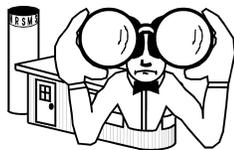


From The Bridge



Spring has arrived. It is so nice to go outside in the warm weather, see the flowers in bloom and the leaves starting to bud on the limbs. But I am still reminded of winter by the potholes that one must avoid while driving. I do not know about you, but I feel that I am on an obstacle course trying to avoid potholes. I have never seen so many. I hear of news reports that thousands of potholes have been filled, but I am still avoiding hundreds of potholes. I have never seen so many cars with flat tires pulled off on the shoulder of the road as I have this year. Hopefully, the road crews will get the pothole problem corrected.

Several weeks ago the Hampton Roads Ship Model Society held its annual Banquet at the Riverwalk Restaurant in Yorktown. We had 38 members and guests attend and enjoyed a fine evening of fellowship, delicious food and recognitions. I failed to thank Tom Saunders for making the arrangements and I apologize for this omission. Tom did a splendid job to ensure that the Banquet was a success. I understand that he has started the planning process for next year's Banquet.

I had the honor of bringing the HRSMS Ship's Bell for display at the Banquet and actually got to ring it several times. The members voted on the 2010 Founders Award and it was presented to John Cheevers. He received a replica of the HRSMS Ship's Bell and a plaque with his name was added to the list of Founders Award recipient's on the HRSMS Ship's Bell.

I want to thank Bob Comet for his presentation at the last meeting on Building his Niagara. This was Part Two and I know everyone is looking forward to Part Three.

See everyone Saturday.

Ryland

Mystery Photo



Mystery Photo #285: Remember the old saying, "If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck...?" Well... hopefully you remember. Perhaps a few of you fishermen out there found this vessel to look more like a gar than a duck. And maybe the odd animal lover out there thought he was looking at a platypus. I'll give you that. And, maybe, some others were searching through their Captain Nemo collections for the Nautilus—there might be more than a passing resemblance to his infernal submarine. Well, Tim Wood, Dave Baker, and Bob Comet got the idea, for they had no trouble identifying the odd-billed offering-of-the-month not as science fiction but as *HMS Polyphemus*, in what Tim describes as "an experimental torpedo ram of the Royal Navy." So the

(Continued on page 2)

Case That Finished Model

If you all remember, several months ago Bob Sanderson made a rare meeting appearance and brought with him a nearly complete model a T2 tanker. Well he's happy to report that the model is complete and resting comfortably inside its newly fabricated acrylic case and base. The case is made from 1/8" acrylic to inside dimensions of 36" long X 9" high X 5" wide. The base is slightly larger, rabbeted and made from 1/2" thick black acrylic. He reports a total cost of \$68.25 tax included. He is truly impressed by the price!

Several years earlier, he reports that he had a similar case made for his Robert E. Lee model by the same outfit. He says it was very similar, only being made from 1/4" acrylic. The cost of that case was \$85.

Bob can't believe the price of these cases and is sharing this resource with others who may want to use his supplier. The firm is:

Polyfab Display Company
14910 Persistence Dr
Woodbridge, Virginia 22191
Ph: 703-490-6401 or 1-800-polyfab
www.polyfab-display.com

Check them out, they may suit your display needs. Bob seems to be very satisfied; it may be worth the drive to Northern Virginia to pick up one.

John Cheevers

MEETING NOTICE

Date: Saturday April 10, 2010

Place: Mariners' Museum

Time: 1400 Hours

(Continued from page 1)



Mystery Photo

inference must be, if it walks like a ram and quacks like a ram...Yew got a ram.

Most of us arm-chair sailors visualize the modern, finely tuned hull form as one where the bow has, at the very least, lots of flair forward and a raked stem—good for slicing through the waves and keeping the deck dry. Almost all modern naval combatants feature this bow shape. But it was not always that way. As students of naval and nautical history we see how this feature has evolved over the years. We read descriptions and study paintings of ancient Greek trireme galleys fitted with huge, phallic bronze



extensions intended to hole an enemy’s hull by ramming. We study how, as ships ventured further from shore and sail replaced rowing for propulsion, rams disappeared and the bow shape evolved into the rounded, apple checked, bows so prevalent in the 17th and 18th centuries. Naval cannon further increased stand off distances and thoughts of ramming became old fashioned. Maneuvering the hull quickly and easily was the order of the day, and the underwater extensions disappeared.

