

Fathom

The Journal Of The National Maritime Museum Cornwall



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Printed by Park Lane Press on FSC certified paper, using fully sustainable, vegetable oil-based inks, power from 100% renewable resources and waterless printing technology. Print production systems registered to ISO 14001, ISO 9001, EMAS standards and over 97% of waste is recycled."



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Cornwall Trust
Discovery Quay Falmouth Cornwall
TR11 3QY

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Reg no: 3446298 | Charity no: 1067884



Front cover image: rare example of early tattoo flash from the Jessie Knight collection. Courtesy of Neil Hopkin-Thomas.

Foreword

Our first annual journal documents an exciting year for The National Maritime Museum Cornwall as we launch two exhibitions concurrently.

Captain Bligh: Myth, Man and Mutiny is a traditional maritime subject for us, something people would expect us to do, but we present it in a surprising way, challenging the Hollywood portrayal of Bligh, raising questions around traditional perceptions, and exploring his connections to Cornwall.

In **Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed** we are delighted to spearhead this unique collaboration between national organisations, collectors, artists and leading academics. By championing exhibitions like Tattoo, the museum positions itself at the forefront of challenging preconceptions about what we can, and should be, curating and collecting.

Our 2017 exhibitions programme continues to grow our reputation as a museum. We are proud to bring treasured artefacts from national and international collections to Cornwall and the South West, the like of which are rarely seen outside of London and the UK's other metropolitan centres.

I would particularly like to place on record our deep sense of gratitude to the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, who have loaned paintings and objects which grace both exhibitions.

I would also like to personally thank the private collectors who have lent their objects for our Tattoo exhibition. They are Paul 'Rambo' Ramsbottom, Willy Robinson, Jimmy Skuse, and Lal Hardy.

Thank you also to guest curators Dr Pieter van der Merwe (Bligh), Dr Matt Lodder (Tattoo), Alice Snape who curated the 100 hands installation and Alex Binney for curating 'Tattoo artists in other mediums'. Finally I also thank Neil Hopkin-Thomas, custodian of the fabulous Jessie Knight Collection.

As ever, I am hugely indebted to *all* our partners, funders, lenders, staff and volunteers for their invaluable contribution to what we hope will be a remarkable year for us. 🌊

Richard Doughty, Director
National Maritime Museum Cornwall
March 2017



National Maritime Museum Cornwall
overlooking Falmouth marina at dusk.
Photo: Luke Hayes.





Contents from Jessie Knight's original tattoo tool box. Photo: Paul Abbitt courtesy of Neil Hopkin-Thomas.

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Opposite: Jessie Knight with family
crest courtesy of Neil Hopkin-Thomas.

British Tattoo Art Revealed

**A unique and magical journey
through tattoo history**

Words by Alice Snape

Falmouth's maritime legacy and coastal culture is a huge part of its charm and it is a fitting setting for this journey of discovery to begin. The National Maritime Museum Cornwall, on aptly named Discovery Quay, is a vast, striking building that is currently home to a truly groundbreaking tattoo exhibition.

Opening on 17 March 2017, and running until 7 January 2018, **Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed** takes us on a journey through 400 years of tattoo history that beautifully

illustrates the past and present of the British tattoo scene. The exhibition challenges long-standing preconceptions regarding class, age and gender, and celebrates the rich heritage of tattooing as an art form.

"What's been missing is this real big-picture, trans-historical survey, which joins up the dots in chronological order from the 17th century to the present day," says the exhibition's guest curator Dr Matt Lodder, who is lecturer in Contemporary Art History and Director of »

American Studies at the University of Essex. “When it’s laid out as a continuous story, the whole sense of tattooing’s place in society changes: it’s not some new fad, but a constant, important presence in British cultural life, part of the fabric of how our country has expressed and understood itself for centuries.”

Showcasing the work of major tattoo artists, from George Burchett, who tattooed throughout the first part of the 20th century, to modern-day masters Alex Binnie and Lal Hardy, this is the largest ever gathering of real objects and original tattoo artwork showcased in the UK. The exhibition also reveals hidden histories, including the story of Britain’s female tattoo artist, Jessie Knight, who worked from the 1920s until she retired in 1963. One of the most exciting items on display will be a hand-painted advertising banner which Jessie’s tattooist father used to advertise his trade, and which became Jessie’s prized possession.

Tattoo artist Lal Hardy has lent some of his personal collection of tattoo memorabilia to the exhibition. “Various museums shied away from the subject. It is so important that we record and document the history of tattooing as it is one of the most diverse and fascinating practices of the human race.”

Much of the flash and ephemera have been kindly lent by private collectors, Paul “Rambo” Ramsbottom, Willy Robinson, Jimmie Skuse, and Neil Hopkin-Thomas. “This kind of material simply isn’t housed in public museum collections and thus is rarely on display to the general public,” says Matt Lodder. “It’s been a labour of love earning the trust of the people who own and care for this magical material, and it’s a real privilege to be able to share their stories widely.”

A year after London’s *Into You* closed its doors, owner Alex Binnie has lent objects that made the shop so iconic, including a painting titled *Tattoo Electric Expert* by Henk Schiffmacher and the shop’s sign, among many other items.

“It’s a recent history, if you will,” says Alex Binnie of his collection. Alex also curates a selection of original artwork that features his edit of British-born tattooists, providing a personal snapshot of art they are doing outside of tattooing, including Duncan X and Curly, who both worked at *Into You*.

“Curly, who in many ways doesn’t consider himself an ‘artist’, has thrown himself into the exhibition – he’s working on his piece as we speak,” says Alex. “I think he’ll come up with something really worth seeing.”

“

**When it’s laid
out as a continuous
story, the whole sense
of tattooing’s place in
society changes**

”

Dr Matt Lodder



Tattoos, though, are living and three-dimensional forms of art, so an innovative installation creates a 'sculptural map' of the current UK tattoo scene. The '100 Hands Project' (search #100hands on Instagram) curated by editor and writer Alice Snape, features original artwork tattooed onto 100 silicone arms by the UK's 100 most talented artists working in different styles.

"The historical survey section of the show ends in about 1995 or so; so the 100 Hands survey of contemporary artists shows how all of the rich and intertwined histories have blossomed into the kaleidoscopic industry which exists today," says Matt Lodder.

100 Hands features work from tattooists who are all currently living and working in the UK representing the kind of work that is popular now, from black and grey and geometric to neo-traditional and colour realism. David Corden from Edinburgh, Sway and Jemma Jones, who work at Sacred Electric in Leeds, Freddie Albrighton, from Immortal Ink in Chelmsford,

Lewis Parkin of Northside Tattoos in Newcastle, Otto D'Ambra of The White Elephant, London, Touka Voodoo, of Divine Canvas, and Claudia de Sabe of Seven Doors are just a handful of the names involved.

"100 Hands features the artwork that tattoo collectors are currently getting inked onto their skin, it's amazing that a museum will house this sculpture that symbolises current tattoo trends and styles," says Alice Snape.

All 100 participating artists have created something unique for this exhibit and the quality and diversity of the work is truly astonishing.

It is estimated that one in five of the UK population is tattooed, this figure rises to one in four in young adults, and tattoo artist Otto D'Ambra wanted to provide a commentary on this in his submission to 100 Hands. "I felt the urge to get the art of tattooing out of its trendy and superficial vision in our modern society," says Otto of his work. "Tattoos are fashion, they are an essential part of a trend these days, but there »

Detail from Sailor Knight's advertising banner, Jessie Knight archive, courtesy of Neil Hopkin-Thomas.

Left: 100 Hands contribution by Gemma B.



“
Tattooing is a magical, romantic, exciting and often-misunderstood art-form, and this exhibition aims to communicate some of that magic to visitors.
”



Above: Tattoo machine from the collection of Willy Robinson.

is certainly much more than that behind people's desire to get tattooed. In my work, I wanted to highlight the meaning and purpose behind what drives an individual to mark themselves, putting aside the aesthetic of tattooing."

Three major contemporary art commissions are also on display, from three tattoo artists working in very different styles. Designs have been created on hyper-realistic body sculptures that will represent the artefacts and artwork around it – another wonderful way the nature of the art form is being brought to life inside the museum.

In response to stories about Captain Cook's voyages to the Pacific, Tihoti Faara Barff's work celebrates the modern revival of Tahitian tattooing; Matt Houston's commission is a heroic celebration of the sailor tattoo, very apt for the maritime location; and Aimée Cornwell, a second-generation artist, illustrates how tattooing is breaking down artistic boundaries with the form of fantasia that has become her signature style.

Overall the exhibition features more than 400 original artworks, photographs and historic artefacts, in collaboration with other national organisations including the Science Museum and Pitt Rivers Museum.

Tattoos are magical and romantic, exciting, but all too often misunderstood, and this exhibition could turn all that on its head. "We hope that our exhibition will communicate some of the magic of tattooing to visitors," says Matt Lodder. And what better reason to go? 🐦

This article was originally published in Total Tattoo Magazine.

totaltattoo.co.uk

Contributors

Photos: Paul Abbitt

The exhibition includes three major contemporary art commissions from three tattoo artists working in three very different tattoo traditions. Each artist has created a unique design on a hyper-realistic body sculpture.



Above: Contributing artist Matt Houston.
Photo courtesy of Matt Houston.

Matt Houston used to work in white-collar corporate jobs, finding little buzz or reward out of life. He undertook an old-school traditional style apprenticeship, voluntarily and without pay, at a street shop in a low income area of South London. He worked unpaid for nearly three years, using the evening to study and sharpen his skills in all styles of tattooing, before starting to tattoo the public.

Eventually he quit a top design job with a global blue chip firm to pursue his dream of tattooing full time and taking up his first chair. Matt loves the challenges tattooing presents, the satisfaction it offers and the connection made between two people in that moment. Primarily it was the art that drew him to the job, but also the learning. He loves the fact that every day is totally different, meeting new people and encountering new projects.

He's also found that fellow artists are just people. Reality TV programmes paint tattooists as 24-hour party people, but most artists he knows couldn't keep up their tremendous work efforts if that were true.

