

CHRISTMAS ON BOARD HMS WARRIOR

Alan Brindle



Alan armed and ready to go!

When a request came to the MLS for a lantern show on board the Royal Navy's ship HMS *Warrior*, now permanently moored in Portsmouth's historic naval dockyard, I volunteered immediately.

HMS *Warrior* was Britain's first iron-hulled, armoured battleship and was built at Blackwall on the River Thames. Launched in 1860 she joined the Royal Navy in 1861 and became the pride of Queen Victoria's fleet. The ship was 418 ft long and had a displacement of 9,210 tons. She carried 40 guns, 702 men and was powered principally by steam as well as wind. Under steam she reached 14.4 knots, under sail 13 knots and with combined steam and sail 17.2 knots – the fastest afloat in her day. She gave her name to the class of ironclad battleships built subsequently.

In 1863, under the command of Captain Cochrane, HMS *Warrior* completed a 2,600 mile tour of Great Britain, inviting visitors on board at every port. There was enormous interest everywhere they called in. This was the time recreated on 3 and 4 December 2022 when people were invited aboard as the crew



HMS Warrior ready for Christmas

prepared for Christmas. All the participants, including me, were dressed as they would have been on the Tour of Britain in 1863 and, of course, a magic lantern show was part of those celebrations.

I was assigned a space below decks, alongside a cannon and near a rack of guns! Although the black-out was a challenge, people arrived in small groups for a short

show and then moved on, altogether a great many shows. Those who were really interested – and there were quite a few – returned for a longer show at the end of the day when it was dark outside. This was a very special event and I thoroughly enjoyed being part of it. For the first time HMS *Warrior* had a higher footfall than HMS *Victory* nearby – and in fact I have already been invited back for 2023!

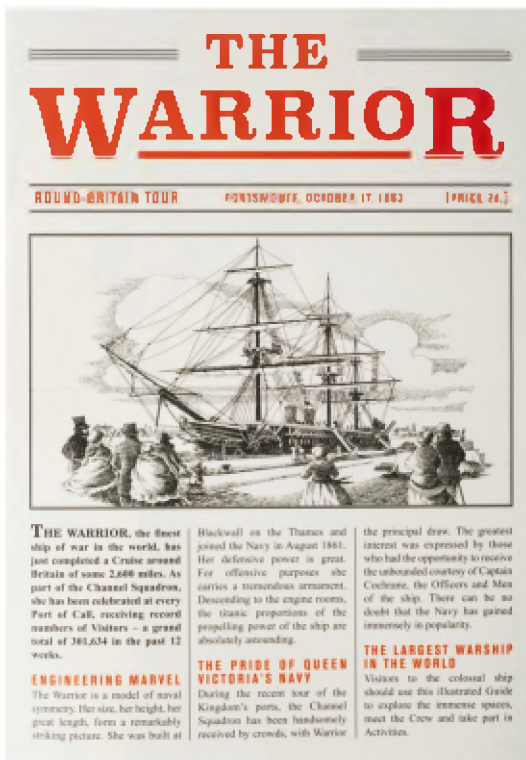


A suitably-dressed early visitor to the show (left). I was asked to include the 'man eating/swallowing rats' slide as there were plenty of rats on board in 1863. I told the visitors that the 'man' was the Captain of the ship!



A cannon's-eye view of the show (left)

The ship's company and 'guests' in 1863 costume (right)



THE WARRIOR, the finest ship of war in the world, has just completed a Cruise around Britain of some 2,600 miles. As part of the Channel Squadron, she has been celebrated at every Port of Call, receiving record numbers of Visitors – a grand total of 348,634 in the past 12 weeks.

ENGINEERING MARVEL
The *Warrior* is a model of naval symmetry. Her size, her height, her great length, form a remarkably striking picture. She was built at Blackwall on the Thames and joined the Navy in August 1861. Her defensive power is great. For offensive purposes she carries a tremendous armament. Descending to the engine room, the Titanic proportions of the propelling power of the ship are absolutely astounding.

THE PRIDE OF QUEEN VICTORIA'S NAVY
During the recent tour of the Kingdom's ports, the Channel Squadron has been handsomely received by crowds, with *Warrior* the principal draw. The greatest interest was expressed by those who had the opportunity to receive the unbounded courtesy of Captain Cochrane, the Officers and Men of the ship. There can be no doubt that the Navy has gained immensely in popularity.

THE LARGEST WARSHIP IN THE WORLD
Visitors to the colossal ship should use this illustrated Guide to explore the immense spaces, meet the Crew and take part in Activities.

The 1863 Tour of Britain by HMS Warrior



HMS Warrior today in Portsmouth dockyard