

# Some History of the Worcesters

For over a century, The Incorporated Thames Nautical Training College, "HMS Worcester", trained young seaman officer Cadets and Midshipmen for the Merchant Navy, Royal Navy and Royal Naval Reserve.

Three "HMS Worcesters" served Britain's maritime interests from 1862 until the early 1970s.

The first of them (Worcester I) was a 1,473 ton, 50-gun wooden frigate, built at Deptford Naval Yard in 1843 and laid up at the Nore. A contemporary account of the day reveals: This fine ship of war was launched from the Royal Dockyard, at Deptford on Tuesday last, and attracted thousands of spectators, both on the banks of, and in numerous steamers and boats on the river. The launch took place at a quarter before three o'clock, when the gallant vessel floated into the Thames amidst the cheers of the assembled thousands. The "christening" and breaking of a bottle of wine across the bows was performed by the daughter of the Captain-Superintendent of the Dockyard, Sir John Hill. The vessel is a 50-gun frigate. She has a round stern according to the model of Seppings, and is one of the earliest vessels constructed upon that principle.

The dimensions of the frigate are:

Length from front of figure to aft of the stool	197'3"
To the after part of the taffrail	194'0"
From forward of the forecastle to aft of the taffrail	179'3½"
On deck	172'9½"
Keel for tonnage	145'3½"
Breadth in extreme	44' 3"
For tonnage	43' 8"
Moulded	43' 0"
Depth in hold	14' 6½"
Height from top of figure to underside of false keel	38' 0"
Height from top of taffrail to underside of false keel	40' 0"



The Worcester is a beautiful model, and reflects great credit on those who have constructed her. She has been towed to Sheerness, where her masts etc. will be put on board. Her armament will consist of fifty 32 pounders, medium guns. Great praise is due to the Authorities of the Dockyard, and more particularly to Sir John Hill, under whose direction and superintendence the launch took place. Accommodation was afforded to thousands of persons in the Dockyard, and order was so well preserved that that no crowding was necessary, and all accidents were avoided." (Research by T.J. Buttolph OW)

She (Worcester I) was anchored in the River Thames at Blackwall Reach and saw service from 1862 until 1876 when she was replaced by the old two-decked line-of-battleship, Frederick William (Worcester II). In 1946 she in turn was replaced by a purpose-built steel hulled schoolship, (Worcester III) formerly the T.S.Exmouth.

The first Worcester was moored off Folley House Mills, her first 18 Cadets joining in August 1862. A gunner, ship's corporal, ship's steward, boatswain and boatswain's mate were appointed, soon followed by a further 4 Cadets. The following year she was moved to Erith, abreast the downstream end of Cory's coal berth. Then again in 1869 moorings were moved, to a position off the end of Southend Pier.

Two years later she was moved to more permanent moorings, off Ingress Abbey, at Greenhithe in Kent. The ship was officially a 'hulk on loan' from the Admiralty and it is recorded that £49 13s 8d was spent on her at

Sheerness, prior to towing up to Blackwall Reach, where a further £862 11s 1d was spent on her complete conversion to training ship.



The second Worcester was laid down in 1833 as the 'Royal Sovereign', a 4,725 ton line-of-battleship, converted to steam while still on the stocks at Portsmouth. Her history up until 1876 was unexceptional to say the least. Laid down as a three-decker mounting 110 guns in 1833, she took 27 years to build! In 1839 she was renamed 'Royal Frederick' and in 1845, 'Frederick William', apparently as a compliment to the King of Prussia. By 1859

her design had been changed and her armament increased to 116 guns. In the same year the Admiralty issued orders to cut down her armament, convert her to a two-decker, and install screw, engines and boilers. 1860 saw her launched at last, but with 86 guns and 500HP engines. She was then immediately paid off into reserve at Portsmouth, as the first of the new ironclads was approaching completion. She did however see sea service, albeit briefly, off the Irish coast from 1866 to 1868, as a coastguard vessel, armed with 74 guns of the 'Trafalgar Pattern'. Upon completion, she returned to Portsmouth, where her armament and machinery were removed. Needless to say, her seventy years of sterling service as 'HMS Worcester' more than made up for the uselessness of her early life.