In his own words: "When I design a tattoo I try to consider how it will look in 20 years or more. I want my tattoos to last and look good forever. I design tattoos that are simple and elegant, but retain a bespoke look. An artist colleague told me that when one designs a tattoo it's a mathematical equation that needs to be solved: how can I equate the elements a customer wants in a way that is aesthetically pleasing whilst also ensuring it stands the test of time?" »

[Instagram.com/matthew_houston](https://www.instagram.com/matthew_houston)





Matt Houston's commission is a "heroic celebration of the sailor tattoo." Photo: Paul Abbitt.

Hyper-realistic silicone body cast by Gorton Studio, Falmouth. These commissions were supported by Arts Council England through its 'Grants for the Arts' scheme.



“
**Tattooing really
 has some almost
 indescribable magic
 and mystical feeling
 and essence to it...**
**It's a deep and
 intimate way of
 sharing your soul.**
 ”

Aimée Cornwell

Above: Aimée Cornwell illustrates how tattooing is breaking down different artistic boundaries with her own form of fantasia.

Aimée Cornwell is a second generation tattoo artist, based in Oxford. She refers to her tattooing style as Fantasia and has attracted a dedicated international following for her distinctive tattoo style. She is frequently invited to work at tattoo conventions around the world, and her clients undertake travel from all corners of the globe to be tattooed by her. Aimée's work challenges the go to image of what most people think of when they hear the word tattoo. Her work is delicate and fantastical bringing a clear female voice to what has been a traditionally masculine world.

[Instagram.com/aimeecornwelltattoo](https://www.instagram.com/aimeecornwelltattoo)



Tihoti Faara Barff is from the island of Tahaa in Tahiti. In his own words: “You have to remember there was no social media when we started tattooing, no Facebook. No sharing. We had no tattoo book to follow. We had to create our own designs. Every valley in Tahiti has a name, every bird, every animal, every plant, every mountain, they all have a name. I take my designs from the Tahitian world.” Tihoti believes that the essence of a Polynesian-style tattoo is not like getting a heart or a butterfly inked on your shoulder or an exotic symbol on the ankle as a souvenir of a trip to a foreign country: “It is not about fashion. Fashion changes. A tattoo is on your skin for life. You must be proud of it for life. It is about a tradition that stretches back thousands of years.” 🌿

Above: Tattoo on hyper-realistic body cast by Tihoti Faara Barff.

Facebook.com/Tihoti-Tatau-Tatau-Art

Re-creation of a studio

Lal Hardy was born in 1958 and, has spent most of his time since living and working in Muswell Hill, North London. Lal first opened the doors to *New Wave Tattoo* in 1979 and is still tattooing there today. He is famous for tattooing footballers and celebrities though he points out that all his clients are celebrities in their own right.

“I founded *New Wave Tattoo* in 1979. A very exciting time in the fashion, music and tattoo world. My first tattoo studio was on Beaconsfield Road, New Southgate in London. It was upstairs and it was a converted kitchen. The recreation of the studio in the exhibition is quite a faithful reproduction. You can see old style flash, very punk rock inspired and certificates from the Japanese Tattoo Club. It really shows how different tattooing was in the 1970s compared to now in 2017. It was much more primitive back then, nothing like the studios of today. I worked off a formica table, there were less colours, you had to sterilise everything yourself. But this shows how I got my start.”

“This is an important, ground breaking exhibition. It’s the first time that a major exhibition has documented British tattoo history in this way in the UK. Many collectors have put their resources into this exhibition and the museum team and Dr Matt Lodder have done an amazing job in creating a walk through visual feast of tattoo history. Anyone attending will have their eyes opened wide by what’s on display here.” 🐦

lalhardyink.co.uk

Below: The exhibition recreates Lal's first tattoo studio from the late 1970s and 80s.



The human skin collection

Dr Gemma Angel, an interdisciplinary scholar specialising in the history and anthropology of the European tattoo, and medical museum collections of human remains, provides an insight into the darker side of tattoo collections with a rare display of tattooing on preserved human skin from the Wellcome Collection's medical skin collection, on loan to the Science Museum.

“For many 19th-century criminologists, the European tattoo was viewed as a disturbing ‘social symptom’ of moral deviance or criminal abnormality. Some believed that signs of criminality could be ‘read’ and diagnosed from the features of the tattoo marks. This prompted the collecting of a great many photographs, drawings and in some cases even the preserved tattoos themselves, in an effort to establish a ‘taxonomy’ or scientific way of categorising different deviant or criminal types in society.”

“Although this criminological project ultimately failed in its attempt to treat tattoos as a sign of criminality, the collections they left behind provide a unique insight into 19th-century tattooing practices. The tattoos within this fascinating collection bear testament to the lost loves, battles fought and lives lived of countless unknown men. Their often-elaborate skin-markings may be viewed as a kind of historical document, the writings of those who seldom left behind autobiographies – ordinary working men, sailors, soldiers, circus performers, criminals.” 🦋

Dr Gemma Angel
Cornell University,
Research Fellow & tattoo historian



Top: Preserved human skin courtesy of the Science Museum, London. Photo: Luke Hayes.

Bottom image: A pair of tattooed eyes. Preserved human skin (Science Museum Object no.s A747 & A754). Photograph © Gemma Angel, courtesy of the Science Museum, London.

Not just for sailors anymore: Myths and misconceptions about British tattooing

Words: Dr Matt Lodder, guest curator
of Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed



As you enter our new exhibition at the NMMC, **Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed**, you are faced with the half-length portrait of a man, painted in the early 18th century. He is clearly a man of some status and wealth, bedecked in a large, ostentatious wig, his robes fastened with a gilded jewel. He looks confidently and assuredly out towards the viewer, and clutches in his right hand a small object, perhaps a religious reliquary. On this same arm, revealed by the rolling of his sleeve and drawing the eye, is an extensive tattoo of Jesus on the cross, and then ascending to heaven. A date is permanently inked into his wrist: 1699.

This man is Heinrich Willhelm Ludolf, ambassador to the English court in the late 1600s. Immediately, this image begins to shake our preconceptions, perhaps, about tattooing, its history in Britain, and its relation to wider narratives of class and social status, as well as its particular use in signifying and projecting moments of personal identity. You may have read, for example, that Captain Cook discovered tattooing in New Zealand during his voyages there, and that the practice was unknown or forgotten in Britain at that time. And yet here, some 70 years before Cook's epic journey, is a public figure, proudly displaying his complex religious tattoo for all to see. You may have sensed, perhaps, that the very act of marking your skin was a sacrilegious act, and yet here is a deeply spiritual tattoo. And you may have had a sense that, at least until recently, tattoos were confined in some sense to sailors or crooks, and yet here is a diplomat, linguist, translator, emissary to the King of England at the height of the Georgian period, and secretary to Prince George of Denmark with an arm full of tattoos which would not look out of place on a contemporary footballer or boyband member.

The exhibition is packed with images and objects like this which disrupt and challenge ideas about who has been tattooed, when, and why. From early Victorian cabinet cards, through which artistically-inclined tattoo artists presented their talents to a client base of minor royals, rakish aristocrats, and music hall stars, to the vast trove of poetic and lyrical tattoo designs and ephemera from the private collection of Britain's first key female tattoo

artist, Jessie Knight, we are able to present novel and surprising insights into a world so often hidden from view. From the organised and passionate work of Bristol's Les Skuse, who exhibited tattooing in art galleries in the early 1970s and who was proclaiming his status as an artist back into the 1950s, to the professorial sanguinity of George Burchett, a tattooer who counted the King of Denmark amongst his finest canvases, we tell the stories of the artists and their customers who have exemplified and advocated for the best of British tattooing over the centuries. And by recreating tattoo shops over several decades, from a small booth resonant of the seedier parts of the urban 1960s to a space from the 1980s which defined a decade of punk, through to the fixtures and fittings from *Into You Tattoo*, a shop famed around the world since the 90s but now evacuated due to the gentrification of central London, we can allow visitors to see the changing face of British tattooing and peek behind doors they may never have dared look behind!

In a series of commissioned pieces of contemporary work, we are also delighted to have been able to use the exhibition to showcase and preserve for future generations a snapshot of the quality and variety of tattooing in Britain today. 100 silicone hands have been tattooed by artists across the length and breadth of the country, and range in style from the hyper-realistic to the abstract. In addition, we present a range of art in other media – painting, sculpture, photography – by contemporary tattoo artists, demonstrating the artistic talent in the industry, and that their work on skin is essentially another medium for their work.

Taken as a whole, the exhibition is provocative and exciting. No matter with what preconceptions you happen to arrive at the exhibition, you will leave with a richer, more varied and more nuanced sense of the history and future of this beautiful, strange, and romantic art form. 🦋

Dr Matt Lodder is guest curator of

Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed. He is Lecturer in Contemporary Art and Director of American Studies at the University of Essex.



100 Hands

Guest curator of the 100 Hands project Alice Snape of Things&Ink on contemporary tattoo art and this unique installation

Words by Alice Snape

Photos: Luke Hayes and Paul Abbitt courtesy of NMMC

It was the stunning work of tattoo artist Claudia de Sabe that made me fall in love with tattoos. From the moment I discovered her work, I knew I wanted to be heavily tattooed. I wanted to turn my own body into a work of art, become a collector of delicate, beautiful work by an array of different artists. So, of course, Claudia was the first tattoo artist I put on my list when I was approached by NMMC to curate the 100 Hands Project.

For me there is absolutely no denying tattoos are art, that's not a question up for debate. Of course, all tattoos are not created equal, some are "good" and some "bad". Tattooing is another medium and tattoos can be analysed in a way that any other works of art can – watercolours, sculptures, sketches, oil paintings. This means that some are worthy of being housed in a museum. The problem is, of course, tattoos simply aren't objects that can be put in a frame or housed in a cabinet. They are on the skin of living, breathing people, which means ordinarily they disappear from existence once the wearer's life is over.