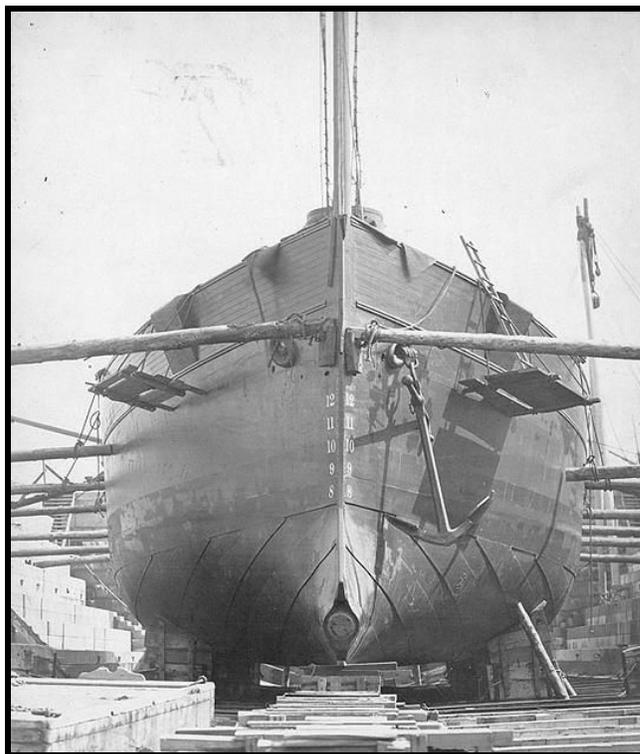
In the middle of the 19th century, as steam began to replace wind power and wood construction began to yield to iron and steel the ram made a resurgence of sorts. The speed of these early mechanical behemoths although slow was not wind dependant and tacticians began to think in terms of ramming as a tactical maneuver once again. We read how the converted *Merrimac*, *CSS Virginia*, emerged from the ruined Gosport Naval Shipyard in 1862 to sweep Hampton Roads clear of the blockading Northern fleet primarily by sinking her opponents with the iron ram. It lasted for one use, becoming dislodged in the hull of her first victim *USS Cumberland*. Rams in naval design continued to occupy tactical thinking after the civil war and therefore it was not a new idea in 1878 when our Mystery vessel’s keel was laid at the Royal Chatham Dockyard outside London on the Thames.

Now, what of the vessel in our Mystery Photo? Dave, no doubt, recognized the vessel immediately, “the

photo (the photo on the left only - jfc) was taken in drydock at the Royal Navy’s Chatham Dockyard, where she was built and completed in September 1882.” Tim and Bob made the now familiar Google search selecting “ram ship” and “ram bow” as their search words. To these gents the images presented by the Mystery were the same images they found in their own searches. To the Royal navy she was thought of as what Tim and Dave correctly describe as “an experimental ‘torpedo ram’”—a further defining of the “ram” genre. Yew still with me?

According to Tim, *Polyphemus* “was partially submersible and intended to attack by stealth,” to which Dave adds, “her principal function was [to] torpedo enemy warships rather than to attempt to ram them.” And he continues: “Her torpedo armament included five 14-in. tubes, one mounted to fire forward and the other four being the first broadside-firing fixed tubes to be fitted in a warship. POLYPHEMUS carried no less that 18 torpedoes and on her 7,000 ihp reciprocating steam propulsion plant, could make 18 knots using forced draft, the speed being one of the fastest of the day. For self defense and for keeping down enemy fire, she was initially fitted with six twin-barreled Nordenfeld machineguns. Given that torpedo ranges of the day were quite short (and the weapons rather inaccurate), her tactical employment was intended to be dashing in against an approaching maritime invader, confusing the enemy with machinegun fire, launching the broadside tubes, and then retiring at high speed to reload tubes. Given the very slow rates of fire of defensive guns in the late Victorian period, such a tactic was, at least for a brief time, viable.”

Given the short range of the torpedo, the relatively



USS Intrepid 1874

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)



Mystery Photo

slow speeds in relation to rate of fire, and the limited maneuverability of the vessel, the irony of ironies is that in order “to launch a torpedo attack, *Polyphemus* would need to approach within ramming distance of her target anyway.” I wonder if this is the reason why Dave writes: “Her near-contemporary, the U.S. Navy's *Katahdin*, was a true ram with no other offensive weapons.” Or why he adds: “...should the *Polyphemus* be fatally damaged, her entire superstructure was designed to float

Crew: 80.”

