

HMS Fervent - tender to HMS Daedalus 1865 to 1878

During 1864 it was decided that a small gun-boat was to be provided to act as a tender for the Daedalus, and the vessel chosen was HMS Fervent, which had been built by the firm of R. & H. Green in their Blackwall Yard at Brunswick Street in London, from where her launching took place on 23 January 1856.

She was one of the Albacore-class of 98 gun-boats that had been built for the Royal Navy during 1855 and 1856 for use in the Crimean War, and consequently such vessels also became known as 'Crimean gun-boats'. They were wooden-hulled, with both steam power and sails and, being of shallow draught, were intended for coastal bombardment in the waters of the Baltic and Black Seas. Their design by W. H. Walker was approved on 18 April 1855 and the vessels, which carried a crew of 36 to 40 men, a typical example costing £9867, of which the hull accounted for £5656 and machinery £3298.

These vessels measured 106 feet in length at the gun-deck and 93 feet 2½ inches at the keel. They were 22 feet in beam, 8 feet deep in the hold and had a draught of 6 feet 6 inches, while their displacement was 284 tons and measured 232 tons Builder's Old Measurement. Fitted with two-cylinder horizontal single-expansion steam engines that provided 60 nominal horsepower through a single screw, the vessels were capable of a speed of 7.5 knots. Initially they were armed with one 68-pounder muzzle-loading smooth bore gun; one 32-pounder muzzle-loading smooth bore gun, and two 24-pounder howitzers, but after the Crimean conflict had ended the few that retained their role as gunboats went on to carry a variety of different armament.

On 23 February 1856 Lieutenant Alfred Mitchell (1827 to 1864), who the previous year had been seriously wounded in attacking Sebastopol, was appointed the first commanding officer of HMS Fervent, a post he held until 16 May, when he was promoted to the rank of Commander. However, the vessel failed to become operational, as on 30 March 1856 the Crimean War had ended and the specially built gun-boats were no longer required. As a result the majority, including the Fervent, were placed in storage, and although some were later sold off or converted for other purposes, 45 were broken up during the 1860s without having ever seen service. Their early demise had been due mainly to faulty construction, including the use of short bolts and ill-seasoned wood which quickly rotted, although in some cases the process had been accelerated by a lack of ventilation while they were being stored.

Unfortunately, in the rush to build the vessels short cuts had indeed been made, but as Richard and Henry Green were later at pains to point out that even though they had not been given sufficient time to build the vessels, and not enough good quality timber had been available, the Admiralty had failed to provide the requisite number of inspectors to supervise the work. The result was that even those that had escaped breaking, such as the Fervent, had inherent faults which caused reliability problems throughout the rest of their time in service.

The new lease of life for HMS Fervent in fact began when it was reported that on 4 November 1864 she had "made a trial of her machinery" at Devonport while in the temporary charge of Master (Sub-Lieutenant) William Henry Harris of HMS Indus, the steam guard ship at the dockyard. All went well, and on 6 November HMS Fervent left Devonport for Bristol, where she arrived on the 9th. By then she was described as being "armed with a single Armstrong 40 pounder and other guns of heavy calibre", while on the following day, and still under the temporary charge of Harris, she started again for Plymouth, where she arrived on the 13th in order to collect lighter guns for HMS Daedalus.

On 2 June 1865 Lieutenant Annesley Turner Denham (*see below 1*), the son of the distinguished marine surveyor, Rear-Admiral Henry Mangles Denham F.R.S., who had been employed in 1832 in the survey of the Bristol Channel, was officially appointed to HMS Daedalus for service in the Fervent. He was also to assist Commander Field of the Daedalus generally in the duties connected with the drilling of the Royal Naval Reserve at Bristol, and to occasionally go out into the Severn Estuary to practice the Volunteers. Sadly, however, on 15 January 1866, as the Fervent was proceeding down the River Avon, one of the men fell overboard and was drowned.

Lieutenant Denham left the Fervent in early 1866 when he was posted to HMS Lion, and consequently on 2 May 1866 he was replaced by Lieutenant-Commander John Jervis Gregory (*see below 2*), whose service record shows that he had been transferred to the Daedalus for service on the tender.

By the spring of 1866 the term 'Fenians' was being generally used to describe members of a secret oath-bound fraternal organisation dedicated to the establishment of an "independent democratic republic" in Ireland. Founded in 1858, the rising the Fenians organized in Ireland in early 1867 was a failure, and later in the year was followed by a series of attacks in England aimed at freeing Fenian prisoners. As a result, by the end of 1867 Britain was on high alert, and in late December rumours began spreading that a vessel of suspicious appearance, without papers or colours, and possibly a 'Finian privateer', had appeared off the west coast of Ireland.