The 100 Hands Project is a way of representing the three-dimensional, living »

“

**Ten years ago,
an exhibition like
this would have taken
place maybe at a tattoo
convention for three days,
but not at a museum for
this length of time,
which is incredible.**

”

100 Hands contributing artist
Claudia de Sabe.

nature of the tattoo. I have handpicked 100 of the best tattooists all working in the UK right now providing a snapshot of the work tattoo collectors are currently getting inked onto their skin, from black and grey and geometric to neo-traditional and colour realism. My selection includes the most respected, talented and popular artists. And they have each created an original design on a silicone arm.

"For my submission I simply tattooed something that I would love to tattoo in real life, for a customer," said Claudia de Sabe, when I asked for her inspiration behind the piece she created – a stunning Japanese peony in purple and red. And the reason she wanted to be part of it? "There's still a lot of misconceptions on tattooing and every exhibition can perhaps be of help in establishing a secure space for this art/craft within the artistic community. Ten years ago, an exhibition like this would have taken place maybe at a tattoo convention for three days, but not at a museum for this same length of time, which is incredible."

I've spent the last four years editing a magazine all about contemporary tattoo culture. I launched *Things&Ink* to represent tattoos as they should be, as art, to elevate them beyond the misconceptions you see in mainstream media: "tattoos are cheap, they are for sailors and criminals". *Things&Ink's* pages were filled with fashion, beauty, styled photo shoots, curated content to tell the historical story of tattooing and provide intelligent inspiration for tattoo collectors.

Tattoos are so much more than just beautiful designs, they're reminders of the unique stories that can be told on human skin. Bringing an intimate and personal art form into a museum space gives the practice a new, institutional legitimacy and a special kind of accessibility, dispelling outdated misconceptions and showing just what is possible when artists put ink into skin.

After hundreds of painstaking hours, 100 blank arms are now works of art that will become part of tattoo history. No matter what the inspiration or motivation behind each piece, each work of art will become one to make an installation that I know will have an impact on the future of this thriving, creative and magical industry. 🌸



Above: 100 Hand contribution by Jemma Jones of Sacred Electric Tattoo Leeds.

With thanks to the 100 artists

Louie Rivers

Travelling tattooist
Exeter

Joe Carpenter

Five Keys Tattoo Studio
Norwich

Ricky Williams

The Family Business
London

Jo Harrison

UNiTY / Modern Body Art
Shrewsbury / Birmingham

Caleb Kilby

Old Habits / Two Snakes
London / Hastings

Kate Mackay Gill

Private Studio
West Sussex

Jake Galleon

Studio XIII
Edinburgh

Paula Castle

Broadside
Swansea

Meg Langdale

The Burton Tattoo Collective
Leicester

Joanne Baker

Grizzly Art Collective
Coventry

Han Maude

Infinite Ink
Coventry

Antony Flemming

World of Tattoos
Ruislip Manor

Sophie Gibbons

Tommygun Tattoo
Plymouth

James “Woody” Woodford

1770
Brighton

Pauly

Second City Tattoo
Birmingham

Dexter Kay

King of Hearts
London

Mike Stockings

Legacy Tattoo
Haverhill

Jondix

Seven Doors
London

Olivia Dawn

The Tattoo Company
Wilmslow

Matt Difa

Jolie Rouge
London

Kathryn Kirk

Addiction Tattoo & Piercing
Bangor, Northern Ireland

Tamara Lee

The Circle / Two Snakes
London / Hastings

Aaron Hewitt

Cult Classic Tattoo
Romford

Louis Molloy

Middleton Tattoo Studio
Manchester

Abbie Williams

Lost Time
Peterborough

Amy Savage

The Warren
Canterbury

Araceli Forever

Death's Door
Brighton

Anrijs Straume

Bold as Brass Tattoo Company
Liverpool

Allan Graves

Haunted Tattoos
London

Neil Dransfield

Oddfellows Tattoo Collective
Leeds

Dominique Holmes

Black Lotus Studio
London

Chrissy Lee

Colchester Body Arts
Essex

Lucy O'Connell

Red Tattoo and Piercing,
Leeds

Delphine Noiztoy

The Lacemakers Sweatshop
London

Gibbo

Oddfellows Tattoo Collective
Leeds

Sway

Sacred Electric Tattoo
Leeds

Harriet Rose Heath

Crooked Claw Tattoo
Sheffield

Little Andy

The Church Tattoo Studio
Birmingham

Lal Hardy

New Wave Tattoo
London

Dane Grannon

Creative Vandals
Hull

Hannah Keuls

Good Times
London

Akuma Shugi

Wolf & Dagger
Hove

Ché Crook

Level Crooks
Bristol

Miss Jo Black

Black Inc
Frome

Philip Yarnell

Skynyrd Tattoos
Westcliff-on-Sea

Lucy Blue

Cobra Club
Leeds

Clare “Goldilox” Deen

Incandescence
Birmingham

Alex Candela

Black Market
Leicester

Matthew “Henbo” Henning

Redwood
Manchester

Jack Goks

Cloak and Dagger
London

Jelle Soos

Swansea Tattoo Company
Swansea

Matt Finch

Atelier Four Tattoo Studio
Truro

Dan Hague

La Familia
Newquay

Paul Hill

Vagabond
London

Dawnii Fantana

Painted Lady Tattoo Parlour
Birmingham

Kerry-Anne Richardson

Cock A Snook
Newcastle

Chris Jones

Physical Graffiti
Cardiff

Kat Abdy

Cloak and Dagger
London

Touka Voodoo

Divine Canvas
London

Rosie Evans

MVL Tattoo
Leeds

Joao Bosco

Parliament
London

Claudia de Sabe

Seven Doors
London

Emma Kierzek

Aurora Tattoo
Lancaster

Tacho Franch

Follow Your Dreams
Sheffield

Justin Burnout

Ghost House Collective
Derby

Mitchell Allenden

Dock Street Tattoos
Leeds

Lewis Parkin

Northside Tattooz
Newcastle

Mister Paterson

The Fifth Chamber
London

Charissa Gregson

Bath Street Tattoo Collective
Glasgow

Otto D'ambra

The White Elephant
London

Holly Ashby

House of Thieves Tattoo
Birmingham

Fidjit

Dharma Tattoo
London

Deryn Stephenson

Tenacious Tattoo
Sheffield

David Corden

Semper
Edinburgh

Sarah Whitehouse

Redwood Tattoo
Manchester

Fil

Broad Street Tattoo
Bath

Radu Rusu

Atelier Four Tattoo Studio
Truro

Ella Bell

Dust'n'Bones Tattoo
Plymouth

Ashley Luka

The Square Tattoo Studio
Solihull

Danielle Rose

Sanctuary Tattoo
Dundee

Matt Youl

Painted Lady Tattoo Parlour
Birmingham

Liam Sparkes

Old Habits Tattoo
London

Sadee Glover

Black Chalice Tattoo
Swindon

Jemma Jones

Sacred Electric Tattoo
Leeds

Gemma B

Black Ink Rebellion
Newquay

Kodie Smith

Edshead Tattoo Studio
Chelmsford

Billy Hay

Bath Street Tattoo Collective
Glasgow

Henry Big

Rain City Tattoo Collective
Manchester

Freddie Albrighton

Immortal ink
Chelmsford

Daryl Watson

Painted Lady Tattoo Parlour
Birmingham

John Anderton

Nemesis tattoo
Seaham

Hanumantra

UNiTY
Shrewsbury

Just Jen

Den of Iniquity
Edinburgh

Iain Sellar

The Black Lodge
Bristol

Ollie Streeter

La Familia
Newquay

Cally-Jo

New Wave
London

Sophie Adamson

The Projects Tattoo
Plymouth

Loz Thomas

One By One
London

Kayley Henderson

Northside Tattooz
Newcastle

Tasha Pollendine

Physical Graffiti
Cardiff



Meet the collectors

This ground-breaking exhibition was only possible due to the passion and knowledge of individual collectors, and the objects they saved. Without them, all this material – and the social history it represents – would have been lost.

Opposite Image: Bobby Carole Alkabes
tombstonestudio.com.
Courtesy of Paul Ramsbottom.

Paul 'Rambo' Ramsbottom

About me

I am Paul 'Rambo' Ramsbottom and I was born in 1959 close by Salford Docks near Manchester. I left school at 15 with a burning ambition to be part of the mysterious, and then uncommon, world of tattooing.

I got my first professional tattoo machines in October 1983 from 'the classifieds' in the local paper and opened my first tattoo parlour in 1984 in Manchester. The rent was £15 per week.

I moved to Shudehill in Manchester's Northern Quarter in 1986, where I still work from today. I am Manchester's longest registered tattoo artist.



When did your interest in tattoos begin?

I became interested in tattoos at the age of nine, when I noticed older guys at the local swimming baths with pictures on their arms. I was fascinated that their arms were wet yet the images remained intact. When I asked what they were I was told they were called tattoos. Cash Cooper did my first tattoo when I was 13. It was my nickname, 'Rambo'.

What was the first object you acquired for your collection?

Back in 1985, the first items I acquired were two business cards - one for George Burchett, London and the other for Harry Lever, Blackpool. They were given to me by Derek Duckworth who was Harry Lever's doorman in the 1960s. These cards would be the start of the world's biggest tattoo museum.

Which object in your collection means the most to you and why?

This is the most difficult question to answer. It's like asking me which baby do I sacrifice! One of my most treasured items is a concertina travelling flash book containing work by Manchester tattoo artists Jimmy Thomson of Mosside, Art Cail of Harpurhey and Cash Cooper of Salford. These guys were around in the '40s to the '70s.

Why is it important to collect this type of material?

As with any social history it is important that we collect, restore and preserve for future generations. The history of tattooing is no different. These unsung heroes need to go down on record and their stories and artefacts be appreciated. The beauty and delight can be compared to folk art as the flash and machines were all skilfully handcrafted before the days of mass production.

Do you think museums should be telling the story of tattooing?

Yes! The story of tattooing is as ancient as time and as modern as tomorrow. You can go as far back as when Jesus was a lad, right up to the superb work that is being produced today by some of the world's most skilful artists. If it wasn't for the innovators who paved the way, tattooing wouldn't be where it is today. »

Willy Robinson

About me

I began my career in Germany, selling and repairing one armed bandits during the week, and travelling round to British Forces camps as a mobile disc-jockey at the weekends.

