The story of HMS Implacable

Hello, today let's tell the story of something very special that can be found in The National Maritime Museum. When you first see it, you might wonder what it could possibly be. It looks a bit like the front of a house or grand shop with sixteen windows and columns painted in golden paint. There are flags flying above it. Do you recognize where they are from? One has a Union Jack and the other is blue, white and red. They are the flags of the United Kingdom and France.
And if you look down you might be able to read something written on a painted banner –

IMPLACABLE which means unable to be stopped or unforgiving….

This was part of a ship known HMS Implacable, although it had many names. Its first name was French "Duguay-Trouin". The ship was built in Southwestern France over 200 years ago and five years later, she was used in a battle called The Battle of Trafalgar fought between the British Royal Navy and the combined ships of the French and Spanish Navies. The ship was captured by the British Navy and that is when her name changed to HMS Implacable.

By the time the ship was 100 years old, she sailed the seven seas and had been used in many battles. She was weatherworn and old and it was thought she should be retired from her duties. The King of England Edward 7th said Nonsense, she may be old but she can still be of use. The ship was saved and was sailed to England.

Then her adventures continued. She was used as a training ship. But after a short while again people said this ship is too old, time to use her for firewood.
But there were others who thought like the King and there were several appeals to help preserve her over the years, especially in 1920s. Money was raised to restore the ship and she was used as an accommodation ship, a holiday ship and a coal hulk.
Before once more becoming a training ship and her name changed again. They called her Lion!

But her timbers began to creak and mice and rats began to scratch and woodworms to nibble. Her walls and boards could not be mended. The British said they had no money left to restore her. The French said they didn't have the money either. She could never be taken out onto the ocean waves again. What would you do? Would you find a way of taking care of the ship so that others could see her in years to come. After all she had been very important, and the second oldest ship in the navy.

And the sailors loved her. She was special. They even had a special name for her –
Old Wooden Walls.

But the decision had been made.

Let's row alongside her on that final day. 2 December 1949. There were clear skies and the sea was calm. And lined up on the shore, faces lined with salt sea spray were old Jack Tars, sailors who had loved the ship and come to say a special goodbye.

Her flags fluttered proudly, both British and French to honour all her history. She was pulled far out into the English Channel, and filled with 500 tons of iron so that she would sink. At 1.45pm charges were fired, the attendant ships alongside lowered their flags. The Last Post sounded, good old Implacable true to her name refused to sink. It took almost three hours before she went to her final resting place at the bottom of the sea.

Written by © Olivia Armstrong

The stern galleries and the ship's figurehead were saved. The figurehead is on display too. It is carved in the ship of the monstrous Gorgon Medusa who has hair made of writhing, coiled snakes and large staring eyes that can turn a person to stone.

Afterwards many people said it had been almost criminal to destroy such an amazing historical ship and decided it must never be allowed to happen again. Thanks to their actions another very special ship was saved from being scrapped – The Cutty Sark.

HMS Implacable sails no more but her story will always be told and she will never be forgotten.