

## Conservation of HMS Trincomalee's Figurehead National Museum of the Royal Navy, Hartlepool



### 1.0 HMS Trincomalee and the National Museum of the Royal Navy, Hartlepool

1.1 HMS *Trincomalee*, built in 1817, is the oldest wooden vessel afloat in the world and is the centerpiece of The National Museum of the Royal Navy's Hartlepool site.

1.2 The National Museum of the Royal Navy, Hartlepool joined the National Museum's portfolio in June 2016, having been previously known as Hartlepool Maritime Experience. The quayside attractions were previously managed by Hartlepool Borough Council, whilst the ship was owned and managed by the HMS Trincomalee Trust.

### 2.0 The Requirement

2.1 Following a successful application to the Art Fund's Conservation Grants scheme, the National Museum is seeking an experienced practitioner to undertake the conservation and installation of the figurehead belonging to HMS Trincomalee, detailed in section 4 below.

2.2 It is a funding requirement that the appointed conservator is ICON Accredited

### 4.0 The Figurehead

4.1 When the ship was restored in the 1990s, HMS Trincomalee's figurehead was found to

be suffering from extensive decay and was removed and replaced by a replica. In 2016, when the National Museum of the Royal Navy took over the Hartlepool site, it was 'rediscovered' in a neglected state.

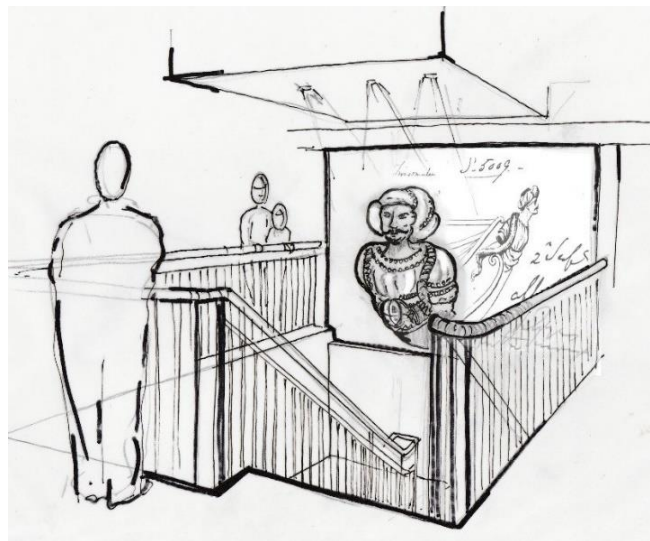
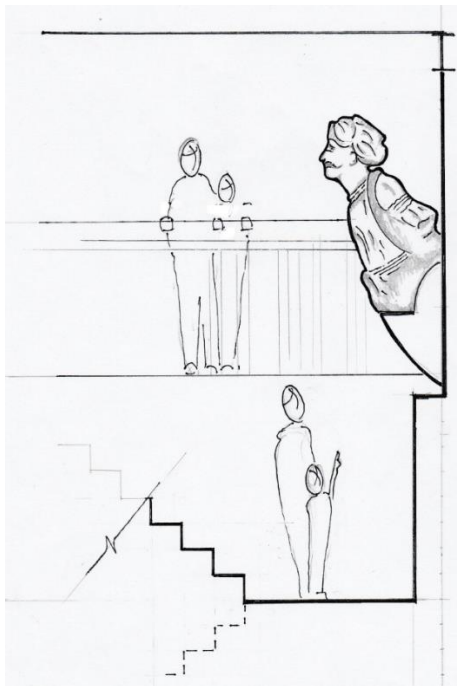
4.2 The removed figurehead is a rare survivor, carved in 1845 by Hellyer & Son, figurehead carvers for the Portsmouth dockyard, in preparation for the ship's first commission. It depicts a turbaned man, believed to represent a native of Sri Lanka (where Trincomalee is a port). The design drawing survives in the National Archives, as do several documents pertaining to the commission.

4.3 A condition report can be found at Appendix 2 – *note: this was based upon images only and not a full inspection*

## 5.0 Display Concept

5.1 It is proposed that the figurehead is installed in the Trincomalee exhibition, a space which tells the story of the ship from its building in Bombay to its restoration.

5.2 The Trincomalee exhibition is currently lacking in any large or colourful objects, and the figurehead would provide a focal point at the top of the stairwell entry point.



*Concept sketches showing figurehead mounted on back wall of stairwell of Trincomalee Exhibition*

## **6.0 Conservation Requirements**

6.1 NMRN are inviting quotes for the conservation and painting of the figurehead to display standard. This will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Timber identification and/or analysis
- Paint analysis – in order to establish the figureheads original and subsequent colours
- Consolidation of internal decayed timber to facilitate mounting
- Replacement and re-carving of decayed timber where necessary
- Preservation of original carved detail
- Removal of detrimental or deteriorated introduced materials such as fibreglass where practicable
- Gap filling and surface preparation
- Removal of paint and reinstatement of original colours
- Fabrication of mount and wall installation of figurehead in gallery space
- Production of a full conservation report including before, after and progress photographs of the work undertaken
- Production of a digital film recording the above processes suitable for use in gallery space

## **7.0 Public Engagement**

7.1 It is a funding requirement that some of the conservation work (probably the final week) takes place at the workshop on the Hartlepool site, giving the opportunity for visitors to see the work taking place.

7.2 Whitsun school holiday (w/c 25 May 2020) has been identified as the preferred date of the conservator's attendance on site, followed by the installation of the figurehead in the exhibition space.

## **8.0 Further information and contact details**

8.1 Further information and images can be requested from: [clare.hunt@nmrn.org.uk](mailto:clare.hunt@nmrn.org.uk)