I ran a pub, and founded the 'Pleasure Dome Disco' before I decided to open a tattoo shop in Gutersloh (Germany) with my friend Alan Dixon. Alan began to teach me to tattoo and I became a 'filler-inner' for Alan's designs. A few months later we purchased a laser and became the first tattoo studio in the world to offer laser removal. We then went on to create a wholesale tattoo and piercing supply company.

I am now following my dream of one day opening the biggest tattoo museum in the world.

When did your interest in tattoos begin?

I wish I had a really cool story to tell but the interest was just always there. It really peaked when I opened my first studio with Alan Dixon. From then it's snowballed and the rollercoaster ride continues.

What was the first object you acquired for your collection?

Wow... we are going back in time now, over twenty years. I remember walking round a convention and spotting a Vince Ray oil painting of a tattooed male devil. As I was buying it, Vince said:

"It's one of a pair you know."

I said "I'll take them".

"But the female hasn't been painted yet", said Vince.

"That's ok", I said, "I can wait..."

Which object in your collection means the most to you and why?

It's an old tattoo mirror. I have more valuable and historically important objects but this holds a lot of memories for me. I was watching a band at a tattoo convention when a guy came up to me and told me that he had bought this old tattoo mirror. He was keeping it, hoping that one day it would go to a worthy owner. After twenty years that mirror came to me, and it was an honour to add it to my collection.



Why is important to collect this type of material?

Business cards, letters, photos, sketches. A big part of tattoo history is paper; therefore no real value was placed upon it. This could be the last opportunity to save what we can before it's too late. So much has already been lost.

Image courtesy of Willy Robinson.

Do you think museums should be telling the story of tattooing?

Kings, queens, upper echelons of society, swash-buckling pirates, adventures of Captain Cook, the tales of tattooed men and ladies. These are all stories that need telling, so hell yes.

Jimmie Skuse

About Jimmie

Jimmie Skuse is the scion of Bristol's legendary Skuse family – son of Danny Skuse, nephew of Bill and Rusty, grandson of Les.

Jimmie began tattooing more than 30 years ago, having picked up a machine at the tender age of 13. He was tutored by his father and still oversees the family business in Bristol.

Jimmie tirelessly keeps his family legacy alive, particularly through his stewardship of the Bristol Tattoo Club, the global organisation for the promotion of tattooing which was started by his grandfather.

Jimmie is also the custodian of one of the most important collections of British tattoo history in the world. He travels the country and the globe displaying and acquiring items, publishing books, and caring for the history of this art.

Les Skuse and The Bristol Tattoo Club

Les Skuse was one of Britain's finest tattooists and an ambassador for the noble art of tattooing. Without his foresight to save the history that had come before him, and what was made during his lifetime, researchers and historians would not be able to piece together so much tattooing history. You have to remember where you come from and Les always revered Joseph Hartley as the master. 🐦

Jimmie Skuse, 2016



Above: Jimmie is grandson of Les, pictured. Image courtesy of Willy Robinson. Right: Jimmie Skuse.



Tattoo Tales

Real life stories
from Cornwall



Jamie Clay

I've got a cutthroat razor on the back of my arm, which I had done because of being a barber. I wanted it really basic to hark back to traditional naval tattoos. A lot of young barbers are covered in tattoos, so it goes hand in hand. Photo: Rosie Kliskey. »

When developing this exhibition, the museum wanted to engage with as many people as possible – not just to create a platform for their perceptions and stories, but to help shape the exhibition itself. Tattoos presented us with a perfect opportunity to do this.

We started by simply asking people to share the stories behind their tattoos – stories that are moving, funny and truly surprising. This conversation led naturally to questions about tattooing as a form of art, and whether museums and art galleries should take it more seriously.

Working with Rosie Kliskey, a Cornwall-based photographic artist, and Storylines, who specialise in recording and presenting community history, we approached students from Falmouth University and Exeter University, Falmouth town residents, members of the British armed forces – represented by the Royal British Legion and Battling On (an organisation that works with those suffering from mental or physical disabilities or illnesses as result of service in combat zones).

Here we can only show a small snapshot of the stories we have collected. You can see a wider selection in the exhibition, and we will also be sharing many online. I hope you find the stories collected and presented as moving and thought-provoking as I do.

Seth Hall

National Maritime Museum Cornwall





Olivia Healey

I study illustration. This one's a sketch that my friend did, and I was just like, "Oh I want that!" I think the preliminary drawings people do for their projects are really cool and work quite well for tattoos. Like little pencil sketches. I think it was weirder for him as his art is on my skin. I like how mine are one-offs. Photo: Storylines.

Trevor Hodges

My first tattoo I had when I was 14 years of age. My father was very, very violent. He's broken most the ribs in my body. And I just grew up very angry and antisocial. So my tattoos were just to say, keep away. But I wouldn't be without them now, it's just part of my make up. I fought my demons and I'm winning. Photo: Storylines. 🐦



Tattoo artists in other mediums

Alex Binnie has lent objects from his iconic shop *Into You* and curates a selection of original artwork by tattoo artists, providing a personal snapshot of art they are doing outside of tattooing.



I got my first tattoos in my teens in the late 70's, went to art school and started to get heavily tattooed in the 80's, and was tattooing by the end of that decade. On the way I played in bands and worked for a while as a medical illustrator, which I loved, but tattooing was what I really wanted to do. As was traditional, and really the only way at the time, I started from home - a large squat in Central London peopled with creative types, exciting times! I was working, but there wasn't much going on in the UK at that time, so I went to LA where things WERE happening, got tattooed by a couple of my heroes, and ended up staying and tattooing in Hollywood for a couple of years.

In 1993 I came back and started *Into You*, with then business partner, piercer Teena Marie. We were pretty much the first real custom tattoo shop in London, it's hard now to truly appreciate how different things were back then. There was clearly a demand and soon Curly joined us, and it grew from there. A big thanks to all the amazing artists that I've been lucky enough to work with, it's been quite a ride!

Outside of tattooing I have always produced work in other media. At art school I made performance and installation work and I managed to combine that with the tattoo/body art world by being lucky enough to perform regularly with the amazing Ron Athey. I produced plenty of drawings and flash in my earlier years, culminating in the box set - 23 Sleeves, published in 2001. I started printmaking around 2000, a medium that grabbed me almost as much as tattooing and I was very lucky to find a good print studio where I had access to equipment and learned my basic skills. After experimenting with various print styles including etching, monoprint and others I settled mainly on screenprints for several years, making work often influenced by the Japanese woodblock print that Japanese tattooing is based on.

Sadly in 2016, after 23 years my shop in London *Into You* finally closed its doors. I'm currently on a break from active tattoo duties while I ponder my next move. It's been a long, amazing, but somewhat exhausting ride. I will always love tattooing with a passion, and may one day return, but for now I'm making prints and other art, and taking the dog for a good long walk! Watch this space.

“
**Quite a lot of
 objects and pictures
 from my old shop
 in Clerkenwell,
 London will have
 a new lease of life
 in this show.**
 ”

Quite a lot of objects and pictures from my old shop in Clerkenwell, London will have a new lease of life in this show. So it's going to be great, and somewhat emotional to see them in their new location! Also I have curated a section of work in other mediums by contemporary tattooers.

Why is this exhibition important?

It's important to get some idea of the amazing history behind contemporary tattooing. The range of work is amazing, and this will bring it to a wider public.

Why should people see this exhibition?

It'll be fun as much as anything else, visually stimulating, and educational. Tattoos are everywhere now, all over such a wide range of media, but most people only get a tiny glimpse of what tattooing is.

What have you most enjoyed about curating the other mediums exhibition?

I made the selection of tattoo artists I invited very personal, it's a snapshot of people that I know, and have worked with. It's NOT a full representation of work being done today. It's been fun contacting them a reaffirming our connection by asking them to contribute. 🐦

Hidden Histor

The Jessie Knight Story

All images courtesy of Neil Hopkin-Thomas

Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed reveals hidden histories, including the story of Britain's pioneering female tattoo artist, Jessie Knight, who worked from the 1920s until she retired in 1963. »



Below: Jessie Knight's original tattooing kit, courtesy of Neil Hopkin-Thomas.



“

**Jessie's clients
were people from
all walks of life. She
claimed she tattooed
King Edward VIII
before he came to
the throne.**

”

Jessie Marjorie Knight was born in Croydon on the 8th of January 1904, the eldest of eight children. Jessie was the daughter of tattoo artist and circus performer 'Sailor' Charlie Knight. They were part of a father and daughter sharpshooting act which ended, allegedly, when he shot her in the shoulder. She took over the family tattooing business in Wales aged 18 when her father returned to sea. Jessie set up and ran a number of successful tattoo shops, and mentored another female tattoo artist, Winne Ayres.

One of Jessie's brothers was Victor Knight. (Rex Roper) a professional lasso artist. Among other things he toured with Edith Piaf as her warm up act. One of Jessie's sisters was Ella May Knight, a sharpshooter and wife of Hal Denver, and one half of the sensational Denvers. In their heyday, the Denvers' act featured in leading theatres like the Sahara Hotel, Las Vegas, and appeared for five shows a day, seven days a week, at the Palace Theatre on Broadway. Ella was also an understudy to the film star Margaret Lockwood.

Jessie started to get into tattoo design from a young age and learnt the tricks of the trade watching her father in his shop. Although she officially retired in 1966 she continued to tattoo people up until the 1980's. Jessie's clients were people from all walks of life. She claimed she tattooed King Edward VIII before he came to the throne. She tattooed men and women, although she wouldn't tattoo on woman's hands, as per her shop notice.

In 1955 Jessie took second place in London's "Champion Tattoo Artist in all of England" competition at a time when at best there were five full time woman tattooists at work in Europe and the US combined.

Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed features original artwork by Jessie Knight, as well as many objects kindly lent by her nephew Neil Hopkin-Thomas. One of the most exciting items on display is a hand-painted advertising banner which Jessie's tattooist father used to advertise his trade, and which became Jessie's prized possession. 🖋️

Facebook.com/JessieKnightTA



Opposite and below:
Courtesy of Neil Hopkin-Thomas.





Behind the scenes – the journey.

Co-curators Stuart Slade and Derryth Ridge of National Maritime Museum Cornwall on a two year labour of love to bring this exciting exhibition to fruition.

Stuart Slade: This was a departure in terms of the sort of exhibitions we are expected to put on. And so we did meet with some initial resistance. This was tied to the overall perceptions of tattoos and tattooing, and exactly the sort of misconceptions the show wants to challenge.

SS: What motivated the community to engage with us was that their story and their history was being taken seriously. To see a 'proper' exhibition that was object rich and brought the art and the people into the museum space. A 'proper' history that celebrates the art form, told by the largest gathering of original art in the UK. »

Opposite: Image courtesy of Jimmie Skuse.

Derryth Ridge: The tattooing community were initially concerned with whether we would treat the subject seriously. We had to earn trust of collectors, artists, current practitioners. This meant leaving the museum, going out and being in that community, attending conventions, visiting shops. We physically reached out, listened to what the community was saying, responding to robust views and challenges.



A homage to the past

The marketing image for Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed was inspired by an old photograph. Derryth Ridge, of National Maritime Museum Cornwall and creative lead on the exhibition, explains:

"When I first started researching for the exhibition I came across a photograph of a member of the Bristol Tattoo Club revealing her tattoo.

It's really thought provoking and I wonder if the sitter ever suspected it would become such an iconic image. I imagine the owner of the pair of legs must have been fearless: society wouldn't have been as accepting of women being tattooed in the '50s as they are now.

During the planning of the exhibition, we kept coming back to this image, and all that it represents. We came up with the idea of re-creating it for our marketing campaign, as a sort of homage but with a 21st century twist.

We had already asked Matthew Houston to work with us to create a design for one of our silicone sculptures so it seemed natural that we ask him to undertake the commission – which he did brilliantly.

I love my tattoo and it's a powerful way to commemorate the time I've spent working on the exhibition."



SS: We wanted to create a show of a national standard, with the ambitions and scope you'd expect to see in a national museum. To do this, we wanted to build on the success of our Viking Voyagers exhibition in bringing nationally and internationally important artefacts to Cornwall. We have worked in partnership with experts from the Science Museum, Museum of London, Royal Museums Greenwich, the British Library, National Archives and the Palace of Westminster, as well as the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University Cambridge. Equally importantly we have collaborated with colleagues from Royal Cornwall Museum and Cornwall Record Office to take some of the treasures from the great Cornwall collections – exquisite scrimshaw and a 1860s Bodmin Gaol Register – and place them in a new a new context, a new history that will connect them to a completely new audience.

DR: We want to challenge the perception that a provincial museum has to think provincially. And that culturally challenging, artistically ambitious work can only be done by the big nationals or in big city centres. We want this exhibition to do lots of things: bring in new audiences, ones that wouldn't normally visit us, and bring a new, hidden history to those traditional audiences who do visit us. We want to challenge ourselves as an organisation, what stories we tell and the audiences we bring into the museum with these stories. We want the museum to be for everyone. 🐦

Above: Stuart Slade
Head of Public Engagement,
National Maritime Museum Cornwall
Co-curator: Tattoo: British Tattoo
Art Revealed.
Photo: Sally Adams.

Oposite: Derryth Ridge
Learning and Interpretation Officer,
National Maritime Museum Cornwall
Creative lead: Tattoo: British Tattoo
Art Revealed.
Photo: Storylines.


Museum of the future?

How **Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed**

challenges what museums of the future could look like.

This ground breaking exhibition was only possible due to the passion and knowledge of individual collectors and the objects they have saved. Without them, all this material and the social history it represents would have been lost.

The few artefacts relating to tattooing held in museum collections only tell a partial story, one that reflects the value previous curators have placed on this art. Our view is that this profoundly limits and distorts understanding not just of tattooing but how we perceive our shared past. This raises some challenging questions for museums: *What should museums be collecting now? What stories should we be telling and who for? How do we shape the museum of the future?*

The National Maritime Museum Cornwall will be addressing these challenges over the coming years. We will be reaching out to engage with all our communities, to include their voices, their stories in the maritime museum of the future. 

Richard Doughty, Director
National Maritime Museum Cornwall



Photo: Jessie Knight in her Studio
Courtesy of Neil Hopkin-Thomas.





Building the launch

The in-house build of the *Bounty* launch is part of a programme of reconstruction of historical craft.

Photos: Paul Abbitt

Captain Bligh: Myth, Man and Mutiny brings to life one of the greatest small boat survival stories in history featuring relics from the voyage and a specially built reproduction of the *Bounty* launch. This gives a very real sense of the situation of the 18 men who sailed it over 3600 nautical miles across the Pacific. Here the boat-building team tell us about the journey to make as authentic a reconstruction as possible.

**Andy Wyke: Boat Collection Manager,
National Maritime Museum Cornwall**

The research began in June 2016. We paid a visit to HMS *Victory* in Portsmouth where there are similar boats and 20th-century replicas. The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich let us have a copy of the original plan: however there was a huge amount of detail that was not in the plan and so it was down to us to fill in the gaps. We studied a transcript of Bligh's log of the journey and a number of other publications held in our own Bartlett Library and Maritime Research Centre in Falmouth.

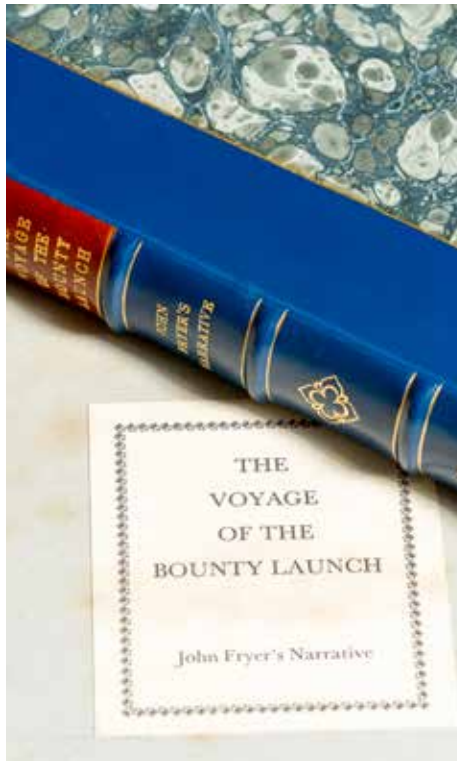
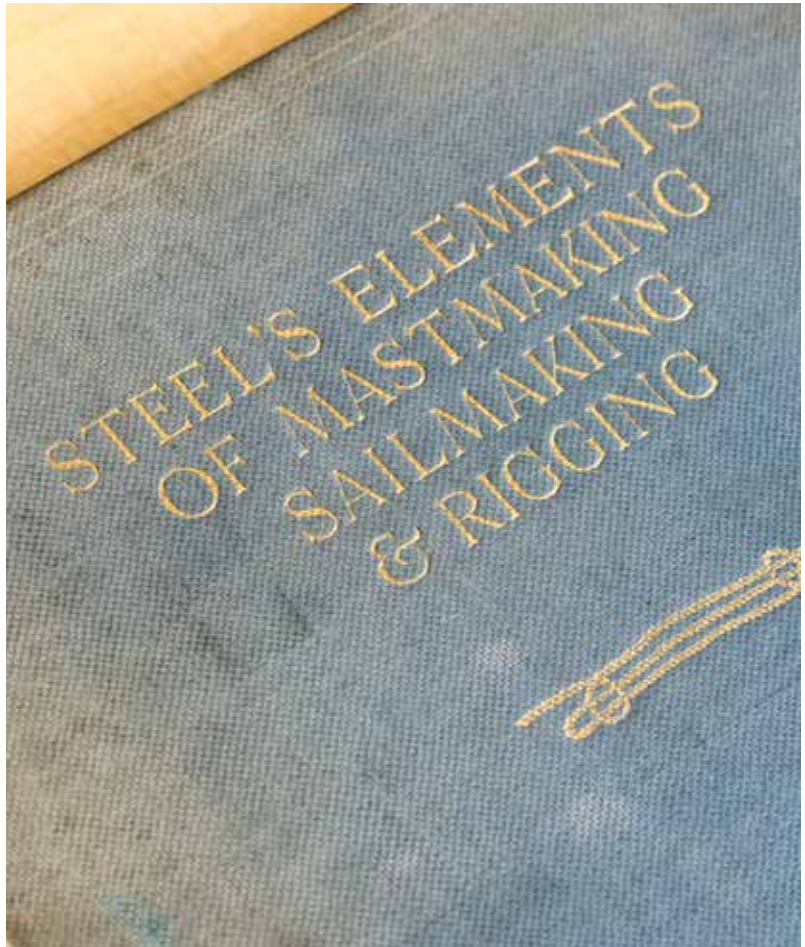
Andy Nancarrow: Boat builder

The Maritime Research Centre and Bartlett Library at the museum are an incredible resource. Some of the publications we consulted include *Steel's Elements of Mastmaking, Sailmaking and Rigging from 1792* and *The Elements and Practice of Naval Architecture 1805*. Also, looking at the artwork of the time, illustrations and paintings, you can see what the artists of the time picked up on and you can see trends emerge. It's like piecing together a jigsaw.

Mike Selwood: Boat workshop Manager

What helps is having a network, and strong community of supportive connections, so we're able to pick up the phone and ask people if they've come across this or that when working on similar projects.

AN: I learned a wealth about Bligh and the story of that journey. I have so much respect for what they achieved in building the *Bounty* launch, with the only knowledge and technology they had. It hasn't got a single screw in it, because this was pre-industrial revolution, when there was no mass production, everything was hand-made. We've tried to be as faithful as we could within the constraints. »



Above and left: books used during research on the launch build.

Opposite: the launch build in progress.



