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Master's Thesis
Maritime Archaeology
University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg

Developing An Archaeological Maritime Museum
Studying the Historic Vessel *HMS Victory* and her Implications for Vessel Oriented Museum Experiences
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Abstract

This study was undertaken regarding the historic vessel *HMS Victory*, which operates a ship museum in Portsmouth, United Kingdom. The study was done from archaeological and museological perspectives following the initial research question: Is the *HMS Victory* a maritime museum? Further research questions developed, such as: How do vessel oriented museums contribute to maritime archaeology? What museological category do vessel oriented museums fall under? What unique problems are associated with vessel oriented maritime museums? The research for this study was done in two ways. The first method was studying the archaeological collection associated with the *HMS Victory* on location with the help and guidance of the Archaeological Data Manager, Nicholas Ball. The second was the review and application of archaeological and museum theory in regards to the impressions created by the collection. Ultimately, I discovered that vessel oriented maritime museums should constitute their own category of maritime museum because of the many conservation and preservation needs that are unique to the incorporation of an historic vessel into a museum experience. Much of my research in museum studies indicated that this specific category of museum was largely underrepresented in strategies developed for addressing these needs. Therefore, I concluded this thesis project with the development of a basic strategy derived from my understanding of the preservation and conservation issues facing the *HMS Victory*. This basic strategy is a six point plan that has, at every step, room for integration of other management plans, reevaluation of the needs of an historic vessel, and space to expand on the interpretive strategy created by addressing an historic vessel as a themed museum experience. The implication of this plan and the general conclusions from this study are that preservation and conservation are different approaches to museums and museum objects, that these needs have significant impact on a complex artefact such an historic vessel, and that museums built around or featuring historic vessels need to develop their own place in museum and archaeological study so as to better provide for the needs of the vessel and the museum experience.

Preface

This preface acts as a guide to the formatting of the following thesis paper. For this project, I chose to study the *HMS Victory* in Portsmouth, United Kingdom as an historic vessel museum, and study the museum collection through archival documents.

The first chapter of this paper covers introductory matter. First and foremost there is an introduction to the entire paper, which gives an idea of the reason why I find this work to be important. Next, I have a section regarding the initial research questions I formed while working with the *HMS Victory* and its collections. Following this is a section of definitions that I felt needed to be established before moving on with the paper. These definitions are not unique to this thesis project, but it is helpful to have them clarified before reading the rest of the paper. Finally I have a section on the history of the *HMS Victory* so that readers may have a timeline of events in the vessel's life.

The second chapter of the project covers the work and research undertaken in Portsmouth. This includes a case study for demonstrating how artefacts have been handled by the museum staff, and a discussion of how arguments about the ownership and authority over the museum have led to disjointed decision making through the years. The third chapter is the maritime archaeological perspective for vessel oriented ship museums, including the application of four archaeological theories and conflicts of interest for the archaeology done with *HMS Victory*. The fourth chapter is a similar discussion from the perspective of museum studies and museum critique.

Finally, the fifth chapter of this thesis paper is an overall conclusion including the all-important proposal for a preservation and conservation management plan outline for use by other vessel oriented maritime museums. Throughout the chapters, there are introductions and conclusions that discuss why this work is relevant for maritime archaeology and maritime museums, and the final conclusions section in this chapter restates much of this information. In formatting this thesis paper, I chose to present information on the ship first to give readers a background in the history and issues regarding the *HMS Victory* as an historic vessel and maritime museum. Next, I chose to discuss archaeological thought and theory because this was the perspective from which I viewed the research undertaken at the *HMS Victory* museum in Portsmouth. I discussed museum studies following this to give more perspective and expand on the research done. The choice to place the management plan in the conclusion chapter was due to the plan being the final formulation of the project altogether.

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1: Introduction

Expansion in the field of maritime archaeology has led to the increase in well-made maritime museums, archaeologically themed maritime museums, and visitor museum experiences focusing on interaction with the sea. Following a museum boom in the 1970's that coincided with revolutions in archaeological theory and thought, the maritime museum experience has been reevaluated and in most museums altered substantially. As it stands, the maritime museum experience is a unique one amongst institutions and museums. Maritime museums take the form of war memorials, floating and functional vessels, ports, replica vessels, and shrines to salvage archaeology. Beyond museums, the way maritime cultural heritage is displayed varies from reconstructed vessels to simple exhibitions of artefacts. It may be difficult to strictly define what constitutes a *maritime* museum,[1] but the experience of maritime cultural heritage for visitors is regularly and consciously shaped through the deliberate choices of archaeologists and curators. The application of certain archaeological theories, as well as studies in types and classifications of museums can help reveal the defining characteristics of an archaeological maritime museum.

Maritime museums, archaeological museums, and vessel oriented museums are underrepresented in museum studies in terms of providing strategies for curation, collection, and display. These museums generally have unique needs that inherently exclude them as outliers to major museum studies. An example of this is the caveat to a definition for open-air archaeological museums posited by Roeland Paardekooper that museums built around visiting historic vessels and learning about life onboard have their own potential category that was necessarily excluded from the study undertaken.[2] While a universal standard for museum planning that encompasses all forms of maritime museum is an unrealistic

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[1] Robert D. Hicks, "What is a Maritime Museum?" *Museum Management and Curatorship* 19, no. 2 (2001).

[2] Roeland Paardekooper, *The Value of an Archaeological Open-Air Museum is in its Use* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2013), 61.

undertaking, I believe that it is both possible and helpful to analyze the long-standing tradition of maritime museums, specifically those with unique attributes such as historic vessels. It would also be helpful to finally establish where such vessel-oriented maritime history and archaeology museums fall amongst the increasingly specific categories of museology.

This thesis will examine some of the issues of designing one specific type of maritime museum: an archaeological maritime museum. Ethical responsibilities, conservation concerns, and archaeological research are all important for the direction of museum design. Collections managers and curators must work with archaeologists and researchers in order to present both a public exhibit, and to maintain the hidden parts of a collection. Currently there are several classifications for different maritime, archaeological, and maritime archaeological museums. Open-air archaeological museums can be maritime in nature and incorporate reconstructed ships, ports, and other maritime cultural heritage. Archaeological museums may display or even focus on maritime cultural heritage, or otherwise spearhead research efforts in maritime archaeology. Maritime themed museums may have little active archaeological research, but may host traveling exhibits, events, or reconstructed ships. Museums sometimes incorporate reconstructed or preserved historic vessels into their collections, allowing visitors the chance to experience the atmosphere on board. There are maritime museums built around such experiences, generally called "ship museums." When one examines the particulars of these museum options, however, it is difficult to decide under which category a ship such as the *HMS Victory*--Lord Admiral Horatio Nelson's flagship during the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805--falls.

This project focused on looking into the question of how the *HMS Victory* functions when it is both part of and the focus of an archaeological maritime museum. Throughout my research, it was not until I encountered the book *Great Maritime Museums of the World* that I saw the idea of a floating

artefact[3] referring to a ship that has been preserved in its original state, rather than salvaged as a

shipwreck. While it might be obvious that *HMS Victory* is such an artefact, the question still remains

about her further classifications as museum, live flagship, and visitor experience. She is incorporated

under the National Royal Navy Museum based in Portsmouth, United Kingdom, but still functions as a

separate entity in many respects. Both the ship and an external museum housing some artefacts are open

to visitors in Portsmouth, situated in the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, which still hosts a naval base.

The library and housing for additional artefacts and the archaeological collection for *HMS Victory* are

behind secure gates that require visitor passes and escorts in order to access them (though a new visitor's

entrance is currently in progress to make the collection more easily accessible to non-visiting researchers).

It is my intention to set forth a series of questions and problems significant in the field of

maritime cultural heritage that can be applied to the maritime museum experience specifically regarding

the floating artefact, *HMS Victory,* and her history and place in the tradition of maritime museums.

Following, I will attempt to provide archaeological maritime museums featuring floating artefacts and

historic vessels with the groundwork for creating ethical, historical, cognitive, and entertaining visitor

experiences. Exploration of these questions will be done utilizing the process of the *HMS Victory*'s

growth from a simple on-board "relic" museum to a full-fledged maritime museum experience as seen

through its archival and archaeological collections. I have been fortunate enough to have visited the *HMS*

Victory in Portsmouth, and worked with her collection under the Archaeological Data Manager Nicholas

Ball. The research I conducted in Portsmouth and its further analysis have served as a case study for the

way this particular subset of maritime museums have been curated, with the unique circumstances of the

HMS Victory's flagship duties further impacting the research.

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[3] David B. Flemming and Heather-Anne Getson, "Nova Scotia's Maritime Museums, Halifax and Lunenburg, Nova Scotia," in *Great Maritime Museums of the World*, ed. Peter Neil and Barbara E. Krohn (New York: Balsam Press, 1991), 32.

1.1: Defining the status of the *HMS Victory*

For the purpose of this thesis project, I have set out to solve a problem regarding the historic *HMS Victory*. As of 2019, *HMS Victory* is under the authority of the National Museum of the Royal Navy in the United Kingdom. She is permanently docked at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard in southern England where curators oversee the collection of artefacts and documents regarding *HMS Victory*'s history. The circumstances of *HMS Victory* and how she came to reside in Portsmouth will be detailed in a later section of this project. Fundamental to this project's formation, however, is a problem that has faced curators of *HMS Victory* since the idea of opening her to the public was first set forth: *HMS Victory* is a live flagship to this day, having never sunk in her lifetime. Ultimately, this is only one facet of the full breadth of the problem I attempt to solve through this thesis project. The overarching problem is this: Can the subjective and objective needs of an archaeological team be combined with those of a museum team to jointly preserve an historic vessel, while also maintaining conservation of a visitor oriented theme based around the visitor experience for that vessel in a museum context?

One of the few general agreements amongst the overlapping fields of study discussed in this paper (museum studies such as museology and museography, maritime history, maritime archaeology, and others) is that frequent reevaluation of both the behind-the-scenes and the public visitor experiences of museums is not only recommended, but required. Many articles, collaborative books, and manuals posit new ways to perform these reevaluations, often from the perspective or perspectives of former curators who have employed various strategies well suited to the specific nature of their respective museum experiences. A museum such as that built around the *HMS Victory* in which an historic vessel is

the primary focus of collection methods, display, and visitor interaction/experience considerations is another unique museum deserving of a specific strategy. While dealing with the challenges set forth by the vessel's unique existence as a commissioned Royal Navy ship, I plan to use the example of *HMS Victory* from her history as a museum and visitor attraction to the way her collections are developed and managed today as a study for what considerations are needed in developing a functional maritime archaeological museum experience based around a particular historic vessel.

How, then, should *HMS Victory* be treated? Is she first and foremost a live flagship, important to the prestige of the Admiral in Portsmouth? Is it more important that she function as a public museum, available for education on the Battle of Trafalgar and the way a warship in the early nineteenth century functioned? Or is she more important as a floating artefact, a complex object with dendrochronological significance, as well as potential perspectives on ship construction from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries? This thesis project sets out from an archaeological perspective to analyze whether or not so-called "live" historic vessels such as the *HMS Victory* function as floating museum housing, complex museum objects, or if they are just as much complex archaeological artefacts with the same significance to maritime archaeology as shipwrecks and sunken vessels. Following this archaeological perspective, this project will shift into a nuanced view on the management of maritime cultural heritage (specifically historic vessels) within museum contexts. The conclusions and potential solution to this problem may serve as a basis on which issues of ownership, conservation priorities, archaeological research, and other complex problems facing maritime and archaeological maritime museums may be resolved in part.

The focus of these conclusions has led the project into a proposed outline for preservation and conservation management plans. The six part outline, with further considerations and important questions posed within it, is a strategy that can be imposed upon the heritage management, conservation, and visitor experience strategies of any vessel oriented archaeological maritime museum, or utilized in a larger focus museum that happens to include an historic vessel or reconstructed vessel. The plan was formulated based

on the combined observations made during my time working with the *HMS Victory* archaeological collection, as well as archaeological and museological research undertaken in the following months. Points in the strategy are left with room for more nuance and important questions, as the strategy is meant to be useful for vessels and vessel oriented museums from a variety of international backgrounds with different levels of funding and status. I believe that this strategy, though highly simplified for the purposes of this project, can be useful for vessel oriented museums or museum experiences. Throughout museological studies, it is widely understood that the more specified the museum type the more complex its strategies must be and few studies even attempt to discuss the multi-faceted challenges facing a vessel oriented museum. It is my hope that this proposed strategy in its simple form becomes a stepping stone for museological research into the specific type of museum category that I explore in this thesis paper.

1.2 Definitions Used

Following is a series of terms that will be applied throughout the discussion of the preliminary research of the *HMS Victory*, questions and problems posed, and analysis of these questions. The terms listed here have complex definitions that have been simplified for the purposes of reading this project, and for many of the terms there are multiple applicable definitions elsewhere. The definitions here have been developed through my own understanding and phrasing and thus are only in reference to how they are used in this thesis project. They are provided to the reader for clarification in usage, but are informed through greater archaeological and museological study and can be inferred to have a degree of nuance behind them.

- Agency - Agency refers to not only the agency of actors--such as museum staff, original owners, authors, and visitors--but also to the implied agency of physical objects. This implied agency is interpreted ontologically through the contextual basis of what the purposes of the object were and currently are, and how the object has been contextualized throughout its existence. The agency of an object can also be applied theoretically to how the object is interpreted, or how it is manipulated for interpretation by museums and visitors alike.

- Authenticity - Questions of authenticity in maritime archaeology usually arise from provenancing (or lack thereof). For the purposes of this thesis project, "authentic" refers to a state of originality to an historic vessel (such as timbers taken from the ship, or artefacts found associated with it) or the time period appropriate to the discussion at hand. Authenticity in this context is a value based assessment of objects that may be undertaken by curators, archaeologists, or visitors.

- *Chaîne Opératoire* - This archaeological theory is best applied in maritime archaeology to help understand the hierarchies (social or otherwise) applied within seafaring communities. Ships in particular functioned with very specific hierarchies due to the isolated nature of the individual ship's community. The theory is a tool for understanding methods, especially technical ones, but can and is applied to social acts especially those concerned with the production and use of artefacts. The application of this theory to the social hierarchies on board vessels is one that I observed in my research and decided to apply to the *HMS Victory*.

- Cognitive Archaeology - A theoretical process in archaeology that attempts to reconstruct the thought and psychological experience of a past society through study of the material culture available.

- Collection Process - This is the process through which historical artefacts and objects are evaluated for inherent significance, cultural value, and other factors that might affect whether or not a museum or institution will keep them. It is at this stage that artefacts are accessioned, deaccessioned, preserved, documented, researched, and occasionally lost or destroyed.

- Complex Artefact - A typical archaeological artefact is relatively easy to identify as a singular object with a unique history that has been obtained (usually through excavation) and studied. For the purpose of this project, a "complex" artefact is one with multiple parts or pieces, in this case the tangible and physical entirety of an intact ship.

- Conservation - Conservation as referred to in this thesis project is an activity that involves the repeated interaction with an object or artefact to reconstruct it, reverse damage done to it, and prevent further damage in the future. Conservation, from this perspective, is primarily concerned with maintaining the physical integrity of an object so that it may be displayed and researched further in the future. Conservation often employs invasive techniques with the idea of restoring an object to its original appearance, the desired appearance from a particular period in the object's

biography. Conservation is generally preferred to preservation when portraying an artefact in a specific way, such as the presentation of the *HMS Victory* at a certain time period.

- Consumption Process - The consumption process is the way in which people (especially visitors, but curators and archaeologists as well) engage with artefacts and displays in museums. This covers the cognitive and emotional engagements, as well as the potential for critical and imaginative engagements. The consumption process assumes a degree of agency for those interacting with objects and displays including the ability to fathom object use, cultural impact and importance, and some sensorial ability in certain experiences.