This caused five war steamers to be dispatched to the coasts of Clare and Galway in pursuit of the mystery vessel while, on the 23rd, two very fast warships, the despatch vessel HMS Helicon and HMS Vivid, left Plymouth Sound for "special duty in the Channel". In fact the Helicon, which was soon working out of Queenstown, was involved in coordinating part of the operation by calling in every second day at Castletown Berehaven to pick up instructions for delivery to HMS Research and the other vessels then cruising off the nearby coast.

It was also considered that the 'Finian privateer' might suddenly appear in the Bristol Channel or Severn Estuary and so, on 29 December 1867, the gun-boat Fervent, which had for some time had been stationed near the Daedalus in the Floating Harbour, was suddenly dispatched to the Severn Estuary. She

left her moorings about five o'clock in the evening, and went down to the Cumberland Basin, whence she steamed down the river about eight, sailing under sealed orders, not to be opened until she reached Kingroad. The *Fervent*, which was under the command of Lieutenant Gregory, was said to "have left the pier amidst considerable cheering from a large body of spectators".

It was also reported that directions had been sent to Plymouth for a detachment of about dozen marines and two guns' crews to proceed to join the *Fervent* when she anchored off Portishead. In fact they finally arrived between one and two p.m. on the afternoon of the 30th and immediately proceeded to board her, making about 36 in all, in addition to the usual crew.

Soon after, the rumour spread in Bristol that the 'Fenian privateer', that by then was then said to have been cruising in the Bristol Channel, had actually been captured by the *Fervent*. However, the officer in charge of HMS *Daedalus*, which also acted as the naval headquarters of the Bristol district, quickly informed local newspaper reporters that it was doubted whether there was any privateer at all the Bristol Channel, even though some other armed vessels had been sent on the same business as the *Fervent*, and were then lying off Lundy Island.

It having been established that the whole affair had been nothing more than a false alarm, matters returned to normal, and on 26 June 1868 the gun-boat *Fervent*, which was armed with two guns and was still operating as the tender to HMS *Daedalus*, was taken into the harbour at Plymouth by its commander Lieutenant Gregory. There she had some defects made good and, on Saturday 1 August, the vessel was finally able to depart Plymouth at the start of her return trip to Bristol.

On 14 May 1869 Lieutenant Blair Skeffington Hamilton (*see below 3*) took over as commander of the *Fervent* tender, and on 25 June proceeded with her to Portishead with stores for the *Daedalus*. Then, by 1871, it was time to sort out certain problems with the *Fervent*, and Lieutenant-Commander Hamilton took her down to Devonport where, after having had her defects made good, she was undocked at Keyham on 15 September 1871.

Shortly after the *Fervent* required further repair work at Devonport, and it was later reported that Hamilton had carried out a satisfactory trial of her machinery on 16 January 1872, she would be setting out for Bristol on the following day in order to re-join the *Daedalus*. However, although she had been moved from Keyham to the hulk HMS *Cambrian*, to take on her stores prior to leaving for her station at Bristol, the *Fervent* was detained for several days at Devonport by the stormy state of the weather, until she finally departed on the 20th.

However, on 15 May Lieutenant Hamilton relinquished his command of the *Fervent* having been granted six months leave, at which time Commander Parsons of the *Daedalus* wrote that he had "performed his duties in an efficient and officer like manner and left *Fervent* in a highly satisfactory

condition.” On 16 May 1872 his place was taken by Lieutenant William Pennell Barrow (*see below 4*) who remained in command of the vessel until he was obliged to retire on 31 December 1872, having been promoted from Lieutenant to Commander.

Then, on 9 January 1873, it was announced that Lieutenant Henry Chapman Walker (*see below 5*) had been ordered to the *Fervent*, which he commanded until 22 May 1874, when he was replaced by Lieutenant Frederick George Dundas (*see below 6*) who had been appointed to the vessel on the 20th. Summer cruising in the Bristol Channel and around the southern coasts of England and Wales was also undertaken, and on 18 July 1876 the *Fervent* was reported to have arrived at Pembroke, while on 17 September it slipped into Plymouth to be patched up. The work seems to have been completed by 19 October, as on that day she was moved out of Keyham to take a trip to test her machinery and, if that trial proved satisfactory, it was expected that she would proceed to Bristol as soon as the weather was favourable. However, at the time it was declared that she was only fit for three month’s service.

Dundas served aboard the *Fervent* until 31 May 1877, while on the previous day it had been announced that Lieutenant Arthur George Fullerton (*see below 7*) had been selected to take his place. Consequently it was to be he who was in charge during the forthcoming summer cruising season. On 8 August the *Fervent* was reported at Tenby, having already visited Weston super Mare, Lundy, Pembroke, and Long Shipping near Pen-Lôn in Anglesey, before returning to Bristol on the 11th and landing a detachment of local Royal Naval Artillery Volunteer. Then, on the 14th she left again with another detachment for a week’s cruise.