“
**During the
 actual build, which
 takes place in the
 museum’s boat
 building workshop,
 we become a living
 exhibit.**
 ”

Andy Nancarrow:
 Boat builder

MS: Our ambition is to become a respected centre for restoration, conservation and repair of historical vessels. And we’re slowly building up that resource. Our core responsibility is the maintenance and care of the nation’s small boat collection, but alongside that we’re developing a reputation for keeping traditional boat-building skills alive.

AW: When it all started to come together it was very rewarding. We couldn’t have managed it without the amazing team of volunteers.

AN: This project is important because it brings history alive. The research process gives better understanding into the past and develops a deeper understanding of the subject. During the actual build, which takes place in the museum’s boat-building workshop, we become a living exhibit. Visitors like to come back and see the weekly progress, and they are able to come into the workshop and chat with the team as we work, asking us questions.

Schools and younger children also get involved. They ask some great questions, and it really brings the subject to life for them.

What our apprentices and volunteers say:

Drew Passmore

Falmouth Marine School Volunteer

"It's been an amazing opportunity to learn both traditional and still relevant boatbuilding skills. And to be part of such a great team."

Olie Crediton

Trainee Boat Curator,

National Maritime Museum Cornwall

"It's been great to understand the boat construction process and research the story of Bligh in more depth."

Reuben Thompson

Advanced Apprentice in Boat Conservation,

National Maritime Museum Cornwall

"This has been such a great opportunity to develop my boat building and woodworking skills."

MS: It’s been great to develop a team of skilful volunteers, and to see the growing association between us and Falmouth Marine School, and to have been able to add an additional dimension to their studies.

On Facebook we publish regular updates on the project and have connected with a wide range of special interest groups from all over the world. It’s inspiring to achieve that global reach. 🌊



Follow the boatbuilding workshop on Facebook
facebook.com/NMMCWorkshop

The Maritime Research Centre and Bartlett Library houses a diverse collection of maritime reference books, periodicals and archive material for public consultation and reference.

Read more on The Bartlett Library and Maritime Research centre at nmmc.co.uk

Capt Bligh: Man Myth & Mutiny

**Guest curator Dr Pieter van der Merwe
on a remarkable West Country man.**

Photos: Luke Hayes and Paul Abbitt





This small boat survival story has been called the greatest in history, do you agree?

Yes I do, as a voyage of survival, started in haste, with only basic supplies and equipment, and by a group who were themselves somewhat ill-assorted and already suffering the stresses of a long commission under a temperamental commander. It was a triumph of endurance, seamanship – and leadership, however flawed and fractiously challenged on the way (as it was) – against extraordinary odds. Had the launch sunk, we would never have known its crew's fate or what happened to *Bounty* except what was later learnt from John Adams on Pitcairn – which was basic and obviously very partial, in his own interest. »

Why Myth, Man and Mutiny?

Bligh is a significant national figure in an unusual way: there is no question he was a very fine seaman, navigator and marine surveyor, a brave and tenacious naval officer with a strong sense of responsibility, including for the welfare of men under him. His fascination, however, lies in how his volatile personality and disciplinarian nature produced the problems it did for him, especially when combined with others which were not of his making. It may be that Bligh's failings lay in social insecurities that would not have affected someone of greater social standing than the son of a customs officer. As so often, in Bligh's case, part of the fascination lies in trying to pin down the human causes of why things went wrong in inherently dramatic situations from which others would have extracted themselves with less controversy.

As George Tobin, the sensible third lieutenant under him on the *Providence* (on the second and unremarkably successful breadfruit voyage) put it in a letter to Frank Bond – Bligh's nephew and first lieutenant, on that voyage – on the day of Bligh's funeral (15 December 1817) 'Let our old Captain's frailties be forgotten and view him as a man of science and excellent practical seaman. He has suffered much and ever in difficulty by labour and perseverance extricated himself...'. It's really the story of most of us in many ways.

Why should people see this exhibition?

It will tell them about a tale of which they will almost certainly have heard but may have got the wrong idea from the three well-known romantic films made on the subject. There is obviously a local interest given Bligh was a Cornishman – though such evidence as there is suggests that while of Cornish family he was probably born in Plymouth. It also includes some of the few relics from the launch voyage – Bligh's coconut bowl, bullet weight, horn beaker and the magnifying glass he used to light cooking fires once they reached the Great Barrier Reef, and other related 18th-century items – including William Hodges's great painting of Matavai Bay Tahiti, painted after he sailed on Cook's second voyage (Bligh was there on Cook's third, and in the *Bounty*).

The recently built replica of the *Bounty* launch will also give a very real sense of the situation of the 18 men who sailed it 3600 miles across the Pacific. 🌊

“
**It was a triumph
 of endurance,
 seamanship – and
 leadership, however
 flawed and fractiously
 challenged on
 the way – against
 extraordinary odds.**
 ”

Dr Pieter van der Merwe

Captain Bligh: Myth, Man and Mutiny has been guest curated for the National Maritime Museum Cornwall by Dr Pieter van der Merwe, General Editor and Curator Emeritus at the National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

For more podcasts and video clips from Dr Pieter van der Merwe, go to nmmc.co.uk



WILLIAM BLIGH CORNISHMAN

High praise has been given to Bligh for his leadership of the HMS Bounty. He is remembered as a man of great courage and determination, who led his crew through the most difficult of circumstances. His story is a testament to the human spirit and the power of leadership.



CAPT. BLIGH MYTH, MAN & MUTINY

VICE-ADMIRAL WILLIAM BLIGH, 1754-1817

In popular myth, the name 'Captain Bligh' immediately conjures up the image of a hardhearted, cruel man. Few people, however, may be able to say why or if this had reputation is deserved, even if they remember the event of 1789 on which it is based – the mutiny on his ship, HMS *Bounty*, as it sailed to the South Pacific.

William Bligh was a man of many talents. He was a skilled navigator, a capable leader, and a man of great courage. He was also a man of great determination, who was willing to face the most difficult of circumstances. His story is a testament to the human spirit and the power of leadership.



MUTINY ON 4

Mutiny on 4

A 21st-century recreation
of Captain Bligh's open
boat voyage.

Photos: courtesy of Channel 4



In a unique experiment Channel 4 challenged 21st-century men to re-live one of the greatest feats of maritime adventure and endurance in naval history for a new TV show. Here Conrad Humphreys talks about the experience.

We staggered up the beach in a remote part of Timor, our weary legs gave way as each of us collapsed onto the pebbly shoreline. Tears of relief ran down our cheeks as we sat motionless for the first time in over 60 days taking in our strange surroundings. I felt strangely numb. Looking back out to sea at the tiny 23-foot wooden boat that had been our world since leaving Tonga, I suddenly wanted to be back on board. Cameras, interviews, people, hassle - surely Bligh didn't have to contend with this welcome, or maybe he did. He certainly did not arrive to a hero's welcome. His men were half dead and several would die within a few weeks of their arrival.

This was our story, a modern day recreation of Bligh's 4000 mile open-boat voyage from Tofua where he was cast adrift from HMS *Bounty* to Timor where he skilfully navigated *Bounty's* launch through some of the world's most remote islands and treacherous reefs. For Bligh, his only mantra was survival. Cast adrift after a mutiny and left for dead with enough rations for only a few days sailing, a sextant, some declination tables, a pocket watch and some carpenter's tools. Who knows really what was in his mind as he pointed the launch towards Tofua, 35 miles away. What unfolded was the greatest feat of navigation and survival in British history, although Bligh was not regarded as a hero by any of his peers.

When I was approached by Windfall Films to be the professional skipper on board this ambitious recreation, my heart raced at

the thought. I've never been shy of taking on sailing challenges, but this was at best audacious and extremely reckless at the same time. With a crew made up of mainly non-sailors; a cast that would fit the Bligh storyline perfectly; a handyman in place of a ship's carpenter, a student doctor in for a surgeon and a whisky salesman in place of the ship's clerk - could modern man survive the same fate as Bligh and his men?

For us, our captain was former SBS soldier, Ant Middleton. Like Bligh he was only 35, but unlike Bligh he was not an experienced sailor. Ant did know how to survive and shouldered the weight of leadership like he was born to be on water. When I looked across to him one night when the wind howled and the heavens unleashed a torrent of rain on our shivering, terrified crew, he looked at me with a broad grin. It was enough for me to realise that, like 1789, it was only wind and water, and if we kept sailing west we'd eventually arrive.

Conrad Humphreys

Conrad Humphreys is a competitive sailor, who has sailed around the globe three times in some of the sailing world's most famous races. Conrad was the professional skipper on the ambitious recreation of Bligh's legendary small-boat journey for Channel 4 programme 'Mutiny.' 'Mutiny' was aired on Channel 4 from 6 March 2017.

Channel4.com



Q and A: Conrad Humphreys, Skipper for 'Mutiny'

Was it a very different boat to handle from those you're used to?

Yeah, very different. It has no keel, very simple sails, so you're really at the mercy of the wind and the waves, which adds some risk. But it was a simple boat, so there was very little to go wrong, very little to break, and easy to repair.

Presumably navigation was another very complicated aspect of the journey?

Yeah. Obviously today we have all sorts of technology to identify exactly where we are, so the challenge in today's world is "Where do we want to be?" Whereas in Bligh's world it was very much "Where are we, and are we about to hit a reef?" Trying to accurately navigate with traditional methods is not something that modern man does anymore.

How did you prepare for the series?

I brushed up on positional navigation, and learned some of the techniques that Bligh would have used. I put on a bit of weight in readiness. In hindsight I wished I'd put on a bit more. I lost 20 kilos. I wasn't prepared for that amount of weight loss.

What were your worries going in to the series?

The biggest worry was the fear of losing somebody overboard, in this boat it would be very, very difficult to go back and recover someone.

What was the reality like, compared to the theory?

It was remarkable, in a number of different ways. At times there was great fear. It taught me a lot about myself, how I reacted to certain people on board, Normally in these situations I'm in charge, so playing a supporting role

to Ant taught me the art of followship, which is as important as leadership.

What did you miss the most, from everyday life?

I missed being able to talk to my family. Normally on these voyages the one solace you have is the ability to make a call.