Dave raises an interesting question concerning *Polyphemus*' overall length. “The ship displaced 2,640 tons full load and was 240-ft. long between perpendiculars (I've no idea how one could calculate the overall length from that, due to the pronounced ram bow; you'd have to have the plans.)” Overall length is an important point to consider if you intend to build a model. You must understand the dimensions mean and how to apply them. Unfortunately, that discussion is outside the scope of this essay. For this vessel, it just so happens

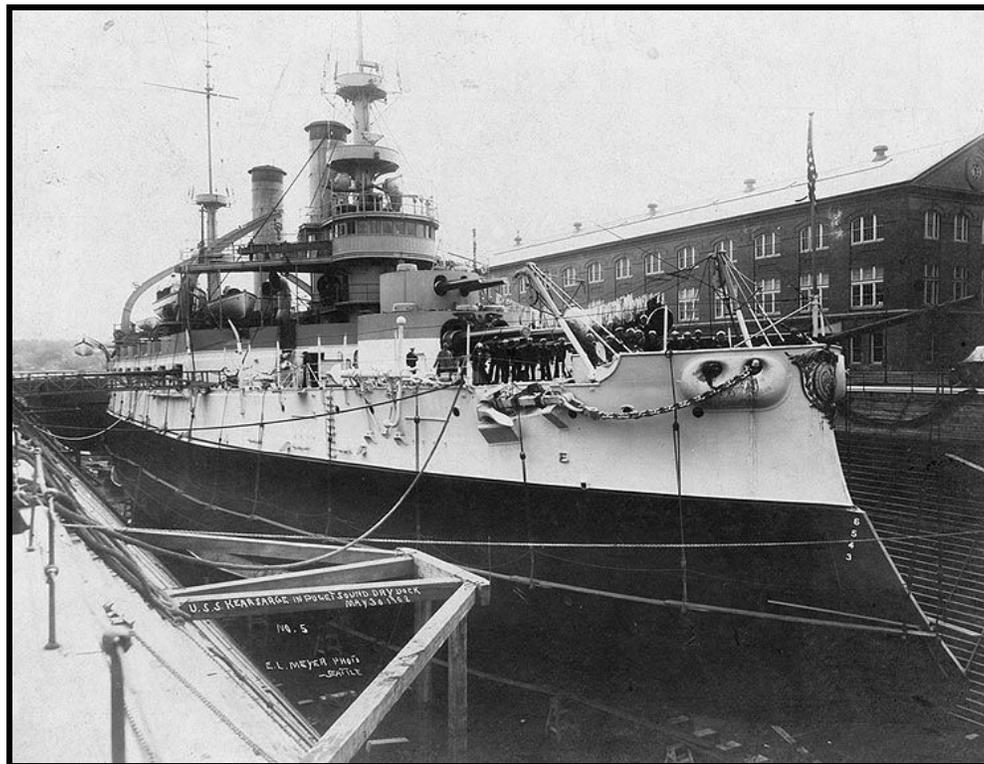


Photo #NH60250 USS Kearsarge drydocked at the Puget Sound Navy Yard, 30 May

that the Inboard Profile plan can be found on page 148 of John Beeler's book The Birth of the Battleship, British Capital Ship Design 1870-1881. While the plan is a small reproduction it does show a scale and suggests an overall length somewhat greater than 240 feet as there are considerable overhangs at the stem and stern.

As mentioned earlier, while the left image is credited at the Royal Navy's Chatham Dockyard, the images on the right caused this writer quite a stir. Actually it's only one image with the topmost of the two being a cropped blowup of the bottom image highlighting the ram and a certain unnamed naval figure. That fellow with his hand on his hip caused Bob to write “The naval officers look like they are wearing European uniforms. Period 1880-1900.” The uniform caused me to initially think that we had a German warship to identify. Later I felt that that the warship was of Mediterranean origin as the building to the left in the bottom image looked Moorish

off and act as a sort of giant life preserver for her crew of 146. [Her] day in the sun was, nonetheless, quite brief, and she was scrapped in 1903.”

Tim supplied this table of specifications for the *Polyphemus*:

“Dimensions: 240' x 37' x 20'6" Displacement: 2,640 tons. Speed: 17.8 knots. Armament: (5) 14" torpedo tubes, 18 Whitehead Mark II torpedoes. (6) 1" Nordenfelt machine guns. Wrought-iron ram. Armor: Deck - 3" compound armour; hatches - 4"; conning tower - 8". Propulsion: coal-fired boilers, horizontal compound engines, twin screw.

or Italian. What a surprise to find that the image captures *Polyphemus* in dry dock at Malta. Tim supplies this nugget to support the image: “Later she was stationed at Malta and practiced maneuvers with the Mediterranean fleet.”

