



Information sheet no 051

HMS *Warrior* 1860

HMS *Warrior* was the first ironclad ship in the Royal Navy. It was built in response to the French armoured ship *Gloire* which was launched on 24th November 1859. In May 1858 intelligence reports of the French intention for a fleet of iron hulled ships reached England. The press over-reacted and rumours of impending war spread, causing the public to demand that something be done. Many in the Admiralty simply wanted to clad British ships with iron plates, but the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir John Pakington, argued that an iron ship with iron armour must be built. On 29th April 1859, Ditch and Mare (later the Thames Iron Works) of Blackwall were given the task of constructing such a ship. HMS *Warrior* was to be the fastest, largest and most powerful warship in the world and was launched on 29th December 1860. The ship was considered to be an impregnable floating fortress and made all other warships in the world obsolete.

In 1861, *Warrior* sailed for Spithead for sea trials, and on 24th October of that year was handed over to the Admiralty. However, due to minor adjustments that needed to be carried out, the ship was not considered ready for action until June 1862. As far as the world was concerned, *Warrior* was a force to be reckoned with from late 1861 and provided a deterrent to any French plans of attack.

The ship's first commission was with the Channel Squadron, sailing in north European waters with the occasional trip to Lisbon and Gibraltar. She was greeted as a wonder of the age. The royalty and ambassadors of Europe visited the ship and when she toured British ports, the public flocked aboard in their thousands.

HMS *Warrior* was never involved in any actions and after 1881 served as a number of stationary uses, including being used as a training ship. In 1904, she was renamed Vernon III and became a tender of HMS Vernon torpedo school at Portsmouth until 1923. In 1929, the ship was taken to Pembroke Dock in southwest Wales and converted to a moored landing stage at a fuel depot. Renamed as C77, she remained in service until the 1960s.

In the late 1960s, the Maritime Trust announced that it was going to restore *Warrior* to her original appearance. In 1979, *Warrior* was transferred from the Royal Navy and towed to Hartlepool where the ship was totally restored to her 1860 appearance. When the restoration was completed, HMS *Warrior* (1860) was towed to the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard to be exhibited.