What kind of relationships did you form?

This was a central part of the whole project. I'm always very open to meeting new people, and this was something I really relished from this experience. What a fantastic group of characters. They all brought different elements to the boat. 🐦

Artist in residence

Museum volunteer, sculptor, boatbuilder, and now our first artist in residence, Rob Johnsey on the inspiration for his sculptures.

Photos: Paul Abbitt



I moved to Falmouth when I took early retirement in 2004. I completed a full time course in traditional boat building at the Falmouth Marine School and went on to study fine art at Falmouth University. While I was a teacher and lecturer in education I owned a variety of sailing boats which I kept in Pembrokeshire and, later, in Plymouth. My introduction to Falmouth was to approach by sea so I guess St Anthony's lighthouse and Black Rock were part of my first impressions. I kept a 100 year old gaff cutter, called Biddy, in Falmouth before I moved here and sailed her across to Brittany a number of times. My passions include sailing and building traditional wooden boats as well as practising as an artist. So Falmouth and the Maritime Museum were perfect for me.

I've been a volunteer at the museum for over 10 years. There have been so many brilliant moments.

Sailing Aileen, a St Mawes One Design, as part of the Falmouth Classics, was very special, as was getting involved with devising a design and technology programme for school children at the museum and carving two Viking figureheads for exhibitions. Most of all, however, I have enjoyed the stimulating comradeship with fellow volunteers as we have gone about completing a myriad of marine related tasks.

I graduated in Fine Art at Falmouth University in 2015. Most of my work for my degree was in copperplate printing although »



“
**I am often
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 pods or shells but
 for this exhibition
 I chose to be led by
 traditional wooden
 boat forms.**
 ”

Rob Johnsey, artist in residence

I did spend some time making sculptures on my foundation course. I visited many different art galleries and museums during my course and while I enjoyed the two dimensional work on the walls I was always mostly drawn to the sculptures in these places. I learnt to appreciate a wide range of sculptors such as Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Anish Kapoor, Peter Randal-Page and many more.

I proposed the *Skeleton* exhibition after completing the second Viking figurehead and graduating. I had enjoyed the construction of the figurehead base so much that I wanted to do more. Thank you NMMC for having faith in me!

Almost all of my sculptures are made by fixing smaller pieces together to form a repetitive whole.

I am often influenced by organic forms such as seed pods or shells but for this exhibition I chose to be led by traditional wooden boat forms. Two of the sculptures, Keel and Transom are made from the keel and transom capping rail of an old classic yacht. The inspiration

for Coracle is just round the corner from the exhibition space. The museum's Shrewsbury coracle is already a piece of sculpture in its own right but as an artist I wanted to take this form even further into a spiral and starscape. Skeleton was the first image I thought of when I proposed the exhibition. I had seen many abandoned wooden boats rotting in muddy estuaries and creeks. These seemed to be just like skeletons of beached whales and that was my inspiration. Who could resist recreating the repeated vertebrae and ribs of both animal and boat?

At the moment I am working in the museum to help make a boat for the Mutiny exhibition so I am taking a break from sculpting. In the future I would be very interested in working with an organisation to produce another sculpture exhibition but with a different theme. A good artist is always looking forward to making something that has never been made before. That's where the excitement lies. 🐉

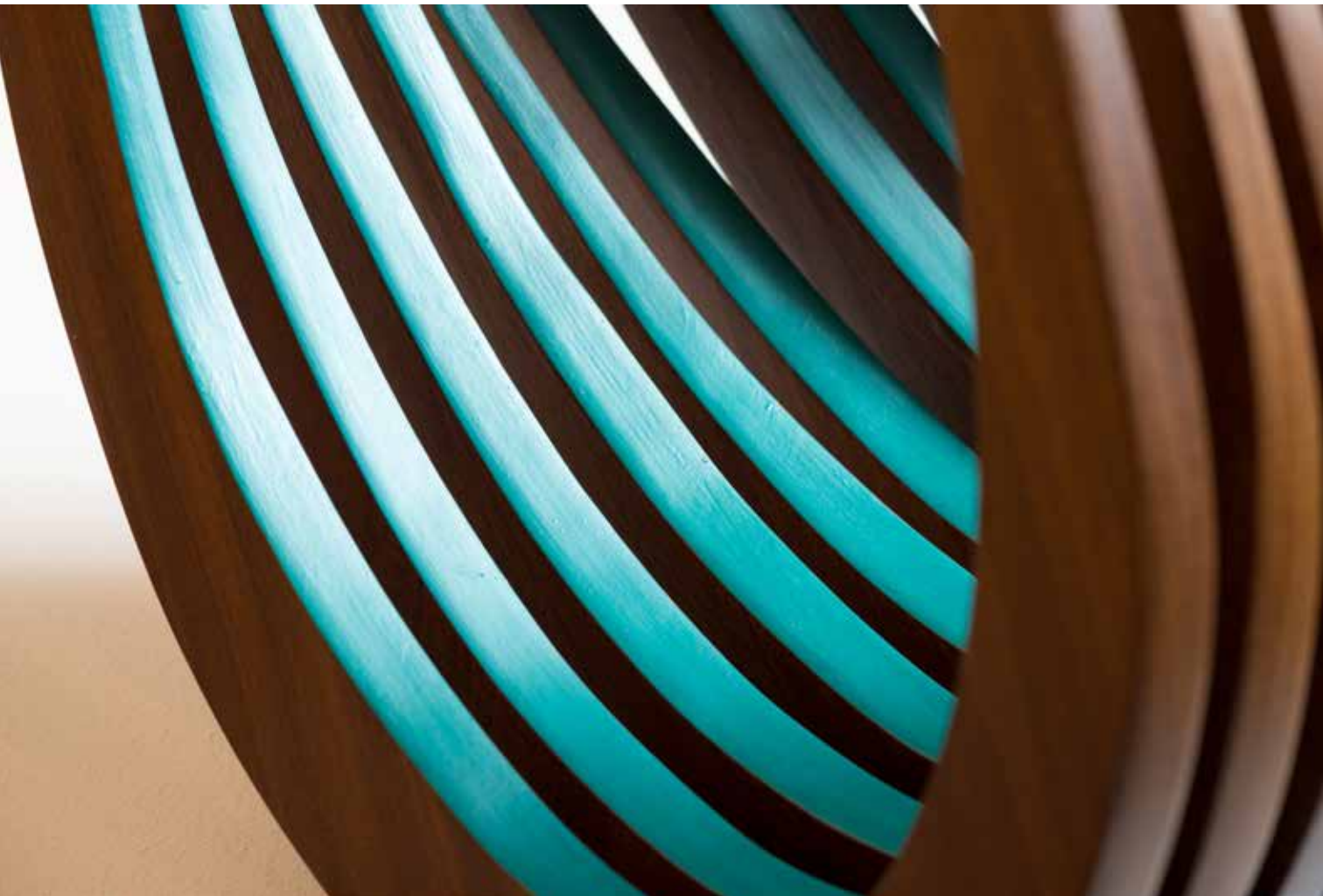
Works from *Skeleton* by Rob Johnsey



ROB JOHNSEY

Skeleton: New sculpture
inspired by Old Boats is at the
National Maritime Museum
Cornwall until 30 April 2017
nmmc.co.uk/whats-on

Works from Skeleton by Rob Johnsey



Viking Voyagers

A look back at our Viking Voyagers exhibition

Photos: Paul Abbitt



An epic experience of Viking life 1000 years ago, this exhibition ran from 20 March 2015 – 2 January 2017. Inviting visitors to take a journey into the Viking world, and explore the truth behind the popular myth of the bloodthirsty raiders, it offered the opportunity to get up close to rare antiquities on loan from the British Museum, National Museum of Ireland, National Museum of Denmark and Manx National Heritage.

Treasured artefacts from the Viking world sat alongside a 14m climb aboard full scale replica cargo ship. Raiding and trading, navigation and seamanship, Viking beliefs and rituals and Cnut's empire of the sea were all explored, alongside the history of Vikings in Cornwall. The legacy of Norse men and women in popular culture, a Viking boatyard complete with an iconic 6m Viking boat and hands on weapons and tools, added to the epic experience of Viking life 1000 years ago.

Dr Gareth Williams, co-curator on the exhibition and the British Museum's world-leading Viking historian said: "The Vikings raided Cornwall, but they also allied with the Cornish against West Saxon expansion and Cornwall was an important point on a sailing route from Scandinavia round Scotland to the Irish Sea and on to Brittany. To a great extent the history of the Vikings is the history of their ships and boats and there is nowhere better placed than National Maritime Museum Cornwall to tell this story."

Viking Voyagers offered us the opportunity to display the cultural heritage of four nations in the Museum for two years. It was an honour and a privilege to host these rare treasures. 🐉



The National Maritime Museum Cornwall

Welcome to National Maritime Museum Cornwall, a unique celebration of our relationship with the sea.

At the museum we

- Curate ambitious and unexpected exhibitions
- Develop partnership projects with national and international museums, bringing new connections with world cultures to Cornwall
- Bring ancient artefacts from national and international collections and cultural heritage rarely seen outside of London and the UK's other metropolitan centres
- Spearhead unique collaboration between national organisations, collectors, artists and leading academics
- Reach out to engage with all our communities, to include their voices, and their stories
- Have ambitions to position ourself at the forefront of challenging preconceptions about what museums can and should be curating and collecting. We want to create a museum of the future for the next generation of visitors

We are situated beside the third largest natural deep-water harbour in the world: Britain's traditional gateway to the Atlantic and one of Europe's finest sailing waters.

The building was custom designed and built on land that was once covered in the sheds of boat builders. These sheds inspired the design of the building which is covered in green oak.

There are 15 galleries over 5 floors. Exhibits explore the overwhelming influence of the sea on history and culture. Visitors can also climb to the top of the 100 foot Look Out Tower for breathtaking panoramic views over Falmouth harbour, docks and estuary.

