but it was only the beginning.

Clarke summoned the two Rajas and all the Chinese headmen to meet him at Dingdings on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 1874. At the appointed time, two steamers belonging to Raja Muntri arrived and on the following day a yacht belonging to Raja Muda accompanied by several row-boats with crews and arms joined them. However suspicions were aroused that these were not pirate boats and the colonial steamer JOHORE was sent to search the river. She returned with eight war junks belonging to the Muntri and two row-boats from the opposition which were all armed with a single 9lb gun and 30-40 men.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> January a large village with a stockade was visited and a large quantity of the best arms was found in the houses. As a result, rockets and shells were fired into the village and the native leaders were suitably impressed. The eagerly anticipated Grand Meeting of the Council was then held on the next day and this was followed on the 20<sup>th</sup> January with the signing of the Pangkor Treaty. The treaty declared that Raja Muda was the rightful Sultan of Perak, whilst the Raja Muntri accepted the position as Sultan of Larut. It was further agreed that Perak would accept and fund two British Residents to advise the local government and that all the Chinese workers would be disarmed.<sup>90</sup>

It is accepted that British political control in the Malay States began on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 1874 with the signing on the PLUTO of the Pangkor Treaty between the Sultan of Perak and Sir Andrew Clarke which was soon followed by the appointment of the first Residents in Perak and the banishment of the piracy centred on Larut.

---

<sup>87</sup> *A Military History of the RN 1857-1900* by Sir W. Clowes p238

<sup>88</sup> Penang Gazette 4 October 1873 – Woolcombe's dispatches of 4 October 1873  
Colonial Papers C1111 of 1874 and the Army & Navy Gazette of 19 August 1876

<sup>89</sup> *Send a Gunboat* by Preston & Major p108/110 Published 1967

<sup>90</sup> The indented text is extracted entirely from the *Morning Post* 6 March 1874



## The Pirates of Selangor

On December 11<sup>th</sup> 1873 AVON (Commander John C. Paterson) came across three trading craft at a moment when six boats full of piratical cut-throats were attacking them. AVON drove them off with loss, but did not succeed in capturing any of them, though she subsequently destroyed some stockades at the mouth of the Jugra River, in which they were supposed to have taken shelter. This incident was probably not the same one as that which led to the capture of a group of brazen pirates in Malacca that is told in the next sequence of events, but it represented a completely different problem for the new Governor

Colonel Sir Harry Ord, Clarke's predecessor, had held the job for six years, but he wasn't liked in Singapore as he tried to make an impression in the Malay States about which he knew nothing. Lt. General Sir Andrew Clarke RE, the new Governor, took office on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1873 and he was made of sterner stuff having just left the post of Director of Works for the Admiralty. He brought with him a set of specific instructions from the Liberal Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Kimberley who wrote;

"Her Majesty's Government have, it need hardly be said, no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of the Malay States. But looking to the long and intimate connection between them and the British Government, as shown in the treaties which have at various times been concluded with them, and to the well-being of the British settlements themselves, her Majesty's Government feel it incumbent upon them to employ such influence as they possess with the native Princes to rescue, if possible, these fertile and productive countries from the ruin which must befall them if the present disorders continue unchecked. I have to request that you will carefully ascertain, as far as you are able, the actual condition of affairs in each State, and that you will report to me whether there are, in your opinion, any steps which can properly be taken by the Colonial Government to promote the restoration of peace and order and to secure protection to trade and commerce. I should wish you especially to consider whether it would be advisable to appoint a British officer to reside in any of the States. Such an appointment could, of course, only be made with the full consent of the native Government, and the expenses connected with it would have to be defrayed by the Government of the Straits Settlements."

Sir Andrew Clarke's responsibilities were enormously lightened by these instructions, which practically conceded the principle for which traders and officials alike in the Straits had been pleading for many years. But the situation he had to face when he reached Singapore on November 4, 1873, was not of a character to inspire a hopeful feeling. He had no sooner settled into his post than he found himself in the thick of the political turmoil of the area and he had succeeded in gaining a Treaty with Perak. SELANGOR was another of the troublesome states and in early January 1874 pirates attacked a lighthouse on its coastline at Cape Rachado<sup>91</sup>. Realising that he was dealing with an act of piracy on the high seas, Clarke felt confident in seeking Vice-Admiral Shadwell's assistance. THALIA was in Singapore and AVON and MIDGE were in Penang, whilst everyone waited impatiently for the appearance of IRON DUKE in Singapore's anchorage.

## The Squadron shows its Muscle

In January 1874 it was reported that the cholera that afflicted northern Sumatra was in demise. The Dutch had lost upwards of 300 men to the disease, but only 60 or so in the fighting. After their second assault in November 1873, Dutch forces occupied the capital and captured the symbolically important sultan's palace leading the Dutch to believe that they had won. The Dutch occupiers then abolished the Acehnese Sultanate and declared Aceh to be annexed to the Dutch East Indies. It was this report that also included the comforting assertion from the Royal Navy that 'there is no serious illness in any of our ships in this part of the station.'

The IRON DUKE was expected to arrive in Singapore from Bangkok on the 21<sup>st</sup> January and that may have happened, but has not been reported. What happened next in the Straits and Settlements effectively consolidated the foundation for the subsequent modern history of Malaya and

---

<sup>91</sup> This is the oldest lighthouse in Malaysia dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century but this tower was lit in 1863

a lengthy and detailed account was published in London's *Morning Post* which I will attempt to replicate here.

So little is known of the geography of the Malacca Peninsula that it may well serve to describe the position of this large and powerful state which though governed by its' own Sultan is protected by treaty with the British Government. The coastline of Selangor extends for about 130 miles along the Malacca Strait with Perak to the north and the Lingie River in the south which separates it from the British colony of Malacca. The state of Pahang lies behind it to the east. Two rivers, the Langkat and the Jungra run through the state and the points at which they discharge into the Strait have become notorious for their association with the lawless pirates.

At the entrance of the Jungra River, there is a bar which prevents the passage of a gunboat and on the bank is a stockade, the stronghold of Rajah Yacooob, one of the Sultan's sons, who is believed to be the chief among the pirates. Inside the bar is a perfect entanglement of creeks and inlets which would baffle any pursuit and provide a perfect asylum for the pirate boats.

The Sultan, who currently lives at Langkat, is a weak and vacillating old man incapacitated by age and the free use of opium. He is incapable of administering proper government and has been surrounded by advisors who for years have subsisted by preying upon the trading craft that pass along the coast.

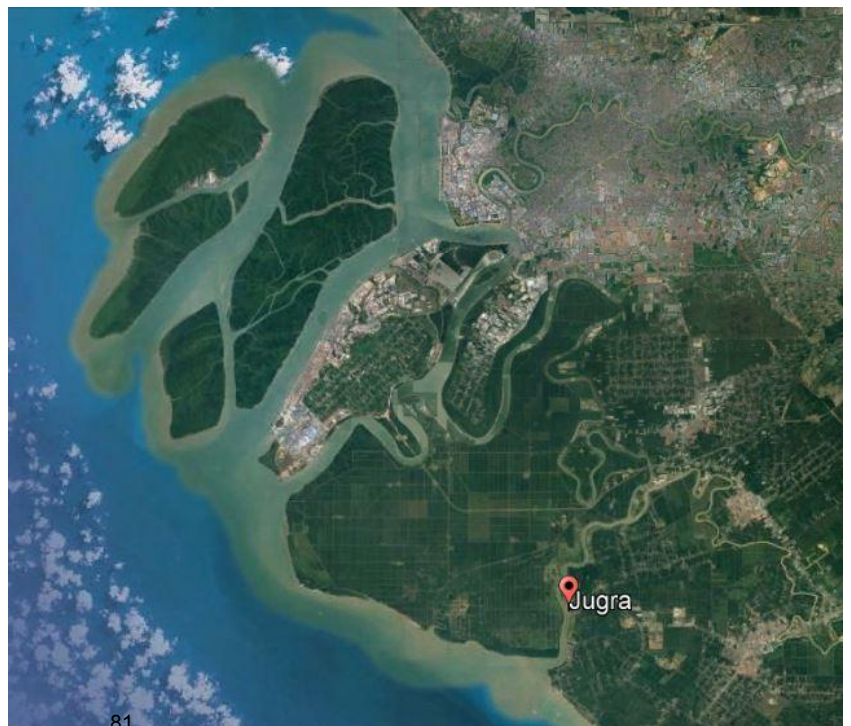
Since 1868 there has been a certain amount of order due to the efforts of the Sultan's son-in-law, who was made Viceroy of the State in that year. He has been supported by our Government and has done much to check the piracy and to rid the country of the bad characters that resided there. Unfortunately enemies of this officer have poisoned the mind of the old monarch against him and since he has come under a cloud of Royal displeasure, the pirates have resumed their activities and have become increasingly daring. There was a shocking incident in December, but the most recent was the attack on the Cape Rachado lighthouse on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1874. It took place early in the evening with the intention of robbing the lighthouse keepers of their pay, but the incident terrified the local community and the relieving of the North Sands lightship could only be done with a large armed force of police on the relief boat.

Inevitably, news of these and other most recent outrages reached the ears of the Governor of the Straits and Settlements and he determined to visit Selangor to endorse a course of action which would bring these outrages to a close.

On **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February** Sir Andrew Clarke embarked on the colonial steamer PLUTO together with his Attorney-General, Surveyor-General, Colonial Surgeon and Aide-de-Camp and they sailed for the one fathom bank and the North Sands lightship. Here he was joined on the next day by the C-in-C China Station Rear Admiral Shadwell. The IRON DUKE had arrived directly from Penang with MIDGE and AVON, but on arrival she joined the THALIA and SALAMIS from Singapore. Their number was increased by the RINALDO from Malacca which had on board the nine murderers from the December incident and the LUZON having on board the Sultan's Viceroy.

On the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> February following a meeting between His Excellency (Clarke) and the C-in-C (Shadwell), the THALIA, RINALDO and the AVON were instructed to blockade the River Jugra. At noon on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February the SALAMIS and PLUTO with the FROLIC and MIDGE sailed for Langkat arriving there early on the following morning.

Negotiations were immediately opened with the Sultan who met the officers sent to see him at the gate of the stockade where he resides. It is a strong post defended by several guns and large numbers of armed men. The Sultan listened attentively, but





declined to visit Sir Andrew Clarke on board the PLUTO which was moored a little way out in the stream and within a few yards of a second stockade situated at the junction of the Langkat and Jungra Rivers for the sole purpose of levying blackmail from passing trading craft. The Sultan was supported in his refusal by his 'chiefs' who had become alarmed at the crisis that had developed around them. If they set foot on the colonial steamer they realised that they would be punished for the crimes in which they were all implicated.

It had been learned that as soon as the warships had appeared off the coast, all the women and children had been sent inland and 300 warriors had been summoned to Langkat. The old monarch probably realised that his hands were not as clean as they should have been and he was apprehensive of treachery if he set foot on the PLUTO.

However, Sir Andrew Clarke was not about to see his mission fail and a second attempt was made to bring about a meeting with the Sultan which was met with success, but he still could not be induced to be taken to the PLUTO. Instead PLUTO was brought in close to the bank and a gangway was thrown ashore from the vessel. As a precaution the Sultan sent 40 armed Malays ahead of him onto the ship and no sooner had he stepped on board than another 80 rushed up behind him. (*It must have been an unnerving experience- Ed.*)

The reception he received from Sir Andrew Clarke and Rear Admiral Shadwell disarmed his suspicions and he immediately appointed the next day to receive the Governor and the Admiral in his fortified residence. As a result of this meeting the Sultan was reconciled with his Viceroy and appointed him president of the court to enquire into the crimes of the nine men brought from Malacca. The meeting lasted about an hour after which the Sultan escorted the Governor to the landing place with full honours.

On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February there was a second meeting on shore at which the Sultan, with all his chiefs gathered around him, promised Sir Andrew Clarke that he would do all in his power to abolish piracy and give his support to his Viceroy to that end. Satisfied that he had achieved a satisfactory solution, Clarke returned to Singapore, but two ships were left at the Langkat and two at the Jugra as a precaution and two Commissioners from the Colonial Government had been appointed to stay in the area to monitor the activities of the natives. The court that had been convened to inquire into the crimes of the pirates brought from Malacca, found them all guilty and they were condemned to death, except one who was too young to accept responsibility for his actions.

On Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February they were executed in front of the crew of the THALIA assembled to witness this atrocious event. The Sultan had promised to compensate the owners of the boat attacked by the guilty pirates, but British sailors had found the boat hidden in one of the creeks and it fell to the RINALDO to tow it back to Singapore.

And with one final act of 'tidying up' this piratical enclave, the Viceroy requested the THALIA to completely destroy the stockades on the Langkat which was done with the utmost enthusiasm. They were razed to the ground and any gun or weapon found within them was rendered useless. It is to be hoped that the piratical outrages inflicted upon innocent trading vessels passing along the coast of Selangor will now cease and that the course of action adopted by the Governor of the Straits and Settlements will have borne good fruit.<sup>92</sup>

Clowes writes that with the Sultan's agreement THALIA occupied two stockades at the mouth of the Jugra River and after a fortnight they were burnt to the ground.<sup>93</sup>

This second coup for Clarke in Selangor emphasised that the Earl of Kimberley's famous instructions' of 20 September 1873 have generally been accepted as providing the basis for this new phase in the history of Malaya and of the British Empire.

Throughout this detailed account, the IRON DUKE was never mentioned, but she must have been there, standing off the coast of Langkat until **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February 1874** when she sailed for Malacca. On the same day Rear Admiral Shadwell bid a fond farewell to SALAMIS as he ordered her to sail for Penang and then home to England. He would miss his 'Maid of the Mist' thrashing her way up China's lazy rivers and this is a convenient moment to look at the PLUTO which had recently arrived on the scene.

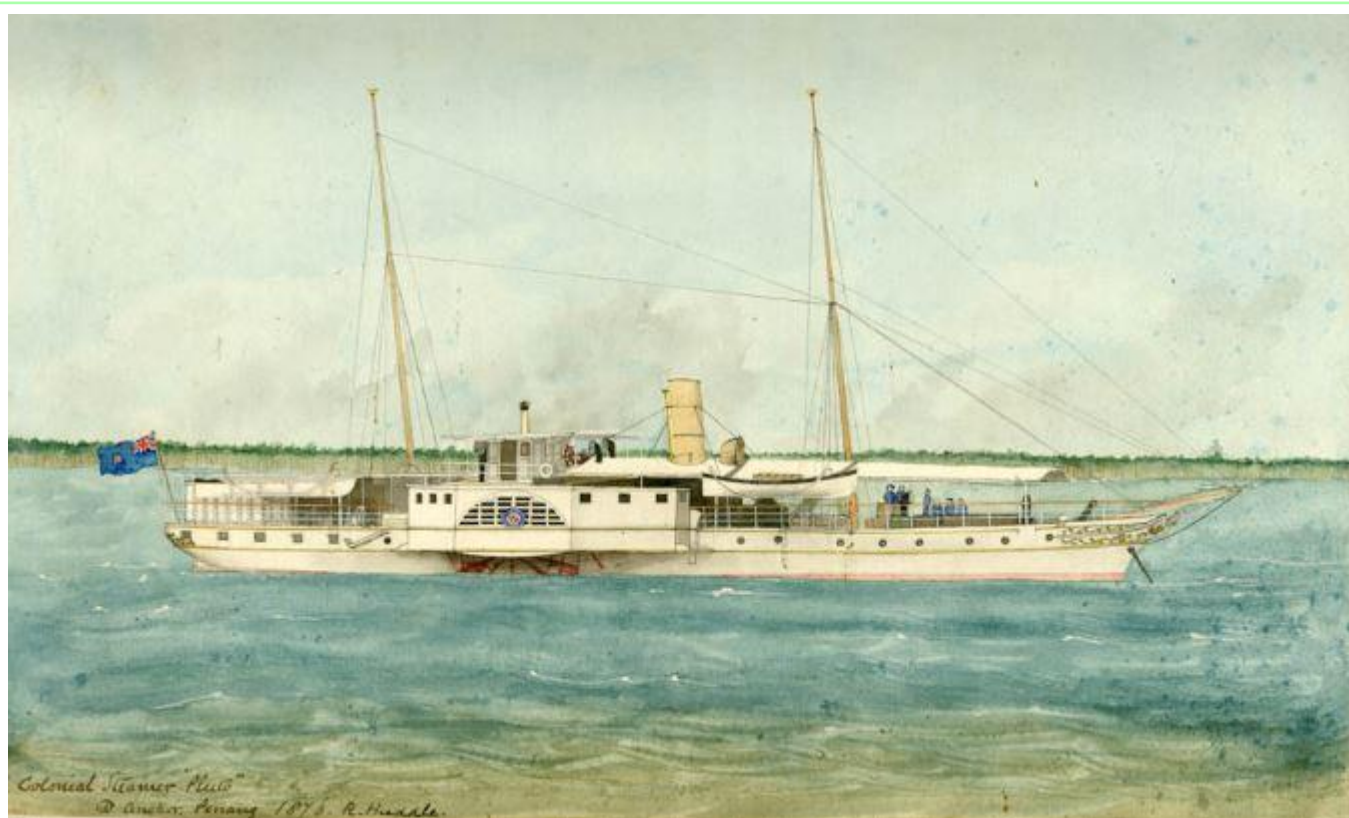
---

<sup>92</sup> Précised from the *Morning Post* 27 March 1874 using the original text

<sup>93</sup> *The Military History of the Royal Navy 1857-1900* page 270

## A Cuckoo in the Nest

Information concerning PLUTO is scant, but it was sheer luck that uncovered this simple, but detailed water colour of her at anchor off Penang in 1876. The artist was her Captain, Robert Huddle who commanded her from 1876. He was initially employed by the Marine Department of the Government of the Straits and Settlements and late in the year he was given temporary command of her until the end of 1878, when the Governor was pleased to recommend his confirmation in the command to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. PLUTO was confined to the placid waters of the Malacca Strait to convey the Governor and his staff to the more remote parts of the administration, so she was not a direct replacement for the SALAMIS and her captain in 1874/5 is not known.



## The PRINCESS CHARLOTTE and a New Naval Hospital

With this Malayan excursion at an end the movements of the IRON DUKE disappear, but she must have made directly for Hong Kong, via Malacca and Singapore as it would seem that Vice Admiral Shadwell had another very important engagement. This colourful colony lay about 1450 miles north east of Singapore, across the South China Sea and it had a reputation for being a very unhealthy place. In the 1850s 25% of the military personnel and 10% of the civilian population died of 'fever' there, so it was imperative that it had an efficient hospital that understood the needs of the locality. On the **9<sup>th</sup> May 1874**, Able Seaman Henry Trethewey was transferred to the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE, Hong Kong's Receiving Ship.