During the 1878 cruising season the *Fervent* was reported as leaving Pembroke on 6 April en-route for Bristol, where later in the month instructions were received in Bristol from the Admiralty for her to proceed on ‘Special Service’. However, in going down the River Avon on the 23rd she went ashore on the Swash, a bank of mud at the mouth of the river near Dunball Island, and had to wait until the high tide on the 27th made it possible to float her off. HMS *Fervent* then proceeded back up the Avon the following morning and lay outside the landing stage until the afternoon’s tide when she was docked, after which no damage was found.

Although she later resumed cruising, and on 17 July was reported at Milford Haven with the 2nd Battery of the Bristol Brigade of the Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers, it was said by then that all she could do was to “hobble about the Channel wherever the tide may take her.” So it was that 1878 was to be her final season, as on 26 October Lieutenant-Commander Fullerton took HMS *Fervent* out of Bristol for the last time en-route for Devonport. She was reported at Ilfracombe on the 29th, having been detained by strong westerly winds, but after finally arriving at her destination, the *Fervent* was surveyed and condemned as not fit for service. As a result, she was recorded as having been scrapped at Devonport after Fullerton had been paid off there on 14 February 1879.

Also requires consulting:- Ship's Book for HMS Fervent - ADM 135/172 in the National Archives. - Reports and other papers giving the history of the maintenance of the hull, machinery and armament from construction to disposal. Not yet digitized.

Commanders of HMS Fervent while the tender to HMS Daedalus

(1) Annesley Turner Denham

Commanded HMS Fervent - 2 June 1865 to 1 May 1866

Annesley Turner Denham was born on 5 May 1835 at Toxteth Park in Liverpool, the second son of Henry Mangles Denham, RN, (1800 to 1887), a Fellow of the Royal Society, and his wife Isabella Cole (1806 to 1865). He was baptized on 9 August 1835 at St Peter's, Liverpool, and entered the Royal Navy in 1848.

Naval commissions:-

Mate (Sub-Lieutenant): 9 August 1854.

Lieutenant: 3 June 1856.

To Retired List as Commander: 1 October 1873.

Important life events:-

3 September 1873 - At All Saints church in Windsor, Denham married Cordelia Ellen Holding (1839 to 1926), eldest daughter of R. Holding Esq.

27 June 1899 - Annesley Turner Denham J.P., of 2 Queen's Terrace, Windsor in Berkshire, died after a short illness at his residence aged 64. His funeral on 1 July 1899 began with a service in All Saint's church, followed by interment at Windsor Cemetery.

(2) John Jervis Gregory

Commanded HMS Fervent - 2 May 1866 to 25 May 1869

John Jervis Gregory was born on 2 March 1838 at Swainswick, near Bath, the youngest son of John Jervis Gregory RN (1797 to 1841), and his wife Caroline Anne Filmer (1805 to 1857). The stepson of Captain Francis Lairdet RN, of the Royal Hospital, Greenwich, he entered the Royal Navy as a Naval Cadet on 11 March 1852, becoming a Midshipman on 1 April 1854.

Naval commissions:-

Mate (Sub-Lieutenant): 10 June 1857.

Lieutenant: 10 August 1859.

To Retired List as Commander: 1 October 1873.

Important life events:-

5 November 1854 - At Walcot church in Bath, John Jervis Gregory married Katherine Monro, the youngest daughter of David Monro of Allen, Ross-shire in Scotland.

27 February 1908 - At 1 Blackburn House, Blackburn Drive in Ayr in Scotland, Gregory fired a loaded gun at his wife intending to murder her. However, at the High Court in Glasgow on 8 May 1908 he was found unable to plead due to insanity.

17 May 1910 - John Jervis Gregory of Blackburn, Ayr, died aged 72.

(3) Blair Skeffington Hamilton

Commanded HMS Fervent - 26 May 1869 to 15 May 1872

Blair Skeffington Hamilton was born on 12 October 1838 at Kingstown in Co. Dublin, the son of James Hamilton, J.P. (1807 to 1877) and his wife Eglantine Georgina Blair (1805 to 1885). He entered the Royal Navy as a Naval Cadet on 11 November 1852, becoming a Midshipman on 11 November 1854.

Naval commissions:-

Mate (Sub-Lieutenant): 15 December 1858.
Lieutenant: 26 November 1859.
To Retired List as Commander: 23 December 1872.

Important life events:-

13 January 1882 - Granted Master's Certificate of Service No. 76466, issued at Dublin by order of the Board of Trade. He was then living at 'Cornacassa House', Monaghan Town, Co. Monaghan in Ireland.