While *Polyphemus* may have been little more than a trials ship in support of torpedo development she has a few more unique features that deserve mention. You can see in the Malta image the huge rounded ballast tanks that speak to the semi-submersible nature of her design. Also you can see twin bow rudders designed to enhance maneuverability when using the ram. What you cannot see in the image is that these rudders were retractable. The IB profile in Beeler's book shows them and their lifting mechanism in some detail.

A woodcut showing her launch shows that the ram made a perfect place to carry a wreath. If yew stuck with me this long, it's time for me to ram it home...If it's “what's up front” that counts, *Polyphemus* counts.

John Cheevers

NAUTICAL TERM

Lapstrake The planking of a craft of which the lower edge of each strake overlaps that below it; a very old and q world-wide technique. The word comes from Old Saxon, *lepel*, overlap.

Submitted By: Tim Wood

The Battle of Hampton Roads

New York Times
Published: March 10, 1862

For a Sea-piece, that fulfills all the conditions of dramatic art as completely as it is possible for a real event to do, commend us to the recital of the battle of Hampton Roads, which we publish to-day. ARISTOTLE himself could not ask a nicer observance of the unities than it displays; and it needs no aid from the playwright's craft to throw the series of naval actions that took place off Newport's News, on Saturday, between noon and night, into the form of a dramatic composition, perfect in design and execution, with its beginning, middle and end, and its moral lesson all included.

The scene opens with the sudden appearance in Hampton Roads of that mysterious marine monster, the Merrimac, and two attendant rebel war-dogs. Down they come, belching fire and destruction, and heading straight towards the National fleet that lay at anchor in the Roads. Imagine the thrill of terror that ran through their wooden walls as the terrible mailed monster made his appearance. Such as had steam to aid their flight, hastily rushed, like herring chased by a shark, for the protecting guns of Fortress Monroe; but alas for those that had not! Two fine old sailing frigates lay at anchor off Newport's News -- the Congress and the Cumberland. Into the latter the iron-clad steamer plunged her steel plow, crashing through the frigate's bow, sinking her instantly, and it is said, carrying down half her crew of five hundred souls. Later accounts diminish this tragic catastrophe to one hundred men. Let us trust that further reports will show this to be still an exaggerated number. The other frigate, the Congress, was next attacked in turn, and after pouring in a shower of shot, which rained like pebbles on the mailed sides of the Merrimac, she surrendered. The events which immediately succeed are but obscurely reported in the telegraphic dispatches; but we catch glimpses of a scene that is painfully dark and disastrous. The National steamers that had taken to flight on the approach of the Merrimac appear all to have grounded on the way between Newport's News and Fortress Monroe; and it seems inevitable that the iron-sheathed annihilator shall go on destroying each in turn, and make her way out to sea, to descend in a new destroying avatar on the blockading fleet along the coast.

In the midst of this gloomy scene the exclamation which spontaneously leaps to the lips is, "Where is the Ericsson Battery?" It alone is able to cope with this destructive monster. Sudden as the realizations of a fairy tale the Battery makes her appearance. A deus ex machina! one may well exclaim. Here, indeed, is a knight in mail fit to cope with Sir Merrimac. At this most critical and interesting "situation" the telegraph becomes tantalizingly brief; but we learn that the Battery made its appearance late in the evening and put her iron sides between our vessels and the enemy. Yesterday

MINUTES



Hampton Roads Ship Model Society
Monthly Meeting
Saturday March 13, 2010
Mariners' Museum
Guest: Chris Spriggins 2nd meeting

The meeting was called to order by the Skipper, Ryland Craze. The picture on page two of the March Logbook was mis-captioned as the Florida. It was the Michigan. No other correction was noted. Eric Harfst gave the year-end Purser's report. It was noted that Ryland Craze needs to be put on the HRSMS bank account. Greg Harrington gave the Webmaster's report. Greg talked about revisions he was making to the web site making it more maintenance friendly. He also posed several questions to the group that he received as Webmaster.

Old Business: Tom Saunders talked about banquet arrangements and said that the members were welcome to bring guests as the room has the capacity to accommodate extra guests and the Society would incur a financial penalty if attendance were to be below 35. The Skipper talked about the Founder's Award. Bob Comet asked that presenters contact Tom Saunders with the subject of their talk so that notice could be given in the Logbook.