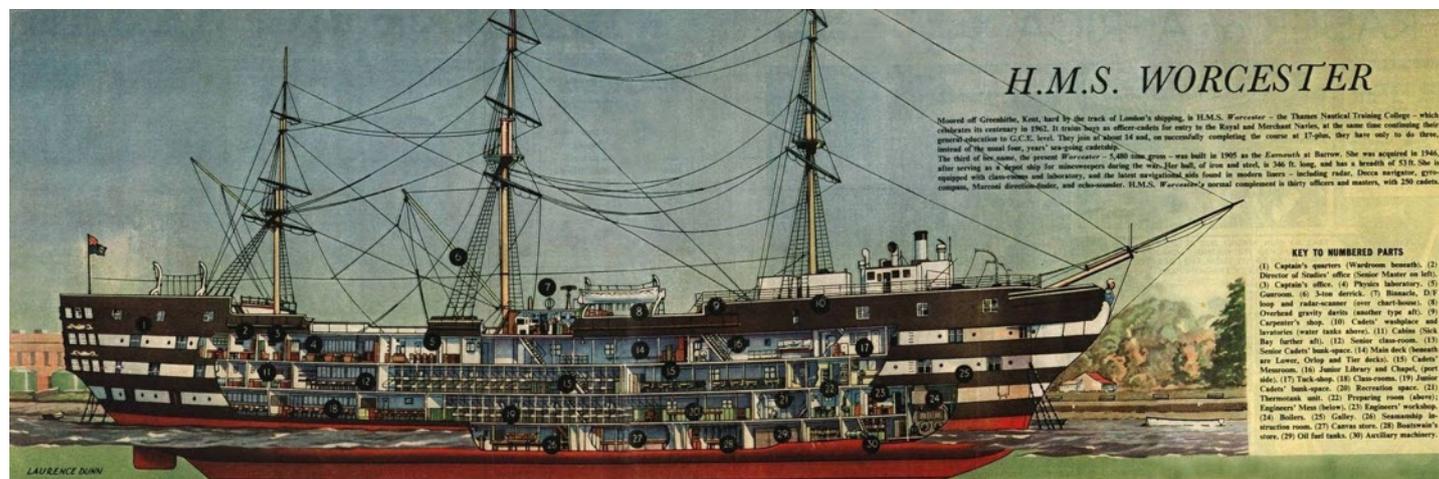
The third ship to bear the name was built at Barrow-In-Furness, by Vickers Sons and Maxim, to the order of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, later merged into the London County Council. She was originally intended as a schoolship for training boys sent on board by the Poor Law Authorities. The late Sir John Biles, an eminent naval architect, drew her lines and was immensely proud of the finished ship. 314 feet in length, 53 feet beam, with



a mean draught of 18 feet 6 inches, her hull was riveted iron below the boot topping, to resist corrosion, and mild steel plate above. During the 1939-1945 War, she saw service first as an accommodation ship for the Volunteer Fire Brigade, then as a minesweeper depot ship, under the White Ensign at Scapa Flow. Following demobilisation she arrived in the Thames on July 6th 1945 and was towed up river to Messrs R. & H. Green and Silley Weir in the East India Dock Basin. Like most depot ships she was in a deplorable condition, but thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of Worcester Cadets and staff, fresh from their temporary wartime home at Fooks Cray Place, the first watch of Cadets was able to join the ship on 31st January 1946. On 2nd February, the ship was formally commissioned into service by representatives of the 'Worcester Committee'. Jury-rigged, with just half a bowsprit and the stump of a main mast, she looked like an ugly duckling alongside 'Cutty Sark', on first taking up her moorings off Greenhithe.

The Cadets, who had missed the advantages of shipboard life and the intimate association with the ships in which they would later serve during their period at Fooks Cray Place, were delighted at the change, and "Old Worcesters," from young officers to retired Masters and Commodores, came down to see the new ship and freely expressed the opinion that, while she could never be the same as the beloved old ship that they knew, she would be infinitely more comfortable and more efficient for her duties. For one thing, there was her much greater size and, an inestimable advantage, greater headroom, convenient storerooms, excellent lighting and ventilation on scientific lines, and properly enclosed classrooms.

When she was designed for the Metropolitan Asylums Board the idea was to accommodate something like 750 boys on board and the Navy used her for 600 ratings, so there was room and to spare for the 200 Cadets who in, 1946, were regarded as a full complement for the ship. Worcester had four decks, apart from the hold, forecastle and poop. The hold was divided into storerooms by seven water-tight bulkheads, with and without doors, and many light bulkheads between the flats. Forward of the collision bulkhead was the coal bunker, abaft it the boiler room and engine room, all of which extended through the orlop deck above it. Then came the chain locker on the starboard side and the diesel generator and refrigerating plant on the port. Tanks for fresh water and diesel oil extended right across the ship. For the next 120 ft. of her length storerooms, with a centre-line alleyway between them, not only gave ample space for things needed on board but permitted everything to



be arranged for constant inspection and easy issue. On the other side of a water-tight bulkhead special stores occupied another 30 ft. across the ship, then two very large fresh water tanks and the after peak. The orlop deck was above the waterline and, with the re-opening of the ports which were plated up by the Navy during the War, afforded plenty of light and air. Right forward the bunkers and engine and boiler rooms extended through the deck and abaft them were workshops and accommodation for crew. Then came the gymnasium, then the lower sleeping deck with hammock stowage leading out of it, 92 ft. long by the beam of the ship. There were nine classrooms, each entirely separate, although some had connecting doors, with up-to-date fittings and single locker desks so that the traditional Worcester book boxes, remembered by many generations of Cadets, were finally abandoned to their original purpose.

