

The 'Foudroyant' timber in Tibberton Court

From 1799 to 1801 HMS Foudroyant would serve as Nelson flagship in the Mediterranean. A portion of timber from this ship stands here in the grounds of 'Tibberton Court' in her memory.

From the 25th May 1798, when the *Foudroyant* was launched at Plymouth, until the sad day when she returned there to cease her active service, many distinguished seamen (NELSON amongst them) had made their mark in Britain's history and had paced her decks and graced her cabins. *Foudroyant* had a long and successful career, and although she was not involved in any major fleet action, she did provide invaluable service to numerous admirals throughout her 17 years on active service.

The History of a ship is intimately linked with the men who served in her. The spirit, which enthused and impelled the fine seamen of those days almost instilled itself into the very timbers of their vessels, and the love of their ships is epitomised in NELSON'S sentiment for the *Foudroyant*, "I love her as a fond father a darling child and glory in her deeds."

Foudroyant, the name derived from the French, meaning *Thunderbolt*.

HMS *Foudroyant* (1798) was an 80-gun third-rate ship of the line, launched in 1798 and a one-off design. She followed French practice of favouring large two-decked, third rates mounting 80 guns rather than the typical British preference for building three-decked second-rate ships mounting 98 guns. The two ship types, despite the difference in absolute gun numbers, had similar gun power but the British thought the second rate had a more imposing appearance and some advantages in battle, while they considered the 80 gun ship as usually faster and less 'leewardly'.

After returning to Plymouth in 1812 was used as a guard ship from 1820, and a training ship from 1862. She was finally placed on the Sales List in 1891 and sold out of the service the following January for £2,350. Bought by J. Read of Portsmouth, she was promptly resold to German shipbreakers. This prompted a storm of public protest. Wheatley Cobb then bought her and used the ship as a boys' training vessel. To offset the restoration cost of £20,000, it was then decided to exhibit her at various seaside resorts.

In June 1897 she was towed to Blackpool. On 16 June 1897 during a violent storm, she parted a cable and dragging the remaining anchor, went ashore on Blackpool Sands, damaging Blackpool North Pier in the process. The Blackpool lifeboat was able to rescue all 27 of her crew. After vain attempts to refloat her, her guns were removed and she was sold for £200. She finally broke up in the December gales.

The ship's bell now resides in Blackpool Town Hall. Copper, salvaged from the wreck, was used to manufacture Medals, which were sold to the public.

Compiled from published record and notes and photographs collected by D J Parker of Tibberton Court. 1998