Captain John Parish was in command of this 104 gun First Rate Ship of the Line when Henry arrived, but he flew a Commodore's pennant from the masthead. As a designated 'Receiving Ship' she was a temporary home to all those naval ratings and officers who were in transit from one ship to another and she had been in Hong Kong since the Second China War of 1857-59. It has also been said



that she was a hospital ship which I believe to be inaccurate, as Hong Kong's hospital ship was the MELVILLE supported by two or three other smaller vessels. However the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE was an old ship dating from 1825 and 1874 was to be her last full year in service. She seemed to fulfill a large variety of functions and was the administrative base of the Commodore. She was also a home for the Commodore, his family, his officers and the crew, as well as providing office accommodation for their staff. The ship was the centre of a great number of ceremonial and diplomatic occasions when the ship would often be dressed overall. In addition to the Special Salutes that were usually fired at noon, there was the occasional Court Martial. Then in the evenings the ship would host large gatherings of dignitaries for the plays and musical evenings so beloved of Victorian society. Wardroom dinners also may have accompanied these formal gatherings, so stretching the catering facilities to the limit.

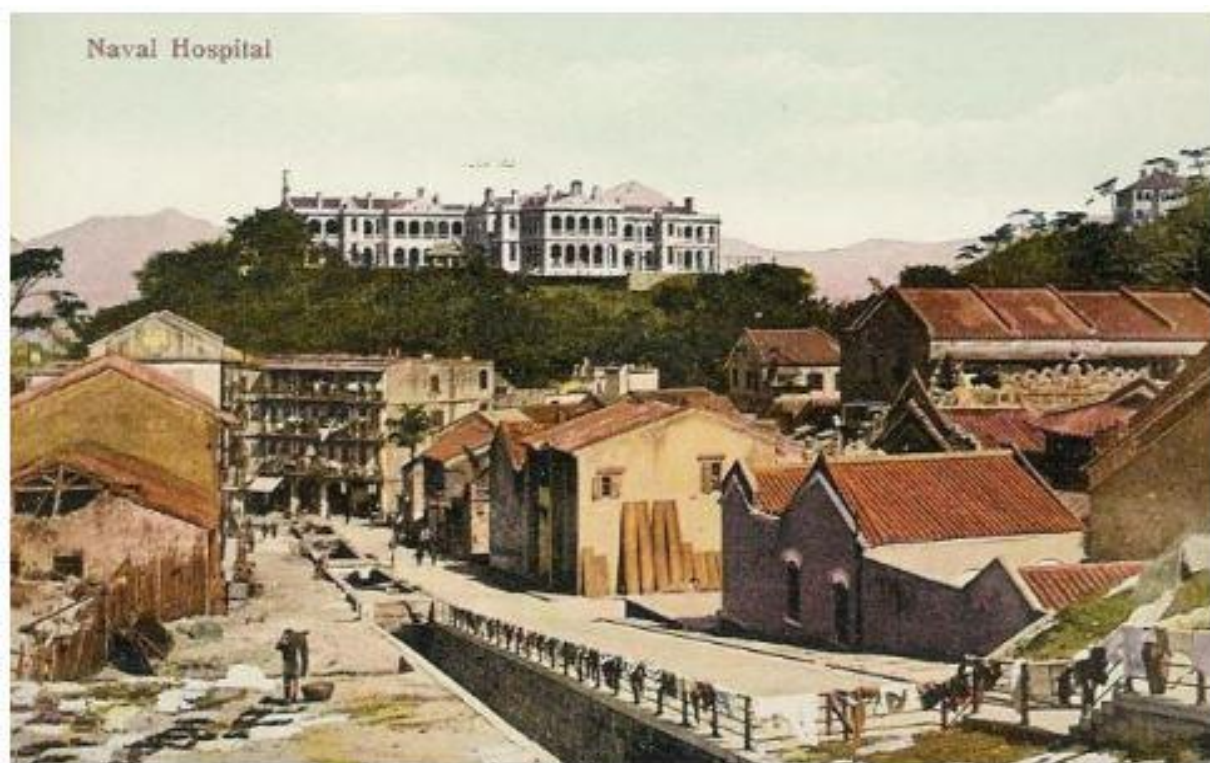
But why was Henry here? The possibility cannot be ignored that Henry was sick and needed hospital attention and that information would be found in the Pay Book of the IRON DUKE, for the simple reason that Henry's name was removed from that ship's Pay Book and transferred to that of the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE. Henry was going to be 'living in' for a while as he became No.49 on List 16. Conversely, it may have been a simple policy of giving men a well-earned rest from the patrols and blockades and the trials of heat and humidity, but that is unlikely as there were several thousand men spread among the 25 or more ships on the China Station. Whatever the reason, he was on board from the 9<sup>th</sup> May until the 1<sup>st</sup> June - 24 days, a little over 3 weeks, so let me provide a simple guide to Hong Kong in 1874.



A large image on a small page cannot do justice to this gorgeously coloured representation of Kowloon and the mainland from Hong Kong by an unknown artist, which was auctioned in London in 2011 for £17,000. It is dated by the presence of the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE (left of centre arrived 1857) and the signal station on The Peak erected sometime around 1866, but it is more likely to be the later date due to the removal of *Princess Charlotte's* fore and mizzen masts. It appears that the MELVILLE is also featured (bottom left).

In 1873 MELVILLE was sold for HK\$35,000 and the money used to purchase the Seaman's Hospital which had been first opened in Wan Chai in 1843 under the charge of Dr Young, who had been surgeon in the Honourable East India Company's iron steamship *Nemesis*, which had also participated in the First Opium War. This water-front hospital, which had been supported financially by Jardine, Matheson and Company, the first commercial house in Hong Kong, had flourished for

many years, but was running at a loss by the 1870s. A letter from Vice Admiral Shadwell, the C-in-C on the China Station, reveals that William Loney, as chief Medical Officer on the station from October 1872 to January 1875, played a large part in the successful move ashore. After this move the medical staff consisted of one Deputy Inspector General, two Surgeons and one Chaplain. The hill on which the hospital was built, was given the name Mount Shadwell and the adjacent hill on which the Infectious Diseases Hospital was later built, was named Mount Parish after Commodore John E. Parish, the "Naval Officer Commanding" in Hong Kong between 1873 and 1876.

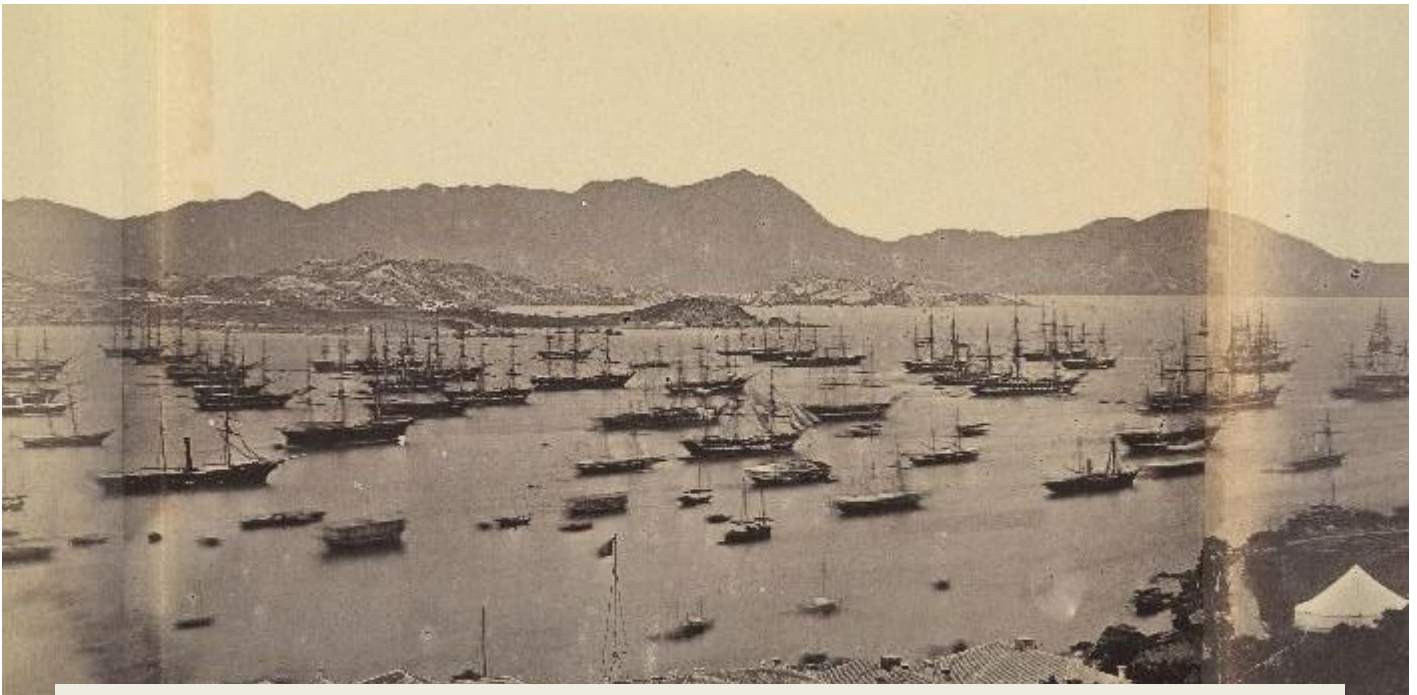


Two old post cards viewed from the same perspective looking towards Kowloon.



There can be little doubt that the IRON DUKE's presence here at this time had a great deal to do with the sale of the MELVILLE and Shadwell's involvement in moving the hospital ashore and it also looks very much as if Henry had succumbed to an illness. There is a definitive reason for reaching that conclusion. IRON DUKE was last recorded on the **12<sup>th</sup> February** leaving the scene of Sir Andrew Clarke's negotiations in Selangor for Malacca. From there she was due to sail to Singapore which she left on **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February** following the arrival of the mails and then sailed on to Hong Kong. She may have arrived in Hong Kong in early March. She was recorded several times as being there on the 19<sup>th</sup> March, but there are no other dates even within the pages of the hallowed *Lloyds List*. Henry's last day on the IRON DUKE was **Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May** and when he came to rejoin her three weeks later she had gone.

If my conclusion is correct then Henry must have been among the first patients to be admitted to the new hospital and that meant a real bed! Not for him a hammock that had to be neatly folded and stowed in the nettings at the crack of dawn every morning. This was three weeks of sheer luxury even if the edge was taken off it by feeling unwell. Yet, that illness may have sown the seeds for Henry's premature death whilst Queen Victoria was still on the throne.




This attempt at a photographic panorama of the roadstead in about 1870 is quite remarkable for its 40 to 50 ships, but there is no sign of the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE. Images of her are exceptionally rare due to her demise in 1875, but the c1868 picture below is clearly a 3-deck first rate with her mainmast intact, whereas her successor VICTOR EMMANUEL was a 2-deck third rate 74 gun warship and more frequently recorded after she arrived on the 4 November 1874.



## Did Henry Receive a Telegram?

The IRON DUKE must have been at Hong Kong from early March until late April and as my reader will see there is an anomaly creeping in with regard to Henry's service record as the dates are untenable. I have already intimated that Henry's time on the books of the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE is largely unexplained and I have suggested that he might have been in need of hospital treatment. But there is another set of circumstances that cannot be ignored – the son he had never seen, had died.

Charles Henry Browning TRETHEWEY died on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1874 aged 21 months.



**CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH** **GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE**

Application Number 11362607-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT					PLYMOUTH				
1874 DEATH in the Sub-district of Charles					in the County of Devon				

Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
	30th March, 1874 6 Unity Place	Charles Henry Browning Trethewey	Male	1 year and 9 months	Son of Henry Trethewey 100 Church St. N.	Erysipelas 3 weeks Certified	Henry Browning present at the death 6 Unity Place, Plymouth	30th March 1874	W. Clement Registrar

The Victorians were never in a hurry to shed babyhood as they are today when they have their first set of jeans before their first birthday regardless of them being a boy or a girl. Some boys in Victorian times would still be wearing a smock or 'dress' when they were three or four years old. Charles had already passed twenty months with the family. There was every probability that he was walking confidently and he would be trying out a handful of words and gaining experience of the world around him. Jane would have had him with her 24 hours a day. She would have known everything about him. She would be looking forward to the day when she could show him to Henry when he arrived home on his ship and that was getting ever closer.

However, it was only in the last couple of years that I have had access to the burial registers of the privately owned Ford Park Cemetery in Plymouth of which they had always been very guarded and possessive. This was where I had earlier discovered Henry's grandparents, John and Ann Trethewey from Cambridge Street, but I did not envisage them sharing it with a Great Grandson.

Erysipelas is most common in young children aged from 2 to 6 years old who have an immune deficiency albeit a temporary one. It occurs when bacteria, normally present on the skin, get below the skin due to an injury. It is a bright red rash, raised from the skin with a hard red edge often on the face, arms or legs. It is accompanied by feeling very unwell which only lasts 2 or 3 days. It is not considered to be serious or even fatal today and is treated with penicillin.

Jane's father, Henry Browning was with his daughter when Charlie died and he was the one to walk into town and register his death on the following day Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March. It was Henry who thoughtfully walked over to Ford Park Cemetery and arranged for his little grandson to be buried there. Charles Henry Browning Trethewey was buried on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1874 aged 1 year and 9 months



from 6 Amity Place and that is how I came to know of his brief existence. It was also another indication that the family was not poor. They were ready and able to buy a plot for poor little Charles.

All funerals are sombre occasions, even more so when it was that of a small child. It might be said that in those days, parents accepted the loss of a child much more easily. It was a common occurrence which could soon be replaced by another pregnancy. However, I do not think it reasonable to erase all emotion from such an occasion. It may have been more difficult to accept when it was the mother's first child, particularly a son. It may have been difficult for Jane with Henry being away for so long and she could not know when he would be back.

It is unlikely at this time and in Jane's circumstances that anyone other than the family would have been involved in the funeral arrangements and there would not have been any form of cortege. It is not impossible that the tiny coffin was resting on a hand cart as the mourners walked the mile to Ford Park Cemetery from Amity Place, up Tavistock Road and along Mutley Plain to Ford Park Road. During the week this was a busy thoroughfare, so it was a foregone conclusion that the funeral would be held on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April 1874. Sunday funerals were very common in these times when it was the only day that male family members could have off work, but when the Brownings reached the cemetery gates they were directed to Section BH Row 62 plot 7. This was the same section as the 1871 grave of his Grandmother Ann Taylor in Row 14, which may have been the large section behind the chapel.

But the question I posed as my heading remains – did anyone send a telegram to Henry? Was Henry's short stay on the books of the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE in Hong Kong, the result of that telegram?



## Preparing for Change

The date of the 19<sup>th</sup> March, that was quoted several times as a date when the IRON DUKE was at Hong Kong, seems to have more than the usual significance as it was the day on which a courier arrived in Hong Kong from Peking. He had come overland and had been on the road for 20 days carrying dispatches to the Admiral, which when read by the Commodore was immediately telegraphed to Vice Admiral Shadwell (*so where was he if not in Hong Kong?*). Shadwell sent instructions that CURLEW and THISTLE should be immediately made ready for sea and that he would follow as soon as circumstances permitted and the correspondent concluded that ‘they pointed to a very unsatisfactory state of affairs.’<sup>94</sup> It was rumoured that there was a rising in the north of China against foreigners and as a consequence the authorities in Peking would not guarantee the safety of any British subjects. This later dispatch added that the CURLEW had been ordered to Taku on the Yellow Sea in NE China.<sup>95</sup>

However, a second announcement from a different source also added to Vice Admiral Shadwell’s diary of visitations. The British Government announced that they intended to withdraw the entire presence of Naval and Royal Marine personnel from Japan.<sup>96</sup> No reason was given, but the tone was peremptory, as some considerable effort had been invested in assisting the Japanese Government to establish a Naval School for Seaman Officers and Engineers at Yokohama and all the instruction was provided by the Royal Navy.

So with the political clouds darkening, there was also a significant change in vessels and their roles which comprised the China Fleet and the first movement was the departure of TEAZER from Hong Kong for Devonport on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April. She had been given permission to follow an unusual route. She was to visit Batavia (now Djakarta) in Java and pass through the Straits of Sunda between Java and Sumatra, before heading for the Seychelles and another unusual visit. After that it was the Suez Canal with stops at Malta and Gibraltar as befitted a small gun boat.

On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April THALIA arrived at Hong Kong from the Malacca Strait in need of docking and engineering repairs which were estimated to take two months and this move is critical to my story as we shall see. She seemed to be replaced by another corvette named CHARYBDIS which arrived in Hong Kong on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April, although there was initially some confusion about her transfer to the East Indies station. CHARYBDIS had spent her years since her build in 1859 on the Pacific Station based upon Esquimalt, but once she had arrived on the China Station she seemed to stay. At 2187 tons displacement and 17 guns she was not to be taken lightly under the command of Captain Thomas Edward Smith after he had commissioned her on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1873 following her refit in Devonport Dockyard (*the likely date and place of this photo*).