- Cultural Value - The value placed on an object stemming from several sources of value generation such as: the object's material history, how the object is viewed by collectors, how the object is interpreted by everyday viewers, the object's aesthetic value, the object's purpose and fulfillment of that purpose, and the reason for maintaining the object in a museum setting. Cultural value can be highly subjective, but for the purposes of this thesis project it is presumed that the *HMS Victory* holds substantial cultural value for a varied audience. This cultural value for the vessel is discussed in depth.

- Display Process - This process is the complex procedure through which museum curators, staff, and consulting researchers determine how to display an object, or how to portray a particular theme to an audience utilizing the objects and resources of the given institution. Display design and theory is not heavily discussed in this project but the specific function of displays on the *HMS Victory* plays an important role.

- Folksonomy - A user-generated system in which online access to a collection (usually of images) is provided to public non-academic users who then interpret and tag metadata with keywords. This system does not utilize pre-established technical jargon. For the context of this research

project, folksonomies are considered digital databases created and published by museums that allow public discussion of objects within a museum collection.

- Historic Vessel - Though this term may also apply to reconstructed ships or vessels of a historic nature, for the purposes of this thesis project the term specifically refers to vessels with a documented and significant history that have been preserved in some shape. Ships that have technically been wrecked or sunk, but that have been heavily restored to a seaworthy state after salvage, or shipwrecks excavated and reconstructed for a museum display also qualify. Examples of these types of historic vessels are the *Mary Rose* and the *Vasa.*

- Maritime Museum - This refers specifically to a museum in which the focus of the exhibits and collections are maritime history and archaeology. This includes museums dedicated to naval battles and seafaring, museums that focus their collections on maritime artefacts, and especially museums that exist on board or include an historic vessel. The maritime museum experience discussed later in this paper refers to the way visitors and museum staff interact with the displays and collections of a maritime museum. Aspects of the maritime museum experience can be highly specialized and unique, especially when that museum is on board an historic vessel.

- Marxist Archaeology - This archaeological theory is essentially an application of Marxist thought towards the archaeological practice. It was popularized in the United Kingdom during the post-processual movement and focuses on the presumed materialistic nature of past societies as well as other functions of the Marxist dialectic. The specific application of this dialectic for research on the *HMS Victory* is discussed in a later section of this paper but focuses on the labor required of sailors on board a large ship.

- Material Culture - There are various definitions put forth in archaeological and historical theory for the term 'material culture.' For the purposes of this paper and the research conducted in producing it, as well as for any future research to be undertaken using this project, material

culture refers to the physical manifestation of cultural activities via artefacts discovered and collected for the purposes of dissemination of knowledge.

- Museum object - An artefact, complex or simple, that has been acquired by a museum. Objects can be singular artefacts, collections of simple specific artefacts, or a complex artefact such as a vessel. These objects are most often displayed and thus it is expected that a museum object is accompanied by an object biography, completed or incomplete. In this project, the term is applied primarily to objects within the *HMS Victory*'s collection but can also be applied to the vessel itself.

- Post-Processual Archaeology - This archaeological theory (which is applied in other fields of study as well) emphasizes the idea that there is a high level of subjectivity to the interpretations of archaeological materials by researchers. This theory made a significant impact in United Kingdom archaeology, making it highly relevant to the interpretations of the *HMS Victory* since the introduction of this theory to archaeological practice.

- Preservation - Preservation as referred to in this thesis project is the activity of maintaining an object or artefact in the state it currently is in. These are largely non-invasive techniques that halt decay, and involve larger activities such as altering the housing of an object in various ways to better maintain its state. Preservation is generally preferred to conservation in cases of historic artefacts since invasive methods can cause further damage.

1.3: A Brief History of the *HMS Victory*

Note: this history of HMS Victory *is adapted from the official history as presented by the museum's website.*[4] *This history has been well researched and expanded upon for many years by the various members of the National Maritime Museum and other scholars connected to the* HMS Victory.[5] *This is an overview of the long history of a living flagship still under the authority of the British Royal Navy and thus the presentation of the history may represent the opinions and motivations of a variety of individuals.*

The keel of the *HMS Victory* was laid down on July 23, 1759 in Chatham dockyard following the British government's decision to build 12 new ships of the line. October 13, 1760 the ship was named *Victory*, and five years later it was floated out of Chatham and placed in reserve. In 1780, copper sheathing was fitted to the *HMS Victory* for the first time following its service in the American War of Independence. Shortly thereafter, in 1781 and 1782, the *HMS Victory* continued to participate in minor naval skirmishes. 1793, the *HMS Victory* became the flagship of a Mediterranean fleet led by Admiral Lord Hood, taking part in unsuccessful action in 1795. Again in 1797 the *HMS Victory* was made a flagship, this time under Admiral Sir John Jervis. The next year the *HMS Victory* was refitted as a hospital ship, before being sent to Chatham dockyard once again in 1800 for a three year massive repair.

Immediately following this repair the *HMS Victory* was once again made a flagship for a Mediterranean fleet, this time under Lord Admiral Horatio Nelson. On the 21st of October, 1805, the *HMS Victory* participated in the Battle of Trafalgar, the most famous event in her history. From 1806 until

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[4] "Restoration Log," and "HMS Victory Timeline," Restoration, HMS Victory Museum, accessed 2019, https://www.hms-victory.com/restoration.

[5] Peter Goodwin, *Nelsons Victory: 101 Questions and Answers about* HMS Victory*, Nelson's Flagship at Trafalgar 1805* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012).

1808, the *HMS Victory* was repaired once more at Chatham--likely due to damages sustained at Trafalgar. Following this repair, the *HMS Victory* was again made a flagship, this time in the Baltic under Admiral Sir James Saumarez. It was following this endeavor that the *HMS Victory* entered Portsmouth harbor for what would turn out to be the final time in 1812.

From 1814 until 1816, the *HMS Victory* was almost entirely rebuilt with extensive repairs and alterations being undertaken in her new home in Portsmouth. In 1824, *HMS Victory* was made the flagship of the Port Admiral in Portsmouth, an honor that she retained for the following six years. For a period of about thirty years, the *HMS Victory* continued to reside in Portsmouth until 1869 when it was made the tender to the *HMS Duke Wellington,* which lasted until 1891. After this, still the *HMS Victory* remained in Portsmouth, finally being rammed and severely damaged by the *HMS Neptune* in 1903. It wouldn't be until 1922 that the *HMS Victory* was removed from the port itself and placed in a dry dock for the extensive repair under the Society for Nautical Research.[6] Six years later the *HMS Victory's* repairs were finished and she was opened up for public visitation, though some materials in the museum collection indicate that prior to this opening there may have been an onboard 'relic' museum primarily displaying artefacts from the time of Lord Admiral Nelson.

From this point on, the *HMS Victory* is no longer only a commissioned ship in the Royal Navy but also an early example of a maritime museum. During its time in Portsmouth when the *HMS Victory* was not directly engaged in tending or as the flagship for the Port Admiral, she was used for ceremonial and training purposes by the Navy. After 1928, this become a less prominent purpose due to the ship's role as a public attraction for civilians. In 1955, another so called "great" repair was undertaken due to the damage sustained by bombings of Portsmouth during the second World War. These "great" repairs refer to massive overhauls of the aesthetic and structural integrity of the vessel, the decisions behind which will be further discussed in this thesis paper. The final, most important stage of the *HMS Victory*'s lifetime is

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[6] "HMS Victory," The Society for Nautical Research, accessed 2019, https://snr.org.uk/heritage/hms-victory/.

that of the transfer of her custodianship in 2012 to the National Museum of the Royal Navy, now in

charge of the extensive collection of artefacts associated with the *HMS Victory* as well as maintenance

and conservation of the ship herself.

An interesting note regarding the modern presentation of the *HMS Victory*: the way it is promoted

focuses heavily on its authenticity as well as its famous role in the Battle of Trafalgar. The website itself

announces "Experience life on board the world's most famous warship,"[7] a provocative statement that

undoubtedly influences many visitors. The first implication of this headline is the idea that what is

presented on board the *HMS Victory* is an authentic experience of life on board a flagship in the Royal

Navy. As will be discussed at length in later stages of this project, the museum on board the *HMS Victory*

has a few unique approaches to creating a visitor experience that implies and purports authenticity. These

approaches include the lack of museum tags in onboard displays, the structure of the museum through the

ship to require visitors to follow a certain path through the vessel, and the careful choice of artefacts on

display. Decisions made in the past regarding these displays, as well as the decision making process

today, are discussed in both the second and fourth chapters.

The *HMS Victory* has undergone many changes throughout her long history. In over 250 years,

she has been aesthetically altered to fit the fleets she joined and structurally altered to keep her afloat.

Having never sunk, the *HMS Victory* is a preserved and original ship of the line. However, the focus on

the *HMS Victory*'s history and its presentation as a museum experience has been the theme of Lord

Admiral Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar. One of the aspects of repair that was undertaken in the

twentieth century was to restore the color scheme and general aesthetics of the vessel as she was in Lord

Admiral Nelson's day. Additionally, the way the museum is formatted with its structured path is meant to

invoke the way the ship operated during Trafalgar. Thus, despite the length of time that has passed since

the battle and the duties and history the vessel has experienced since 1805, the ship itself is presented as a

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[7] "Experience life on board the world's most famous warship," HMS Victory Museum, accessed 2019, https://www.hms-victory.com/.

time capsule for Lord Admiral Nelson's day. Thus the utilization of the archaeological and archival

collections has to conform to this promotion of the Trafalgar timeline. This focus on one event in the

HMS Victory's timeline has significant impact on the way the museums in charge of the vessel have

operated, the conservation and preservation priorities of any given strategy for the vessel, and the analysis

undertaken in this project.

2: *HMS Victory,* Behind the Scenes of a Maritime Museum

To begin the research portion of this thesis project I visited the *HMS Victory* and the attached HMS

Victory Museum in Portsmouth, United Kingdom and delved into her archaeological collection with the

help and supervision of the archaeological data manager, Mr. Nicholas Ball. Specifically, I accessed a

series of documents recording correspondence about the treatment of the *HMS Victory* ranging from

shortly after the outbreak of the second World War to the 1980's. These documents covered a wide range

of issues facing those overseeing the *HMS Victory*, from the threat of bombs to whose responsibility it

was to make decisions regarding artefacts linked to the ship's history. What follows is an account of some

of the most impactful examples of the complicated approach to dealing with a complex artefact such as an

historic vessel.

Today, the *HMS Victory* is maintained in an open-air dry dock in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

The day I arrived to begin my research there, they began a project of removing the old cradles of the dry

dock and replacing them with more modern, sturdier designs. Part of the motivation behind this is the

ongoing concern for the conservation of *HMS Victory*, but part of the reason for changing the cradles is to

make the keel and bottom of the hull more visible as part of the museum experience. Additionally, it has

long been the desire of authorities over the ship's display that visitors be able to see how the dry dock

functions for maintaining the *HMS Victory*. Across the square is the *Mary Rose* housed in her museum

with immense care and consideration for her fragile state. Further down in the port is the *HMS Warrior*,

not dry docked due to its higher level of preservation. The juxtaposition of *HMS Victory* between these

two ships--one floating and one housed--puts it in the unique position of presenting a third way of

preserving and conserving historic ships. This is just one example of the interpretive strategies employed in the development of *HMS Victory* as a standing ship museum.

The first step to developing interpretive strategies--as a way of engaging with the visitors--is to analyze the existing collections of a given museum.[8] This is one of the ongoing projects that I witnessed during my visit to the ship, where the scattered pieces of the *HMS Victory*'s archaeological and historical collections are being gathered up, reorganized, and reassessed for importance to the ongoing research of the ship. Internal research being conducted to keep object interpretation (in this case, the "object" in question most often being the ship itself) is also an important aspect of building a successful museum experience for researchers, curators, and visitors alike.[9] Having a theme for this research is generally considered helpful in museum development, and the theme for *HMS Victory* is thankfully an obvious one: the Battle of Trafalgar and *HMS Victory*'s role there. Thus, any and all artefacts within the collection and archaeological work done for and using the collection are inherently tied to this theme, something to remember throughout the rest of this thesis paper. This theme likewise influences the following case study regarding a set of artefacts rediscovered in the collection.

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[8] Graham Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing museums for visitor involvement* (London: Routledge, 2005), 219.
[9] Ibid, 197.

2.1: Introduction

This chapter contains four sections, one of which is accompanied by a subsection. The first section is a

case study regarding the Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming campaign chairs, a newly rediscovered collection

of artefacts from the *HMS Victory* archaeological collections. The process of discovering the chairs in

both documentation and the storage locations of the collection is discussed at length to give an idea of the

sort of challenges facing the Archaeological Data Manager in his duties for finding and documenting stray

artefacts known to be in the collection. A subsection is attached to this discussion analyzing the

experience for what it means for the overall theme of this project: unraveling the complicated decision

making of the *HMS Victory* staff and demonstrating what the vessel as an historic vessel oriented museum

offers various fields in terms of learning. The next section of this chapter is a discussion of how the *HMS*

Victory as a vessel falls under the definition of a maritime museum, with some discussion of her function

as such (though this is discussed in more detail in a later chapter). The second to final section concerns

some historical background for how the decision making demonstrated in the case study and its analysis

came forth. This section demonstrates both a specific conflict in the history of the *HMS Victory*, and the

basics of a conflict any historic vessel oriented museum may be subject to. The final section is the chapter

conclusion, in which the overarching meaning of the previous sections for the final preservation and

conservation strategy I propose is touched on.

2.2: Case Study, the Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming Campaign Chairs

During my time working with the Archaeological Data Manager of *HMS Victory* Nicholas Ball, a particular case emerged in which I was involved from the beginning to the end. *HMS Victory*'s collection, since its transference to the National Museum of the Royal Navy has become spread across several buildings in the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Part of my research included visiting each separate storage area and assessing what was guaranteed as *HMS Victory* artefacts via the archival catalog. One such storeroom had previously been reorganized by Mr. Ball in order to separate potentially genuine historic artefacts from furniture utilized during events on board the *HMS Victory* and it was here that five folding campaign chairs of the sort that may have been used on *HMS Victory* were found. Three were folded at the time, while the other two were distinguishable for having foldable arms and a broken wicker seat respectively. An additional three such chairs were found in the timber storage area, presumably having been quarantined for preservation (two folded, one stored upright, all three contained in sealed bags).

The first examination of the eight chairs in storage revealed that two of them stood out as looking distinctly more modern. Additionally, only four of the chairs appeared to have a catalog number (which corresponded to the outdated catalog entries). The catalog listed approximately twenty-five of these chairs, said to have red velvet cushions that had been disposed of sometime in the last decade. The next step of this case was to examine the collection currently on board the *HMS Victory*, where another twenty-three of these chairs were discovered, two with arms and none with readily visible catalog marks. These twenty-three chairs were displayed in the Great Cabin, or Lord Admiral Nelson's cabin, with the

majority gathered around a duplicate dining table of one from the period. They are also used during events hosted on board the *HMS Victory* for guests to sit on.

Before visiting the on board furniture, Mr. Ball, myself, and another researcher looked through the collection to see if there was reference to these chairs. A single document from 1963 revealed that the duplicate table in the dining cabin had been built in the Portsmouth dockyard as a replica of a genuine campaign table in the possession of the Society for Nautical Research and National Maritime Museum. To be commissioned next, based on the model of five genuine campaign chairs, were twenty-two duplicate campaign chairs. The chairs were to be based on the example of chairs owned by Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming, who was not present at the Battle of Trafalgar but was otherwise contemporary to Lord Admiral Nelson. This was the first and last mention of these chairs in the correspondence in these folders regarding the furniture on board the *HMS Victory*.[10]

During the visits to the furniture storage areas, we collected another folder of correspondences and documents related to furniture on board the *HMS Victory* collated by a previous curator of the museum collection. The documents included photocopies of past correspondences and more recent furniture catalogs, indicating that extensive research was done to fill the cabins on board *HMS Victory* with furnishings as close to authentic as possible. Two interesting documents emerged from this file after the initial hunt for the campaign chairs had concluded: a photocopied list of period-appropriate furniture in the possession of the museum, and a packet of photographs. The list explicitly named the folding campaign chairs, though it only listed four, and indicated the presence of *foldable* duplicates on board the *HMS Victory*. The photographs, in black and white and dated to 1964, showed pictures of two foldable campaign chairs. There were two chairs shown in three positions each: unfolded with a red cushion on top of the seat, unfolded sans cushion, and slightly folded up to demonstrate the hinges on the legs.

