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Notes on the Removal of the Hull of the Ship "Forest,"² by Extempore Torpedoes

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The above scheme was commenced under the impression that the high tides were over for the winter, and that the vessel would be obliged to remain on shore until the spring.

The breakwater was pushed on with all speed, coolies and our own men working night and day, with parties from "Charybdis" and "Lapwing," and working in the water with temperature below freezing. In ten days it had advanced from the stern as far as the first dotted line in Fig. 2. The digging having at the same time commenced, the greater portion of the vessel's stern and quarters were clear of shingle to low-water mark, when an extraordinary high tide gave so much water that I deemed it advisable to try once more to heave the ship off; this was successfully done after about three hours' hard work.

I may mention that two days before coming off, and when the breakwater was abreast the foremast, a north-east blow was experienced, which, raising a heavy sea, proved its efficiency, as the bags kept the whole force of the seas from the ship; and although the blow lasted twelve hours, no material damage was done to the breakwater.¹

NOTES ON THE REMOVAL OF THE HULL OF THE SHIP "FOREST,"² BY EXTEMPORE TORPEDOES.

By Lient. JOHN FERRIS, R.N.

THE circumstances under which the hull of the "Forest" came into the positions I have endeavoured to show by the diagrams, are doubtless familiar to all, and in my paper I will endeavour to explain the means that were employed by the Channel Squadron at Portland to remove so dangerous an obstacle to navigation.

The wreck was aground on her stem or bowsprit in 24 fathoms of water, bottom upwards, stern-post well out of water, keel at an angle of 45°.

Fig. I represents the general appearance of the wreck on Wednesday, September 19th, when three oil casks, each containing 270 lbs. of powder, were slung on an iron span and placed in such a manner that one exploded on each bilge and one on her keel, as in Fig. II. These mines were at the greatest depth it was possible to

¹ The temperature during the 25 days the ship was on shore, as extracted from the log, ranged during the day from 27° to 50°; wind generally from the northward, with snow occasionally. The working parties from the "Frolic" and "Mosquito," and latterly from the "Charybdis," as shown by the notations in the ship's log, were of great service, and the latter were, with the working party of the "Lapwing," much exposed while making the breakwater; they had to be taken out of the water when quite exhausted and resuscitated by hot tea, kept in readiness on the beach.—A.P.R.

² The "Forest" was a full-rigged ship, strongly-built of timber, of 1,422 tons.

place them, at, viz., 10 fathoms, as the pressure of water would have caused them to collapse at a greater depth.

These mines were so far effective that they broke the keel and burst in large portions of the bilges. It may be asked, why were these mines and others placed on the deck or under-side of wreck? but this is easily explained, as, on account of the masts, yards, rigging, &c., any attempt at a contact on that side would have been futile.

An extempore mine of 250 lbs. of gun-cotton was then placed in position at 20 fathoms, but the strength of the tide prevented the mine from making a good contact with the wreck, the effect, therefore, was apparently small.

Four (100 lb. cases) mines in fork were then placed in the hole made in the morning, as in Fig. III, and exploded at a depth of 17 fathoms. The effect of these mines was very considerable, as very large portions of wreckage continued to come to the surface several minutes afterwards.

On this day the sea was rough and the tides were strong; this prevented our using our means to the best advantage.

Thursday, September 20th.—Two gun-cotton mines failed to explode, as the strength of the tide caused the wires to break by fouling the wreck.

Four (300 lb.) extempore mines on a span were then exploded at a depth of 18 fathoms, and we were rewarded by large portions of the fore-part of the ship coming to the surface, also seamen's chests, bedding, &c., which showed that we were working in the right place to destroy the lower part of the vessel.

Five more mines of 200 lbs. each were then exploded as fast as they could be prepared, and proved highly useful. The tides and weather this day were more favourable than on the preceding one.

Friday, September 21st.—A hole was bored through the dead-wood close to the stern-post and a chain strap rove through it, so as to shackle on a steel hawser with which she was to be towed when freed.

The Trinity yacht "Galatea" endeavoured to move the wreck, also did Her Majesty's ship "Defence." On failing to move it satisfactorily, we again attacked it at 2 p.m., with a succession of extempore mines, and by nightfall had reduced the wreck to the state (as in Fig. IV) of being in three large parts; the bow remaining downwards because of chain cables, &c.

Saturday, September 22nd.—Two more explosions brought the masts and yards to the surface and completely freed the wreck from the bottom, when she was towed into Portland Harbour.

These notes are offered for the Journal of the Institution, in the hope that they may counteract those misinformations (ignorantly written) which filled the daily papers at the time of the first explosion at the wreck.