<sup>94</sup> *Broad Arrow* 18 April 1874

<sup>95</sup> Taku was the site of the Taku Forts that became the focus of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900

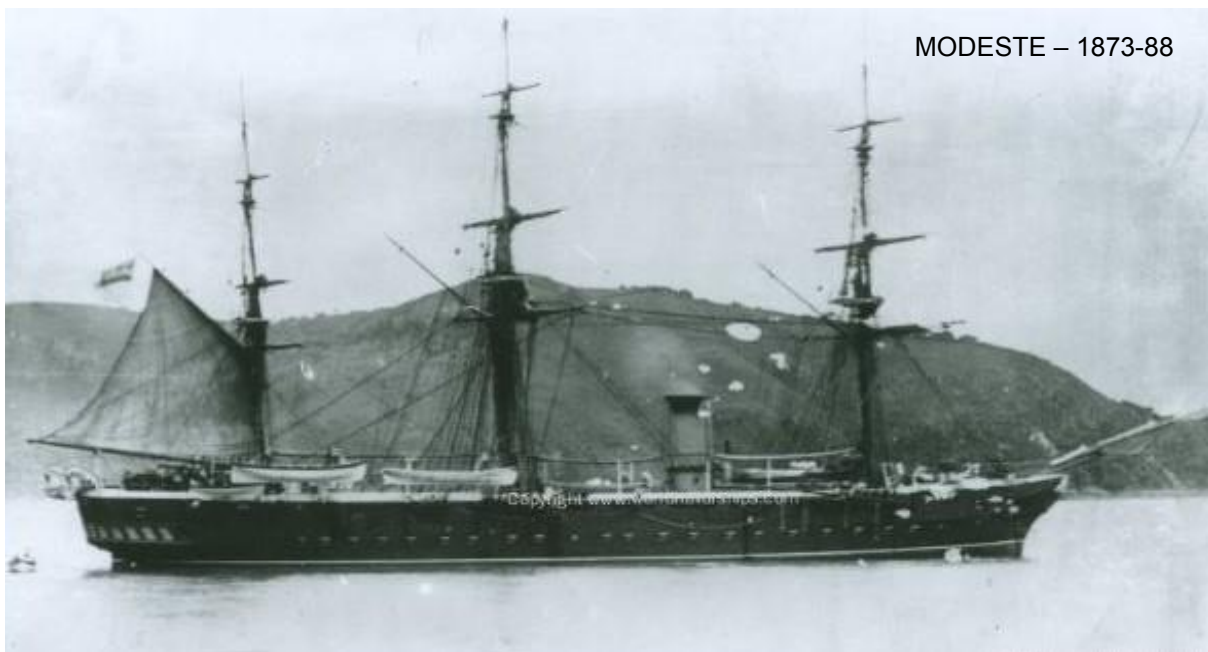
<sup>96</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 3 June 1874



The departure of the TEAZER focuses attention once again on the station's gunboats and early in March a survey of the OPOSSUM was ordered. OPOSSUM was one of the small Albicores and she had been listed as a 'tender to the *Princess Charlotte*,' but the report continued; *if she is found to be useless, she is to be sold in Hong Kong*. Another of the small gunboats that had disappeared from the list without reference was the LEVEN, but this was all part of the Admiralty's plan. Two new arrivals that were the larger, newer versions of the Beacon Class were GROWLER and SWINGER and the latter vessel had only been recently launched in February 1872.

As I read the unending sources of information it becomes clear that some vessels attracted more attention than others and MIDGE and AVON are two examples. Yet it was not a simple case of being on the spot by chance. It was more a case of having commanding officers who were proactive during patrols whilst others simply kept their 'heads down.' This should not be misunderstood. A young, ambitious officer needed to be noticed by a senior officer and the higher the rank the better, without out it he was condemned to oblivion in an enormously long seniority list and could very easily be passed over for promotion from Lieutenant. ELK is another example. She was based closest to Peking at Tientsin with the THRUSH, but as soon as trouble threatened, ELK was ordered to Hong Kong with CURLEW taking her place. RINGDOVE was another vessel that never attracted any attention, whilst a new task was developing in a new location for the HORNET and DWARF.

As the ships on the China Station gradually turned over to increasingly new ships another that joined the station direct from building in Devonport Dockyard was the MODESTE which had commissioned in early January 1874. She was one of five vessels built in 1873/74 of the Amethyst Class of corvette that was smaller than CHARYBDIS and THALIA and probably earmarked for the role of Senior Officer Shanghai after the departure of RINALDO. However, being the latest ship off her drawing board did nothing for her appearance as the class continued to be fully ship rigged as a barque with a main deck lined with guns. Unfortunately, a photograph of her has not been found, but three of her sisters were photographed and this is DIAMOND and NOT MODESTE as I have labeled her.



So much has happened in the preceding pages that my reader may have forgotten that plans had already been laid to replace the IRON DUKE as Flagship of the China Station with AUDACIOUS and she had been due to arrive in Chatham Dockyard on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1874. That time had now come as the *Shipping & Mercantile Gazette* reported on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April. It said that she had a large number of mechanics and other trades working on her, so that she is brought forward for service in China. Two months later and the Lords of the Admiralty seemed rather impatient with the rate of progress as they ordered the dockyard to 'get her ready as quickly as possible.' As a consequence the

Dockyard Management ordered a large number of men to work extra hours on the ship in order to get her ready.<sup>97</sup> It would seem that the relief of the IRON DUKE had been anticipated to occur in Hong Kong in September and that date was rapidly approaching, but for the moment it is **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 1874** and the IRON DUKE is weighing anchor to leave Hong Kong and head northwards for Swatow (or Zhangzhou) and Amoy with FROLIC as escort.

From this point in the story the pieces of the jigsaw are muddled and missing and the only truly reliable source would be IRON DUKE's Log Book in the National Archive. As a consequence it would be easy to simply move on to the THALIA, which I will do in a moment. Instead I want to review the information as it was presented to me.

Able Seaman Henry Trethewey's service record shows that he was removed from the IRON DUKE's Pay Book on the 8<sup>th</sup> May and entered into the Pay Book of the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE on the 9<sup>th</sup> May. That is the Continuous Service system at work. This system was validated on every ship by the weekly musters, when every man was accounted for and had to tally with the Pay Book.

The 8<sup>th</sup> May occurred on a Friday and a muster nearest to that date would have seen the IRON DUKE in Yokohama. It was 2046 nautical miles between Hong Kong and Yokohama and that was 14 days sailing in the slow lane. The secret of the 18 lost days on Henry's record is hidden in the Muster Books and Pay Books and there is little point in trying to visualise what MIGHT have happened. What can be said is that Henry was NOT on the IRON DUKE during May. He was in Hong Kong whilst the THALIA was in dock at Aberdeen and the two would meet in the roadstead off Victoria on **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1874**

## Four weeks on a Corvette named THALIA

I was sat at a desk in the National Archive at Kew eagerly awaiting the arrival of ADM 53/10578. It was the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and it was the THALIA's Log Book, a huge ledger dating from the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1873 to the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1874. Retrospectively I now know that it would have held details of the actions against the Malay pirates, but I was there to trace the passage of Henry Trethewey back to his ship the IRON DUKE.

It was early, very early when Henry came aboard THALIA as she prepared for sea. His first action was to report to the Paymaster and he was entered into the ship's Pay Book as No.160 on List 15. He would then report to the Boatswain, who allocated him to his Mess and to his watch. It was all new and the crew was busy. There was little time to spare for a new boy.

An Able Seaman joining the REVENGE as a 'new boy' wrote in 1877 – I was given a number in the ship's book in the starboard watch. I was a foretopman and No.3 on No.4 gun on the main deck. I was in No.28 Mess, took an oar on the starboard pinnace and slept in No.240 hammock which was stowed in the larboard (port) waist nettings. It would not have been any different for Henry.

As he looked around at the familiar open gun deck with its four 64 pounder, muzzle loading rifled guns (MLR), he could see that beneath the forecastle (forward) a 7-in. chase gun was mounted with another beneath the poop aft and at the break of the poop, the helmsman stood at the huge double wheel awaiting his orders as soon as the capstan pulled the anchor free.<sup>98</sup>

She was a new ship, but not in the accepted sense of the term and the Admiralty had difficulty classifying her as she had not been designed by them. When the East India Company was wound up they still had a Navy with a new Flagship being built in Bombay. She was a 50-gun frigate to be named DALHOUSIE, but the unfinished vessel was dismantled and shipped to the Royal Woolwich Dockyard on the Thames.<sup>99</sup> Here she was re-built as the THALIA and at 2200 tons, she was 200 feet long with a crew of 200 for service in the Eastern Seas and she was the last ship to be built in the Yard before it closed. She was due to be launched by the wife of the First Lord of the Admiralty in front of Prince Arthur and a large gathering of distinguished guests. At 3.30 p.m. precisely on the

<sup>97</sup> *Naval & Maritime Gazette* 6 June 1874

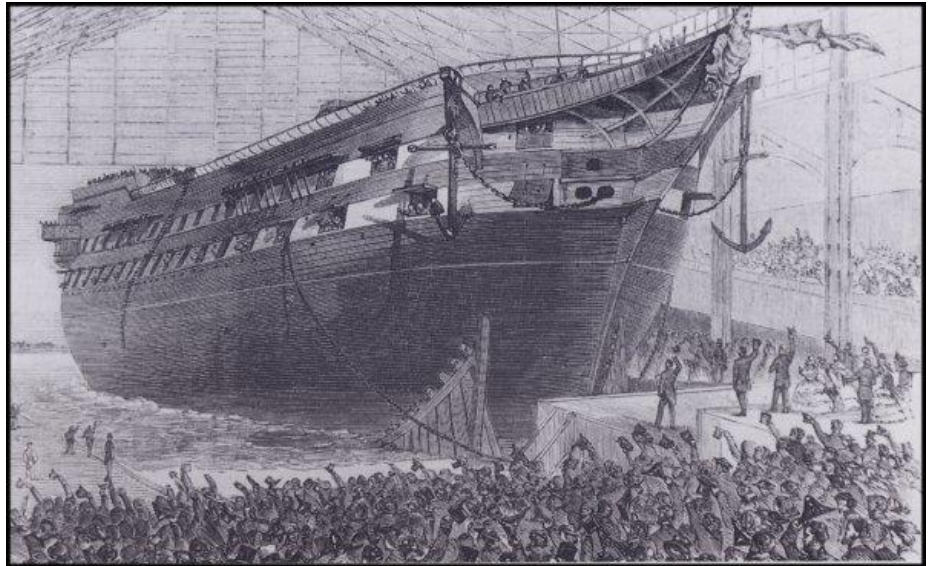
<sup>98</sup> *All the World's Fighting Ships 1860-1905*

<sup>99</sup> *Warship* pp 9-18 Edited by R. Gardiner Published 1993



afternoon of Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 1869, the Admiral's wife named the ship and give the signal to launch. Nothing happened. THALIA remained firmly attached to her cradle on dry land. She stayed where she was until 4 a.m. the following morning.

Work finally finished on her in the March of 1870 and Henry had seen her in Devonport Dockyard not long before he had picked up his draft to the IRON DUKE. In fact she was still in Plymouth when the Flagship left for the Far East.<sup>100</sup> Yet



here she was now, on the China Station after having replaced her sister ship JUNO, the only other ship that resembled her. Both vessels had been designed primarily for carrying troops who were billeted below deck. This gave the sailors the advantage of being berthed on the upper deck in the open air. The sailors loved this arrangement in the sultry conditions, but they liked it even more when the awnings were rigged to protect them from the sudden tropical downpours. However, to call this ship a 'troopship' would have been to invite the wrath of Captain Henry Woolcombe and his crew for she was far from that. The stories of her actions during 1873 would stand the test of any noisy bar or genteel dinner party on the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE. I expect they were recounted for Henry's benefit almost as soon as he had unpacked his kitbag.

I have suggested that Henry had come to the THALIA from a spell in hospital, but there is another possibility. The PRINCESS CHARLOTTE was a 'Receiving Ship' which meant that she 'distributed' men to ships that were short handed. THALIA may have declared that she was deficient and Henry had somehow been selected or volunteered for a transfer to her for a change of environment. The apparent fact that he was embarked as a crew member and not as a supernumerary, points in that direction, yet that word will appear later in the Log Book and confound this theory.

Henry had no sooner stowed his kit, than the THALIA got under way at 8 a.m. on **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June**. I doubt whether he had any idea where the ship was going when she crept out of Hong Kong's sheltered waters along the Taihong Channel. Perhaps he was half expecting her to turn to the southwest, towards Singapore. He may have been surprised when she headed eastwards, for the navigator had given the helmsman a course that would take THALIA to the southernmost tip of the large and mysterious island of Formosa. **Liang Kiau** was 425 miles away and it would take two days to get there.

On **Thursday afternoon** at 3.40 p.m., the lookout sighted land off the port bow. They were nearly there and it was nearly time for another welcome pipe - '*hands to tea.*' The ship lay quietly at anchor in the shelter of the bay throughout **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June**. As soon as they anchored a boat was dropped into the water. That was the routine, but there was no going ashore. There was a very sensitive reason for her presence that will become clear in a moment. They were accustomed to doing what Royal Navy warships did all around the globe. They were visible to the 'natives' and their presence reinforced the all embracing 'strong arm' of Victoria's Empire, but on this occasion their presence was being watched unusually carefully from the shore. After all, Her Britannic Majesty had no apparent interests in Formosa – but was that true?

At 5.25 a.m. on **Saturday morning** THALIA left her anchorage with her Napier engine turning over at a gentle 25 r.p.m. and headed northwest for **Taikau Kun** just 50 miles away. At a leisurely 5 knots, that would take until 5 o'clock that evening and she would lay there over night before moving on. However, during Saturday morning, at 11 o'clock, she sighted DWARF off Saracen Head sailing in

<sup>100</sup> WDM Thursday 5 October 1871 – present in Devonport Dockyard

the opposite direction. It is inevitable that the ships passed close enough to exchange flag signals. Certainly they would have asked the whereabouts of the Flagship, but there is no word in the Log to suggest that they hove to for a while to catch up with the Fleet's gossip.

No! DWARF was there for a very specific reason and her mission was reinforced by the presence on board of Mr. B. Bax, the British Consul in Japan. THALIA was possibly in the same vicinity for the same reason, but her crew may not have been told what that reason was. Japan had invaded Formosa just a few days previously and Great Britain was watching through the telescopes of the Naval Officers on HORNET, DWARF and THALIA.

A significant Japanese invasion force consisting of two warships and two troop transports left Nagasaki on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May bound for Liang Kiau. Two weeks later the DWARF was expected to follow.<sup>101</sup> Her brief was to observe and report the actions of the Japanese. However, the movements of both DWARF and THALIA, when taken together, can mean only one thing. Each ship had come from opposite ends of the area and they were both watching the Japanese.

Many ship movements between Hong Kong and Japan used Formosa as a stepping stone. Most transits seemed to include a group of islands to the west of Formosa called the Pescadores and the four main ports in my account always seem to be mentioned. There is no doubt that the island was a dangerous place. It was the frequent atrocities inflicted upon Japanese sailors and fishermen that had driven the Japanese to make such a provocative move. It was an explosive situation. Japan reinforced her action by laying claim to Formosa and it was this declaration that made other Governments sit up and take notice. There wasn't a country in the world that didn't have British interests at stake and there were a number of British citizens already in the area. The American explorer and naturalist J.B.Steere had engaged upon a significant journey on the island accompanied in part by two British missionaries and they needed to know that the Royal Navy was at hand.

THALIA arrived at **Takau Kun** (sometimes called Takow) that same day – **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June** – and left again on the Sunday morning for another short hop to **Tai Wan Fu** that was only 30 miles away. It gives the impression that THALIA was searching for Rear Admiral Shadwell without knowing exactly where to find him and was visiting each of the well-known ports in her search. She was back-tracking exactly the same course followed by the DWARF, which arrived in Liang Kiau on the 8<sup>th</sup> June where she '*anchored off the Japanese Camp.*' It had been reported that she had come by way of '*Tamsui, the Pescadores Islands, Tai Wan Fu and Takow where she met THALIA and HORNET.*' Until I discovered this account,<sup>102</sup> I had no idea that the HORNET was in consort with THALIA, as she is not mentioned in her Log. However it would seem that the DWARF had orders to make contact with the Japanese Force and when that meeting took place, the British Consul derogatorily describes its leader as '*General Saigo.*'

At the same time as this was happening in the south, the THALIA was leaving Tai Wan Fu, for **Tamsui**. This now large and modern port lies on the northwest corner of Formosa and although THALIA's Log does not make any reference to the Pescadores Islands, there is a beautifully neat sketch of Formosa pinned into the Log showing a course that does include the Pescadores (*reconstructed on following page*).

Tamsui is approximately 250 miles north east of Tai Wan Fu and it took THALIA two good sailing days to reach the port. It was now the evening of **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June** and Henry felt as if he had been on board for months. Again THALIA hove to in Tamsui's bay for just a few hours before setting off again on **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June** for the main Formosan port of **Kelung** (now spelled Chilung), which lay on the other side of the island's northernmost point. She lay there for the entire day of **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June**, but it was no idle day. She took on 7 tons of coal using her cutter. Captain Woollcombe held a defaulters parade in which he heard a serious charge against one of his Able Seamen. The case was proven and the crestfallen sailor lost his rating and the pay that went with it. The crew made the guns ready for a test firing and there was a considerable amount of washing down to do after the coal had been swung on board.

---

<sup>101</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 29 July 1874

<sup>102</sup> *The Eastern Seas* by B.W. BAX p 248 ff published by Murray 1875

This account includes the movements of the DWARF and is written by the British Consul who travelled with her



# MAP OF FORMOSA

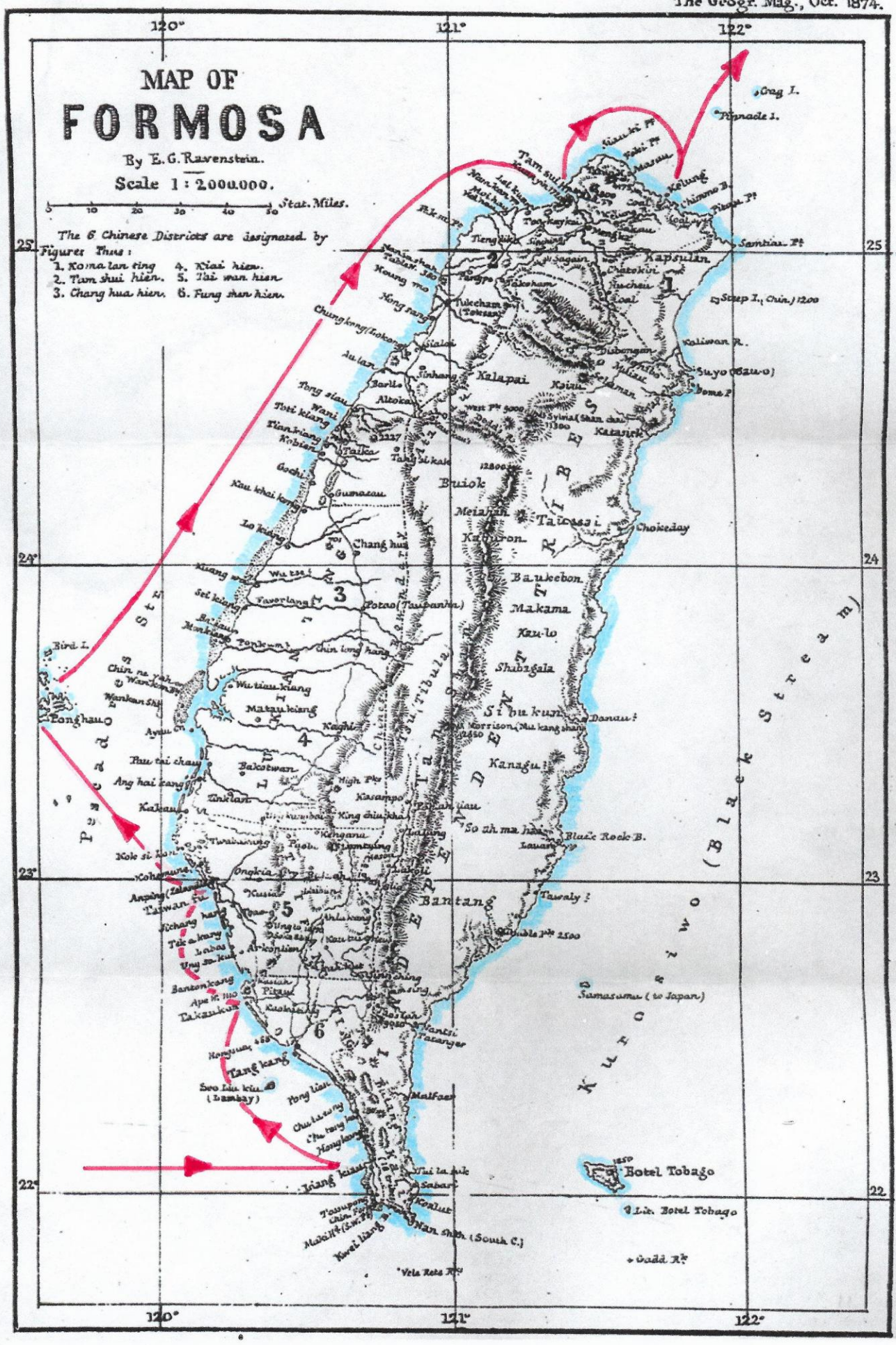
By E. G. Ravenstein.