Forward on the lower deck was a large galley and abaft it, round the open space left for the capstan, were situated the victualling storerooms and pantry. Next came the Cadets' messroom, 51 ft. long by the full beam of the ship, with doors to the upper sleeping deck. Then the cabins of the warrant officer instructors occupied both

sides of the ship except for the outfitter's shop on the starboard, after which is a range of bathrooms and toilets and, right aft, a sick bay 35 ft. long, with isolation ward, dispensary and a cabin for the sick berth attendant.

The library occupied the whole of the round bow on the main deck. It was comfortably furnished with arm and upright chairs, and had an excellent view of the river. The Cadet Captains' quarters - "the Cabin" by Worcester tradition - on the starboard side, was very different from the one right inboard in the old ship, and its counterpart on the port side was the tuckshop.

Abaft that there was a clear space for recreation, running aft to the entry port and visitors' waiting room. This recreation space was decorated with a number of models and ship pictures and furnished partly with the old desks from the former ships with generations of initials carved on them.



Abaft the entry port the deck was narrowed by a range of cabins on either side and for this space the old name of "half-deck" was revived with the interpretation that it used to have in Drake's day. Divine Service was regularly held in this space, the after bulkhead being adorned by two war memorials. Leading out of it on the starboard side were a comfortable warrant officers' mess and galley and some of the schoolmasters' cabins. On the port side were situated the officers' cabins and the Captain's office. Beyond the bulkhead on the starboard side was a big wardroom, accommodating both the officers and the schoolmasters, and a beautiful little chapel furnished with the fittings from the chapel of H.M.S. Iron Duke when she was Jellicoe's flagship. On the port side were the housekeeper's quarters, Captain's galley and some of the masters' cabins, the remainder, with that of the headmaster, being across the stern.

The upper deck, with the exception of the boatswain's store and radar room, was open to the elements, giving Cadets the opportunity for reviving the old Worcester custom of "slewing".



On the stump mainmast was a 5-ton derrick with an electric winch. Under the forecabin were the quarters of the galley boys, the Cadets' washroom, showers and heads, while under the poop was a fine suite of rooms for the Captain. Over the former were located the carpenter's shop and tanks and over the poop the chart-house.

A platform for boat work was secured at a convenient height above the waterline along the port side, facing the shore; but except for one pair of davits for exercise purposes on the upper deck, all the boats were kept in the water.

These consisted of two cutters, a jolly-boat, a second gig, a school gig, two racing gigs, two racing whalers and a motor boat, sufficient for all hands if it was necessary to abandon ship.

The headroom of 9 ft. 6 in. all over the ship was not only excellent for health but gave reasonable living spaces and recreational facilities. The messroom had ample space for all hands to eat at the same time at long tables with good elbow room. The Second and Third Officers sat at a head table with the Chief Cadet Captain permanently and two Cadet Captains by turn. The gymnasium also served as a games room with a piano against one bulkhead, plenty of space for ping-pong, billiards and other games and all the necessary fittings for the projection of talking films. There was also the added luxury of constant hot and cold water to the shower baths and tubs, much more numerous than they were in the old ship, and there was a washbasin for every two boys.



When the third Worcester was fitted out there was great discussion as to whether the Cadets should sleep in standee berths, after the fashion of American transports, or in hammocks which had been the custom ever since the ship was established. Hammocks won the day for a variety of reasons. They were slung in two flats, the forecastle and fore top Cadets on the lower deck and the main and mizzen Cadets on the orlop deck, the stowage being next to the hammock flat in each case. Each Cadet still had his sea chest in the old way, but owing to the shortage and their lack of use to the modern apprentice when he went to sea, they were hired for the term instead of being provided by the Cadets' parents. In addition, each boy had a steel locker of the Navy pattern, put into the ship when she was commissioned at Scapa Flow.

The committee room, which was installed in the ship by the original owners, proved big enough to be divided into the wardroom and chapel. In addition, the Warrant Officers - instructors, carpenter, chief engineer, etc - had their own mess and the petty officers had single berth cabins, and the ratings two-berth.