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[10] Report of the VATC, 6th October 1963, CRTY V2018/569/1, HMS Victory Historical Collection, HMS Victory Museum, Portsmouth, United Kingdom.

Presumably, these photographs were taken as references for the dockyard workers creating the duplicate chairs.

At this point in the chair case study a few problems became clear. First of all, the original document from 1963 (the first dated reference to the chairs) indicated that twenty-seven foldable campaign chairs should be present in the collection, five original chairs from the early 19th century and twenty-two duplicate chairs from the 1960's. The catalog for the artefact collection had disjointed numbers, but indicated the presence of twenty-eight such chairs while over thirty had been physically counted. Thus we had three different counts for the number of chairs. The second problem was that of the catalog numbering. Two of the chairs in storage had large, visible catalog markings in white on their legs and two of the quarantined chairs had numbers on the tags attached to the wrappings. The chairs on board the vessel had no easily observable catalog markers. The catalog made no differentiation between which might be the original Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming chairs and which were the duplicates, a frequent problem in the catalog. A third problem was the lack of mentions of the original chairs, providing us with two possible numbers (four and five), two possible matches from photographs, and no other identifiable features. One of the furniture catalogs showed a contemporary original chair that had been score-marked, and featured arms, giving us at least one more identifiable chair to find if we worked under the assumption that the chair had been purchased for integration into the collection.

To begin tackling the issues discussion of the appearances of the eight chairs in storage took place. The three chairs in quarantine had not been removed from their wrappings, so their appearances were unknown. Of the five in the other storage room, one had stood out as potentially a duplicate, specifically the one with the broken wicker seat. Its wicker had appeared fresher, the paint used on the wood darker, and when stood next to the other four in storage it stood out as looking much more modern. However, one of the folding chairs also stood out as it lacked a feature of the rest of the chairs, being a strip of beading along the top. At the time, this was the only chair found that lacked this feature. Three

possible factors were identified for discovering the original chairs: older weathered appearance, the ability to fold up, and the presence of catalog numbers. Of the eight chairs in storage (which were considered the potential candidates for the original chairs, as it was clearly the plan in the 1960's to remove those from the onboard collection) four had easily identifiable numbers, six were able to fold, and four appeared at first examination to have a more weathered look. Two of those with numbers, 429 and 431, fit all three categories and were therefore considered the most likely candidates.

A second examination, with the use of the photographs of the originals and with a more careful eye, was required. This examination was promptly undertaken and involved the photographing and examination of every single campaign chair across all three locations. It was through this examination that we discovered many of the chairs did have catalog numbers, written in black marker usually on the inner side of one of the legs or directly underneath the wicker seats. The majority of the chairs on board the ship had these numbers, which were discovered when the chairs were turned upside-down.

The first chairs visited were the five in the store room, two of which were considered highly likely candidates for the original chairs. It quickly became clear, though, that the three categories for candidacy were no longer viable when two discoveries were made. The aforementioned presence of catalog numbers, and the inability of the chair with arms to fold. However, the chair with arms had several distinguishing marks of wear that matched with the chair in the photograph, and a closer examination revealed that it had been screwed shut to prevent folding. This chair was thus identified as one of the original Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming chairs.

The chair that folded but lacked the beading at the top was more closely examined and another interesting feature was discovered: it had straight back legs. All of the other chairs in storage, including the broken one that was considered modern, had slightly angled back legs. Additionally, the top of the backs of these chairs were slightly angled with rounded edges to the wood, while this chair had a straighter cut to it. This chair was clearly a modern replica, and not a very accurate one, but the mystery

remained that it folded. Further examination of the remaining chairs revealed that two of them lacked catalog number marks, but curiously had similar score marks to those seen in the antique armed chair that was not of the Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming set. These chairs were also particularly weathered, and so they and the armed-chair that matched the photograph were collected and taken to the bay storage where the quarantined chairs were.

These three chairs were unwrapped and looked over by not only myself and Mr. Ball, but another conservator as well who had more knowledge about furniture. She recalled that at one time there should have been *two* original chairs present with arms, but could not confirm whether or not the number of originals should be four or five. Upon examining the three quarantined chairs, it was determined that the two that folded were certainly more modern, but that older wood had perhaps been repurposed to make them. Additionally, they bore score marks, indicating that when the folding duplicates were made the score marks were also copied. These two folding chairs had the straight back legs and lack of beading that the duplicate from the storeroom had, though when compared to the upright chair in quarantine had lighter wood color. The upright chair very much resembled the broken one from the storeroom, including an interesting feature: it was never made to fold. The hinges were decorative, and closer examination of the legs revealed that the wood had been scored to resemble the seam between the two leg halves but the wood had not been cut.

This left us with three chairs thought to be original (one with arms), and two types of duplicate chairs (foldable with straight legs and without beading, and non-foldable with beading and angled legs). The next step was to examine the collection of chairs on board the *HMS Victory* more closely. Nearly all of the duplicates on *HMS Victory* were beaded, non-foldable (though closer examination as to whether or not they were fastened shut or never foldable in the first place was not done), and numbered in black. Those that were not numbered were still clearly duplicate chairs. One chair was foldable, as demonstrated by a guide on board, who explained that this chair was often used to demonstrate to visitors the original

state of the chairs that could not fold. The guide also recalled that once all such chairs on *HMS Victory*

had been foldable, and had later been fastened shut to prevent wear and tear. It should be noted that the

two folding duplicates in the quarantine area had broken hinges. After explaining our study of the chairs

to the guide, it was revealed that there were additional folding campaign chairs stored in the pantry used

during onboard entertainment. There were four folding chairs stored in the pantry bringing the total

number of chairs up once more. On closer examination, these chairs turned out to consist of three more

folding chairs with the features of the duplicates that lacked beading, and one that had all the features of

the originals.

For closer inspection, the more accurate folding chair was removed from the pantry and placed

next to the folding duplicate on board. It quickly became clear that the chair from the pantry had all the

features of the original chairs because it *was* an original chair. It bore a score mark on the underside of the

seat, had much older wicker and wood, angled legs, beading, a rounded top, and original hinges. Quickly,

this chair was removed from the ship and taken to the bay storage where the other three originals still

were. All three foldable originals were stood side by side and it became even more clear that they were

from the same period of time, and same set of chairs. Each had a score mark, each lacked a catalog

number, each had wear and tear. One of them had clearly been repaired in a more modern time, but the

repair did not damage the integrity of the rest of the chair and it was still clear despite the repair that the

chair had the features of an original.

With four--and perhaps all--of the original Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming chairs discovered,

discussion of the duplicates began. It became clear that the 1960's undertaking of duplicate chairs would

have been of *foldable* chairs, so as to demonstrate their usefulness in battle and keep them as authentic as

possible. It was also likely that some of these duplicates were made with repurposed wood from genuine

antique chairs, as the two in quarantine indicate. As time went on and these chairs were repeatedly used

for onboard functions and demonstrations for visitors, the chairs were damaged and began to show sign of

age and use. Thus, another set of duplicates were made, presumably some with folding capabilities (that were later fastened against folding to prolong use) and some without. These chairs were more accurate to the originals, perhaps because the original chairs were used directly as references as opposed to photographs taken at an angle. The inconsistent numbering of both the originals and the two types of duplicates is ultimately consistent with the haphazard cataloging systems implemented through the second half of the twentieth century, and thus not a factor in the separation of duplicate and original.

The purpose of this focused study on these four artefacts is to demonstrate the way in which "relics" that were once treated with extensive care can be moved quickly out of the eye of curators and archaeologists. As *HMS Victory* is continuously populated, cleared out, and repopulated with period appropriate relics and antiques, items of genuine historic value are often miscatalogued or misplaced. Relics with clear connections to Lord Admiral Nelson are less likely to fall prey to this kind of treatment, but the question this raises regards the criteria for historical importance of *HMS Victory*'s artefacts. Are timbers known to belong to an early phase of *HMS Victory*'s life significant enough to keep despite the preservation problems they raise? Conversely, are artefacts such as canons uncovered from contemporary wrecks or ships' furniture from the time period unimportant and uninteresting because they were not originally Lord Admiral Nelson's? These questions, the history of the campaign chairs, and the demonstration of the problems behind the scenes of the *HMS Victory* museum as laid out in this section are relevant to the following analysis and discussion of how the narrow focus of the museum on a specific historic vessel and the time period it represents can have widespread effects on other artefacts and serve as examples for what to do and what not to do in other maritime museums.

2.2.1: Analysis of the Case Study

The questions raised by myself and Mr. Ball during the search for the Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming

chairs and presented in the previous paragraph tie back to the interpretive strategies utilized by the *HMS*

Victory and associated museum staff to determine what artefacts are displayed to visitors (a process that

will be discussed further in the museum theory section of this paper). It is clear to see that the interpretive

theme of conservation being the Battle of Trafalgar puts some artefacts in the collection at higher risk.

Had the campaign chairs been the chairs that Lord Admiral Nelson presumably used in his cabins, they

would have been more carefully documented and preserved and likely would have been sent to the

National Maritime Museum along with the other Nelsonian furniture pieces that the museum gained

custody of in the 1940's. In fact, the acquisition of furniture such as this collection of campaign chairs is

in some ways a result of the determination to preserve Nelsonian relics. During the earliest

reinterpretations of the *HMS Victory*, period appropriate furniture was desired for decoration on the ship

especially for the benefit of the visitors touring the cabins in lieu of access to the original furnishings.[11]

Preventing the expected damage caused by use in formal Navy functions and the regular visitors touching

the Nelsonian furniture was the priority,[12] which allowed historic artefacts such as the Admiral

Elphinstone Fleeming chairs to be damaged instead.

Despite the apparent conflict in preservation and conservation ideals here, this decision made by a

past curator reflects the strategies for the *HMS Victory* and the vessel's furnishings. In order to present the

ship in her Trafalgar form (an act of conservation), as well as preserve the artefacts and relics associated

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[11]Document dated 15th December 1972, V2019/42/69, HMS Victory Historical Collection.
[12] Memorandum dated June 20th 1950, V2019/18/34, HMS Victory Historical Collection.

with Lord Admiral Nelson, decisions were made that led to the chairs being acquired for replication and

then their integration into the display and use of those replicas. An understanding was developed here that

conserving the state of *HMS Victory* in 1805 was more important than preserving the Admiral Elphinstone

Fleeming chairs, which were less important to preserve than the Nelsonian relics. The preservation and

conservation management plan that I have been formulating reflects this understanding, and does not

conflict with the decision making process of past *HMS Victory* museum staff who perceived period

appropriate furnishings as props important to the interpretive strategies employed. That is not to say that

in the future, decisions regarding artefacts in the archaeological collection will be handled in the same

manner. Over time, *HMS Victory* museum staff have gained access to greater resources, funding, and

expertise that allows for more informed decision making in the strategies for preservation, conservation,

and interpretation of the vessel. Should a similar situation arise again, the collection reflects the decisions

made in the past and how they affected the artefacts in this case so that staff may choose a different

strategy.

The effects of this case study on the *HMS Victory* as a vessel may appear minimal at first glance.

The chairs are, after all, merely props--both historic and replica--that are used to enhance the displays of

life on board the vessel, and do not hold much importance in the preservation needs for the ship itself. Of

course, this makes the chairs part of the overall conservation techniques employed on the vessel where

active efforts to portray the ship as she was at Trafalgar include the use of period furniture. The chairs do

have overarching meaning for the future of the *HMS Victory* though, as they are indicative of the kind of

thought processes applied in lieu of a concrete preservation and conservation management plan. It is not

uncommon for historic vessels to become too expensive to maintain, to fall into disrepair, and to become

unimportant in the eyes of authoritative bodies.[13] Though it is unlikely given the nearly century-long

preservation mission surrounding *HMS Victory*, under the wrong circumstances the vessel could become

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[13] Ben Gutierrez, "Historic ship ordered to leave Honolulu Harbor," *Hawaii News Now*, August 12, 2016, https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/32743767/historic-ship-ordered-to-leave-honolulu-harbor/.

as unimportant for preservation as the Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming campaign chairs. Timbers could be reused elsewhere, artefacts incorrectly removed from the collection, and parts of this historic vessel mistreated due to a lack of processual strategy designed to protect the cultural value of such an historic vessel. The plan that I propose at the end of this thesis project is designed with vessels more unfortunate than the *HMS Victory* in mind to ensure that the lessons learned by funded historic vessel oriented museums are applied equally to the preservation of worldwide maritime cultural heritage.

2.3: The *HMS Victory* and the Maritime Museum

The *HMS Victory* functions as an interesting example to the world of maritime museums. That there are constant questions and frustrations involved in crafting her visitor experience only enhances her ability to serve as a primary example to other similar museums. The *HMS Victory* ultimately serves as a living and complex artefact, with many moving parts that must constantly be reevaluated like any other artefact. As a wooden ship, *HMS Victory* is inevitably subject to decay. Timber supplies fill an entire storage bay at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, ready to be cut by appropriate experts to the specifications determined by curators and archaeologists who've studied the ship plans made from *HMS Victory'*s past outfits. As it is, there are changes on board that are clearly later additions. On the orlop deck, at least two sections of planking are clearly new. And yet, to the visitor, these blend in with the rest of *HMS Victory*. It's necessary to have complete planking on the orlop deck, where visitors must walk through to the ammunition storage from the surgeon's area. This is an example of one of the few seamless integrations of the museum's conservation needs and *HMS Victory*'s preservation needs.

Most of the *HMS Victory* is not "original" (referring to the building of the ship in the mid-eighteenth century), as answered to one of the most frequently asked questions the museum fields. Every time she has been rebuilt, more and more timber has been removed and repurposed. A current project for the Archaeological Data Manager, Mr. Ball, involves generating a database from a highly detailed 3D model made that can identify each and every timber of the ship. What, then, makes *HMS Victory* authentic, if not her timber? The most authentic part of *HMS Victory* becomes the experience of climbing aboard a live flagship and walking through the path set out by the museum. This path takes

visitors through all accessible decks, the cabins of Lord Admiral Nelson, and from bow to stern.

"Maritime museums do not separate seafaring from its natural and cultural environments; they rather

celebrate human industry and ingenuity through the crafts, traditions, and enterprise of the sea."[14] In this

same way, the *HMS Victory* shows the impressive ingenuity of the British navy in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. Visitors can see the different types of large canon utilized during the Battle of

Trafalgar, then walk the deck with a galley display and see a replica of the massive stove used to serve

the large crew. Space is used sparingly even now, as replica mess tables are crammed between spare guns

to make room for wartime activity. The museum cares about the identity of the crew, as men serving

under a famous admiral in an equally famous battle, demonstrating both a collective identity (with

constant reminders of the British Crown stamped on various objects) and an individual one (one can

imagine individual sailors seated in front of the replica meals on the mess tables).[15]

In the growing field of museology, debates over the importance of visitors and public engagement

have begun to shift away from object-oriented approaches. Programming and the accentuation of public

participation have led to blockbuster events and attempts to appeal to non-traditional museum visitors.

This shift has led to a more ideological approach to museum displays and curation in general, which may

or may not benefit complicated museums such as those that encompass entire floating vessels.[16] The

vessel in such a case is a complex object that can represent a series of ideologies ranging across history,

archaeology, conservation, naval power, colonialism, imperialism, etc. Certainly, the approach to the

museum experience undertaken on the *HMS Victory* can be considered non-traditional and arguably

participation in the movement of museum experiences towards mass entertainment, as it is a fully

immersive museum. Due to these unique factors in the museum formation and experience of *HMS*

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[14]Hicks, "What is a Maritime Museum?," 159.
[15]Ibid, 160.
[16] Irina van Aalst and Inez Boogaarts, "From Museum to Mass Entertainment: The Evolution of the Role of Museums in Cities," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 9, no. 3 (July 1, 2002).