Scale 1 : 2,000,000.

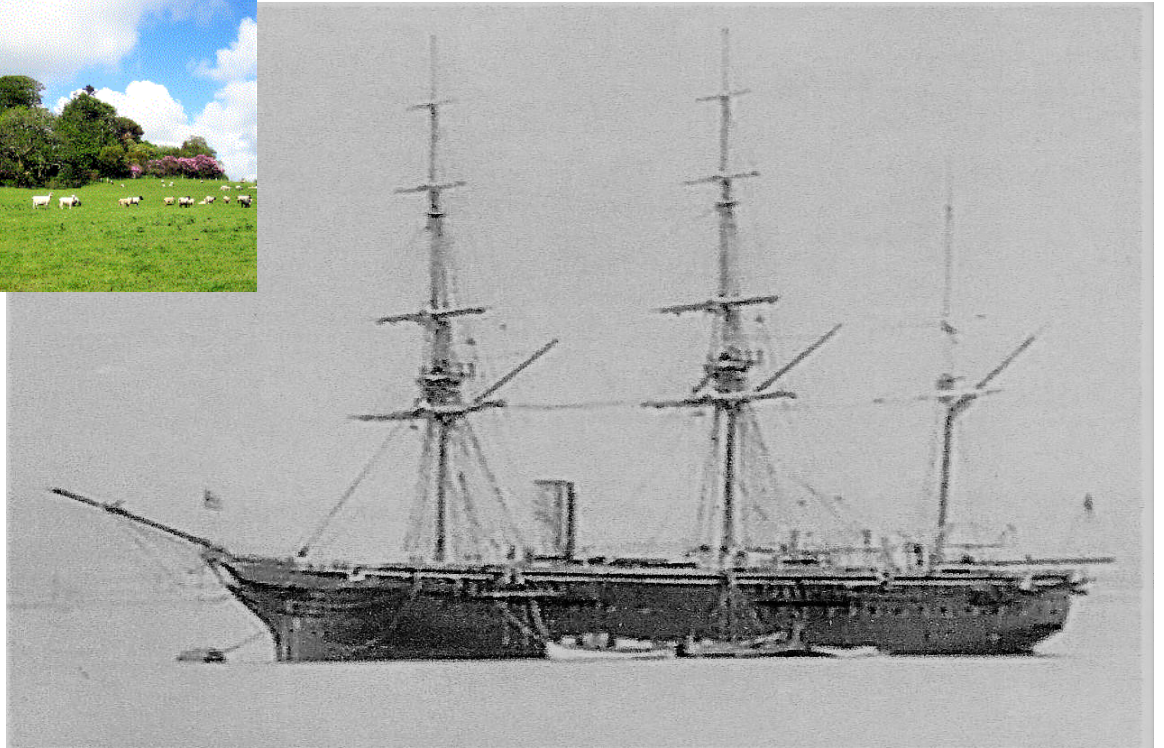
5 10 20 30 40 50 Stat. Miles.

The 6 Chinese Districts are designated by Figures Thus:

- 1. Koma lan ting
- 2. Tam shui hien
- 3. Chang hua hien
- 4. Kiao hien
- 5. Tai wan hien
- 6. Fung shan hien

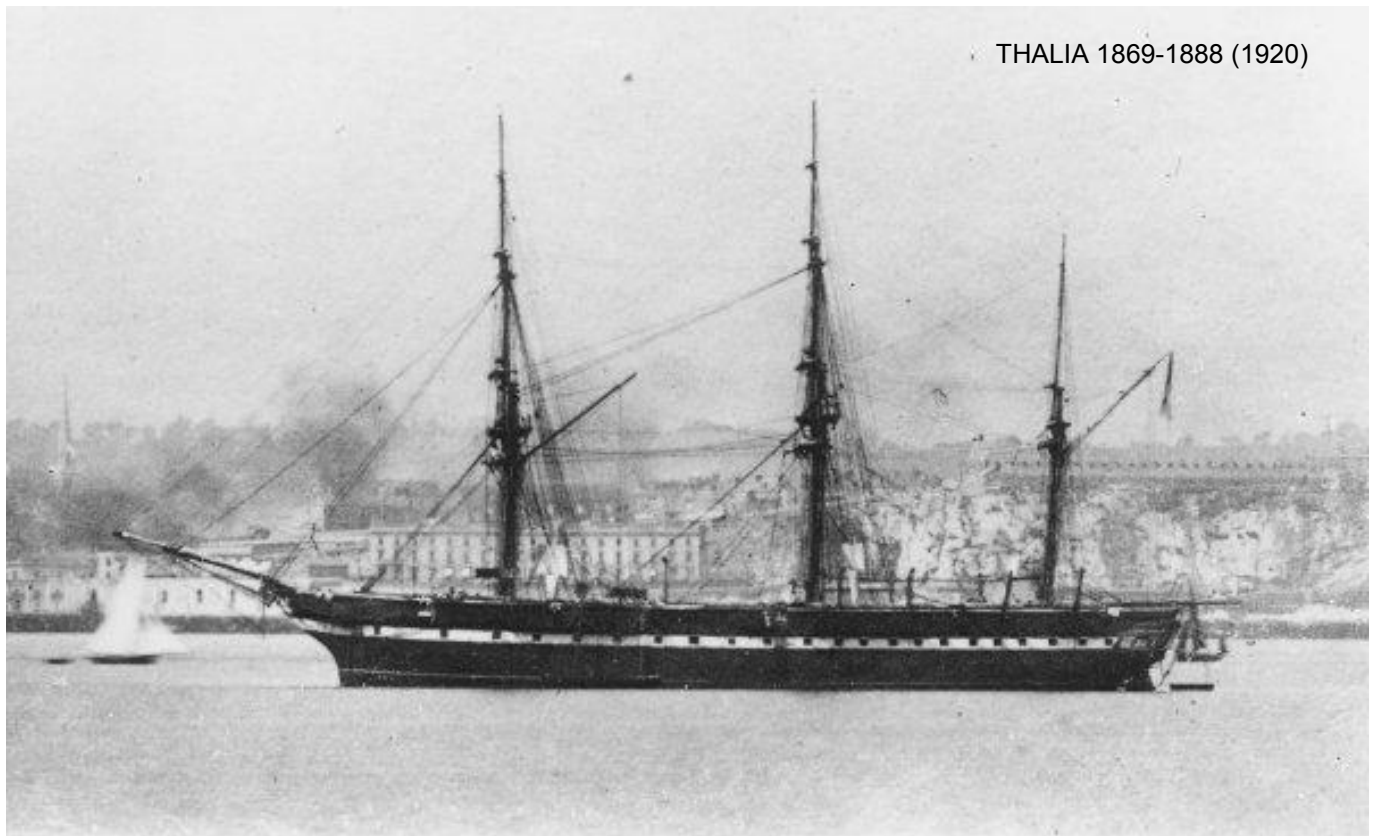






The glass negative from which the image above was taken is dated 1869 and is to be found in the Victoria State Archive in Melbourne. If correct then THALIA has just completed as a new build ship from Woolwich. Below is the entry in the Baptism Register for Plympton St. Mary showing Henry Bedford WOOLLCOMBE's illustrious lineage.

M.J.C. born 28th April 1831.	April 27. No. 1131.	Henry George Woolcombe	Mary Elizabeth	Hemurdon R. G.	Captain R. G.	W. J. Coppard
--	---------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------	-------------------	------------------	---------------



THALIA 1869-1888 (1920)



THALIA left Kelung for Nagasaki in Japan at 4.50 a.m. on the morning of **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June**. Meanwhile at the opposite end of the island, DWARF left her position in Liang Kiau bay and ventured cautiously around the southernmost point to locate the eastern camp of the Japanese force. She stayed only long enough to determine the size and nature of the activity there before back-tracking to the deserted South Bay where she anchored. On Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June she re-entered Liang Kiau bay to resume her watch and by that time THALIA had reached the bustling Japanese port of Nagasaki.

Nagasaki lay 700 miles to the north east across the East China Sea and the third day out was **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June**. The crew had just been dismissed from morning prayers when the lookout sighted a large school of whales. The more knowledgeable among them offered the opinion that they were minke whales, but that was not the only species to frequent these waters. However the onlookers didn't really care what species of whale they were, to those who had not seen them before, it was a magnificent sight.

As the petty officers shouted their orders, aloft the sails were furled to take the weight off the ship and the ship's engine took a hold of her as she came under the shelter of the bay. THALIA's crew was glad to be here at last. Nagasaki was a truly international port and the thought of a 'run ashore' was most welcome after two weeks of confinement in a constantly moving vessel. It was **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June**, but the discipline would not relax until Sunday. Until then, there would be endless repairs, to ropes, rigging and sails. There would be interminable washing, cleaning and painting. The ship would have to look her best when she met the Flagship, but they were still not sure where she was.

At 2.30 on the afternoon of the following day, the officers were curious to see one of the Japanese transports enter harbour. The Officer of the Watch recorded in the Log that she was *carrying invalids from Liang Kiau*. How did he know that? On **Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June** the crew was delighted to see fresh meat coming alongside, but the 150 lbs. and 75 lbs. of vegetables that they embarked doesn't seem nearly enough to keep a crew of 200 fed and happy.

By now it was **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June** and the relentless naval routines were enhanced by the need to get all the bunting out of the flag lockers and to have the ship dressed overall by 8 o'clock in the morning. Today it was the anniversary of the Russian Tsar's accession and there just happened to be a Russian Flagship in the harbour. This called for yet another naval evolution. At 11.45 a.m. a salute was fired and the naval niceties exchanged. At last the sailors could have their 'run ashore.' Following morning prayers on **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June**, 'Special Leave' was granted to the entire crew, so what did Henry do? Did he join his messmates exploring Nagasaki? Had he been ashore here before?

The new week began with the crew preparing THALIA for sea once again and she steamed out of Nagasaki in the early hours of **Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June**, but her next two ports of call are a little uncertain.<sup>103</sup> Initially, she was at sea for about thirty six hours and as her normal rate of progress was little more than 5 knots, that makes her first destination about 180 miles distant from Nagasaki. It is possible that THALIA headed south, rounded the southernmost headlands (for there were several) and then headed northwards again towards the main island of Honshu. However that distance seems to be in excess of 400 miles. The other possible route from Nagasaki was northward into the Tsushima Strait and then through a very narrow passage, no more than two miles wide between the islands of Kyushu and Honshu. Copied from the Log the port that has defied identification looks like *TAKE SEINA* and it must have been somewhere along the south coast of Honshu. Where ever it was, the THALIA failed to find the IRON DUKE. She stayed overnight and sailed again in the morning for another port I have been unable to identify. It was written 'MIRWARA,' which she reached later that same day and again anchored for the night. It was now **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June** as she left Mirwara and it seems to have been no more than 50 miles along the coast to **Kobe**, which she reached later that same day. Another overnight stop brought **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June** – **Henry's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday** – but as they left Kobe at 7 a.m. that morning the weather was 'thick' and Yokohama lay almost four days sailing away.<sup>104</sup>

Throughout **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June**, as the THALIA headed northeastwards towards the island of O Shima, she was battered by a heavy swell that made living conditions and the routine of daily evolutions very hard work. Yokohama was reached whilst the crew swung monotonously in their

---

<sup>103</sup> It most likely that the two unidentified ports were HORISHIMA and MIHARA as the distances between them suggest.

<sup>104</sup> KOBE to YOKOHAMA is about 400 miles eastward – south from Kobe, round Cape Shio, then NE for 230 miles to the island of O Shima at the mouth of the bay giving access to Yokohama and Tokyo.

hammocks. It was 3.50 a.m. and the watchkeeper noted in the Log that it was 'DAYLIGHT' and it was also the last day of June.

As the crew were roused from their slumbers, it soon became apparent that they had found the Flagship and a faintly audible murmur ran around the main deck. IRON DUKE was here with RINGDOVE and SYLVIA, but there was a clutch of other foreign vessels unfamiliar to our sailors. There were three American corvettes one of which was the HARTFORD. There were Japanese ironclads and the French ironclad MELAMPUS. At 6.15 a.m. the IRON DUKE saluted the Dutch flag with 17 guns, but it is not clear why that was necessary. During the day there was a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing between the Royal Navy's ships, but the crucial statement in the Log for which I was searching came at 5.15 p.m. It simply said *Sent Supernumeries to IRON DUKE*. So he was a Supernumerary after all.

Able Seaman Henry Westaway Trethewey packed his kitbag after returning his hammock and mess utensils to the Purser's Mate in the storeroom flat. He took one last look around the ship, shook hands with his new-found mess-mates and walked over to the bulwark door to join the others waiting to climb down into the ship's boat.

## The Lion Gathers Her Cubs

It is **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 1874** and Henry is back among familiar faces and familiar surroundings. Was he glad, or a little bit homesick? How much longer can this go on? He had been away now for almost three years. His new wife Jane would not recognise him. Would he recognise her? I am sure that feeling was shared with many others, as we will see in a moment. Henry's first action was to make sure that the Paymaster knew that he was back aboard and in return Henry was re-allocated the same number that he had before – No.173 on List 5. As far as this story is concerned, it now has three threads to it. What had been happening? What will happen next – and when are we going home?

The CADMUS flying the flag of Vice Admiral Shadwell left Shanghai on the 27<sup>th</sup> May for Nagasaki. Whilst he was there he was involved in an old controversy concerning the bar across the Woosung River. British captains had been complaining that there was only 18 feet of water at high tide and many British ships were now drawing 20 feet of draught. The British Consul could only agree with their complaint, whilst pointing out that the 'sommolent' Chinese authorities in Peking did nothing and were unsympathetic despite collecting tonnage dues from ships using the port.

CADMUS reached Yokohama by way of Kobe on the 13<sup>th</sup> June and Shadwell transferred his flag back to the IRON DUKE which had received some attention in the Yokoska Dockyard. With her mission over, CADMUS was ordered to return to England and she left harbour on the 18<sup>th</sup> June for a leisurely homeward passage by way of the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>105</sup>

MIDGE had been ordered to reach Nagasaki by the 1<sup>st</sup> July and THISTLE was already there whilst RINGDOVE had also been in the dockyard at Yokoska for attention and was therefore, in the vicinity. THALIA was at Yokohama and had now been awarded the accolade of Senior Officer Japan, which seemed to be attracting more than its fair share of attention, as SYLVIA, the surveying ship, had also arrived at Yokohama before the end of June.

By the middle of July, IRON DUKE's time at anchor off Yokohama had expired and she was on the move again. She called at Hiogo (a place I have never identified) and she was there on **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July**, but was due to move on to Kobe before sailing to Nagasaki, which she reached on **Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July 1874**. Whilst she was there, Vice Admiral Shadwell had to convene the Court Martial of THISTLE's sail-maker who had been absent without leave and refused to work to the orders of the ship's boatswain. He was found guilty on both charges and sentenced to nine months hard labour in Hong Kong where there must have been some form of punishment system.

---

<sup>105</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 22 August 1874



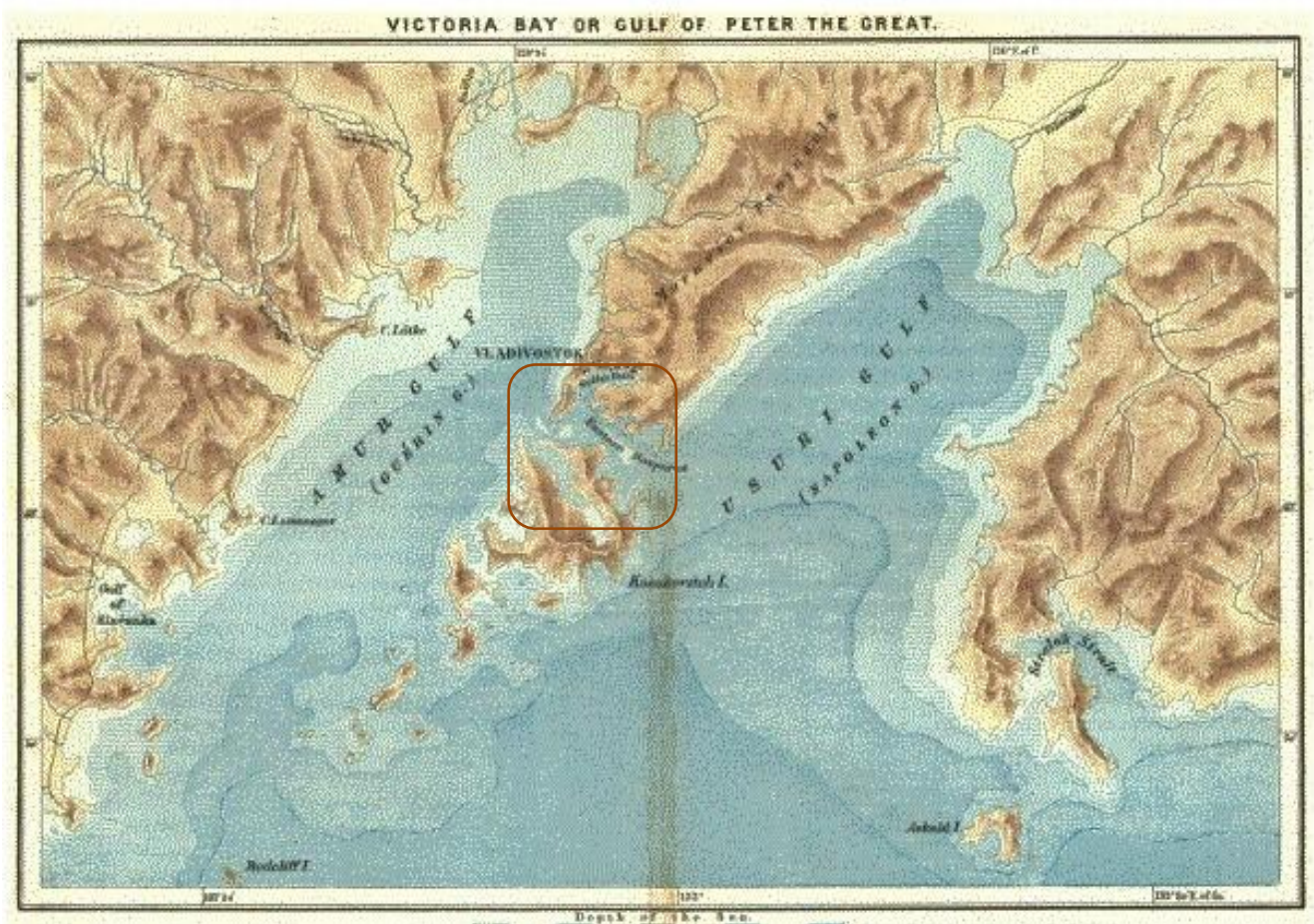
## At home, all is not as it should be!