19 December 1897 - Blair Skeffington of Hamilton of the 'Grosvenor Hotel', Sydney in Australia died unmarried in the Sydney Hospital aged 59, and was buried on the 22nd in the Waverley Cemetery at Sydney.

(4) William Pennell Barrow

Commanded HMS Fervent - 16 May 1872 to 31 December 1872

William Pennell Barrow was born 8 January 1841 at Molesey in Surrey, the third son of George Barrow (1806 to 1876) and his wife Rosamund Hester Elizabeth Pennell (1810 to 1906). He was baptized on 21 February 1841 at St Peter's, West Molesey, and entered the Royal Navy as a Naval Cadet on 9 March 1854, becoming a Midshipman on 7 March 1856.

Naval commissions:-

Mate (Sub-Lieutenant): 7 March 1860.
Lieutenant: 27 August 1860.
To Retired List as Commander: 31 December 1872.

Important life events:-

6 July 1863 - William Pennell Barrow died at 'Ulverstone Lodge', Addison Road in Dublin, aged 32.

(5) Henry Chapman Walker

Commanded HMS Fervent - 17 January 1873 to 22 May 1874

Henry Chapman Walker was born on 13 October 1843 at Whitby in Yorkshire, the second son of James Walker (1799 to 1861) a solicitor of Airy Hill, and his wife Elizabeth Chapman (1815 to 1849). He entered the Royal Navy as a Naval Cadet on 10 April 1856, before becoming a Midshipman on 10 April 1858.

Naval commissions:-

Mate (Sub-Lieutenant): 13 October 1862.
Lieutenant: 9 November 1864.
To Retired List as Commander: 22 December 1881.

Important life events:-

4 September 1880 - At the Mairie in the 7th Arrondissement of Paris (civil ceremony), followed services at the nearby St Thomas a' Aquin Roman Catholic church and the English

Church in Paris, Walker, of High Stakesby near Whitby, married Olympe Melanie Cecile Mareschal, the only child of Major Mareschal of the French Engineers, who was in charge of the tomb of Napoleon 1st on St Helena.

16 February 1887 - Henry Chapman Walker of High Stakesby near Whitby, died at his residence after a painful and lingering illness, aged 43, and was buried on the 19th in Whitby Cemetery.

(6) Frederick George Dundas

Commanded HMS Fervent - 20 May 1874 to 31 May 1877

Frederick George Dundas was born on 16 June 1845 at Durham, the son of the Reverend George Charles Dundas (1814 to 1883), and his wife Constance Stevenson (1819 to 1858). He entered the Royal Navy as a Naval Cadet on 7 June 1859, before becoming a Midshipman on 23 June 1861.

Naval commissions:-

Sub-Lieutenant: 5 July 1865.

Lieutenant: 21 January 1867.

To Retired List as Commander: 19 June 1890.

Important life events:-

10 February 1866 - At St Mary's church in Leicester, Dundas married Eliza Beck (1843 to 1926), the eldest daughter of Charles Beck of Nottingham.

25 February 1884 - Granted Master's Certificate of Service No. 76515, issued at London by order of the Board of Trade. He was then living at 120 Ladbrooke Grove, Kensington.

5 March 1899 - Frederick George Dundas of 95 Comeragh Road, West Kensington, Middlesex, died after a brief illness accelerated by malarial fever contracted while serving in both East and West Africa, and on the 9th was buried in the Beck family vault in Nottingham Church Cemetery, aged 53.

(7) Arthur George Fullerton

Commanded HMS Fervent - 28 May 1877 to 14 February 1879

Arthur George Fullerton was born on 23 September 1844 at Stretton on Dunsmore in Warwickshire, the youngest son of John Fullerton (1803 to 1871), and his wife Louisa Skipwith (1806 to 1875). He was baptized on 25 October 1844 at Stretton on Dunsmore, and entered the Royal Navy as a Naval Cadet on 5 June 1858, being one of the first to be trained on board a harbour ship.

Naval commissions:-

Lieutenant: 28 June 1866.

Commander: 31 December 1882.

To Retired List as Captain: 13 March 1894.

Important life events:-

29 October 1872 - At St Peter in Plymouth, Fullerton married Isabel Molesworth (1845 to 1906), the daughter of Colonel St. A. Molesworth, Royal Engineers.

4 & 5 June 1879 - Court Martial of Fullerton for negligently stranding HMS Cherub off the island of Heligoland. The charge was proved and he was adjudged to be reprimanded.

1915 to 1918 - Although over 70 years of age Fullerton returned to active service and held a post under the Admiral Commanding the Reserves.

9 September 1930 - Arthur George Fullerton of London, died at 38 Avenue du Marechal Joffre in Nice, Alpes-Maritimes, France, aged 85.