The Captain's quarters were, naturally, under the poop and consisted of a large drawing room right across the stern, with a stern-walk facing downstream, dining room with pantry, etc., and four bedrooms, in addition to the Captain's own suite of a day room, bedroom, dressing room and bathroom.

Although the electric mains for the ship's lighting ran under water from the shore she had a diesel and three steam-driven generators, the former supplying D.C. current to the electric winch and all of them supplying the current for the pumps, ventilating fans and the lighting in case of breakdown of the shore supply. Two Scotch boilers burning coal supplied the ship's heating and hot water.

Although the fire danger was not as great as it was in the old wooden ship, every sensible, seaman-like precaution was taken and mains were laid on all decks. Seventy tons of water could be drawn at once from the gravity tanks, in addition to that delivered by the pumps in the engine room. Fire extinguishers were to be found everywhere and routine fire drill was held regularly, together with boat drill and "abandon ship" practice. The greatest care being taken to prevent the drills becoming an ordinary routine.

## WORCESTER CRESTS

Since its foundation in 1862, Worcester possessed six crests - four official and two unofficial.

The following is from an article by Commander Gordon Steele VC, RN (OW), Captain Superintendent from 1929-57, which appeared in The Dog Watch magazine in December 1956. "The first crest (1), giving a good beam view of the frigate, is of dignified simplicity and savours of the days of sailing ships, Perhaps, today it would look too much like a cork label on a rum bottle, otherwise it had much to commend it. It only lasted five years, from 1862 until 1867, when it was replaced by (2), bearing the same title but supported with flags and wearing the "Queen's Crown" of Queen Victoria. In 1867 the frigate Worcester was replaced by the Frederick William, two-decker, the Second Worcester. The title was changed and the crest redesigned (3). It is interesting to note that the frigate in the center is still retained. The new title "Thames Nautical Training College", appears in the scroll, and under the crest we find the prefix, 'H.M.S.' to the name Worcester. This is interesting in that it was used occasionally as far back as 1863. The question is often asked, "why are you H.M.S.?" The reply is that it was a special privilege granted by the Admiralty to the Merchant Navy Officers Training Establishments. But records indicate that it was used loosely many years before official permission was granted. Perhaps the fact that the ship was Admiralty property was considered by the earlier management sufficient grounds for terming her H.M.S. and the Admiralty in their kindly interest in the training ships were aware of this but took no action to Stop it. The Point was officially brought up many years later when the third Worcester was acquired in 1945, and official sanction for using H.M.S. in the title was granted. The third crest (3) appears when the "College" (ship and shore office) was "incorporated". This was merely a business formality in registering the college and management as a limited company within the Company Act. The bow view of a two-decker then took the place of the former frigate in the centre of the crest; and the title became "The Incorporated Thames Nautical Training College", with the motto, "Union is Strength", added to the top of the crest. This motto never caught on; it may have referred to the smooth-working of the sea services represented by the red, white and blue ensigns, Admiralty flag and Pilot Jack, shown clearly in the new crest, but it is more probable the motto was just a good-sounding slogan which was not in Latin! The fourth crest, started in 1893, is the present official one, and as far as we can see likely to remain so. There have, however, been two attempts at other designs of the Worcester crest, which have not been adopted, but which are worthy of mention. (5) is the design of Captain D. Wilson-Barker (later Sir David), and is a copy of the crest of the City of Worcester, from where Sir David's family came, with the addition of the naval crown. We find it in use on old sports programmes, notepaper, etc., in and about 1898, and it is also the crest carved into the mantelpiece in the captain's dining cabin. Captain Wilson-Barker was well ahead of his time, because ships' crests today are invariably taken from towns and places which they happen to be named after. The crest is excellent and in the view of many, an improvement on our present one which is somewhat ornate in style. There would be objections to it however, inasmuch as Worcester Castle is too similar to Conway Castle, and the connection of our ship with the City of Worcester is negligible. Captain Wilson-Barker's crest was never adopted officially, and after short personal use, was dropped. (6) is an oddity. In the 1930's the Worcester was elected to membership of the Public Schools Club and the occasion was marked by the presentation of a shield depicting the Ship's crest, finely worked by a firm of experts, which was duly presented to the Club and which was hung in the bar among some hundred crests of other public schools and colleges. Some years later the crest disappeared from the bar and was replaced by this somewhat unusual offering. Where it came from nobody knows, but it hung there for many years before being replaced once again after the war by the official crest before the Club merged with the East India Club some years later.