Back in England and more precisely, Chatham, things were not advancing according to plan and causing sleepless nights for some people. It had been announced that Vice Admiral Shadwell's term as C-in-C China Station would expire on the 31<sup>st</sup> August – exactly three years from his appointment, yet work on AUDACIOUS was lagging seriously behind. In mitigation it was stated that 'the alterations were very extensive as accommodation would have to be provided for a larger number of officers and men than hitherto formed her crew, besides having to provide quarters for the Admiral in charge of the station and those attached to his staff.'<sup>106</sup> This is a very lame excuse as AUDACIOUS was a sister ship to IRON DUKE which had been performing those duties as Flagship for three years. To me, this sounds very much like a very demanding Admiral, but who was he?

On the 25<sup>th</sup> July it was announced that Vice Admiral Alfred Phillipps Ryder, who was currently attached to the British Embassy in Paris, had been nominated for the China Command and he would proceed on the VIGILANT to assume command whilst AUDACIOUS would follow as soon as she was ready.<sup>107</sup> This was an unusual course of action as VIGILANT was a paddle driven dispatch vessel and a successor to the SALAMIS, but unlike the latter, VIGILANT was only three years old.

## IRON DUKE visits Russia

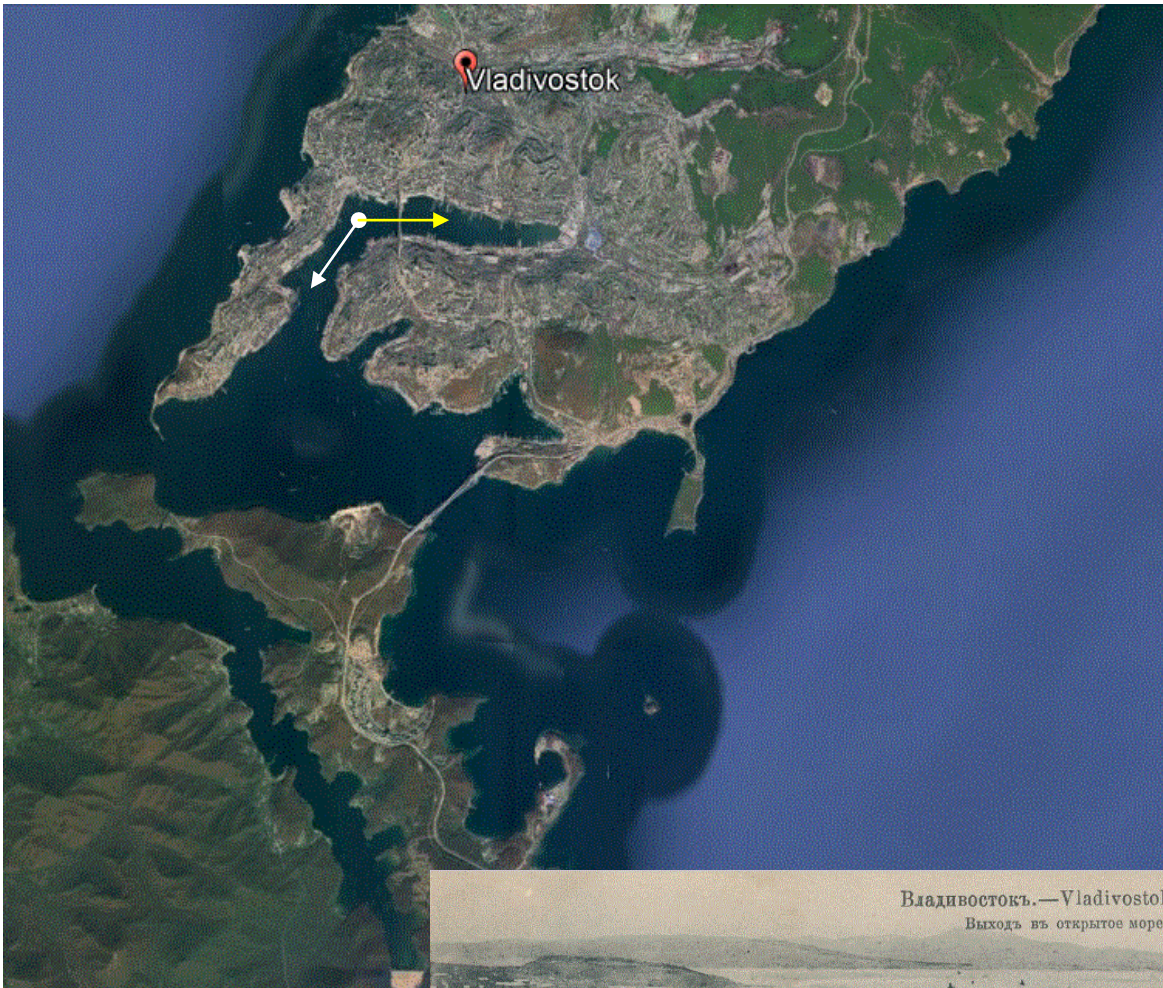
Able Seaman Henry Trethewey may not have known where he was headed on that **Thursday morning 6<sup>th</sup> August 1874**. I very much doubt that he had ever heard of Vladivostok, that was 780 nautical miles due north of Nagasaki. As the squadron set sail, it was an impressive sight, with the three gun boats led by the IRON DUKE and they had nearly five days sailing in front of them.



<sup>106</sup> *Broad Arrow* 18 July 1874

<sup>107</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette* 25 July 1874





Although the postcards are early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the topography of the inlets has not changed even if there may be more buildings. The white arrow is the first view and the yellow arrow, the second.





This was a very unusual mission. It might even be considered to be unique within the commission. Russia was not a part of the China Station. Every port visited so far (with the exception of Bangkok) had either been a port of the British Empire or a Free Port open to the world, but Vladivostok was neither of those. Russia had been our enemy just 20 years previously at the Crimea and the Royal Navy, with a little help from the French, had annihilated the Russian Fleet in the Black Sea. Memories don't fade easily among seamen. Sebastopol and the destruction of the fleet would be clearly remembered, but this has the appearance of a naval mission. It looks as if it might have been an opportunity to learn a little more about the Russian naval mind and meet one of its Admirals.

During this period the Siberian Flotilla was based at Vladivostok as a part of its Northern Pacific Fleet. It was not large in numbers in the 1870s, but their ships attracted some interest. The Bogatyr Class consisted of four ships and two of them were attached to the flotilla in 1874 – VITYAZ & ASKOLD and the former ship is illustrated below, somewhere in the Far East.



Another class that was unique to the Russians was often called a light cruiser class and the Russians were the first to use the description 'cruiser.' A 'class' of two was built in 1860 and these were also called 'steam clippers' being fully rigged as a clipper ship – ABREK & VSADNIK – would have attracted some interest as a part of the Flotilla if they had been present in Vladivostok. There were two more classes built in the late 1870s until it was finally accepted that a sailing rig was obsolescent.

It is very likely that some form of competition was organised among the crews and all seamen were adept at music and dancing, whilst the officers, no doubt, found themselves passed around whatever form of society existed in Vladivostok in 1874. In any event, those few days constituted an information gathering opportunity and Vice Admiral Shadwell's report of the visit would have contained many interesting observations, gossip and opinion. He would not have ignored the Russians' relationship with the Japanese which was historically fractious, as both sides sought to increase their dominance in the Far East which eventually led to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Even within their own crews the Russians exhibited little loyalty in the sense that the Royal Navy could boast, with mutiny and revolution never far from the surface.

August was the best month of the year for visiting Vladivostok for its weather. Temperatures between 65°F and 73°F could be guaranteed with comfortable nights, a great deal of sun and blue skies together with very little rain, but as a town that was only founded in 1859, was it a place to visit? The

fact that three gunboats had joined ‘the party’ added another 200 men to the 450 on the IRON DUKE so liberty men ashore would have been a problem. It is more likely that they went ashore as organised parties to take part in some form of sporting or social activity. To let them go ashore as they might have done in Britain was unthinkable. Drink fuelled fights would have been inevitable, but desertion was unlikely.

There is no record of the date that the squadron arrived at Vladivostok, but readers of the *Morning Post* learned of their presence in the port on the **14<sup>th</sup> August**.<sup>108</sup> It added that two days after their arrival the MOSQUITO had been sent back to Shanghai with the mails and on that very same day (14 August) Commander Buckle brought the FROLIC into Vladivostok in MOSQUITO’s place. Admiral Shadwell’s stay in Vladivostok would not exceed eight days following which the squadron would sail for Hakodate. The *London Evening Standard* followed this up on the next day with the news that the IRON DUKE would leave Vladivostok on **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August**.

## A VIP Meeting in Hokkaido

Barely ten days following this last report, news appeared in the *Globe*<sup>109</sup> which was both startling and confusing when consideration is taken of the two-month time lag between the event and the report. It announced that,

The recently formed Japanese Naval College, which is under the superintendence of Commander Douglas, who has with him a picked staff of engineers and seamen gunners, will be broken up if war is declared between China and Japan and the C-in-C of the China Station Vice Admiral Sir Charles Shadwell K.C.B. has been instructed to order the embarkation of the whole of the English naval officers and men of the college on board one of Her Majesty’s ships on the station immediately on the outbreak of hostilities.

This newspaper was London based, but not often empathetic with naval reports and this particular pronouncement does not seem to be echoed in other, more reliable sources, but it does add weight to a much earlier statement that I have already quoted in which the Government announced its intention to withdraw staff from the college with very little warning. However, it was the Japanese incursion into Formosa that was at the heart of the problem and up to three British warships were continuously monitoring the situation on the island as the MODESTE and DWARF had done during August.

The IRON DUKE reached Hakodate on **Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August**. It was 540 nautical miles from Vladivostok and that timing suggests a leisurely speed of 6 knots. The following day the THALIA arrived from Yokohama carrying Sir Harry Parkes together with the London mails dated the 10<sup>th</sup> July, but Parkes was no ordinary visitor. Sir Harry Parkes was a British Diplomat who attracted the title of Envoy Extraordinary and he was the Consul General to Japan 1865-1883 and for him to come to Shadwell, a mere Vice Admiral, was in itself extraordinary.

Parkes had lived and worked in China since the age of 16 in 1841. He seemed to become involved in every major issue in the wars and disputes between the British and the Chinese and his accrued knowledge and experience in negotiating with them became indispensable. Yet he was never far from trouble having survived an Imperial order for execution and three assassination attempts one of them in Japan. He was the man of the moment, but what was it that he was so anxious that Shadwell should know?



The Japanese Naval College had been established at Parkes’ suggestion. He was the first foreigner to present his credentials to the new Emperor in 1868 and he had also masterminded a great deal of Japan’s infrastructure to Britain’s advantage including the railway from Tokyo to Yokohama, the telegraph system and a number of lighthouses.

---

<sup>108</sup> *Morning Post* 12 October 1874

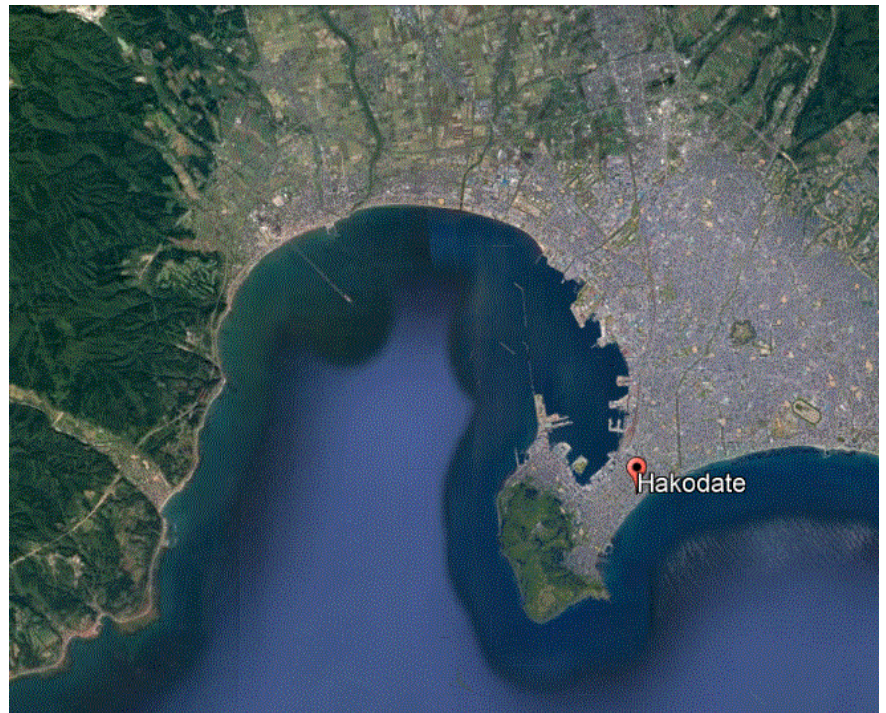
<sup>109</sup> *The Globe* 24 October 1874



The chance discovery of a detailed, but readable report entitled **Hakodate as a Treaty Port 1854-1884**<sup>110</sup> shone a light upon another possible reason for the visit of Sir Harry Parkes. The port was failing and as Japan had only two Treaty Ports (Yokohama was the other) then Parkes as Consul General needed to do something about it. Hakodate was not exactly one of Japan's more vibrant port towns. It was on the fringe of a vast, sparsely populated border region. Parkes' predecessor Alcock may have endorsed the harbour, but he described Hakodate as *little better than a long fishing village* and expected it to *prove utterly useless for the purposes of trade*. Harry Parkes was also quoted as saying that *it is a perfectly lifeless place*. The use of Hakodate as a Free Port was not exactly overwhelming and within ten years the interest of western merchants was in decline, but not everyone shared that desolate view.

In spite of his words, Parkes was not a man to oversee failure. In 1871 he reported a population of 15,000, but before the end of the 1870s it had more than doubled. The famous, female traveller Isabella Bird visited Hakodate in 1878 and found a 'flourishing city of 37,000 people.' After talking at length with consulate staff and foreign residents she wrote,

*Hakodate as a foreign trading port is almost nothing. If it were not for the ships of war that visit every summer, and the arrival of a few visitors in impaired health it would be dull. It is unprofitable for foreign steamers to come so far for just one port, now that Japanese steamers, which can trade at all ports, are so numerous. Foreign merchandise is now being imported by Japanese merchants on Japanese ships and the chief items for export - dried fish, seaweed and skins - is being sent direct to China and the main island on native ships.*



This illustration by an unknown artist is dated 1868

<sup>110</sup> *Hakodate as a Treaty Port 1854-1884* by Steven Inving Graduate School of Economics, Kyoto University, Japan

This small gathering of British Royal Naval warships was probably at the furthest point from Devonport that they could reach and even farther from London where the decisions were being made. The trio of gunboats gathered around the Admiral's Flag on the IRON DUKE at Hakodate was broken up when the MIDGE left the harbour on the 26<sup>th</sup> August for Yokohama with the mail for England. THALIA stayed until the 2<sup>nd</sup> September before leaving to return Sir Harry Parkes to Yokohama, but it was possibly another ten days before IRON DUKE was ready to leave. That departure has no date, but when she did finally recover her anchor, she set sail for Nagasaki non-stop – 1086 nautical miles away. Both FROLIC and RINGDOVE left with her, but RINGDOVE parted company at Yokohama and poor FROLIC was couldn't keep up and was left behind. It took IRON DUKE five days sailing and she arrived in Nagasaki on **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September** – TWO days before FROLIC – Oh! Dear.<sup>111</sup> On **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September**, THALIA joined the Flag at Nagasaki, but was ordered to remain in Japanese waters under the present, prevailing conditions.

## Loose Ends Come Together

The date that had been promulgated as the end of Vice Admiral Shadwell's tenure of the China Station was now in the past and the IRON DUKE remained on the far side of the world. It was not only the Admiral, but almost the entire crew that were beginning to wonder whether they would ever see England again. Shadwell's relief, Vice Admiral Ryder, had known of his new position now for seven weeks and his declared intention to take passage in the paddle driven dispatch vessel VIGILANT had not been confirmed. She had only just conducted a six-hour trial from Portsmouth in the week beginning the 7<sup>th</sup> September,<sup>112</sup> whilst his Flagship, AUDACIOUS, was making progress but only slowly. It was all very tentative, but it had been said that the two Admirals would meet in Singapore in November<sup>113</sup> – we shall see! In the meantime Shadwell had an important meeting in Shanghai on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October. He was to meet Her Majesty's Minister to Peking to discuss the tensions between China and Japan following the Japanese incursion into Formosa.<sup>114</sup> THISTLE was there in Shanghai on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September and reported that 'all was quiet.'