Victory, not only does the vessel function as an example for other maritime museums but it also makes an interesting study for the formulation of strategies to handle similar museums.

One of the most favorable factors that *HMS Victory* has is place sensitivity. Place sensitivity as part of the consumption process (to be discussed at greater length) is crucial because it ensures that a visitor's first impression gives them the idea that they are at a "special" site.[17] Her location in Portsmouth HIstoric Dockyard, and most importantly her fully formed ship's body, engage all the senses of the visitor. She invokes the maritime history she embodies by being present beside other historic vessels--such as *HMS Warrior* and the museum housing the remains of the *Mary Rose*--as well as modern naval vessels, just barely visible to the public. Seagulls can be heard, the ocean smelled, and the sounds of a ship--wood creaking, the smell the timbers, etc.--can be experienced to an extent. Most museums leave visitors deprived of their usual senses, something that curators must manage in development,[18] but not *HMS Victory*. This is something that is unique to vessel oriented maritime museums in which visitors can experience the featured historic vessel first hand. While special effects are used (or planned for) in other museums to simulate the sensory experiences of interaction with the sea, an historic vessel physically located near or on the water necessarily requires less budget and staff work for crafting those same experiences. In formulating an experience strategy for a housed reconstructed or restored shipwreck or vessel, those factors are often considered as part of the improvement to authenticity.[19] For the strategies around the *HMS Victory,* where the question of authenticity is common, this is a distinct advantage.

Part of *HMS Victory*'s strange relationship with the museum is her partial classification as an object. A ship is inherently a complex artefact and one often given quite a bit of agency by museum staff and visitors alike. What does an object such as *HMS Victory* say about its origins? What does it say about those that place value in its preservation and display? These questions become more complex when

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[17] Black, *The Engaging Museum*, 85.
[18] Ibid, 204.
[19] Christopher W. Alexander, Miyoko Tsutsui, and Gary Black, *The Mary Rose Museum* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1995).

considering the plans to complete and make public some form of database for the *HMS Victory*. The database may be only the previously mentioned timber analysis, or it may include relevant parts of the archaeological collection--something other museums have begun to do in the United Kingdom. Digitization efforts and the interaction between non-museum staff with such online resources create new contexts for objects and help generate the folksonomies used to describe them.[20] As creators and consumers generate such online content for the museum and its collections, a dualism begins to form that removes the obsolete "object centralization" and transforms the museum into public forum.[21]

Here we perhaps crack the code to *HMS Victory*'s continued "authenticity" problems in its conservation strategies. In determining the cultural value of objects to be collected and displayed, there is a pattern of desire for expressions of cultural experience that can be grasped and understood by visitors and viewers.[22] A complex artefact such as *HMS Victory* will have a multitude of potential applications of cultural value. Being a live ship, hosting the Navy on board even now, may be her most obvious and immediate value. Internationally, she is one of only a very few preserved and never-sunken warships. Academically for researchers across several fields--maritime history and archaeology, naval studies, even a handful of fields regarding sociology and more individualistic histories--*HMS Victory* is a priceless object for study. Culturally, she is regarded as a significant site by plenty of non-British tourists. The continued preservation of the vessel, and the active desire to display the history and lives of the crew under Lord Admiral Nelson indicate that as of right now the *HMS Victory* carries a significant amount of cultural value for the museum staff, the overarching body of the National Royal Navy Museum, and for the educational efforts in the United Kingdom. The establishment of this cultural value as a maritime museum allows the vessel significant room to grow strategically to preserve maritime cultural heritage.

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[20] Fiona Cameron and Sarah Mengler, "Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museum Collections Documentation: Emergent Metaphors for a Complex World," *Journal of Material Culture* 14, no. 2 (May 27, 2009).
[21] Ibid, 195.
[22] Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into collecting in the European Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1995), 297.

Something to consider when developing strategies for visitor engagement and museum experiences is the significance of the material being presented. Some visitors may be interested in museums regardless of content, but many visitors see museums as an authoritative place of learning for specific topics and there are expectations necessarily related to this thought process.[23] In terms of the *HMS Victory* it is clear from the observations of museum staff past and present that visitors to the vessel expect an authentic representation of life on board a nineteenth century warship. This turns the ship from a vessel on its own into the presence of a museum because the vessel is no longer an artefact, but a housing for questions and answers. This is very important to keep in mind when applying the conservation management section of the strategy I propose. Conservation is an active application of interpretation to a museum or museum object, and in the case of the *HMS Victory* it involves various methods of "authentic" portrayal of maritime life. Thus in realizing that the *HMS Victory* cannot and does not function only as a museum object but is in itself a museum experience of authenticity, strategies can be adjusted to ensure that the ship has a balance of displays and treatments appropriate to this dual status.

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[23] John H. Falk, "Understanding Museum Visitors' Motivations and Learning," *Motivation and Learning Styles* (2006), 110-111.

2.4: Arguments of Ownership

One of the most critical problems in the formation of preservation and conservation management

strategies for the *HMS Victory* is the conflict of authoritative bodies overseeing these efforts. The vessel

functions as a still commissioned flagship for the Admiral of the Royal Navy stationed in Portsmouth, and

thus is required to perform certain duties that come with that title. When *HMS Victory* was first conceived

of as a museum in the 1920's, a fund called "Save the Victory" was created by the Society for Nautical

Research (SNR), connected to the National Maritime Museum (NMM). The NMM had primary

responsibility for the conception of *HMS Victory*'s preservation (much of the physical labor to maintain

the ship was however undertaken by Naval dock workers), as well as the work done for the archaeological

and archival collections from documentation to storage. The SNR, for its part, had final say for the use of

official "Save the Victory" funds (S.T.V.F.) and were necessarily consulted in conflicts between the

NMM and Royal Navy. In the past few years, responsibility for the *HMS Victory* was taken over by the

National Royal Navy Museum, though parts of the *HMS Victory* historical and archaeological collections

are still housed in London at the NMM.

The primary conflict represented in the *HMS Victory*'s correspondence collections took place in

the 1940's and 1950's. It began when the SNR gave permission for the S.T.V.F. to be used to restore a set

of original furniture from the ship that had been owned by Lord Admiral Nelson. This preservation

activity took place at the NMM, where the artefacts continued to be stored despite requests from the

Commander in Chief of Portsmouth--the Admiral whose flagship was thus the *HMS Victory*--that the

furniture be returned to Portsmouth for display on board the ship.[24] Following the correspondence through conflict, a timeline became clear. In the late 1940's, it was the intention of the SNR and NMM to return the Nelsonian relics to Admiral Willis, the Commander in Chief at the time, for display on board *HMS Victory*. However, a member of the board at the NMM named Lord Stanhope became concerned that the amount of official functions on board the ship would put this furniture at risk of further damage. A letter from 1948 revealed that since the destruction of the Admiralty House during the Second World War the *HMS Victory* had been used for all official entertaining.[25] The three sides of the issue ended up being as follows. Admiral Willis and the Royal Navy associated the Nelsonian furniture with the prestige the *HMS Victory* deserved as a live flagship and thus wanted the pieces on display as part of the museum experience for visitors, with plans in place to remove and store the furniture during official Navy business so as to preserve the pieces. Members of the SNR and NMM gave conflicting answers to the Admiralty regarding whose authority it was to claim ownership of the Nelsonian furniture. The board of Trustees through the NMM believed the furniture should either remain in London, or a separate museum housing be built for display in Portsmouth, but that under no circumstances should the pieces be on the ship. Members of the SNR, with the final say on the matter, tried to mediate between the Admiralty and the NMM trustees with the ultimate conclusion that the furniture would be housed off the ship, but SNR funds would have to be used to furnish the *HMS Victory*.[26]

Museums still function as housing for cultural and national identities, often expressed through the material heritage of a particular culture, thus giving museums the complex responsibility of choosing how to display and preserve such heritage.[27] What does an object say about its origins? What does an object say about those that place value in it? For an historic vessel, such as the *HMS Victory,* the authority over

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[24] Correspondence to Lord Stanhope, V2019/18/21, HMS Victory Historical Collection.
[25] Correspondence from Admiral Willis dated September 13th, 1948, V2019/17/11, HMS Victory Historical Collection.
[26] Correspondence dated April 18th, 1950, V2019/17/81, HMS Victory Historical Collection.
[27] Cameron and Mengler, "Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museums Collections Documentation," 191.

her display and presentation decides the answers to these questions. Should the Royal Navy be the foremost voice in crafting displays around her as a live flagship, the question of military and imperial influence can be brought up. *HMS Victory* has always been displayed as she was in 1805 at Trafalgar, as a monument and shrine to Lord Admiral Nelson. To other interested parties, such as the NMM and SNR, this was concerning as it prioritizes the Royal Navy's agenda over the immediate preservation and conservation of the vessel and its artefacts. Changes in museum operations do tend to be driven by social contexts,[28] and so perhaps the Royal Navy and its associated museum are driven by the need to display *HMS Victory* as a prestigious object for Britain's history. This is in fact expressed in the collection's history, at one point, when in the 1970's a request was put forth to utilize the S.T.V.F. for furnishing the quarters of officers living on board the *HMS Victory* with period reproduction furniture to "[keep] with the dignity and impression given by the remainder of the ship."[29]

When looking at the period of time where authorities from the NMM conflicted with the interests of the Royal Navy, an important point to mention is that the NMM is located in Greenwich, London. Today the city of Portsmouth is approximately a three hour train ride from London, to give an idea of the sort of distance between this museum and the ship. There were times where the NMM had little first-hand knowledge of the state of the ship, nor did the SNR, due to this distance. Of course, the NMM was not the owner of the ship, as the *HMS Victory* did and still does legally remain in the hands of the Royal Navy. Like other historic naval ships that have been rescued from being scrapped by museum boards, *HMS Victory* only became a preservation and conservation project when the idea to host an onboard museum was introduced in the 1920's and initial efforts were funded entirely by the S.T.V.F. started by the SNR. Conversely, the correspondence in the collection also indicate that at times the NMM had insufficient plans to provide for continued preservation of *HMS Victory* whereas the Navy offered their expertise,

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[28] Cameron and Mengler, "Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museums Collections Documentation," 200-201.
[29] Correspondence from Commander Twiddy to George Nash, V2019/42/69, HMS Victory Historical Collection.

funding, and staff to maintain the ship.[30] At times there have been conflicts over the proper materials to use, where one authority believes cost effectiveness will not cost the ship crucial structural integrity, or another believes there is a more urgent matter to be taken care of first. The rigging, weather protection, on-board entertainment, use of the ship for official functions, use of museum objects on board the ship for visitors, access to the ship, and many other issues have arisen between the Royal Navy and the various museum entities with stakes in the continued life of the *HMS Victory.*

The ongoing conflict between the three primary interested parties regarding ownership of *HMS Victory* perhaps was inspired by the fear of her becoming a military war memorial. For some time, *HMS Victory* did feature portraits of Lord Admiral Nelson on display in the spot that it is believed he died. Throughout reimaginings of the *HMS Victory* as a visitor experience, the portraits were regarded from two perspectives. The first was that they enhanced the emotional experience of seeing where Lord Admiral Nelson fell, and did not glorify the military history of the vessel. The second was that they detracted from the authentic feeling of the ship and encouraged inaccurate history, since one of the portraits was highly imaginative in its portrayal of Trafalgar and the spot commemorated remains unconfirmed. It is unclear whose recommendation it was to remove the portraits in the end, but they were taken from the ship and integrated into the museum's collections off-board. It should be noted that the SNR funded preservation efforts for these portraits, as well as other Nelsonian "relics" that were later housed at the NMM.

Conversations about conservation and preservation of the ship go back and forth regarding the vessel's timbers (both on and off the ship), her Trafalgar appearance, and the need to maintain her parts. "Maritime museums are popular because of the metaphorical power of ships, which appeal as emblems of memory and identity."[31] As a maritime museum, the *HMS Victory* serves as a powerful metaphor for British naval might in a somewhat mild manner (as opposed to the complicated colonial history behind

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[30] Correspondence dated February 1927, V2019/16/2, HMS Victory Historical Collection.
[31] Hicks, "What is a Maritime Museum?," 171.

other great ships of Britain's past). The *HMS Victory*, like other maritime museums, reflects the interplay of historical and public archaeology by displaying what is essentially a floating archaeological artefact--the ship herself--alongside a history of restorations, conservation efforts, and other significant moments in her history aside from Trafalgar. It's clear from the continued display of Trafalgar and Nelsonian objects at the NMM that this is recognized as a powerful moment in history to be reflected by museums. The one uniting feature, then, for the authorities in charge of preserving the vessel, conserving the Trafalgar appearance, and otherwise operating the museum experience is the representation of *HMS Victory* as a warship at Trafalgar.[32]

The arguments over ownership were also in some ways arguments over conservation strategy. Without a clear idea of whose authority gave staff working with the *HMS Victory* final say on what artefacts would remain on board the vessel, where repairs were to be made as inconspicuous as possible, and why certain parts of the vessel should or should not be maintained as her 1805 appearance, it was inevitable that confusion occurred. There is still some of this confusion today, in that artefacts from the *HMS Victory* archaeological and archival collections have been dispersed for various purposes throughout the holdings and storage facilities in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, and some even remain at the NMM. Because of the issues of authority, no concrete preservation and conservation strategy or management plan was set for the curators and archaeologists working on the project. This is also why inconsistencies have arisen in the recent reevaluation of the vessel and the collection. The lack of authoritative strategies led to curators and archaeologists having to rely on academic and professional research and backgrounds that were not always consistent with the 1805 Trafalgar interpretive strategy. This portion of research for the thesis project thus demonstrates the absolute need for a museum, especially one handling such a complex interpretive artefact, to have a clear authoritative body overseeing it.

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[32] Correspondence dated to March 1954, V2019/26/2, HMS Victory Historical Collection.

2.5: Conclusion

The time I spent in Portsmouth working with the archaeological and historical collections of the *HMS Victory* was rewarding and incredibly educational for researching this project. Not only did I have the chance to experience the *HMS Victory* and the associated HMS Victory Museum first hand as a visitor and as part of the staff, but members of the staff were very candid about the complicated history of the museum and its collections. The correspondence I found was uncatalogued, and part of my time there was spent cataloguing and documenting that part of the collection for the database. Despite the clear issues and poor decision making outlined in the documents that I consulted in my discussion about the ownership arguments, the museum staff made no attempts to hide these conflicts. Today, decision making for the *HMS Victory* is far more organized and nuanced, as the staff have more funding and more direction for conserving and preserving the vessel.

The experience with the Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming chairs was, as I was told, a common one in terms of discovering real historic artefacts amongst the collection. It was unsurprising to the staff that a combination of catalog errors and disregard for historic artefacts not directly related to Lord Admiral Nelson had led to these historic artefacts being mishandled and poorly preserved. These practices became commonplace due to the constant struggles going on between the authoritative bodies handling the *HMS Victory*. Workers from the Royal Navy while competent for matters of preservation and conservation of the vessel itself, due to the physical ability to perform the activities required for maintaining the ship, were not knowledgeable about preservation practices for the artefacts on board. Likewise, members of the NMM and SNR that were displaced from Portsmouth were unable to understand the importance of

accurate furnishings on board the vessel when experiences the atmosphere of the visitor experience. With only the goal of representing and preserving the history of the Battle of Trafalgar, there were no smaller goals concerning certain aspects of the *HMS Victory* collections that could guide staff handling the vessel and artefacts directly in Portsmouth. Precedents were then set during these turbulent periods that led to further confusion within the catalog and complicating matters for the present museum staff attempting to both preserve artefacts and conserve the ship's state. In conclusion, the information learned behind the scenes at the *HMS Victory* in Portsmouth revealed how without an established strategy for an historic vessel with multiple interested authorities involved, poor policies and procedures may be put in place that threaten the material cultural heritage of the vessel and its associated artefacts.

