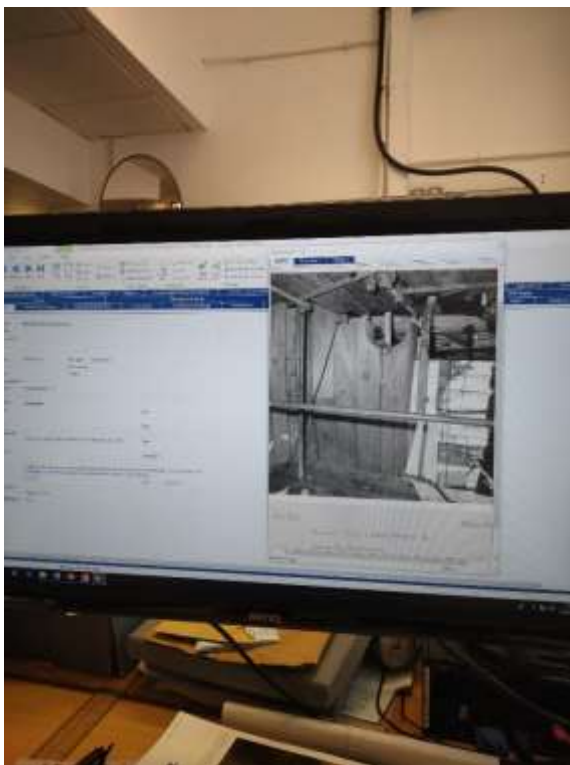


June update

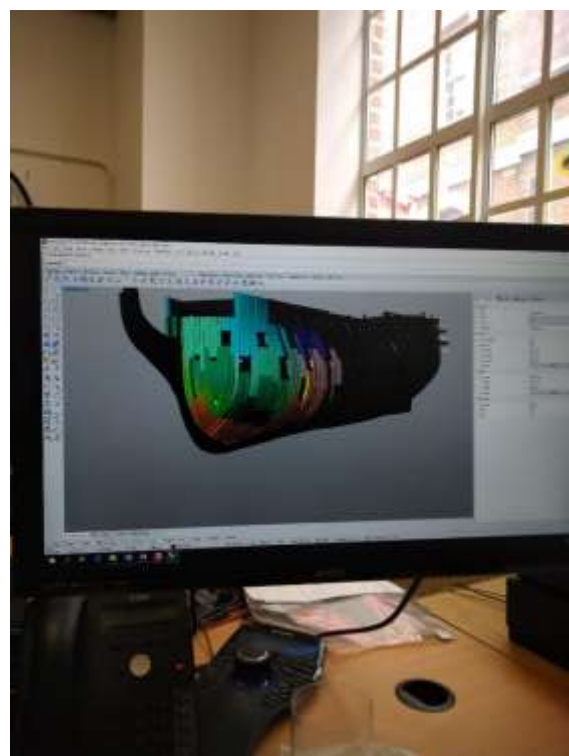
June went by very quickly. I finished off working at the old Marines Museum. We moved on from uniform and sport medals to instruments and wrapping-up paintings. I found the work really interesting. Some people might not, because it was just wrapping up objects and cataloguing. I think the objects that you come across are fascinating and it really gives you an idea of a collection! It makes me wonder what other museums have in that small box in the corner of that forgotten room... Ed, one of the Collections Assistants, showed me beautiful ceremonial swords that were given for acts of gallantry. These are delicately carved and their act of gallantry inscribed on the blade. Apparently, one marine thought it was too good to waste, so he used his during battle so much the inscription wore off!



After that I moved on to work with the archaeology department for HMS *Victory*. This consists of an Archaeological Data Manager, Nick Ball, and the Principal Heritage Advisor Rosey Thornbere. I was eager to start working with ships again. Nick is undergoing the huge task of cataloguing all of *Victory's* collection and timber properly, so that it is on the same database and we can understand how much of the fabric of the ship has altered through her numerous restorations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This will give us a good idea of how to proceed in her conservation. Nick and Rosey also are updating a computerised model of *Victory* with any dates we come across for specific timber. So, for example, if there was a need to replace a plank, the model will be able to tell us how old that wood is so that a decision can be made on how to conserve it. When I was working with Nick this meant that I was cataloguing photographs and plans onto the database, and trying to update it onto the model too. This is actually quite fun! When you're given a photograph and you're not entirely sure where on the ship it is you have to check different deck plans or other photos and compare. It was detective work really. Some photographs don't have dates on, but they still had to be put on the database.



The cataloguing system for *Victory*.



The ship model used to identify timbers.

Rosey has given me a lesson on using AutoCAD which is a drawing program. I've been digitalising the mizzen fighting top of HMS *Warrior* for the riggers. I found it can be frustrating, but I just plug my music in and do it! I think it looks quite good now, and hopefully it will be useful to them.

Rosey also took me around *Victory* looking at the rase marks (see below) on certain timbers and checking for new cracks. We were doing this because the old cradle system from the 1920s is being removed, and new props are being put in place. The props can measure weight, so you can see if the ship is moving, but because of the redistribution of weight it was good to check the timbers visually as well. We also checked with prongs the moisture levels in pieces of wood. It was after a week of torrential rain, so everything was pretty soggy.



Rase marks: Made by the shipwright, they identify and date timbers. They can give a lot of information too, such as repair, where the wood came from and how the timber was managed.

One of the main projects that I have been helping to organise with Nick is going through a huge store with *Victory's* old timber and documenting it, or throwing it away (eventually). These pieces of timber have come off the ship at different points. Some of them are very interesting and should be kept. For example, if they have any distinctive rase marks or interesting fittings. Some of them were bought by a company to be made into trinkets for punters so have been cut down and drawn on making them less significant. The problem is, the amount to sort through is absolutely vast. Some of the timber is mouldy, or eaten through by pests. We need to start making space and store the timber correctly. We need to document every piece, photograph it and wrap it up correctly. It's a big task, but one that I'm glad I'm part of. Although it might take a while, this work will help people in the future understand what *Victory* is made of!



I also was lucky enough in June to go to a seminar in London on conserving historic vessels. Arabella, my mentor from NMRN, and others from Chatham and *Cutty Sark* were on the panel. It was interesting to hear how different organisations chose to maintain and conserve their vessels. I also got to sit in on a HMS *Victory* Project Board meeting which was really interesting to listen to. We got shown around the dock of *Victory*, where the new cradle system was explained. When the supports for the transom come out, there is a bit of worry about the rudder and tiller so the Board were given an explanation of that and the options there are to prevent damage. They were all very nice people with specialisms in different areas, and it was interesting to hear how they come to decisions about HMS *Victory*.



Finally I was called upon by the riggers to help Eli go up *Warrior's* mizzen to help take measurements. The entire mizzen mast is coming down this year and they want to replace most of the rigging. It was nice to be back up there, and I swear not half as scary as when I first went up! I really enjoyed it, and it's a lot cooler too!