New Business: None

Show & Tell: Bob Comet talked about "Liquid Bandage", available at Rite Aid, for treating small cut and wounds. Hugh Van Brimmer showed a tool, "The Perfect End" from Model Expo, used to trim the ends of lines. Hugh also showed a modified needle used to assist in rigging. John Cheevers showed a half-hull model he had finished carving. Ryland Craze showed a plank-on-bulkhead kit of the Brig Syren.

The meeting was adjourned to a presentation, "Building the Niagara Part II", by Bob Comet.

morning the fight began, and the Battery, after engaging the Merrimac and the two rebel gunboats, in a five hours' action, put them all to flight, the Merrimac slinking off "in a sinking condition." The timing of the action is really so nice that it sounds like a romance, and one might well be incredulous, were not our tidings official, and were it not known that the Ericsson Battery sailed from New-York last week for Fortress Monroe, with the express purpose of going up to Norfolk and bearding the monster in his den. Her arrival was certainly in the very nick of time, and the result one which does honor not only to the officers and men, but to the ingenious inventor

(Continued on page 6)

Photo Submitted by Tim Wood



© MHC

Mystery Photo

Contact John Cheevers by mail, e-mail or
telephone if you know what it is.
jfcheevers@verizon.net

NOTABLE EVENTS

APRIL

- 10 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: "The Warrant 1782 - 83" Graham Horne

MAY

- 8 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: Greg Harrington

JUNE

- 12 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: George Livingston

JULY

- 10 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: "The Nemi Ships", Ron Lewis

AUGUST

- 14 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: TBD

SEPTEMBER

- 11 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting, Picnic, NN Park
19 Talk Like a Pirate Day

OCTOBER

- 9 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation, Ryland Craze
16-17 IPMS Region 2 Model Contest, Fredericksburg, Va.

NOVEMBER

- 13 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: Tony Clayton

DECEMBER

- 11 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: John Cheevers

JANUARY

- 8 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

**WATCH, QUARTER
AND
STATION BILL**



Skipper: Ryland Craze (804) 739-8804
Mate: Tim Wood (757) 934-1450
Purser: Eric Harfst (757) 221-8181
Clerk: Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580
Historian: Len Wine (757) 566-8597
Editors: John Cheevers (757) 591-8955
Bill Clarke (757) 868-6809
Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580
Webmaster: Greg Harrington (757) 930-4615
Chaplain: Alan Frazer (757) 867-7666

(Continued from page 4)

who shaped the victorious creation of naval art.

HR And this reminds us that we must not, in the contemplation of the merely aesthetic aspects of the battle of Hampton Roads, lose sight of the practical import of this brilliant affair. The Merrimac is undoubtedly a most formidable engine of war, and previously to the construction of Ericsson's iron-clad Battery, we had nothing in our navy that could begin to stand before her. The stories of her inefficiency and failure, that the Richmond journals have published at various times, were probably in great measure intended as a mask; the work on her has been done by Northern mechanics, and is no doubt well done. The rebels have thrown their whole resources into her, and, in despair of obtaining a navy of their own, thought to send out an engine of war that would utterly destroy ours. The vision was not altogether baseless. If they had been only a month earlier with the Merrimac, it is hard to set limits to what she might have done. That she would have been able to destroy every vessel in the Roads, brave the batteries of Fortress Monroe and the Rip Raps, and make her way out to sea may now be considered a demonstrated fact. Once out on the rampage, she would play the butt in the crockery-shop with our wooden blockaders; and it is difficult to see what would have prevented her going down the coast like a destroying angel and annihilating our whole fleet. The London Times not long ago threatened to lay the Warrior broadsides of New-York and Hoboken; what was there to hinder the Merrimac's realizing the threat? One can imagine how the rebel chiefs at Richmond will gnash their teeth over this fatal delay that has dashed their hopes of success on the sea, and put an end forever to their navy.

If the Battery had not arrived in time! -- one trembles to look along the line of this contingency. Suffice it to say that it did arrive in time, and that the National cause has had an escape and a triumph whose romantic form stirs the mind with mingled wonder and joy.

The archive of the New York Times is an excellent source for contemporary reports of events such as shipwrecks, naval engagements and launchings. Articles in the Public Domain (1851-1922) are free. It is interesting to note the writing style of the articles.

THE ANSWER

The answer to Mystery Photo 285:
HMS *Polyphemus* (1881)

Your Articles Are Wanted

Have you read a book, found a new tool, found a source for supplies, or built a kit? Send a note to the Editor.