3: The Archaeological Perspective

The *HMS Victory* is a live historic vessel. Because she has never wrecked, she is in a highly favorable state for study of ship construction, especially long-term. Having just under two hundred years of frequent refits and repairs gives an excellent look into the way ships of the line were altered throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While such study usually requires archival research of ships plans and drawings, the *HMS Victory* presents an interesting conundrum. Her ships plans and drawings are incomplete, going back only so far into her restoration (though new discoveries at the dockyard in which she was originally built may yet reveal her original plans). Therefore, in order to learn more about the way she was first made, to learn about the provenance of her original timbers and the construction methods utilized in the eighteenth century English dockyards, she must be studied as she is now.

When constructing complex museum displays around particular objects, object biographies are crafted including: physical form and status of the object, materials and techniques used in its creation, the life history of the object, social contexts from its history, the cultural values attached to it, and the performance of its meaning put forth in the display.[33] This information is best obtained for and from the *HMS Victory* through the application of archaeological research and techniques of study, such as dendrochronology and the study of builders' marks on the surviving original timbers. It is also possible to create online resources for archaeological research out of the relevant objects in the archaeological collection, the timber database, and the scanned ship plans and photographs that the Archaeological Data Manager is currently integrating into the museum's internal system. Additionally, archaeological theory has been and can be of further use to the interpretation of *HMS Victory*. As the first part of a good

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[33] Kirsten Wehner and Martha Sear, "Engaging the Material World" in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations,* ed. Sandra H. Dudley (London: Routledge, 2016), 146.

preservation and conservation management strategy is to develop or expand on an existing interpretive strategy, the role of maritime archaeology in constructing or imagining an historic vessel oriented museum is no small one.

3.1: Introduction

This chapter of the thesis paper has to do with the application of archaeological theory, as well as discussing how archaeology has operated in the past priorities for the preservation and conservation of the *HMS Victory*. The chapter has four sections and four subsections. The first section is that on archaeological theory, and discusses how and why archaeological theory is relevant in this thesis project and for the *HMS Victory* and associated collections. There are then four subsections in this section detailing the specific application of four archaeological theories: post-processual theory, Marxist theory, cognitive archaeology, and *chaîne opératoire*. Summarized definitions of these theories can be found in section 1.2 of this paper in alphabetical order. The next section of this chapter regards the conservation priorities that have influenced the *HMS Victory* collection, and what future there is for archaeological research on the vessel. Following this is a section about conflicts of interest, including how certain artefacts are given significantly more research funding than others. Finally, the last section is a conclusion that explains how this chapter on the archaeological perspective ties in to the overarching themes of this thesis project regarding preservation and conservation management.

3.2: Archaeological Theory

Since it has been established that the *HMS Victory* functions as a floating archaeological artefact, is attached to an archaeological collection, and otherwise engages in the practices of modern maritime archaeology, it is only logical that research done on and using the ship utilize archaeological theories. In the definitions section of this project I have laid out the basics of four archaeological theories that I think have high potential for contributing to, or utilizing, the study of the *HMS Victory*. Post-processual theory, Marxist theory, cognitive archaeology, and *chaîne opératoire* are all well known and taught archaeological theories used regularly in the research and writing processes by archaeological researchers. The use of these four theories contributes to the expanding knowledge of the fields of maritime archaeology and history and are important to the continued research and interpretation regarding the *HMS Victory*. In the following subsections I will outline the basics of application of these three theories to existing study done on the *HMS Victory*, as well as providing potential future research questions that could be utilized by various interested parties in furthering the understanding of the history around and the life on board the *HMS Victory*.

3.2.1: Post-Processual Theory

Post-processual approaches to archaeology can be daunting due to the sheer amount of questions that are

raised throughout the process. However, it can still function as a useful tool in critical discussions about

the interaction of the maritime material world and the interpretations put forth today.[34] Post-processual

thought is already utilized, and has been utilized in the past, in the continued reinterpretations of the

appearance of the *HMS Victory*. Questions of subjectivity have led to new understandings of the portrayal

of the ship. The design of ship models, which are painted in bright colors, led to a decision in previous

decades to paint the stripes of *HMS Victory* bright yellow. After archaeological research discovered the

original paint colors, the subjectivity of this bright color was acknowledged and changed. The colors and

decorations in the onboard cabins have also been reanalyzed in this way. Originally, as detailed in the

archaeological and archival collections' documents, the restoration process in the 1970s and 1980s

involved looking at preserved and restored rooms in period-appropriate buildings.[35] Photographs of

libraries and sitting rooms are part of the *HMS Victory*'s collection as references for how the curator at the

time thought Lord Admiral Nelson may have styled his day cabin. This led to the inclusion of heavy

curtains, velvet cushions laid on the folding campaign chairs, and nice carpets.

Today, more research done from the archaeological side--regarding finds from other warships of

the period--has led to the understanding that Lord Admiral Nelson would have necessarily preferred less

elaborate decoration in his cabin, and to a degree less comfort. His ship's cabin would not have been

styled in the same manner as his home, making research into room decorating from that time period

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[34] Joe Flatman, "Cultural biographies, cognitive landscapes and dirty old bits of boat: 'theory' in maritime archaeology," *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 32, no. 2 (2003): 144.
[35] Collection of documents regarding authentic cabin furnishings, V2019/12/1-V2019/12/96, HMS Victory Historical Collection.

unnecessary for the reimagination of the cabins of *HMS Victory*. Historical research is not always the

most accurate route to take with the interpretations of life on board the *HMS Victory*, and thus a look at

the subjectivity of the museum team's backgrounds can sometimes be helpful in determining what

research is the best route to follow. Post-processual thought also leads to the introduction of more critical

research questions for the continued interpretation of the *HMS Victory*. How important were the

possessions that were on board to the crew members? What prestige might be attributed by curators and

collectors to these pieces regardless of the personal value actually attached to them? How does the

balance between historical accuracy and impressive displays work when the ship herself is representative

of historic might and prestige? These sorts of questions can help guide future interpretations of the vessel,

her collections, and the information disseminated about them towards a combined representation of the

impressive might of a ship of the line and the historic reality of such a ship.

3.2.2: Marxist Theory

The most obvious application of Marxist framework to the study of maritime history is the acknowledgement of a sailor as a multi-skilled worker.[36] The *HMS Victory* finds herself in an interesting position when presenting life on board a ship, especially that for the common sailors on board. First and foremost, she is considered of most historic importance for being the flagship of Lord Admiral Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar. In the earliest onboard museum, relics of the battle were displayed, not the items possessed by the crew. Her prestige as a flagship and a battle-tested warship were prioritized as the most interesting and important facts about her history. Nevertheless, *HMS Victory* has served other purposes such as hospital ship and training ship to unnamed sailors in the past. Already, there are representations of this on board seen in the mess display and the surgeon's deck.

What can the *HMS Victory* say about the life of a naval sailor from the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries? The carpenter's walk represents the multi-faceted work of some sailors who not only had to help the daily operation of a massive warship, but also maintained her structural integrity. Currently, study is being undertaken on the surgeon's tools on board, which are historical and not replicas of period instruments. This study may reveal interesting facts about how efficient or painful surgery on board was, or how effective emergency medicine was for the time. Daily life on board a vessel is a major topic of study for maritime archaeology. The majority of artefacts recovered from shipwrecks and submerged sites have to do with day-to-day survival at or by the sea. While the *HMS Victory* does provide valuable insights into ship construction by nature of her continued survival, it is also possible to use interpretative strategies in archaeology to figure out what life on board her decks was like. The placing of

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[36] Flatman, "'Theory in maritime archaeology,'" 149.

real artefacts on her surviving decks gives a tangible sense to what an anonymous sailor would have seen

during his service. By creating this interpretive atmosphere, the museum engages in a dialectic of

understanding not only the life of Lord Admiral Nelson and his officers, but that of the entire crew.

3.2.3: Cognitive Archaeology

To a great extent, the most prominent archaeological theory at play in designing an interpretive museum around an historic vessel is the utilization of cognitive archaeology. As defined previously, cognitive archaeology helps archaeologists, researchers, and in this case museum curators and display designers imagine how past civilizations thought and functioned by analyzing artefacts available. With surviving historic vessels like *HMS Victory* a great deal of archival documentation is available for this process, not just the artefacts preserved from the era. Ships' logs, first hand accounts from the Battle of Trafalgar, notes and letters from members of the *HMS Victory*'s crew, and many other forms of written documents are available amongst the collections associated with the ship, held both in Portsmouth and in London at the National Maritime Museum. Because of the abundance of archival material, documentation, and historic record maintained by the Royal Navy, it is not difficult to outline most of *HMS Victory*'s history. What is more murky for the museum staff to put together is the interpretation of the thoughts and actions taken by those on board or in charge of the ship; this is where the cognitive exercises of this theory come in handy.

As has been continuously pointed out in this project, the mass appeal of visiting an historic vessel such as the *HMS Victory* is no longer the glory of the triumph she achieved in the Battle of Trafalgar. That part of her historic legacy may be significant, and it may be the theme around which her conservation is focused, but it ultimately holds less attention now than the well noted and almost mystical fascination visitors worldwide have with the idea of man at sea.[37] The use of mass entertainment museum studies and the integration of virtual museum experiences into new ones has led to greater and greater focus on the

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[37] Hicks, "What is a Maritime Museum?," 168.

individual's ability to interpret the past from their own perspectives. Reconsidering universal assumptions regarding progress and the temporality of points in history is an important part of handling museum display and interpretation because it engages the cognitive abilities of everyone who encounters the museum experience regardless of their education or background on the topic.[38] For maritime museums in particular, this cognitive engagement for the visitor is important because ships are fixtures in human memory, and vessel oriented maritime museums often feel the pressure to provide visitors with that expected mystical experience.[39] Allowing cognitive archaeology to influence the interpretations present on the *HMS Victory* allows a punctuation of the real seafaring life of the nineteenth century through the preexisting myth in some visitors' minds.

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[38] Cameron and Mengler, "Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museums Collections Documentation," 191.
[39] Hicks, "What is a Maritime Museum?" 168.

3.2.4: Chaîne Opératoire

A ship such as the *HMS Victory* is a particularly excellent opportunity to discuss *chaîne opératoire* and

the social hierarchies organized on ships. As a Royal Navy ship, the *HMS Victory* had an even more

specialized social hierarchy which can be represented through the material presentation of the ship itself.

By showing the difference in recreated sleeping and eating areas for the officers, Lord Admiral Nelson,

and the crew, *HMS Victory* can--without the need of explanatory texts detailing the hierarchy on

board--represent to visitors how a naval ship in the early nineteenth century maintained social order. This

form of representation, showing and not telling visitors how social order was divided on board a ship, is a

unique feature of an historic vessel as a museum experience. It is still important, though, that curators and

archaeologists handling the artefacts for display on the vessel recognize the theory of tool use and artefact

production that goes into this display. Items that demonstrate the simplicity of crew property versus the

fineries of the officers represent different production of goods, from utilitarian to luxury, which is also a

possible interpretation of the artefacts as they are on display.

Representing the hierarchy of social order requires some knowledge of the makeup of the crew.

Known members of the crew that were considered specialists included: a sailmaker and his mates,

carpenters, a ropemaker, an armourer and his mates, a gunsmith, a cooper, victuallers, a poulterer,

stewards and servants, the boatswain's mates, a quartermaster and his mates, gunner's mates, quarter

gunners, captains for the forecastle and foretop and maintop, yeoman of the sheets, yeoman of the powder

room, master-at-arms, and two ship's corporals.[40] These titles not only indicate the important tasks set out

for various specialist members of the crew, they also determined pay and order of command. During the

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[40] Goodwin, *Nelson's Victory*, 54.

Battle of Trafalgar there were over eight hundred men and boys on board this warship in order to operate and maintain the guns, and follow other important orders from Lord Admiral Nelson.[41] Even amongst the naval sailors and marines on board the ship there was a hierarchical order to ensure that every person on board fulfilled a small part of the vast list of duties necessary for the smooth running of the *HMS Victory* during the heat of battle. The gunner, for one, was in charge of everything to do with firearms and the storage of them on board the ship.[42] With cannons located all over the *HMS Victory* each needing appropriate maintenance, it is understandable that a significant number of the crew were assigned tasks by the gunner. This social order was absolutely necessary for the function of the guns on board the ship from the large cannons to the smaller muskets.

Social order is, as it stands, a well studied facet of naval and maritime history. In terms of the *HMS Victory*, a fair amount is already known due to previous research conducted in the archival and archaeological collections attached to the ship. Thus, I propose a different reason for utilizing this archaeological theory in the future surrounding the vessel and museum. Already, a new focus has emerged in the last couple of decades regarding a realistic and tangible presentation of the life on board for an average sailor on *HMS Victory*. As a contribution to the improvement of *HMS Victory*'s visitor experience, the theory of *chaîne opératoire* should be applied when making decisions regarding what should and should not be incorporated in the on board display. Understanding the order in which importance was assigned to the physical aspects of the ship can be derived from understanding of the importance of the social order of the ship. Obvious examples of this are the surgeon's tools, and the extensive amount of ammunition on board. *Chaîne opératoire* could help inform the decisions about what props are absolutely vital by being applied to prop and artefact alike to consider the process through which such an object would have been supplied to the crew and put on the vessel.

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[41] "The Crew," HMS Victory Museum, accessed 2019, https://www.hms-victory.com/content/history/crew.
[42] Goodwin, *Nelson's Victory*, 55-56.

3.3: Conservation Priorities and Future Archaeology

As the correspondence in the archaeological collection shows, some parts of the ship were sacrificed for preservation purposes. In the past, decisions have been made both for cost effectiveness and for conservation--such as choices in rigging materials at different points in the ship's history at Portsmouth. Nevertheless, through repairs and reconstruction the *HMS Victory* has in a way become a sort of open-air museum with an archaeological context (though it cannot be strictly called an open-air archaeological museum as it is a maritime museum first and foremost). This is because *HMS Victory* works with the definition for such museums: "...[the museums] are not about artefacts with their specific story...but about presenting a story in a physical setting using fitting (replica) artefacts."[43] It is fitting that this quote references the presentation of a story, as the conservation priorities of the *HMS Victory* museum staff have always put the interests of visitors learning about Trafalgar ahead of other needs.

One interesting question to raise in regards to the archaeology of the *HMS Victory* is that of her location. The Portsmouth Historic Dockyard is of its own right a location of cultural heritage, while the *HMS Victory* functions as a secondary location within Portsmouth (representing the physicality of the Battle of Trafalgar). While "relevant cultural heritage on site and nearby is seldom seen as a separate category of the collections,"[44] in other archaeological museums, can the same be said of *HMS Victory*? Her presence in Portsmouth is, in part, due to preservation priorities. She was moved into the docks and out of the water due to a desire to keep her from rotting away. Not even under the threat of bombs could

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[43] Paardekooper, *The Value of an Archaeological Open-Air Museum is in its Use,* 28.
[44] Ibid, 215.

she be moved from Portsmouth it seems.[45] There is a mutual exchange of prestige that comes with the

HMS Victory remaining in Portsmouth as the flagship of the Commander in Chief located there. *HMS*

Victory receives the care and funding of a member of the Royal Navy and now the care of the National

Royal Navy Museum in exchange for serving some onboard functions: special events, host for visitors,

and an ongoing use of one of the cabins by Navy officers which is thus off limits for visitors.

In the preservation of original (or otherwise historic and interesting) timber from *HMS Victory*

there are several factors at play. The first is that *HMS Victory* has been re-outfitted many times and most

refits done without the informational documentation that would help indicate to researchers and

archaeologists what changes were made where and why. Luckily, through use of the 3D timber model in

the Archaeological Data Manager's possession, archaeologists have made significant discoveries as to the

nature of timber provenance in various parts of the ship and unraveling other major changes. The next

issue is that of determining the problems facing *HMS Victory*'s timbers. The work on the archaeological

timber database may help prioritize certain pieces of wood for various research purposes--an important

part of conservation priorities.[46] Whereas in shipwrecks and submerged sites containing wooden artefacts

and timbers the primary concern is with waterlogged wood, the *HMS Victory* has been successfully and

expertly dry docked in Portsmouth for almost a century.[47] Thus, it is already too late to apply many

modern discoveries in maritime archaeological methodology for waterlogged wood but *HMS Victory* has

not suffered for this.