On the 7<sup>th</sup> October it was announced from Chatham that the AUDACIOUS was finished as far as the Dockyard workmen were concerned although a little was left to be done by way of painting and putting the ship in order, which would be done by her crew. Therefore it was the intention that the ship would leave Chatham on the 10<sup>th</sup> October and call at Portsmouth for final orders.<sup>115</sup> That did not happen. Her first steam trial, which was not reported, must have been a failure, for a second one was held on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October<sup>116</sup> which 'was again unsatisfactory,' but Vice Admiral Ryder had to be on his way if he was going to meet the revised date of December 1874 for the transfer of the command of the China Station.

AUDACIOUS sailed from Spithead on the morning of Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October with a lot of very anxious engineers below decks. She arrived in Plymouth Sound the next day and I immediately wondered why that was necessary. Two Lords of the Admiralty were visiting and inspecting both port facilities and the dockyard as a guest of the Civil Lord, Sir Massey Lopes at Maristow. On the Monday morning Vice Admiral Ryder, with some of his staff officers, met with their Lordships, but no reasons were given. Then on Wednesday they were brought out to the AUDACIOUS, anchored in the sound, on the VIVID. A 17-gun salute welcomed them on board when there was a full and detailed inspection of the ship accompanied by a lot of lively music from the ship's band. Following the inspection their Lordships returned to Devonport on their own yacht ENCHANTRESS. Nothing was said and at 6 o'clock that evening AUDACIOUS hauled in her anchor and left Plymouth Sound. It was left to the *Naval & Maritime Gazette* to sum up the exasperation that many must have felt in getting the AUDACIOUS to sea and heading for China.<sup>117</sup> It is Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 1874.

---

<sup>111</sup> *Morning Post* 11 November 1874

<sup>112</sup> *Broad Arrow* 12 September 1874

<sup>113</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 26 September 1874

<sup>114</sup> *Broad Arrow* 03 October 1874

<sup>115</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 07 October 1874

<sup>116</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 26 October 1874

<sup>117</sup> *Naval & Maritime Gazette* 29 October 1874



## A Charmed Existence

A Typhoon - this unprecedented natural abhorrence hit the colony soon after midnight on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1874 and the damage and loss of life among Hong Kong's Chinese community was enormous. Dozens of ships at anchor had been sunk, driven ashore or dismasted and Chinese boats had been destroyed in their hundreds. Yet there was no mention of damage to the Royal Navy's China Fleet and as far as I can tell, it was only the diminutive ELK that was in Hong Kong awaiting the arrival of the VICTOR EMMANUEL. Not even the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE is mentioned, but she must have experienced something similar before.

The *Illustrated London News*<sup>118</sup> features a short statistical piece supported by an illustration of 'the gunboat FLAMER' which was driven up onto dry land and totally destroyed, but as one of the 1856 Albarcores, she was not an active vessel and had been hulked long before the IRON DUKE's time on the station.

IRON DUKE was still at Nagasaki when this occurred, but this port had had its own typhoon on the 20<sup>th</sup> August which had sunk a Japanese navy iron clad oddly named STONEWALL. This had occurred, just as the 'Duke' was leaving Vladivostok, so she was leading a charmed existence.



IRON DUKE had avoided the devastating typhoon that had laid waste to Hong Kong and the image shows the ruins of the Aberdeen dock facility often used by the Station's ships. However, the devastation may have been a part of the reason for the IRON DUKE's six week sojourn in Shanghai.

---

<sup>118</sup> *Illustrated London News* 21 November 1874



## An Extended Stay in Shanghai

When I left the story of the IRON DUKE she was at Nagasaki and due in Shanghai by the beginning of October. Once again this story is devoid of dates as little was published relating to the IRON DUKE's movements, but it is apparent that she had arrived at Shanghai sometime during early October 'with her squadron' and was at anchor in the Woosung River. This news was coupled with the discovery that the Chinese Arsenal had built a very impressive iron clad ship using 5-inch plating, but it was designed as a turret ram, a modern diversion from a sailing rig and quite formidable.

The London based newspaper *Broad Arrow* occasionally gave very detailed and colourful insights into life on the station and it fortuitously produced one that revealed the activities in Shanghai during October 1874. It is so good that it is worth reproducing in full, in spite of its unrelieved appearance.

THE presence of the China Fleet has added to the social life of Shanghai. Her British Majesty's gun-vessel *Frolic* followed the *Midge* up to Shanghai on the 6th October, and next day the *Modeste*, corvette. The *Frolic* had hoisted Admiral Shadwell's flag on her arrival, but it was shifted to the *Modeste* on the 8th October, with the customary time-honoured observances. The stay of the squadron at Shanghai will, as at present arranged, extend to a fortnight, time enough, it is to be hoped, for the interchange of those courtesies for which Britishers abroad are ever famous when the Army and Navy are concerned. The *Dwarf* left on the 13th October for a week's stay at Chinkiang, and is charged, we believe, with some special duty on the Yangtze. The *Frolic* left for Ningpo on the 14th, where she would remain for a week, and then return to Shanghai, prior to taking up her station for the winter, which will probably be Hankow. It is understood that the *Midge* will proceed to Ningpo and relieve the *Frolic*; so that the Ningpo residents will have the reassuring presence of a gunboat for some time. The *Growler* is expected daily from Amoy. Admiral Shadwell, accompanied by his secretary, has paid a visit of inspection to the Temperance Hall. The Admiral was especially pleased with the permanent boarders' apartments, while the cleanly, healthful, and orderly appearance of the dormitories set apart for seamen and other temporary occupants, also met with his unqualified approbation. The library, reading-rooms, and dining-rooms were also inspected. The Admiral spoke in terms of great praise of the establishment and maintenance in Shanghai of so excellent a place of resort for the men of the fleet, and hoped that nothing would be permitted to interfere with its continued success.

However, it was not only the *Broad Arrow* that carried useful snippets, the curiously named *Homeward Mail from India & China* was another such paper. The British residents at Chefoo had petitioned Vice Admiral Shadwell for a gunboat to be stationed there over the winter which was a regular practise across the bay at Tientsin and the Foochow Chamber of Commerce had asked for a



permanent presence of a warship at that port, but Shadwell had declined replying that any ship of necessity must visit other southern ports. Foochow was opposite the northern tip of Formosa and the newspaper added that the heights above Foochow 'are being armed with large guns recently imported' whilst adding the observation that the 'Japanese-Formosa question remains in status quo as far as is known.' It also noted that the 'Wusung fortifications are proceeding, but slowly,' yet what that referred to is unclear.

The anxiety inferred by the Chamber of Commerce in Foochow was understandable, but the reasons they gave did not persuade Vice Admiral Shadwell. They wanted to know where the *KESTREL*<sup>119</sup> was when the British steamer *Canton* had run on to the Min Reef. They did not realise that Shadwell was a marine surveyor and he gave them short shrift. He wrote,

British merchant vessels properly navigated are perfectly capable of safely voyaging by themselves without requiring the assistance of Her Majesty's men-of-war. Although it is their duty to afford every assistance to merchant vessels in distress, it has not, to my knowledge, ever been deemed necessary to station vessels with a view to that possible contingency.<sup>120</sup>

The original announcement that brought the *IRON DUKE* to Shanghai to meet the British Consul from Peking has not raised a single comment. Yet the stand-off between the Chinese and the Japanese remains unresolved. 'The *DUKE*' was still at Woosung on the **22<sup>nd</sup> October** and is not mentioned in the piece above from the *Broad Arrow*.

And so my story now moves into November 1874 as the pieces of this extraordinary jig-saw are moved around once again. We have already seen that *AUDACIOUS* was only days into her passage that was likely to last two months if her machinery could hold together, but there were two other ships heading towards Hong Kong that would attract attention to the station – *VICTOR EMMANUEL* and *CHALLENGER* – and I will come back to them in a moment.

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 1874** is the next key date in this chronology as it was the day that Vice Admiral Shadwell left Shanghai in the *MODESTE* and reached Woosung the same day where he found the *IRON DUKE* and shifted his flag to her. I have used the wording in the newspaper exactly as reported for its naiveté, but things were beginning to happen – at last. This was Shadwell's last opportunity to move his fleet around the station as he saw the situation demanded.

*MODESTE* and *SWINGER* were to remain on the Yangtse with *FROLIC* in support at Shanghai. *MIDGE* had been ordered to replace *HORNET* at Tientsin, whilst *HORNET* was to visit Foochow, no doubt to appease the Chamber of Commerce, before heading to Hong Kong which she had to reach by the 29<sup>th</sup> November. On the following day the *PRINCESS CHARLOTTE* was to be paid off and the 'FOR SALE' notices erected – one owner, low mileage, fair condition, offers invited. The *VICTOR EMMANUEL* would be commissioned on the 1<sup>st</sup> December and the crew which had brought her to Hong Kong was to be split between the *CURLEW* and *MIDGE* which would be commissioned on the same day.<sup>121</sup> Of course this was not all the ships on the station, but only those with a new role to play, but *AVON*, *ELK* and *CHALLENGER* were also in Hong Kong waiting to move on.

Meanwhile *IRON DUKE* left Woosung on **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November** for her next port of call, Amoy which she reached three days later on **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November** and met with the *DWARF*. When *IRON DUKE* left Amoy for Hong Kong, she was escorted by the *DWARF* and they both reached Hong Kong on **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 1874**. Curiously this coincided with a telegraph message received at Admiralty in London from Shadwell that announced that the Japanese would evacuate Formosa with all despatch as the agreement with the Peking Government was accepted as entirely satisfactory,<sup>122</sup> which was a shrewd and satisfying conclusion.

---

<sup>119</sup> *KESTREL* was only listed for the first time in Dec 1874.

<sup>120</sup> *Broad Arrow* 2 January 1875

<sup>121</sup> *Western Morning News* 8 January 1875

<sup>122</sup> *Shipping Mercantile Gazette* 24 November 1874

## A Christmas in Hong Kong

When it was announced from Hong Kong on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November 1874 that the CHALLENGER had arrived from Australia it was published in dozens of newspapers two days later. It was a story that many people were following closely as it was a unique global expedition of scientific discovery that laid the foundation for a new subject – Oceanography.

The CHALLENGER was a straightforward wooden screw corvette of 21 guns and 2137 tons that had been built in Woolwich in 1858, but in 1872 the Admiralty was persuaded to provide a ship for a global expedition led by the Royal Society and the University of Edinburgh and the Admiralty chose the CHALLENGER. In Portsmouth Dockyard they fitted out the ship with chemistry and natural history laboratories, made room to accommodate a number of scientists and removed 17 of her 21 guns. She was commissioned on the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1872 by Captain George Strong Nares, one of the navy's most competent surveyors who was probably well known to Charles Shadwell, who had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1861. In 1871 Nares had been surveying in the vicinity of the new Suez Canal in the SHEARWATER and had met IRON DUKE making the first navigation of the canal by a capital ship of the RN and Shadwell was about to renew the acquaintance of his 'fellow surveyor' once again in Hong Kong.

The announcement of CHALLENGER's arrival, although accurate, was too simplistic as she had voyaged north westward from Cape York in Australia, across the Arafura Sea visiting remote islands between Celebes in the west and New Guinea in the east. During October she progressed steadily and systematically towards the Philippines and ultimately Manila. It was then an easy passage to Hong Kong where she now rested. It is most unusual to have an image of the people who feature in the story, but this was taken in October 1874 with Captain Nares front centre and Commander John Maclear sitting extreme left. Maclear was another talented surveyor who had joined the Navy at 13 in 1851. He was promoted to Captain in 1876 and led expeditions in Canadian and Australian waters in the early 1880s whilst Nares was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1875.





It was early in December when the Admiralty informed George Nares that he was to take command of an Arctic Expedition and that he was to return to England as soon as was practicable. He handed charge of the CHALLENGER to Captain Frank Tourle Thomson of the MODESTE on the 11<sup>th</sup> December, three days after the ELK had left for England via the Suez Canal, but then, she was a mere gun boat. This simple transfer of responsibility again highlights the number of senior officers in Shadwell's fleet who shared his interest in this newly aspiring subject of oceanography.

London's Globe newspaper carried a small advertisement in its edition for Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 1874 announcing a lecture at the Royal United Services Institution in Whitehall Yard on the following Friday at 3 p.m. It was entitled 'HMS VICTOR EMMANUEL as a hospital ship during the late Ashantee Campaign.' It was to be given by none other than Vice Admiral Ryder, not yet appointed as C-in-C China Station. In April 1874 she had been moored in Southampton Water off the site of a major military hospital at Netley, but on the 7<sup>th</sup> September she arrived at Simon's Bay, South Africa on her way to Hong Kong. She left again on the 12<sup>th</sup> September with almost 8500 nautical miles in front of her so she would not arrive at her destination until mid-November.

With the arrival of the IRON DUKE on the 25<sup>th</sup> November, Vice Admiral Shadwell had the opportunity to be present at the handover of PRINCESS CHARLOTTE and to inspect her replacement, but there seems to be a significant shift in position between Shadwell and Ryder. Much has been made of VICTOR EMMANUEL as a hospital ship, yet that was not her intended role in Hong Kong. Shadwell had dispensed with the MELVILLE and moved the hospital ashore and it seems rather an odd coincidence that land adjacent to his hospital that had been promised to Shadwell by the Governor for an auxiliary hospital had suddenly been denied by officialdom at home. It was said that, the Colony cannot alienate more land and the Admiralty is not permitted to build.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless the plans for change were in motion and the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE paid off on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 1874.

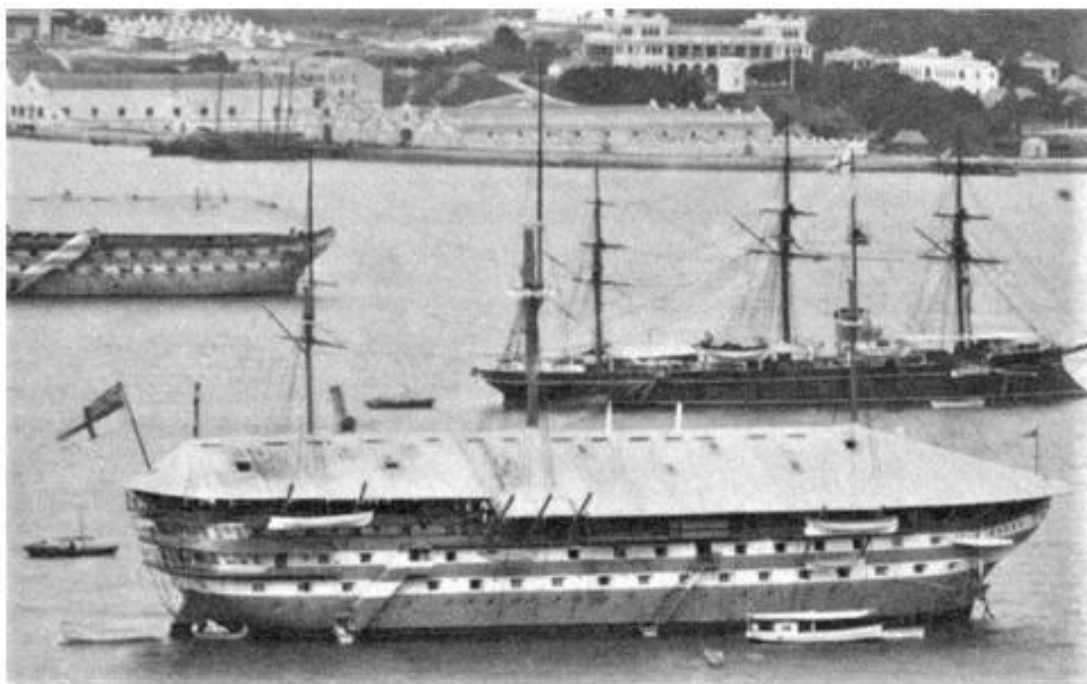
DWARF had accompanied the IRON DUKE to Hong Kong from Amoy, but it was now known why HORNET had been ordered to be at Hong Kong from Tientsin by the 29<sup>th</sup> November. Both gunboats were paid off on the next day and together with the VICTOR EMMANUEL, all three ships were commissioned on the 1<sup>st</sup> December with the two gunboat receiving new crews made up from the crew that had brought the VICTOR EMMANUEL into Hong Kong.

## VICTOR EMMANUEL

A wooden, screw 91-gun 2<sup>nd</sup> rate ship of the line of 4800 tons, launched in 1855 from Pembroke Dock as REPULSE.

Renamed the same year after a visit by the King of Sardinia.

She served as Receiving Ship Hong Kong until 1899. This view c1890 has the Dockyard in the background



<sup>123</sup> Hampshire Telegraph 27 January 1875

As I compose and contemplate each page of text I am acutely aware that poor old Able Seaman Henry Trethewey is barely mentioned in any of my writing. My reader has to work hard at transposing him into the circumstances in which he found himself, so perhaps I should attempt something a little closer to his daily life.

Kathleen Harland attempts, quite successfully, to describe a year in the life of Hong Kong in Chapter 3 of her book entitled *The Royal Navy in Hong Kong since 1841* beginning with the Christmas period and New Year 1878. That year was the last in the tenure of Vice Admiral Ryder and his Flagship AUDACIOUS as they anticipated the return of the IRON DUKE in September 1878. She doesn't quote her sources, but they have the flavour of local knowledge which was not found in the British newspapers. All military service is about routine and off-duty routines can often become traditions. Competition was also an essential part of routine, so that it did not become tedious or boring and entertainment was also essential to inject some frivolity and prevent introspection. The Royal Navy was adept at all of these distractions.

Harland begins her story by saying that; the naval year always began with a Rowing Regatta, a pastime beloved of Victorians, but a very useful skill in the navy. Of course there were plenty of boats available, but they varied considerably in size from gigs and whalers to cutters and long boats. Depending on the ships in the harbour at the time, races could be attempted on two courses. One was a circular course from the VICTOR EMMANUEL to circle around a chosen ship and back again. The other was a straight dash from the Receiving Ship to the coaling sheds at Kowloon. There were more than enough ships in harbour in the New Year of 1875 (*Iron Duke's* year) to provide a full day of entertainment for spectators and burn enough calories to keep fit young men occupied and hungry.

A second activity highlighted by Harland features the AUDACIOUS and this could just as easily have been achieved by the IRON DUKE. Two teams made up from Royal Marines and Seamen would race each other to take their field guns ashore and heave them some distance along the Praya East to the Happy Valley to the accompaniment of the ship's band. A hundred years later this would have been essential TV as the Field Gun Crews from the Naval Bases fought each other in the ring at the Earls Court Exhibition Centre in London.

Of course this period would not be complete without some form of 'Festive Entertainment' and that would be held on a stage specially constructed for the occasion, but this year, 1874/75, provided a dilemma. Was there enough time to transform the VICTOR EMMANUEL or should there be a 'Farewell Concert' for the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE? In 1878 the stage was built on the quarter deck of the former ship and decorated with appropriate home-made scenery and an entertainment was held in front of civilian and military guests as well as 600 sailors. Everyone seemed to enjoy a programme of music, dancing, readings and sketches performed by the inevitable hidden talent recruited from among the crews of the ships in harbour.