A constant struggle indicated by extensive studies in the correspondence in the archaeological

collection is with the infestation of the ship by the death watch beetle. This is also a concern for the

preservation of various wooden artefacts on board the ship, and often when an artefact is removed from

the ship for one purpose or another it is first quarantined to avoid spreading potential infestation to the

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[45] Correspondence, V2019/14/1, HMS Victory Historical Collection.
[46] Colin Pearson, *Conservation of Maritime Archaeological Objects* (London: Butterworths, 1987), 164-165.
[47] "The Dry Dock," HMS Victory Museum, accessed 2019, https://www.hms-victory.com/things-to-see/dry-dock.

collections in storage. Professionals in the United Kingdom have developed methods for handling

infestations of the beetles in hardwood structures,[48] and other companies have since developed techniques

for fumigating entire ships.[49] These techniques are not unknown to the conservation staff of the *HMS*

Victory, nor the staff of other major historic vessels as it appears during the first infestation the past

curators consulted with curators of major historic vessels worldwide for the best strategy to fight the

beetles. At one point in the 1960's, additional wood was ordered for future repairs and restoration to the

HMS Victory. A decision was made to switch from oak, which had been used originally, to teak because it

was believed this wood would be less palatable for the beetles.[50] There is still a significant amount of this

wood in storage in Portsmouth for future use in preserving the ship.

Arguably, the most significant archaeological future project for the *HMS Victory* is the timber

database in development. Increasingly, online access to research has become significant for researchers

from all disciplines. The database would not only provide a study of the ship construction--especially if

accompanied by public access to the scanned ship's plans--but also increase available

dendrochronological cross-comparisons, assist in analysis of timber sources from the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries, and prove an interesting case study for the extensive 3D analysis of vessels. Massive

works of photogrammetry on other projects have been made available for similar purposes, and it would

be beneficial to the maritime archaeological community for this database to be completed and made

public. While 3D models, scale models, and other forms of analysis already exist this database serves as a

complete object biography of the *HMS Victory* as a vessel, documenting when and where each repair was

made. Additional application of this database in terms of the development of a virtual visitor experience

for the museum is discussed later in this thesis paper.

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[48] "Pest Advice for controlling Death Watch Beetle," British Pest Control Association, accessed 2019, https://bpca.org.uk/a-z-of-pest-advice/death-watch-beetles-control-bpca-a-z-of-pests/189160.
[49] "Ship Fumigation," Eco Worldwide Solutions Group, accessed 2019, https://www.ews-group.nl/en/fumigation/ship-fumigation/.
[50] Report of the VATC, CRTY V2018/569/1, HMS Victory Historical Collection.

3.4: Conflicts of Interest

Most *in situ* archaeological sites present preservation and research problems that conflict over

methodology and priority. While reconstructions can without fear be utilized for research purposes,

knowing that they can be rebuilt, the *HMS Victory* is an original artefact (to an extent) and there are

legitimate worries that in depth archaeological study of her may lead to irreparable damage. However, as

discovered by other museums with an archaeological nature, repair work is an opportunity to conduct

such potentially damaging research--and even make a visitor learning experience out of the study.[51] While

once, early in the *HMS Victory*'s days as a museum, artefacts were considered important to this story that

view has shifted quite a lot. Now, the priority does lie on the ship herself and on the best ways to preserve

her, while maintaining the authenticity of Trafalgar through active conservation efforts.

One of the most heavily studied parts of *HMS Victory* is the surviving sail from the Battle of

Trafalgar, hereafter called the Trafalgar Sail. The Sail has proven to be a highly valuable archaeological

resource as it provided the basis for a study on the degradation and preservation of sailcloth, a rare find in

maritime archaeology.[52] The Sail has received countless museum resources in order to conserve it due to

its being the only surviving sail from the battle. Thus, its cultural value is both academic and prestigious.

The correspondence collection for *HMS Victory* includes consultation with the conservator of the *USS*

Constitution, specifically regarding conservation of rigging and sailcloth with particular concern as to the

Trafalgar Sail (which is not included with the current rigging of the ship).[53] The correspondence also

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[51] Paardekooper, *The Value of an Archaeological Open-Air Museum is in its Use*, 280.
[52] Howell G.M. Edwards, Nik F. Nikhassan, Dennis W. Farwell, Paul Garside, and Paul Wyeth, "Raman spectroscopic analysis of a unique linen artefact: the *HMS Victory* Trafalgar sail," *Journal of Raman Spectroscopy* 37, no. 10 (October 2006).
[53] Correspondence, V2019/19-V2019/40, HMS Victory Historical Collection.

indicated that in the past, the rigging has been less of a priority for conservators of the *HMS Victory*, and cheaper materials were used when the priorities of conservators and curators were the presentation of a prestigious Trafalgar status.[54] Recently, it was advised that the *HMS Victory* take down much of the rigging and part of her masts, storing massive coils of rope in the storage bays holding her additional timber supplies.

Once more, the conflict of *HMS Victory*'s flagship duties and her availability to visitors warrants discussion. Currently, the amount of the ship open only to Royal Navy employees is limited to Tom Hardy's cabin, the officer's cabin beneath the Lord Admiral Nelson day cabin. When the ship is required for naval functions, it is closed off from general visitors, but this is on rare occasions that do not interfere with regular visitation to the ship. Nonetheless, early concerns from the National Maritime Museum that newly conserved furniture owned by Lord Admiral Nelson would be used during official functions on board the ship have surprising relevance today (see sections 2.3 and 2.4). The Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming chairs discussed as a case study for artefacts in the collection are the prime example of how genuine artefacts, if integrated into the ship's furnishings, may be utilized during official functions such as dinner parties without the staff, crew, or guests realizing what they are. Already, several pieces of furniture have been replaced in the past few decades with replicas (notable in of themselves for excellent craftsmanship and for being produced by Portsmouth dockyard workers) in order to preserve the originals in museum storage or display. Without informative labels telling guests on board the ship not to sit on historic furniture, it is understandable that curators would have concerns of careless behavior destroying valuable pieces on board the ship.

Of course, this concern of the museum staff is in many ways overridden by the increasing desire for "authenticity" on board the *HMS Victory*. As mentioned previously, the authenticity of the ship is wholly dependent now on the atmosphere created for visitors, and the importance of feeling as though one

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[54] Correspondence, V2019/17/13, HMS Victory Historical Collection.

is on a live warship during the period of the Battle of Trafalgar. Guide ropes, stationed museum staff, modern light fixtures, and emergency exit signs are all necessary concessions that detract from this authentic atmosphere. Thus, the rest of the items placed on board must be chosen and displayed with deliberate care to enhance the lifelike appearance of *HMS Victory*. This has led to the repurposement of archaeological artefacts from other vessels, especially the *HMS Warrior* which is also incorporated under the National Royal Navy Museum. Artefacts such as broom heads, barrel staves, and others are used to create replica props for the *HMS Victory* that are then unknowingly integrated amongst non-historic replicas. This is undesirable as replicas and props on the vessel naturally break due to use and visitor interactions, leading to historic artefacts being disposed of unceremoniously. On the other hand, the air of authenticity is crucial for the conservation priorities of the vessel, and certain historic artefacts do in fact enhance that experience on the ship.

For a comprehensive conservation and preservation management strategy, a vessel with archaeological conflicts of interest such as the *HMS Victory* must to a degree rank by priority the needs for the archaeological team. As I will outline in my proposed plan, this is an integral part of the organizational process. The interpretive theme for the *HMS Victory* is clear: preserve as much of the vessel and her artefacts as possible while active conservation efforts restore and maintain her 1805 appearance at the Battle of Trafalgar. Questions of "authenticity" are met with a combination of real historic objects and replicas designed to inspire the interpretive feeling of life on board. Now, the archaeologists on the team prefer to remove historic objects from places on the ship where they might be used during *HMS Victory*'s flagship duties or accidentally damaged by visitors. The presence of these artefacts, and the presence of archaeologically significant parts of the ship, are no longer the priority due to the latest needs of the museum experience. Items that have always had assigned significance, such as the Trafalgar Sail, Nelsonian relics, and certain timber parts have already been removed from the vessel

for proper preservational storage. Now, items that were once regarded as necessary casualties to the

ongoing conservation of the 1805 ship are becoming eligible for preservational priority.

3.5: Conclusion

In this section, several complicated concepts were brought forth to detail the archaeological perspective of

the *HMS Victory* as a living artefact. Archaeological theory, for one, is a naturally multi-faceted approach

to artefacts. No one theory can be applied without consideration of the nuance of theory as a whole, which

is why I felt the need to discuss four distinct theories (though others could be applied as well).

Post-processual, Marxist, cognitive, and *chaîne opératoire* theories are the most significant for the

modern use of conservation strategy in forming the visitor experience of the *HMS Victory*. The focus of

the vessel is no longer on the triumph at the Battle of Trafalgar, though this aspect is not wholly forgotten.

Instead, with visitors constantly asking for more information on the authenticity of the ship, archaeology

becomes increasingly important in providing just that. A significant portion of the HMS Victory Museum,

as well as signs outside of the vessel, discuss ongoing archaeological conservation projects such as that of

stripping back the layers of paint on the ship. One can see the application of archaeological thought in the

way the vessel appeals to visitors now, walking a fine balance between entertainment experiences and

plain fact to keep visitors interested and the museum sufficiently funded. However, since there is still no

cohesive approach to conservation and preservation of the vessel and the archaeological collection, there

are naturally conflicts between how the theories are applied to artefacts, the ship itself, and the priority

given to various objects in the collection.

4: The Museum Perspective

Without a doubt, there are many complex factors that obfuscate the definition of the *HMS Victory* as a museum. On the one hand, the ship herself does not house any artefacts not on display and those that she displays are often within reach of visitors and may or may not have distinct historic value or provenance. There are no labels to inform visitors of the significance of certain objects, though museum guides stationed throughout the ship are generally knowledgeable to significant artefacts on board. How, then, can one look at a live flagship and say "that is a museum"? Arguably, it would be more fitting to define the *HMS Victory* as an object within a museum's collection--the collection now in the hands of the National Royal Navy Museum. Site is also another possible title for *HMS Victory*, as the impressive size of her makes it difficult to grasp the word "object" in relation. Certainly, the ship from which Lord Admiral Nelson gave his orders and on which he was shot and killed during the famous Battle of Trafalgar warrants the name "heritage site."

The combination of archaeological object and heritage site puts *HMS Victory* (and other similar ship-museums that have blurred lines in their definitions) in a new category: archaeological object as a museum experience. After all, "...ships and boats are the ultimate maritime artifacts since they are the literal and figurative vehicles of maritime endeavor…"[55] Museums such as the Vasa Museum and the Mary Rose Museum recognize the importance of focusing museum efforts on historic ships, but in neither museum can a visitor walk structurally sound decks and experience the ship immersively. *HMS Victory* is not the only historic ship available for boarding, certainly, but its function as a heritage site for the famous Battle of Trafalgar with the extensive collection and museum design that reproduce the conditions on

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[55]J. Revell Carr, "The Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut," in *Great Maritime Museums of the World,* 255.

board at the time elevates her status. Additional concerns in regards to visitors and researchers are introduced when an historic vessel is involved in the direct museum experience. Safety and mobility are obvious problems to be addressed, but there are also constraints to what researchers and museum staff can do with the vessel's interpretation, preservation, and conservation.

4.1: Introduction

This chapter highlights museological theory, focusing on how certain key components of constructing the museum visitor experience have been employed in the past and present by various members of the staff working with the *HMS Victory* and associated collections. The three major museological ideas I discuss are crucial background considerations for any historic vessel oriented museum to keep in mind when developing preservation and conservation management strategies. There are four sections in this chapter. The first section discusses the collection process that has been utilized in the past by curators of the *HMS Victory*. The next section discusses the consumption process of visitors to the vessel and museum. The third section discusses the display process and how it has been altered over time to fit the desires of visitors over time. The final section serves as a brief conclusion to this chapter. For the most part, the ideas discussed in this chapter are easier to summarize (as seen in the definitions in section 1.1 for the three processes) and accompanied by straightforward discussion of the effects of these processes on the *HMS Victory* and its collections.

4.2: Collection Process

The collection processes used by past curators of the *HMS Victory* have been varied due to differences in

background, experience, and the reimagination of the ship's image over time. In the general tradition of

European collections, museums in particular obtain and preserve objects that have some inherent value or

significance.[56] These judgements I saw first hand, as the Archaeological Data Manager Mr. Ball identified

objects within the catalog that had no inherent significance to the archaeology or history of the *HMS*

Victory. These objects included plastic replica food items that while important for the visitor experience

of the vessel add nothing to the study of the ship or her place in history. Alternatively, there are items in

the collection such as spare timbers that display the cutting marks of carpenters and shipwrights that

would mean little on display to a visitor, but could be important to unraveling her many redesigns if

studied by a trained archaeologist.

Thus it is important for the future study of the *HMS Victory* that an archaeologist be involved in

the reorganization of the extensive collection of artefacts at the Historic Dockyard. Were the collection

faced only from the perspective of creating an authentic visitor experience, items of significance such as

known pieces of original timber might be discarded. The ship does still function as an archaeological

object, with archaeologists making discoveries regarding her wood provenance and which layers of paint

were original to what point in time. If treated only as a floating museum, the *HMS Victory* would still

likely have the items currently in her collections, but only from a historical perspective. They would be

preserved but not further studied, and priority would be given exclusively to items such as the furniture.

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[56] Pearce, *On Collecting*, 151.

"The preservation of antiquities should produce objects that are chemically stable with an aesthetically acceptable appearance."[57] The argument for the inclusion of an archaeologist in the curatorial and collections team can thus also be formed from a display perspective. Archaeologists such as Mr. Ball focus on the material culture that is stable enough to provide data concerning an accurate, and aesthetically attainable, picture of the state of the ship at a certain time. Correspondence and research found in the *HMS Victory*'s archaeological collection indicates that at various points in her history, the ship was subjected to different interpretations by curators with varied backgrounds in maritime history and archaeology. Similar trends can be seen in the restoration of other ship furnishings, or ideas thereof, such as on the *Buffel* in Rotterdam and the *Amphion* in Stockholm.[58] Interpretations change naturally over time, as more evidence is revealed through archaeological and archival research alike.

One of the roles for the Archaeological Data Manager is, at the moment, production of a database of every piece of timber currently part of the ship, as discussed previously. Digitization and online databases have become a complicated new addition to museums and archaeology in general, but the process of applying them to the *HMS Victory* is especially daunting. The application of multiple folksonomies becomes necessary in the organization of the artefacts, correspondence, and digital parts of the collection. The *HMS Victory* museum and library host many volunteers of various backgrounds who contribute to the constant process of digitizing content from ship plans to correspondence. This gives researchers more metadata and the ability to provide new contexts, as well as inform the in-house researchers of new knowledge that they might have missed.[59] Unsurprisingly, though, as collections are opened up to more diverse folksonomies and given databases and greater agency through researchers, "collections necessarily become implicated in discursive struggles,"[60] such as questions of authorship,

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[57] James E. Bruseth, Amy A. Borgens, Bradford M. Jones, and Eric D. Ray, ed., *La Belle: The Archaeology of a Seventeenth-Century Ship of New World Colonization* (Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 2017), 79.
[58] Niell and Krohn, *Great Maritime Museums of the World,* 142 and 187.
[59] Cameron and Mengler, "Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museums Collections Documentation," 201.
[60] Ibid..

ownership, authority, and control. The same, as discussed previously, is true of the *HMS Victory* and her

collections.

Outside of the archaeological considerations, clearly a degree of collection has been undertaken

for items that are not directly related to the *HMS Victory* but add historical and archaeological value to her

collections nonetheless. In the act of systematic collecting via representative examples,[61] there is an

implicit manipulation derived from the physical arrangement of "finds," in this case period appropriate

furniture that may or may not have some sort of connection to Lord Admiral Nelson or his crew. These

objects are still artefacts of the time, in some cases acquired from antiques dealers and in others perhaps

donated to the Society for Nautical Research.[62] The motivation to collect them, though, is entirely for their

functions in the consumption and display processes of the ship. There is little collection culture of

"inherent significance"[63] when it comes to the collection of period artefacts for use on board the *HMS*

Victory. However, there are still artefacts of historical value that are regarded as unimportant to the ship

itself within the collection that have, over time, been removed from the consumption and display

processes.

Additionally, there are recreations and replicas within the *HMS Victory*'s collections that have

their own historical significance. Wooden casks that have been excavated from wrecks and other

archaeological finds have been conserved and treated specifically for museum display in other collection

contexts.[64] For the *HMS Victory*, unsurprisingly, original wooden casks and barrels were not a priority of

the Royal Navy and thus do not survive. Some of the casks from the *HMS Warrior*, however, were

preserved in some ways--particularly in the form of surviving staves. These staves were used to then

create replica casks and barrels that could be displayed on board the *HMS Victory* and remain in the

collection both on and off the ship. These replicas warrant a place in the collection (though they may not

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[61] Pearce, *On Collecting,* 269.
[62] SNR acquisitions lists, V1993/565, V1993/447, and V1993/524, HMS Victory Historic Collection.
[63] Pearce, *On Collecting,* 151.
[64] Bruseth et al, *La Belle,* 70.

retain the original staves used to build them) because they are historically accurate recreations that add to the authenticity of the presentation of the ship. This serves as one specific example of how the collection process applied to the *HMS Victory* archaeological collection operates primarily with conservation priorities in mind. The focus has always been to collect in order to represent the *HMS Victory* at Trafalgar, leading to some decisions regarding the collection that impacted various artefacts, as well as the consumption and display processes of the museum.

4.3: Consumption Process

For the consumption process of the *HMS Victory* as both ship and museum, different artefacts are of

different importance--but none are wholly insignificant. Authentic items are ultimately not displayed

properly. A brief conversation with some of the senior guides for the ship reveals that only about three of

the canons displayed on the gun decks are original metal canons, but there are no signs indicating this to

visitors. Authenticity being a huge concern for visitors to the vessel, this is an oversight due to the attempt

to display the ship without museum labels. There is a documented desire for authenticity in visitor

experiences of heritage sites, as well as a desire for a genuine concept of everyday life that is represented

without the use of labels for a more immersive experience.[65] With tangible reconstruction (things that

visitors can touch and interact with, not just observe from afar) the *HMS Victory* appears to be a genuine

reconstruction of life on board during the early nineteenth century. But incorporating real archaeological

objects should be done more deliberately, rather than sprinkling those objects in amongst replicas.

Emphasizing the object biographies of certain artefacts would add a new dimension to the storytelling on

board the vessel, or perhaps even to the HMS Victory Museum where displays can be made with

explanatory labels.

Another important part of the consumption process is that of education and vistior learning. "The

idea of museums as spaces for access to information denotes an authoritative position and static notions of

producer and consumer."[66] Ultimately, the *HMS Victory* functions as an authority on naval life and

history, as well as on Trafalgar and Lord Admiral Nelson. The ship was at the Battle of Trafalgar, it is

[65] Gaynor Bagnall, "Performance and performativity at heritage sites," *Museum and Society* 1, no. 2 (2003): 92.
[66] Cameron and Mengler, "Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museums Collections Documentation," 207.

where Lord Admiral Nelson died, and it has seen a long history outside of those events in 1805. This is a tremendous undertaking for the museum, as they have been given the monumental task of displaying so much history with the desired "authenticity" of life on board as well. Material objects are essentially authentic expressions of cultural experience, and thus crucial for this process.[67] For particular ships, the cultural values may change, but for *HMS Victory* at the moment her greatest value is that of authenticity to the Trafalgar era on board the ship.

This idea of authenticity on board *HMS Victory* is expressed through "...the congruity between the value allotted to each separate piece, and its visible place in the scheme of things…"[68] Visually, the *HMS Victory* does present a taste of what life on board a warship in 1805 was like. The catalog reflects this desire, through the acquisition of wooden buckets, barrels, mops, and the proper devices for hanging gun equipment throughout the gun decks. While perhaps insignificant to a researcher, to whom searches turning up replica biscuits and replica buckets would be frustrating, these props are nonetheless visible parts of the narrative being told on board the ship and thus notable parts of the collection, as well as important pieces in the consumption process undertaken by visitors. "For some visitors, the emotional, aesthetic and intellectual response to direct engagement with the site and/or collections will be all that matters,"[69] which makes planning for the individual visitor's consumption of the exhibit difficult. Ultimately, if props assist in the positive emotional response from the majority of visitors, then props must be prioritized by at least some parts of the museum staff (ideally not the archaeological team, though).

There is a potential barrier that currently faces a variety of museums around the world: the way "intellectual" museums are less and less frequented because of a perception that such museums only cater to a highly educated and professional class of visitors.[70] From my own time behind-the-scenes with the

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[67] Pearce, *On Collecting,* 297.
[68] Ibid, 269.
[69] Black, *The Engaging Museum*, 96.
[70] Ibid, 56.

museum staff, I know that engaging exhibits are often in production for other parts of the museum complex at Portsmouth, and I am also aware of the many problems with doing such exhibits on *HMS Victory*. Space and accessibility will always have to be a consideration, clearly, with the minimally invasive additions to a ship of her size that have already been conceded to in order to open up the accessibility for the public. Since the *HMS Victory* cannot adjust development plans for most physiological consumption needs of visitors, staff have in the past and continue in the present to focus on prospects of visitor engagement and education. These fall under the categories of self-esteem and self-actualization according to Graham Black, in which the most important for *HMS Victory* to incorporate are "authenticity and integrity" and "freedom of movement."[71] Freedom of movement here refers to the ability of visitors to make choices about what information they will consume during their visit, something that is certainly a major issue on board *HMS Victory* as she is now in 2019.

In order to present the most authentic image of *HMS Victory* as a warship, labels explaining certain artefacts and their placement were removed. Like many other museums in recent years, it appears *HMS Victory* has come to prioritize visitor learning in order to allow the mythical world of seafaring to capture the thoughts and feelings of visitors rather than explanations of the minutiae of maritime life that labels would provide. Visitor learning is how individual visitors engage with presented knowledge, as opposed to educational programs that are the systematic ways in which museums present knowledge.[72] While an appropriate choice for the level of visitor consumption being sought by the museum and the staff working with the ship, this does make engagement with certain displayed objects more difficult. Guides are posted here and there throughout the ship, but are not restricted to certain places and instead move about with visitors or as needed. Thus, if a visitor to Lord Admiral Nelson's day cabin should ask a question about the desk on display there and there is no guide to answer, the visitor may have a negative experience of *HMS Victory*'s historical and authentic presentations. Thus, by choosing to proceed in this

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[71] Black, *The Engaging Museum,* 32-36.
[72] Wehner and Sear, "Engaging the Material World," in *Museum Materialities*, 151.

way with the consumption process the museum staff have made yet another compromise for the sake of the conservation of the Trafalgar era *HMS Victory*.

4.4: Display Process

There have been a few significant phases of displays on board the *HMS Victory* as a museum. The first, her historic relic displays, were initiated after 1922, when *HMS Victory* was opened up to the general public. Photographs now in the archaeological collection for the ship show a small collection of "Nelson relics" including objects supposedly from Lord Admiral Nelson's time aboard *HMS Victory* and relics of the Trafalgar battle itself. At some point in the early 1920's collection of Nelsonian artefacts and relics became a priority, as is clear from the early correspondences between the NMM and SNR. Though the ship itself was being restored to its Trafalgar appearance, the displays on board were not an immersive experience but instead a sort of memorial to Lord Admiral Nelson and the Trafalgar victory. This phase of the museum displays certainly supports R.D. Hicks' assertion that the *HMS Victory* "represents the apotheosis of a semi-mythical naval hero in whose glory all of the ship's visitors solemnly partake."[73]

For some time, curators and admirals in Portsmouth seemed satisfied with letting the *HMS Victory* exist as a shrine and solemn museum. However, following the second World War, it appears a more immersive experience on board was desired. As discussed in the section regarding authority and ownership issues, it became the desire of the admiralty that *HMS Victory* should be experienced as a live flagship, but also displayed with Trafalgar and Nelsonian era furniture and decoration. Period appropriate furnishings were prioritized, and a new vision of the *HMS Victory* as a window to the maritime past was created. This vision has been the overarching goal for *HMS Victory* curators, archaeologists, and display managers since and has been accomplished to varying degrees of success.

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[73] "What is a Maritime Museum?" 168.

The latest stage in the immersive experience of *HMS Victory* as both a live ship and a museum has been to remove labels and create a walking tour of the ship that encourages visitors to experience her as she was. Once again, Hicks explains this phenomenon in maritime museums at large as an expression of individual identity, discovery, odyssey, and exploration for the visitors.[74] The ship becomes a ritual in this way, through the application of cognitive archaeology. "The concentrated essence of civilization which ships emobidy through their voyages guarantees an emphasis on ritual,"[75] thereby assuring that the solemn nature of *HMS Victory* and the experience of a walking tour sans textual or audio guidance creates a ritual of stepping into the past. Though the lack of audio guides has only recently become a choice on behalf of the *HMS Victory* museum, the lack of textual guides was very much a purposeful decision. The museum has shaped the visitor experience of *HMS Victory* into a living, breathing museum experience as opposed to the "dead museum" that was so feared by the admiralty.

Displayed both outside of the ship itself, and inside the museum dedicated to the *HMS Victory* are explanations of its archaeological history. These displays discuss the work done to strip back paint layers and discover what colors the cabins and the timbers were originally painted, leading to the reimagining of her Trafalgar stripes. They also explain to an extent what studying timbers that are removed from the ship can do for archaeology, as dendrochronology is performed on some of the older pieces of timber taken from *HMS Victory* during repairs and restoration efforts. These displays are, to a degree, a reconsideration of how in-house knowledge should be presented. In some of the correspondence regarding the *HMS Victory*, there was a suggestion that to openly address the preservation issues facing the ship would be less dignified. Specifically, the letter requests a rewording of signs put up by the SNR for the "Save the Victory" fund so that foreign visitors are not given the wrong impression of the dire state the ship was in. [76] Today, there are no such donation signs along the outside of the dock, likely as a result of giving more

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[74] Hicks, "What is a Maritime Museum?" 160.
[75] Ibid, 164.
[76] Correspondence, V2019/42/58, HMS Victory Historical Collection.

priority to the naval budget used to maintain the ship. This dissemination of archaeological knowledge rather than the more immediate history of the *HMS Victory* is not necessarily a distraction in the educational integrity of the *HMS Victory*, but it does present some implications for the involvement of the Navy in the choice of educational topics.[77]

Museums have traditionally been regarded with a degree of reverence, sometimes due to the style in which the buildings are made, but largely because the building itself is viewed as a sort of ritual space.[78] The *HMS Victory* carries similar weight in part due to her physical presence at the Battle of Trafalgar, and also due to the on board remnants of her status as a shrine to Lord Admiral Nelson. As of February 2019, *HMS Victory* only bears two physical markers regarding Lord Admiral Nelson: a plaque on the deck where Admiral Nelson fell after being shot, and a wreath carved into one of the knees on the orlop deck, presumed to be the very spot Admiral Nelson passed. In the past, the plaque has been laid with wreaths of flowers by important visitors and the carving was accompanied by a portrait called "The Death of Nelson," by Arthur William Devis. These acts of honoring Lord Admiral Nelson created onboard shrines, impacting the way *HMS Victory* was experienced by visitors.

The portrait has since been removed from the ship in order to create the "authentic" presentation of the ship as she was in 1805. The significance of authenticity in the construction of museum exhibits is not only based in the desire of visitors (and curators) for true accuracy, but also the generation of authentic emotional responses to the concept of everyday life.[79] However, this authenticity can be achieved without artefacts: "Visitors may have encountered real coal in a plastic mine, but there was no doubting the emotional impact it could engender…"[80] Bagnall's juxtaposition of the real coal in the plastic mine demonstrates that so long as the result is engaging and perceived as authentic by the visitor, real artefacts may not be necessary. The use of plastic replica objects has already been employed by the

[77] Cameron and Mengler, "Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museums Collections Documentation," 201.
[78] Sophie Forgan, "Building the museum: knowledge, conflict and the power of place," *Isis* 96 no. 4 (2005): 576.
[79] Bagnall, "Performance and performativity at heritage sites," 90.
[80] Bagnall, "Performance and performativity at heritage sites," 90.

curators of *HMS Victory,* for things such as displays of food on mess tables and a replica stove that burns with LED lights instead of real coal and flame.

The question of the use of authentic artefacts on board the *HMS Victory* has been central to discussions between the various bodies in charge of her well-being for decades. In 1948 and 1949, a set of furniture owned by Lord Admiral Nelson and restored using funding from the Society for Nautical Research sat in limbo as three different parties argued over whether or not to put the furniture back on board (see section 2.4). Of major concern are two conflicting principles: maintaining the authenticity of the portrayal of life on board *HMS Victory*, and the preservation and conservation efforts around the artefacts that contributed to their extended lives. There are very few signs on board *HMS Victory* that forbid visitors from touching historic objects (and as mentioned in the above section regarding the Admiral Elphinstone Fleeming campaign chairs, many objects on board the ship are handled with great regularity). As expressed by the SNR in their correspondence, the use of historic artefacts on board the ship put those artefacts in danger of being used heavily and carelessly by visitors to the *HMS Victory*. The desire to present an authentic view of life on board *HMS Victory* in 1805 and under Lord Admiral Nelson's command must then be tempered with the preservation needs certain artefacts present with.

To a certain extent, though, *HMS Victory*'s changing status as museum and flagship necessitates the presentation of her complex history in the hands of conservators. Museums as a whole are beginning to document their conservation and how their displays have changed over time, as part of an effort to explain biased histories behind how displays have been put together.[81] Like any other museum, *HMS Victory* must critically examine the shrine-like status once given to the on board display of the ship and how that has affected what remains of *HMS Victory* to display today. Visitors themselves are part of the consumption process,[82] and thus must be considered during the display process. With so little changed

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[81] J. Pedro Lorente, "From the White Cube to a Critical Museography: the Development of Interrogative, Plural and Subjective Museum Discourses," in *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum,* ed. Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Piotr Piotrowski (London: Routledge, 2016), 122.
[82] Black, *The Engaging Museum,* 84.

about the history presented on board *HMS Victory* the external displays regarding her conservation and the way she has been treated in the past will need to give more comprehensive explanations of perceived "authenticity" on board. A democratic museum--one that sees museums as forums for discussion of wide-spread ideological issues--makes clear what its own biases may be, while a conservative museum petrifies social structures and favors a "cult of tradition."[83] Arguably, *HMS Victory* has participated in the conservative museum narrative in her past, but as archaeology and research become more of a priority than the display of British naval power, she has the potential to be displayed in a more forum-like manner.

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[83] Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Piotr Piotrowski, "Introduction" in *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, 6-7.

4.5: Conclusion

This chapter covers important museological ideas demonstrated by the *HMS Victory* and its museum. The processes of collection, consumption, and display are important steps from an artefact in a collection to the portrayal of an interpretive theme in a museum. For the *HMS Victory*, consumption of the history surrounding the ship has influenced the other two ideas heavily due to the interpretive strategy in place for the ship. Understanding how these three processes take place within the *HMS Victory* and its museum collections is important for being able to assess the conservation and preservation priorities of the past, and how to alter those to fit present and future needs in the proposed management plan in the next chapter of this thesis paper.