Imagine the scene as all those who made up the audience were brought out to the ship across a darkened harbour in small boats, the ladies wrapped in boat cloaks, attempting to climb the companionways onto a ship lit only by swinging lanterns. It was scene impossible to recreate today and must have been full of excitement echoing to the shrieks and laughter. Was it a scene that Henry Trethewey experienced? What sort of Christmas did he have with thoughts of his young wife Jane at home without the son she had been waiting to show him?

Yet these were short, but enjoyable distractions from the daily tasks of the ships on the China Station whose Flagship was impatiently waiting to be relieved by the AUDACIOUS. Where was she?

It was the *Globe* published on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 1875 that provided that information. It read;

Arrangements have been made for Vice Admiral A. P. Ryder, the new C-in-C of the China Station, to meet Vice Admiral Sir Charles Shadwell at Singapore and there to relieve him of his command, should the state of affairs in Siam not necessitate Shadwell remaining in Bangkok. Ryder had arrived at Aden on the 19<sup>th</sup> December in his Flagship AUDACIOUS and intended to proceed as soon as the ship had been coaled.



---

## Are We Never Going Home?

The newspapers had reported two dates for the departure of IRON DUKE from Hong Kong in the New Year of 1875. The first was the 2<sup>nd</sup> January followed by the 8<sup>th</sup> January and neither happened, leading to the old adage of ‘never believing what you read in the papers.’ However, the third date seemed to be a firm date and it was **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 1875** and her destination was Singapore. Within 24 hours that changed when news reached the Colony of ‘disturbances in Bangkok.’ This news must have been received during the preceding few days as THISTLE was dispatched ahead of the IRON DUKE to investigate the seriousness of the situation. This useful and often busy little gunboat had a new crew and during her time in Hong Kong over December she had had her boiler and masts removed for attention. However, early rumours of unrest in Siam may have contributed to the deferred dates even if Shadwell and his staff had kept the information to themselves.

The CHALLENGER was another vessel to have left Hong Kong after the Christmas break. She was not concerned about the circumstances in Siam, she had a different mission. A telegraph message was sent to London on the 19<sup>th</sup> January to confirm that she had left the Colony and retraced her cruise towards New Guinea by way of Manila. Two months later, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March she plumbed a depth of 4,475 fathoms – and that is 26,850 feet. That is unimaginable for a lead weight on a piece of cord, for there was no sonar in those days and it was never a candidate for the *Guinness Book of Records* for the longest piece of string. This find was at the southern end of the Mariana Trench, between Guam and Palau. Later, deeper discoveries in the same area were named *Challenger’s Deep* in recognition of that first discovery.

***Rouse out there; rouse out; rouse out!*** – The Bosun’s Mates bellowed along the mess decks accompanied by the moans from the tightly packed hammocks, bulging and twitching from the deck head. Sources vary about the routines of the day and their timings and it very much depended upon the whereabouts of the ship and whether it was summer or winter in the naval calendar, but one thing was certain, those shouts from the Bosun’s Mates were early – very early. Hammocks had to be lashed and stowed in the nettings, the main deck washed down and holystoned, washed again and then dried and the boats cleaned before the pipe ‘cooks to the galley’ at 6 a.m., brought a welcome respite for 30 minutes to enjoy hot chocolate and ship’s biscuit at the crowded mess table.

However, this morning was one of those ‘different’ days. The ship was leaving harbour. All boats had to be swung in and lashed; all ropes coiled and in their place, the capstan crew had to be ready to haul in the anchor; gunners had to be in position to respond to the salute that would come from the VICTOR EMMANUEL and the topmen would be up on the yards ready to unfurl the sails. The C-in-C was not only leaving harbour, he was leaving the Colony for the last time. Captain Parish, who was still flying his Commodore’s pennant at the mast head, would be sorry to see Shadwell go, but that was navy life; forever moving on.

Lieutenant Stopford Cane Tracey had agreed their course with Captain Arthur and as the anchor surfaced, cascading mud and water back into the Roads, the Captain gave a heading to the helmsman and the Bosun shouted to the topmen to ‘unfurl.’ It had been an interesting, even challenging commission. It had stood Lt. Tracey in good stead. He would be a credit to his auspicious naval family and eventually gain his own promotion to Staff Commander.<sup>124</sup>

It took more than a little time, but the truth regarding the IRON DUKE’s movements eventually reached the newspapers.<sup>125</sup> It transpired that the THISTLE left Hong Kong for Bangkok on the 7<sup>th</sup> January and the IRON DUKE delayed her departure, which was originally intended to be the 8<sup>th</sup> January, to allow the THISTLE time to reach Bangkok, assess the situation and telegraph Hong Kong with her findings. It was then that Vice Admiral Shadwell felt able to inform Captain Arthur that he could proceed directly to Singapore on **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 1875**.

---

<sup>124</sup> He was placed on the Retired List in 1884 and buried in Ryde Cemetery, Isle of Wight in 1905 aged 67

<sup>125</sup> *Broad Arrow* 27<sup>th</sup> February 1875 from a Hong Kong Correspondent dated 14<sup>th</sup> January

---

## The World They Left Behind

The Correspondent whose letter was published in the *Broad Arrow* at the end of February tied up all the loose ends that have formed a part of this story. The troopship ADVENTURE had arrived in Hong Kong and had been detained awaiting orders from England. It was thought that she would be sent to Japan to collect the marines that had been stationed there and in addition there were over fifty officers from the VICTOR EMMANUEL, THISTLE and CURLEW as well as a number who had been invalided home. The ‘new broom’ would soon arrive and cast a critical eye over the composition of the station he had inherited.

One point of interest before we leave was the number of foreign warships present on that day, Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January – the French corvette MONTCALM, the German frigate ELIZABETH, the Austrian frigate FRIEDRICH and the Russian corvette ASKOLD, a ship that I had highlighted earlier as possibly present when IRON DUKE visited Vladivostok. Perhaps this was a result of an invitation.

The enormous ledger of the Ship’s Log was full before they reached Singapore and the last entry was for **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 1875** and there is no subsequent Log in the National Archive at Kew.<sup>126</sup>

---

## Relief at Last

It took eleven days for the IRON DUKE to reach Singapore. It is 1862 nautical miles and that represents 11 days at 7 knots. It was **Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January 1875** and AUDACIOUS was not expected for a week. Vice Admiral Shadwell’s duties as C-in-C were not over just yet. On Monday he made a formal inspection of the CHARYBDIS and found everything in order. During that day the gunboat HART arrived from the Malacca Strait, so Shadwell declared that he wished to inspect her on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January and it was an opportunity to meet Commander T. Harvey Royse and his officers and crew. Shadwell complemented Royse on the excellent condition of both his ship and his crew and he was invited to witness some manoeuvres in spite of the weather being most disagreeable with a NE Monsoon and rain. However the crew showed that they could man and arm the ship’s boats with 3 minutes of them being hoisted into the davits. It was a demonstration that Shadwell thought was ‘extraordinary’ and offered his personal commendation to his Commander. On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January a Grand Ball was given at Government House which was a complete success and was one mode in which the inhabitants and the authorities can show hospitality and kindness towards British Naval Officers (*taken verbatim from the contemporary press as a classic example of high Victorian Society at work – Ed.*). But Friday had been set aside for a more serious occasion on the Flagship – a Court Martial. Mr. Bate an Assistant Paymaster stood, with cap under his right arm, in front of the table, but the charge on which he was found guilty, is not known. His sentence was one year’s loss of seniority and a severe reprimand, before he was marched out of the cabin by the Master at Arms.

The AUDACIOUS reached the moorings off Singapore on **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 1875** accompanied by LAPWING (Commander Sir W. Wiseman), which was one of the larger Plover Class gunboats built in 1867. The formal exchange of command took place on **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1875** when Vice Admiral Shadwell struck his flag at the Fore Top and raised it at the Mizzen and the Admiral and his Officers entertained Vice Admiral Ryder and his Officers to dinner on the IRON DUKE that night with the Governor as Guest of Honour.<sup>127</sup> There was nothing left for them to do now. On **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1875** IRON DUKE left Singapore on a course that would take her north through the Malacca Strait in the wake of the AVON that had left for Plymouth on the 15<sup>th</sup> January, 18 days ahead of her former Admiral.

How much Henry was involved in the ‘festivities,’ as they were called, is impossible to say, but one thing of which he was now certain was that -

**THEY WERE GOING HOME!**

---

<sup>126</sup> ADM53/10355

<sup>127</sup> This is an aggregation of reports from the *Western Morning News* 10 March 1875 & *Broad Arrow* 20 March 1875



---

## The Passage Home

A schedule of IRON DUKE's homeward passage was published in London's *Morning Post* and quickly pounced upon by other regional papers with a vested interest. The *Hampshire Advertiser* carried it on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1875, but it was something to which a sailing vessel could not strictly adhere and they had already wasted no time in leaving TWO DAYS EARLY. It read,

SINGAPORE	– depart 5 <sup>th</sup> February	
Trincomalee	- arrive 16 <sup>th</sup> February	depart 20 <sup>th</sup> February
Pointe de Galle	- arrive and depart 23 <sup>rd</sup> February	
Aden	- arrive 13 <sup>th</sup> March	depart 17 <sup>th</sup> March
Suez	- transit 25 <sup>th</sup> and 26 <sup>th</sup> March	
Port Said	- arrive 30 <sup>th</sup> March	depart 2 <sup>nd</sup> April
Malta	- arrive 8 <sup>th</sup> April	depart 13 <sup>th</sup> April
Gibraltar	- arrive 19 <sup>th</sup> April	depart 22 <sup>nd</sup> April
PLYMOUTH	- arrive 30 <sup>th</sup> April	

It can be clearly seen that the passage home was a long one. It was 12 weeks. Everyone would have to be patient, but every day brought them closer to Plymouth. Throughout this story any passage between two ports was rarely accomplished faster than a 6 knot average, so all talk of her prowess under sail at the outset of this story, when the IRON DUKE was sailed hard against the VANGUARD, was simply to prove a point to the naval architects and designers and the 10 knots claimed bore no relation to the daily routines.

When Henry's grandson, Nelson Trethewey, made the return journey to Hong Kong in 1951 and 1954, the passage took 4 weeks – *Canton* out and *Chusan* home – and both places after which the ships of the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company were named, have featured in this story, but this was 1875 when sail was still the prime mover.

IRON DUKE had already left Trincomalee when the first report of her passage reached a newspaper. It was the *Shipping & Mercantile Gazette* that said that she had left on **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February**, apparently a day late, but there was good reason for the delay. On the 20<sup>th</sup> February 1875 a Court Martial was convened on board the Flagship to hear the case of Lieutenant A. Rolands of the R.M.L.I contingent on board GLASGOW, which was also in the harbour. The case against him stated that he was literally '*fighting drunk.*' After his arrest on board his ship he had broken out of his cell and had threatened to assault the sentry detailed to guard him. The Court found against him and he was sentenced to be severely reprimanded and relegated to the bottom of the Lieutenants' Seniority List.<sup>128</sup> The GLASGOW took nine years to build and her wooden hull was intended to use up the vast stock piles of wood made obsolete by the iron hulls. She was finished in 1870 at Portsmouth Dockyard and commissioned as Flagship to the East Indies Station, latterly under Rear Admiral Arthur Cumming, but she was now on her way home to be Paid Off and eventually sold for scrap.

However, the fact that the 'Duke' was able to set sail on a Sunday made little difference to her routines. A morning service would have been held on the main deck as usual and the afternoon and evening would have been relaxed, as it always was. Only the Duty Watch would have been busy.

The *Hampshire Advertiser* was next in line to report on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April that IRON DUKE had left Aden for Suez on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1875. This was wrong and four days later they corrected themselves by announcing that she had ARRIVED in Aden on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March** from Pointe de Galle, a place I have not been able to identify, but Aden was no place to idle away three days when the ship could be pushing on towards home. Yet it took a frustrating 17 days to reach Port Said and to be safely out of the confines of the canal.

---

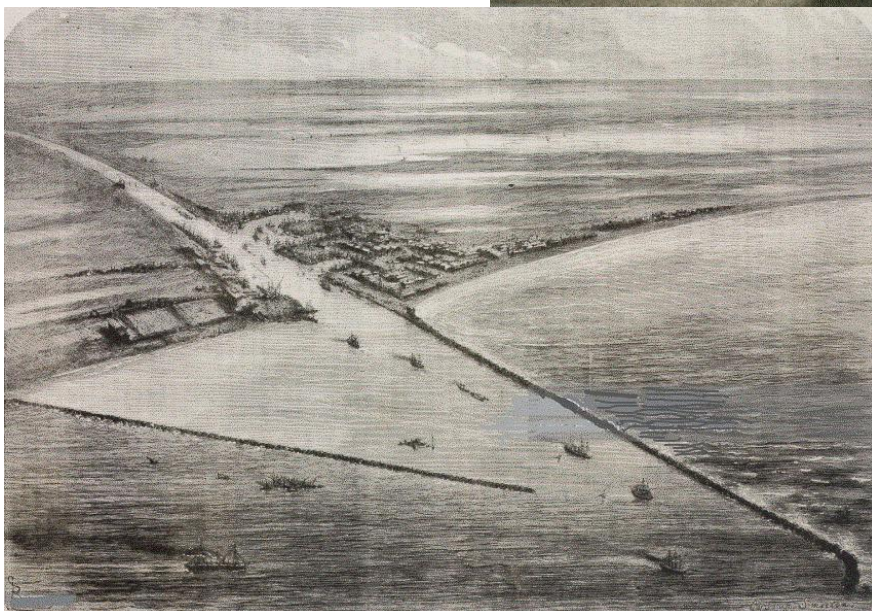
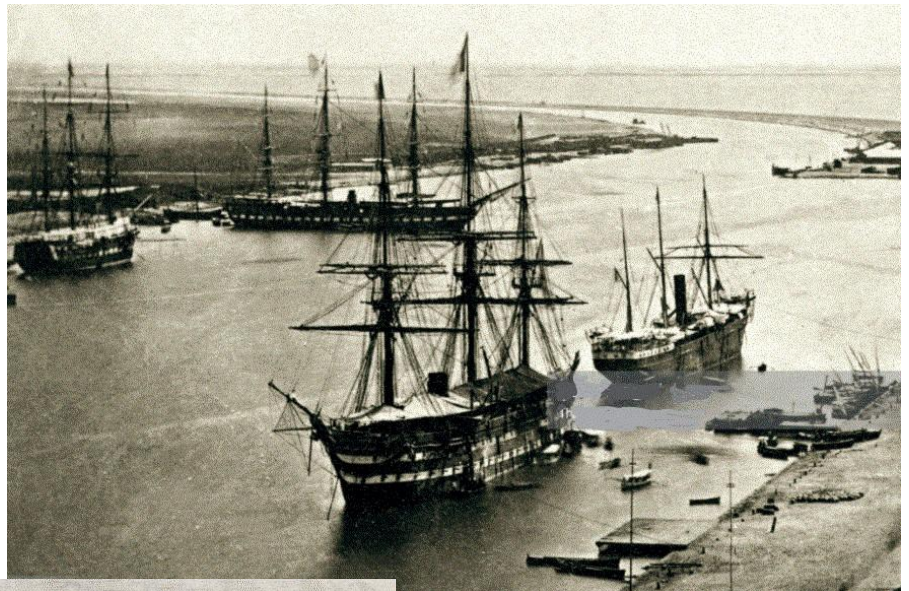
<sup>128</sup> WDM Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April 1875



The passage south made by AUDACIOUS proved to be embarrassing for some and worrying for others. She had begun the transit being towed by a canal steam tug, but that was abandoned part way down for AUDACIOUS to use her engine. In spite of that, they could not keep a straight course and she began bouncing off the banks of the canal much to the annoyance of both Canal Authorities and the Senior Ship's Officers as there was a considerable risk of damage to both canal and ship's hull. Damage to the banks was expected as a fact of life, as ships movement through the water caused constant erosion and as consequence dredgers were permanently placed in the canal for that very purpose. The illustration above shows a Troop Ship for India passing one of those dredgers in about 1882.



If the IRON DUKE had adhered strictly to her schedule then she would have found herself in Port Said just as it was hit by a heavy westerly gale that lasted from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> March and caused a number of ships to drag their anchors and suffer superficial damage. As it was, the 'Duke' arrived in the aftermath on **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March**. The extortionate toll demanded of the ship was disputed, but it was paid.



These two images from the Getty Library represent the very early years of the canal and Port Said, on the left, is in its infancy.

The lighthouse on the left bank can also be pinpointed. The image above is next to the basin, which can be seen on the right bank of the inland extremity of the town.

IRON DUKE left for Malta on **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> April 1875**.



---

## One More Month at Sea

News that the AVON had reached Gibraltar on the 6<sup>th</sup> April probably raised no interest beyond that of her own crew, but she was doggedly keeping ahead of her former Admiral in the IRON DUKE which had arrived in Malta on **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> April**. EIGHT days from Port Said seems excessive for the 1181 nautical miles, but it is spot on for 6 knots, her ubiquitous speed and exactly on schedule. This announcement suggested that she would leave on the following day, but that was unrealistic and not in accordance with her intended departure.<sup>129</sup>

On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April Vice Admiral Shadwell was entertained by General van Straubensee together with Lieutenant Commander Frank de Rougemont and Lieutenant Atkinson which seemed to be a little out of the ordinary. De Rougemont was the captain of the HELICON, a paddle vessel that was about to be undocked in Malta's dockyard. HELICON was a despatch vessel built in 1865 and displacing about 1000 tons. She had been the unlucky vessel to carry the news to England concerning the loss of the CAPTAIN in 1870.

Charles Van Straubensee had been the Governor of Malta since 1872 where he was born in 1812 as the second son of a junior Royal Artillery Officer. He led the attack on Canton whilst he was Commander of the British Forces in Hong Kong during the Second Opium War, so no doubt, he could reminisce with Shadwell, to the amusement of two attentive junior naval officers.

Valetta, Malta was home to the Mediterranean Fleet and its Receiving Ship was HIBERNIA flying the flag of Rear Admiral Edward Augustus Inglefield who was also Superintendent of the Dockyard. However Inglefield was also a Fellow of the Royal Society to which he had been elected in 1853 so again Shadwell was on common ground and their promotions to Vice Admiral would follow that year although Shadwell's was imminent (20<sup>th</sup> April 1875).<sup>130</sup>

IRON DUKE left the imposing Grand Harbour of Valetta on **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 1875**. It was 1144 nautical miles to Gibraltar which at 6 knots would occupy almost 8 days. This would be a little behind schedule and mean that Shadwell would not have reached harbour when his promotion would be made public, but that could wait. The AVON reached Spithead on the day that their former Admiral received his promotion. I don't think they would have noticed. They were about to be Paid Off.

The 'Duke' arrived at the 'Rock' on the afternoon of **Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April** and left again at 11.45 on the following morning – **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1875**, but they had been in Gibraltar long enough to be told of a deviation to their schedule.<sup>131</sup> IRON DUKE had been ordered to call into Lisbon in Portugal to meet with the Channel Fleet lying in the Tagus River under the command of Rear Admiral Beauchamp P. Seymour flying his flag in the AGINCOURT. Her instructions were to embark the invalids from the Channel Fleet and to bring them home to Plymouth. There are no reports of this meeting off Portugal, but according to the timings it would seem likely that IRON DUKE had increased her speed to 8/9 knots to make the rendezvous within 48 hours of departure, at midday on the Saturday or earlier.

---

## Expected Home from China

News that the IRON DUKE was due to arrive in Plymouth Sound that same day appeared in the *Western Daily Mercury* on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May. However, a nominal 6-day passage for the 867 nautical miles suggests that she was using daylight hours for a departure from Lisbon and an arrival at Plymouth Sound, so it was **8 a.m. on the Sunday morning 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1875**, before she hove into view making for an anchorage inside the Breakwater. Excitement among the crew must have been running high and I can well imagine that it was difficult to concentrate on the scores of tasks ordered by the Petty Officers in mooring and securing the ship from her long voyage. Henry and his shipmates

---

<sup>129</sup> *Shipping & Mercantile Gazette* 24 April 1875

<sup>130</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser* 1 May 1875

<sup>131</sup> *Hampshire Independent* 5 May 1875

would have to be patient. They now lay within earshot of the Flagship, the ROYAL ADELAIDE, so their first duty was to fire the saluting guns in deference to the Flag of the Commander in Chief Devonport, whilst the next duty was to welcome alongside the Admiral's steam yacht VIVID carrying dispatches for Vice-Admiral Sir C. Shadwell. When she cast off to return to her moorings off the C-in-C's Official Residence at Mount Wise, she was carrying Vice-Admiral Shadwell on board. The protocol had to be followed. He was obliged to make a courtesy call on Admiral the Hon. Sir Henry Keppel. It was, after all, almost four years since Sir Charles Shadwell had left Devonport for the China Station, but a dinner party to celebrate his return and his promotion was a very pleasant way to end his commission.

Work began in earnest on Monday morning when a tug brought out the barges from the Armament Depot so that the IRON DUKE could discharge all her powder and shot. This was a tense time for those in charge of the operation, whilst the Admiral left the ship in his gig for Plymouth's North Road Station and a long, first class train journey to visit Admiralty in London's Whitehall.

By Monday afternoon, all was now ready to bring the IRON DUKE into harbour and after her short journey along the winding channel that led into the Hamoaze, she was moored alongside the Master Attendant's jetty, which I would suggest was the jetty at Morice Yard and there was good reason for doing this. She was carrying scores of Supernumeraries from the Channel Fleet that were destined for the Receiving Ship ROYAL ADELAIDE and that was the nearest point to her mooring, off St. John's Lake. She also had hospital cases that would be taken around into Stonehouse Creek for landing at the Naval Hospital.<sup>132</sup> Once that was done she was probably taken to a jetty in the Keyham Steam Yard by one of Dockyard's steam tugs secured alongside.

As Tuesday morning dawned, the crew still had plenty to do around the ship. After breakfast the men were assembled in various working parties and one of them was detailed to go aloft and unfurl the sails so that they might hang down to dry. The foretopsail yard was Able Seaman Edward Hellings's place and he didn't think twice about that task. He had done it hundreds of times before. Within seconds he had nimbly reached the top of the first pole of the mast and he was just negotiating the 'futtock' rigging,<sup>133</sup> when his barefoot slipped and he lost his balance. As he fell, he struck his head against the sheet anchor and plummeted into the water. Those on deck who heard his cry, rushed to the ship's side to attempt a rescue, but his body was seen to sink immediately it hit the water. The newspaper report of the incident conveyed the hopelessness of the situation.

*Divers were used throughout the rest of the day in the hope that they would be able to recover the body, but as the tide was running out at the time, it is feared that it has carried the body with it.<sup>134</sup>*

This was a distressing end to the commission. The Flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Shadwell had been flying in IRON DUKE for three years and nine months and the following evening, at sunset, that flag was struck in front of the assembled crew, to formally bring the commission to an end. Edward Hellings never saw that flag lowered. After surviving the rigours of shipboard life and the dangers of the East for almost four years, he had died ignominiously in the River Tamar.

His messmates would now have the depressing task of auctioning his kit at the foot of the main mast to raise a little cash to send to his family. Undoubtedly those belongings would have included presents gathered from the Orient and bought in exotic ports. Presents that would have been a surprise and a delight to his family after such a long absence from home. He was a native of Barnstaple and his friends were about to pay him a visit after so long abroad,<sup>135</sup> but he would never set foot in Barnstaple again. There was little enthusiasm among the bidders for the pitiful possessions and it was a silent and subdued Mess that evening. I wonder if Ted Hellings had shared that Mess with Henry?

---

<sup>132</sup> *Western Morning News* Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1875

<sup>133</sup> Short shrouds connecting top-mast rigging to lower mast. A sheet anchor is the heavy, emergency anchor

<sup>134</sup> *Western Daily Mercury* Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 1875

<sup>135</sup> *North Devon Journal* Thursday 13 May 1875 Page 5 – His parents were Henry and Grace of Rackfield, Barnstaple.



Several days later, the turbulent currents of the estuary tired of wrestling with his body and dumped it on the shoreline of the Mount Edgcumbe Estate. When it was found, it didn't take the Parish Officers long to discover who it was and arrangements were soon made for Edward Hellings, late able seaman of the IRON DUKE, to be laid to rest in the Church Yard at Maker, where his memorial can be found.

---

## The Last Day on Board

On Monday afternoon 17<sup>th</sup> May, a strange little paddle sloop left Spithead and headed for Plymouth. The SALAMANDER under the command of Staff Commander Kiddle was among the oldest steam vessels afloat being contemporary with COMET and built in 1832 and she was destined to play a part in the final act of the IRON DUKE's de-commissioning. She nosed gently into the Hamoaze on the tide of the following morning carrying Supernumeraries for the ROYAL ADELAIDE and about 50 Royal Marines and she landed them all at the Royal William Yard, but she now had the task of 'conveying to the eastward men paid off from the IRON DUKE.' She wasted no time with men anxious to be home. She left again, within hours of her arrival.

It is perhaps appropriate that I should let the **Naval & Military** correspondent of the *Western Daily Mercury* have the last word.

*The IRON DUKE, double screw armour plated, Captain W. Arthur, late Flagship of Vice-Admiral Sir Chas. F.A. Shadwell, K.C.B., F.R.S., on the China Station, was paid off alongside the Devonport Dockyard yesterday morning, and put out of commission, the crew having been granted eight weeks leave. The payment took place under the superintendence of Captain Algernon C. F. Heneage of the ROYAL ADELAIDE. The detachment of the Royal Marines was landed at the Dockyard and marched to their headquarters in Stonehouse.*<sup>136</sup>

Henry had been in Plymouth for ten days, but I have gained the impression that they were not allowed to set foot on shore during that time. After such a long time away, I am sure that any relaxation in the naval discipline could have created unwanted problems for everyone involved. The tension among some in the crew must have been intolerable, yet naval seamen were renowned for their stoicism and tolerance. Then, suddenly it was all over. Henry was released on the morning of **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 1875** with a pocket full of money, a kit bag full of presents and EIGHT WEEKS leave.

I wonder if he had been able to get a message to Jane to meet him outside the Albert Gate. Would she want to come? Would she have recognised him in the crowd? One thing is certain, the house in Amity Place was alive with conversation on that special evening and for many days to come, but Jane would have hidden the sadness in her heart at the loss of poor little Charlie.

## Postscript

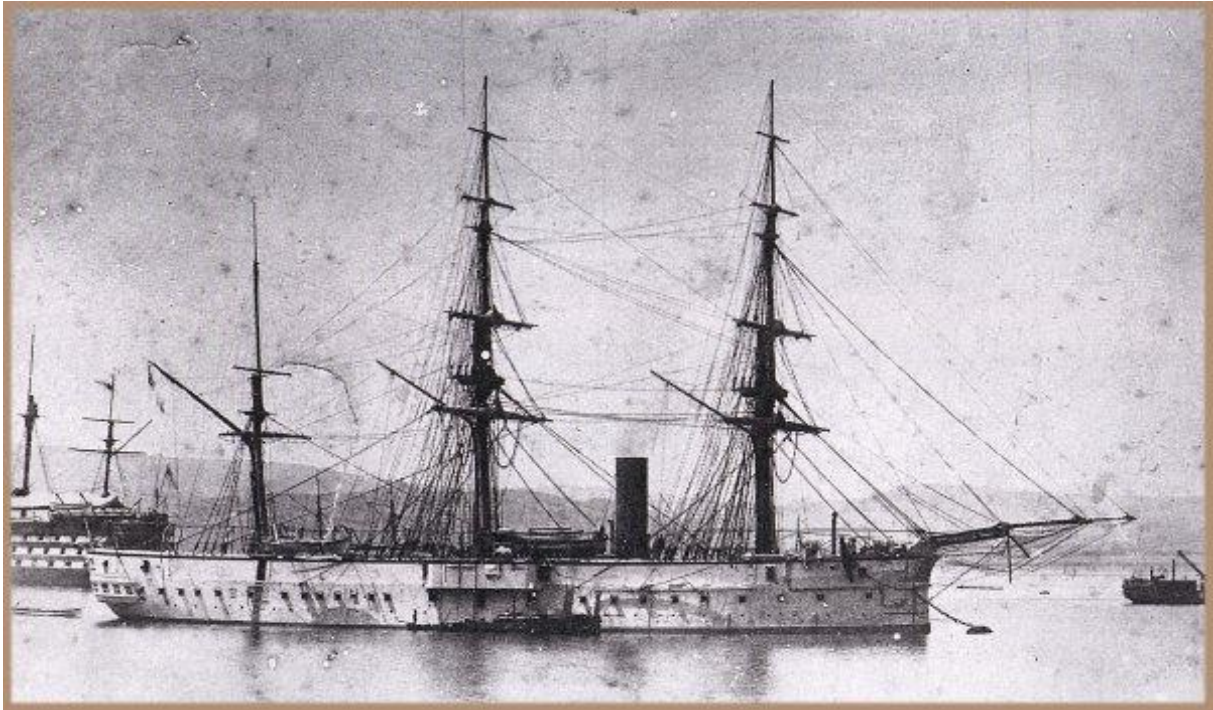
IRON DUKE was placed in the First Division of the Steam Reserve and there was immediate talk of a quick turnaround in the Dockyard so that she could replace the AURORA as Coastguard Ship at Greenock on the Clyde.

**Vice Admiral Sir Charles Shadwell** was invited to the Archbishop of Canterbury's summer Garden Party along with 800 other titled and honourable people on the 31<sup>st</sup> May, but the weather was so poor that they had to make do with the reception rooms and library in Lambeth Palace. He was then invited to be the Principal of the Royal Navy's School for Officers at Greenwich.

**Captain William Arthur**, about whom not a single word was written throughout the four years on the China Station, didn't do very much until he was invited to be the Captain of VERNON, the new torpedo school of the Royal Navy at Portsmouth in May 1876. He did this for five years before accepting a CB and a place as a naval attaché at the British Embassy in Washington.

---

<sup>136</sup> WDM Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 1875



This photo of the IRON DUKE is alleged to have been taken in 1870. It is a very important photo showing the ship off Millbrook Creek with the gunnery ship CAMBRIDGE behind her stern, but the white painted hull of the Far Eastern Fleet sets her apart. If it is accurate, then it is more likely to be the summer of 1871 after all the stability trials were complete, but note the excessive height of the masts. The reduction in that height was meant to have been a part of those modifications, but there are no contemporary images of her on the China Station to demonstrate her appearance.

## Henry's Subsequent Career 1875 – 1877

Henry would not go back to sea again until 7<sup>th</sup> August 1877 when he joined SIRIUS.

During the intervening 28 months he was moved SIX times between the THREE Training Ships moored in the Hamoaze. Two of those ships were for the Boys. He spent the last two months of 1876 on the IMPLACABLE where his training had begun and he spent 93 days on the IMPREGNABLE during 1877, but the vast majority of his time was spent in four different roles on Devonport's Gunnery Ship CAMBRIDGE

19 May 1875	31 March 1876	CAMBRIDGE	287 days
1 April 1876	31 October 1876	CAMBRIDGE	214 days
1 November 1876	31 December 1876	IMPLACABLE	61 days
1 January 1877	7 April 1877	CAMBRIDGE	97 days
8 April 1877	9 July 1877	IMPREGNABLE	95 days
10 July 1877	6 August 1877	CAMBRIDGE	28 days

There is little indication on Henry's service record which might suggest the purpose of these long and short spells on each ship. I am sure that his first long stay on the CAMBRIDGE was as a part of her crew, although the reason for shifting him from one Pay Book to another is unknown. Bearing in mind that Henry had had two months leave, it was mid-July before he actually took up his post and he then enjoyed more than 15 months on one ship in one place.

The two later short spells on the Gunnery Ship may have been courses of instruction in gunnery which he had never previously received and this would put him in a good position for further promotion to Leading Seaman and Petty Officer which came his way whilst he served on the SIRIUS – and that is another story - as they say!



## A Tale of Two Sisters

On Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 1875, barely six weeks after Henry had joined the CAMBRIDGE, news spread like wildfire around the messes that the IRON DUKE had sunk the VANGUARD. What nonsense is that? Surely they must be kidding? I don't believe it - but it was true.

Almost 150 years have passed since the day of that collision and VANGUARD is still there, sitting almost upright on a sandy seabed, remarkably intact. Divers from Dublin University's Sub-Aqua Club visit her regularly and revel in the experience she gives them. They drift back in time to Henry's days on her and they experience what was familiar to him. Her anchors and guns are still there. They know her in detail and have written at length about their experiences.

So what happened on that fateful day?

This story is best told by those with and in interest in the Coastguards of Yesteryear.

The VANGUARD had been stationed at Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) for four years and had just completed a summer season of training duties for some hundreds of Coastguards stationed around the Irish coasts. Most of these men were family men who endured two weeks of rigorous training, sorely missing their families at home on the Coastguard stations. The Navy considered these exercises necessary to keep the men ready for active duty should the need arise. From the last week in July 1875 the 1<sup>st</sup>. Reserve Squadron of the Royal Navy had conducted a cruise around the coasts of Ireland. The object of the cruise was to test the efficiency of the gun crews at gunnery practice. The ships of the squadron were WARRIOR, DEFENCE, HECTOR, ACHILLES, PENELOPE and IRON DUKE. All were full-rigged ironclads and were among the most modern of their day. The cruise was nearly completed when they arrived in Dublin Bay at the end of August. The DEFENCE returned to Lough Swilly and the PENELOPE to Sheerness.



During the summer months 350 Coastguards in Ireland had undergone 7 to 14 days training at sea aboard the vanguard. The last of them disembarked on the 30<sup>th</sup> August. At about 10.20 a.m. on the 1<sup>st</sup> September the VANGUARD joined the fleet in Dublin Bay and proceeded single line ahead while the speed gradually built up to 7 knots. There were now four ships going on to Queenstown headed by the WARRIOR, HECTOR, VANGUARD, IRON DUKE and ACHILLES in that order. At about 11.25 a.m. the squadron passed the Kish light in moderately clear weather. At this time the ACHILLES was ordered to depart for Liverpool by 12.30. The IRON DUKE and the VANGUARD now proceeded to steam parallel to the other two ships and by 12.35 p.m. were engaged in steering this new course when the ships ran into a dense fog bank, giving visibility of less than a ship's length. The outline of a sailing ship began to form through the dense fog on the starboard side of the VANGUARD. The helm was thrown hard to starboard and the engines rung to stop, just missing this merchant sailing ship.

Orders were given to turn VANGUARD back on its original course and unwittingly this put her across the path of the approaching, though still invisible, IRON DUKE. At 12.50 p.m. the IRON DUKE cruising at 8 knots struck her sister ship a mortal blow nearly amidships, the fog being so dense that neither ship saw each other till less than 40 yards apart, by which time it was too late to do anything. IRON DUKE's ram had torn a hole 9 feet long by 3 feet wide in VANGUARD's outer skin which quickly flooded the engine and boiler rooms. Water was entering at the rate of 500 gallons a minute it was clear that the ship was doomed. All the crew were now ferried to the IRON DUKE. The fog cleared before 1.40 p.m. when the Captain of the VANGUARD was the last to leave the ship. She had come only 18 miles from the harbour at Kingstown. At the Court Martial on board the ROYAL ADELAIDE in Devonport, Captain Dawkins of the VANGUARD was severely reprimanded and dismissed from his ship, never being employed again.



Water was entering at the rate of 500 gallons a minute it was clear that the ship was doomed. All the crew were now ferried to the IRON DUKE. The fog cleared before 1.40 p.m. when the Captain of the VANGUARD was the last to leave the ship. She had come only 18 miles from the harbour at Kingstown. At the Court Martial on board the ROYAL ADELAIDE in Devonport, Captain Dawkins of the VANGUARD was severely reprimanded and dismissed from his ship, never being employed again.

The ingress of water that extinguished the boilers stopped the steam driven pumps and she sank within the hour, but there was time to rescue the entire crew of 360 men.

For a description of the wreck - <https://dusac.org/dive-guides/hms-vanguard/>

The Vanguard lies on a sandy seabed in around 50m, tilted over towards her starboard side. The wreck lies with the bow to the south and the stern to the north. The wreck rises around 16m from the seabed to the top of the gun battery. Her solid construction and iron hull have ensured she remains very intact, and still very recognisably a ship. The size of the wreck means that it is generally only possible to see a section of it on each dive. The following information is put together from my dive log notes (S.P.) and reports by other DUSAC divers who have dived on the wreck, cross-referenced with the ship's plans.

She lies at 53° 12' 45.288" N, 5° 46' 14.808" W  
This is to the south of Dublin Bay, off the coast of Wicklow

The wreck is protected under the National Monument Act,  
and is owned by Eugene Houlihan, Co.