5: Conclusion

When I began the research for this thesis project, I thought I would only be asking a single question: Is the *HMS Victory* a maritime museum? Naturally, as my research continued I formulated additional questions due to the materials I was faced with, and it became clear that this original question was only part of an ongoing problem faced by floating artefacts, preserved ships, and ship museums. Authenticity and the expectancy of cultural value are heavily tied up with museum experiences, and with a preserved and functioning ship the expectations are even higher. There is an expectation amongst visitors and new staff at the museum, both on and behind the scenes, that the *HMS Victory* is entirely as she was during the Battle of Trafalgar. The museum is transparent in addressing these expectations by explaining thoroughly at available opportunities how difficult this "authenticity" is to attain and understand. Nonetheless, a certain performance and illusion must be applied to the ship in order to make her a marketable tourist attraction. Props constructed of modern materials, or salvaged from other shipwrecks of the period, are placed throughout the ship with no labels to distinguish what is original and what is not. Repairs and other adjustments made to the structure of *HMS Victory* (for safety as well as preservation purposes) are done with internal documentation but little advertisement when the information distracts from the Trafalgar narrative.

The *HMS Victory* is a special and unique kind of maritime museum, and one that has not been strategized for appropriately in the world of museological and archaeological planning. Throughout this paper I have mentioned a management plan for preservation and conservation needs of historic vessels in museum contexts that I will present in this chapter. The plan is a very simplified one, designed to be as adaptable to the various unique factors affecting this category of archaeological maritime museum

featuring an historic vessel. Of course, having such a strategy to work with will not solve every problem facing this type of museum. Timber decay, visitor expectations, the increasingly popular use of virtual museums to enhance the experience of physical ones, and other factors discussed in this project can and will make serious impacts on any museum of this type. The plan as I made it is intentionally flexible because of these issues, and because an important point is that museums--especially museums of this type--*must* reevaluate their strategies over time. The *HMS Victory* began as an on board display of relics from the Battle of Trafalgar and gained enough attention through this to become a significant historic landmark and museum. Today, Lord Admiral Horatio Nelson and his success at Trafalgar are not the most significant parts of the *HMS Victory* museum experience. They remain the priority in terms of the theme around which display of the vessel is oriented, but an understanding has emerged amongst the archaeological and curatorial teams that looking at the individual and largely anonymous life on board a nineteenth century warship is beginning to dominate public interest.

5.1: Answering the Problem

The study of historic vessels such as the *HMS Victory* and the museums built around them could easily be the focus of a much longer project. Even now, this thesis paper only serves as a sample of the thought, research done, and potential further questions that occurred over the course of the project. Nevertheless, upon concluding that perhaps the *HMS Victory* is her own category somewhere between museum object, archaeological artefact, and visitor experience it became easier to attempt to posit an answer to the problem: how should the *HMS Victory* and other historic ships considered "live" be treated when put into a museum context? It is my belief that museums hosting ships like *HMS Victory* should consider the ship first and foremost a dynamic and complex artefact. It is not a museum object, per se, as historic vessels are often interactive. Additionally, depending on the conservation or preservation efforts of the respective authorities in charge of these vessels, re-interpretations of the vessels may result in even more activities involving the public and the archaeological community alike.

Treating an historic vessel as a museum unto itself is problematic for a variety of reasons. As has been discovered during projects such as that for conserving and displaying the *Vasa,* major changes must be imposed on vessels that are wholly museum. While a ship such as *HMS Victory* can largely accommodate the changes required for health and safety, it would be nearly impossible for the ship to contain the displays warranted for a museum explaining the significant history behind the Battle of Trafalgar, Lord Admiral Nelson, and the myriad of other topics addressed in a well rounded presentation of the *HMS Victory*. The aesthetic qualities of the ship, too, would suffer were she to play host to glass cases and sterile museum labels.

One of the most important concepts introduced during this thesis project was the presence of a conflict between the ideas of preservation and conservation in museum studies and practice, as well as in maritime archaeology (definitions as used in this paper are in the above definitions section). The *HMS Victory* is a combination of both efforts. On the one hand, it is crucial to engage in preservation efforts in regards to the constant degradation of the ship due to the elements and visitor traffic. On the other, the priorities of the museums and other authorities making decisions about the *HMS Victory* since the 1920's have always started with presenting her as she was at the Battle of Trafalgar. This conflict has underlied others, such as the one over the Nelsonian furniture pieces which would have contributed to the conservation of the ship in her Trafalgar state, but may have contributed to a compromise in the preservation of the artefacts. Today there is perhaps more balance between these two concepts, but ultimately a more concrete conservation and preservation plan would not go amiss. Mentioned in Emma Hocker's *Preserving the Vasa*, a combination of these plans when developing a museum for or around an historic vessel is crucial, as is understanding the difference in motivations.

5.1.1: Utilizing the Virtual Museum

One area for potential improvement of the visitor experience for the *HMS Victory* is to complete and

make available the online databases related to the ship's collections. Already "virtual" maritime museums

have been utilized to create "research orientated information resource[s] for interpreting shipwreck

material,"[84] and otherwise allow for unique visitor experiences to otherwise inaccessible sites (such as

shipwrecks). The 3D model of the *HMS Victory*'s timbers, the scanned maps and lines plan drawings, and

the photographic collections are all valuable assets for a museum to host online. This is especially true of

an historic vessel oriented museum such as *HMS Victory*, which cannot be physically modified to allow

for extensive accessibility for all persons. It is unavoidable that in preserving the ship as near to her

functional Trafalgar state as possible there will be visitors unable to follow the route of the vessel due to

mobility restrictions. However, with the progression of technology it is now fully possible to create what

is called a virtual museum experience--one in which the vast majority of the museum's collections are

available in some sort of digital form. This additionally provides museum staff with a new avenue of

preservation-minded display. Using scans, 3D models, photographs, and extensive descriptions museums

can present a fragile object to the world while simultaneously storing it in ideal circumstances to prevent

the kind of damage objects within physical displays are at high risk for.

  This sort of virtual museum is ideal for the archaeological collection of the *HMS Victory*. It serves

as a solution to the decades-long concern over displaying original artefacts on the ship by offering a new

way to give visitors access to those artefacts. The timber database, if made available, would also

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[84] Mark Staniforth, "Public Access to Maritime Archaeology," *Bulletin Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology* 18, no. 1 (1994).

contribute strongly to the visitor experience by allowing for easier explanations of the presence or absence of "original" and "authentic" timbers throughout the ship. For example, at the location where the *HMS Neptune* rammed into the side of the *HMS Victory* causing serious damage, the database could be used in conjunction with photographs after the incident to explain the presence of newer timbers in that area. This could be done as a set of linked pages, one relating to the timbers and one relating to the incident, or another pleasing arrangement that allows visitors to click through the photographs and learn more about the vessel's repairs. Visitors asking questions about the authenticity of the timbers of *HMS Victory* could be directed to such a virtual museum experience by the guides on board the ship. It would even be possible to integrate some form of the database onto a tablet or tablets located perhaps in an area just before the entrance to the ship, so that visitors could see the timber information for themselves before asking these questions (which, as noted, are frequently asked).

5.2: A Plan for Historic Vessel Museums

What I propose next is a basic outline of a plan that combines conservation and preservation priorities, a plan that can hopefully be expanded and applied to other historic ships in various museums or archaeological sites worldwide. The outline is very brief, detailing only the necessary points, and thus must be edited and adapted to appropriate vessels in question. It is created with the idea that an historic vessel (or raised shipwreck) is being prepared to be displayed as a visitor attraction or cultural heritage site. At all stages of the plan there is room for reassessment of the vessel's needs, as well as recommendations for prioritizing vessel needs or visitor needs where appropriate. There is also room for the addition of preexisting heritage management plans and previously prepared budgets in the case that this plan is applied to an historic vessel or heritage site that has already been made a visitor site in the past, but requires a modern reevaluation.

Conservation and Preservation Management Plan Outline
1. As far as possible, assess the most pressing immediate needs of the vessel itself. Waterlogged wood, corroded/corrosive metals, and structural integrity are the most important aspects to focus on. Ideally, a risk assessment for the vessel will have already been produced by archaeologists (if a submerged wreck) or conservators (if already lifted and housed, or an historic vessel not sunk). If not, a fuller report detailing all environmental and internal factors that might contribute to the degradation of the vessel is warranted at this point as well.

2. Before engaging in further conservation or preservation activities than necessary (such as in time sensitive cases) determine the goals for display and research of the vessel. This may include:

    a. A period of history with particular significance for the vessel that is likely to attract and appeal to visitors

    b. A significant archaeological or historic feature of the vessel researchers may be interested in

    c. Unique aspects of the vessel for contribution to the field of maritime archaeology

    d. The priorities of the authoritative body in charge of housing, researching, and displaying the vessel

3. Develop an appropriate heritage management plan including an available and realistic budget. Not every project can rely on the kind of budget given to the *Vasa*. If the vessel in question is being raised from an archaeological site, there should already be a budgeted management plan in place that can be adapted to fit the needs of the visitor attraction to be associated with it. If the vessel is an otherwise intact historic vessel then the body of authority in charge of it likely already has a budget in place that will guide this project moving forward. The heritage management plan can and should be focused towards the goals established for the vessel in step two. It should also be a flexible plan with room for reevaluation, improvement through new methodologies of preservation and conservation, and alteration in the event that circumstances for the vessel dramatically change.

4. Assess Preservation Needs:

    a. Using the information collected during step two, decide what theme should be the focus of the archaeological maritime visitor experience. This is a highly important step, as it will determine what state the vessel should be in before opening the museum or visitor attraction.

b.   Assess the vessel at its current state as well as (to the greatest extent possible) its form most appropriate to the chosen theme. The closer it is to the state desired, the easier the next step will be.

c.   Develop a realistic timeline for making the vessel part of the desired visitor experience that will act as a guideline for further plans for the vessel.

d.   Identify the primary needs of the vessel for attaining the goals of the timeline. Potential questions to ask are:

   i.   Does the vessel need to be treated to prevent further damage and decay? If so, what methods are available, taking into account time and budgetary constraints?

   ii.   What physical adjustments to the vessel need to be made to accommodate its purpose in the visitor experience? I.e. emergency exits, fire alarms, sprinklers, accessibility, lighting, ventilation, etc. Are these adjustments necessary for how the vessel is to be presented, or would it be preferable to instead build an exhibit around the vessel?

   iii.   How will these changes affect the rate of deterioration or otherwise affect the structural integrity of the vessel? Does that alter the plan for displaying the vessel, such as determining that emergency exits would be too damaging and thus making the vessel itself off limits to visitors?

e.   Assess what changes are absolutely impossible for maintaining the preservation needs of the vessel and what compromises can be made. Changes that would ultimately lead to the accelerated degradation of the vessel should not be undertaken. The first priority should be the maintenance of the vessel for research and visitors in the future.

5.   Assess Conservation Needs:

a. Having already identified a theme or aesthetic ideal for the vessel in previous steps, address what needs to be changed on the vessel to suit this. Depending on the damage or other issues these changes may cause with the preservation needs, a plan of action for the conservation in compliance with the theme should be set forth.

b. In some cases conservation or preservation may dominate the other. As stated in the previous section, preserving the vessel for a longer period of time is the first priority in the various plans that should be set forth regarding the vessel and the museum experience built around it. In cases such as the *Vasa*, the structural integrity of the vessel was ultimately prioritized over allowing visitors to enter the ship as emergency exits as required for health and safety would have significantly damaged the stability of the hull.

c. Should the preservation needs be sufficiently met, and the vessel be in particularly good condition, conservation needs may take priority. In the case of the *HMS Victory*, the ship has had paint stripped off and reapplied as part of her reinterpretations. Following the archaeological discovery of her original paint colors, the paints were once again altered all over the ship. This was done because conservation of the Trafalgar time period took priority over the potential damage the wood might experience through the repainting process.

6. Plan to reevaluate the vessel, museum, and visitor needs regularly and in accordance to updated standards for material cultural heritage, museum and archaeological theory, and other major changes to museum display design.

This plan, as I explained above, is only part of the process of turning an historic vessel into a museum experience. Within the plan are references to other plans that are likely to have been made for the historic vessel in question already, and the understanding of this plan as it is set forth is that this is not part of the

initial management of an historic vessel. Additionally, submerged shipwrecks are not likely to be able to utilize this plan in the development of creative underwater museum experiences due to the even more unique circumstances in those cases. Nonetheless, it is my belief that using this basic outline an historic vessel oriented maritime museum can reassess its preservation and conservation needs to better suit modern visitor expectations.

5.3: Final Conclusions

Maritime archaeology as a field has expanded dramatically with the development of new methodologies in the field and in the preservation process. As already discussed, maritime museums tend to be long lasting institutions due to the mythical nature of their connection between present populations and the past seafarers that capture our imaginations. Real history integrated into the human fascination with the sea generates a reliable museum experience that can inspire national and individual narrative connections for visitors. Thus, it is unsurprising that vessels and museums built around them--such as that of the *HMS Victory*--have gotten an increase in attention, funding, and importance in the past decade. Upon taking over museum duties for the *HMS Victory*, the National Royal Navy Museum began to apply more archaeological and research ambition to the collections than before, perhaps due to the increase in visitors to the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard after the opening of the Mary Rose Museum. Additional interest in this process has fueled a newfound interest in the *HMS Victory* as a museum experience.

Archaeology, and especially maritime archaeology, has always been captivating for public audiences. Museums built around archaeological collections often incorporate narratives about the archaeologists who found those items because the activity of archaeology tends to be a more interesting story. There are games, movies, novels, and hundreds of other pieces of media built around the activity of archaeology, not the theory behind it or the application of that theory to the objects found in the field that tell simple stories about cooking and sewing. The majority of archaeology is research of a kind that largely only fascinates other archaeologists. It is a constant struggle for archaeologists staffing museums to manage to portray that research in a way that intrigues the public, thereby tying into the cycle of

funding based on public interest based on interesting finds. An historic vessel is a highly valuable

archaeological artefact in that cycle. First and foremost, the *HMS Victory* was preserved by the Royal

Navy and not by archaeologists. This demonstrates that a significant enough historic vessel holds interest

for outside parties, not just archaeological researchers. Any preserved vessel serves to provide insight into

construction techniques, dendrochronology, and other archaeological topics.

The *HMS Victory* is more neutral ground for a study such as this thesis than an historic vessel

such as the *Falls of Clyde*, which has no funding nor sufficient support to maintain it, or the *Vasa*, where

conservators have been granted vast amounts of funding by the Swedish government. The British Royal

Navy has gone to great lengths to preserve the *HMS Victory*, and to help the world remember her part in

Lord Admiral Nelson's triumph at the Battle of Trafalgar. However, concessions have been made

particularly in times where authoritative heads from museum and Navy alike disagree on the best course

of action. It has nearly always been a matter of conservation versus preservation, and the argument over

active or passive participation in the crafting of the museum visitor experience on board the vessel that

have been at the root of the conflicts. This is not an unusual or unique problem, though it is influenced by

circumstances unique to *HMS Victory*. This is why my focus became finding a way to manage both

preservation and conservation needs in an historic vessel oriented museum experience in order to help

preserve the maritime cultural heritage worldwide threatened by such conflicts of authority, budget, and

interpretation.

I believe that the research presented in this thesis paper reflects the efforts made by

archaeological and curatorial staff to maintain the *HMS Victory* as a museum experience. Throughout this

paper I have discussed archaeological theories that can and are applied to the archaeological collection of

the vessel, museum processes that have been utilized to craft an experience on board *HMS Victory*, and

other significant factors that shaped the museum experience as it is today. I also identified several major

issues in the past and present for the *HMS Victory* and the museum that are not unique, but instead

relevant for other historic vessel museums, as well. These problems informed my formation of the six

point outline for a preservation and conservation management plan that would help settle these conflicts

in the future. I believe that the application of this plan, and the consideration of the various questions and

problems i posed throughout this paper, can help an historic vessel oriented museum such as the *HMS*

Victory align the interests of museum staff and visitors alike for the continued contribution to the

maritime cultural heritage of the world.

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