Support us

We are a charity with no regular support from the government and we rely on our visitor income to continue our work. The generous support of individuals, companies, and trusts and foundations enables us to fulfill our educational mission and preserve maritime heritage. For more information on how you can help go to

nmmc.co.uk

Boatbuilding workshop

Visitors can see shipwrights at work restoring and building boats in the boatbuilding workshop, which is respected as a centre for excellence in restoration, conservation and repair of traditional boats.

Collections

The museum's collections consist of a range of objects, boats, art, books and archives.

The National Small Boat Collection

The National Small Boat Collection was originally developed by the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. This is now housed in Cornwall where it has been extended by the addition of other craft. This collection is representative of boats from the UK and around the world. A maximum of length overall of 30ft (14.2m) is set for the collection although there are exceptions. A collection of objects and archives support the National Small Boat Collection.

Cornish Maritime Collection

Much of the Cornish Maritime Collection came from the former Cornwall Maritime Museum in Falmouth. It contains objects, pictures, models and archives relating to the history of Cornwall and the sea, and Falmouth in particular.

The Bartlett Maritime Research Centre and The Bartlett Library

The museum's research work is led by the Bartlett Maritime Research Centre which incorporates the Bartlett Library. The library houses a diverse collection of maritime reference books, periodicals and archive material for public consultation and reference. The main themes are: Cornwall maritime history, British and international shipping, the history of boats.

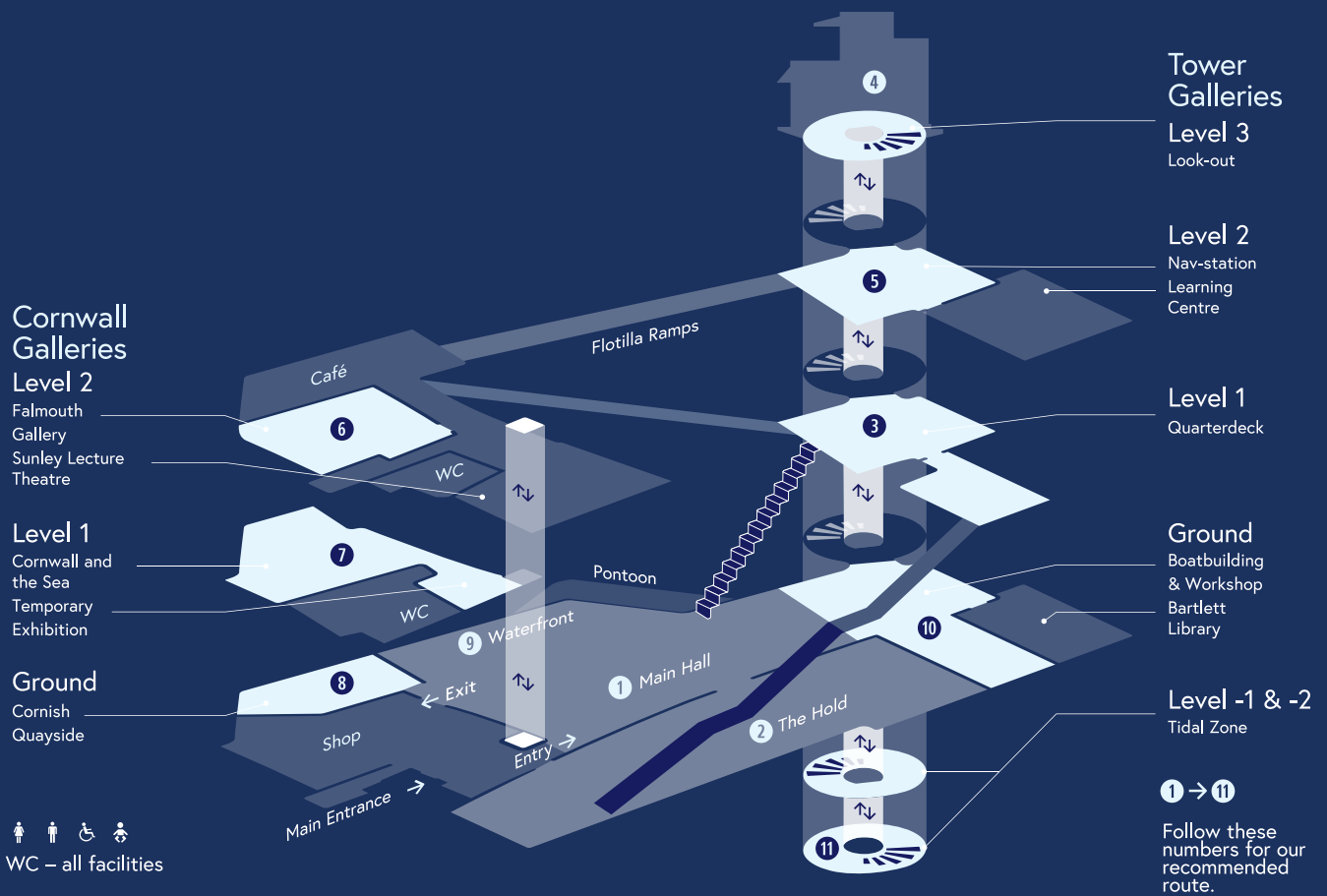
Formal education programme

Our award winning learning programme is the largest and most varied of its kind in Cornwall.

Family programming

The museum delivers 118 days of free family learning activities every year.

Museum map



2017 listings

MAJOR EXHIBITIONS

Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed 17 March 2017 – 7 January 2018

A ground-breaking history of British tattooing, featuring cutting-edge designers, leading academics and major private collectors.

Captain Bligh: Myth, Man, Mutiny 17 March 2017 – 7 January 2018

Challenging the Hollywood depictions and bringing to life one of the greatest small boat survival stories.

SMALLER EXHIBITIONS

Skeleton: New sculptures inspired by old boats Until 30 April 2017

A series of sculptures by Rob Johnsey, boatbuilder, sculptor, the museum's first 'artist in residence' and a long serving and dedicated member of the team, having volunteered for over 10 years.

Tattoo artists in other mediums 17 March 2017 – 7 January 2018

Alex Binnie curates a selection of original artwork by British-born tattooists.

MUSEUM LATES

Museum Late: Tattoo Friday 17 March 2017 7.00pm – 10.30pm

Relax with a drink in our bar, and enjoy live music, an introduction from guest curator Dr Matt Lodder, and our new exhibitions.

Music: Tom Dale + 'Honey Club'
Residents: Balouu + Tom Gecim

Bar: Sponsored by Sailor Jerry

Tickets: £10. Students: £5.
Buy online at nmmc.co.uk

Museum Late: Conrad Humphreys of Channel 4's Mutiny April 2017

Conrad will talk about his experience, and our bar will be open.
More at nmmc.co.uk

Museum Late: Britain on Film, Coast and Sea May 2017 In partnership with BFI

More Museum Lates will be added in the year, check nmmc.co.uk/whats-on for details.

FAMILIES

February half term

Out of this world: Voyage through Space with Space Odyssey Planetarium

Half term landing dates: 11, 12, 13, 14, February 2017

Make your own solar system mobiles, Nebular jars, Bicarb rockets
Plus: Science of the Sea – on Thursday 16 February – grab your lab coats and look through magnificent microscopes, listen to marine themed talks, take part in work shops, craft making, and more with brilliant marine experts from the University of Exeter.

Easter holidays

Sailor Craft in the Age of Sail Saturday 1 April – Sunday 17 April

Make your own: Ship in a bottle, Seachests, Maps, Scrimshaw
Plus: Pirate Puppet Shows, "The Voyage of Mystery" live show, Trails, Chocolate casting

May half term

Awesome Adventurers

Saturday 27 May – Sunday 4 June

Go on an awesome adventure this summer. Inspired by the heroic voyages of exploration by ships such as Captain Bligh's *HMS Bounty*, join the crew of *HMS Adventure* in our PlayZone to explore the Pacific Islands. Plus craft-making and a summer trail.

Summer holidays

Awesome Adventurers

Friday 27 July – Sunday 4 September

Please see above

October half term

Magic in Motion

Saturday 21 – Sunday 29 October 2017

Animation, Shadow puppets, Zoetrope, Kaleidoscopes, Pin wheels, Magic discs

Christmas holidays

Thursday 21 December 2017 –
Wednesday 3 Jan 2018

Experience a traditional Victorian Christmas

Ongoing

Pre-school

Museum Minnows: activities for under 5s
Term time only

Every Monday during term time at 11 O'clock, drop-in for a lively half hour of stories, songs and rhymes.

The Bartlett Maritime Research Centre and Reference Library

The Bartlett

The Bartlett is the research centre and reference library of the National Maritime Museum Cornwall. Staffed entirely by a dedicated team of volunteers, the Bartlett offers access to one of the best collections of maritime reference books and periodicals in the country.

The Bartlett holds information of many types of ship and boat construction, their trades and usage, and information that helps to provide deeper knowledge and understanding of our maritime heritage - especially that of Cornwall.

Entry is free. The Bartlett is open five days a week, from Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm. Wi-fi facilities exist, and document photography is allowed for a modest charge.

Research facilities

Casual and in-depth research is encouraged on maritime, or mariner, related matters.

In addition to the core collection of books, magazines and archive material relating to Falmouth Harbour, the Bartlett holds a number of search databases and finding aids, including the A-Z of Cornish built ships 1776-1914; Fox's Arrivals – an index to G. C. Fox & Co.'s Falmouth ship arrival ledgers from the 1880s to the 1970s; an index to Lloyd's Wreck Returns; with an index to Cornish Masters and Mates, and their Certificate Nos, - just to mention a few.

The Bartlett's experienced staff are available to assist with research, provide advice and guidance, and direct researchers to other sources of information when appropriate. We are happy to undertake preliminary research in response to email or postal enquiries, and now offer a copy service for plans of classic yachts contained in early yachting magazines, for a modest charge.

Conserving the books

Many of our books, magazines and archives, are rare or aging volumes, requiring regular careful conservation. Specialist cleaning and conservation work is carried out by a dedicated team of Heritage volunteers from the Falmouth Decorative and Fine Arts Society. Researchers are requested to handle our volumes with care and consideration.

Enquiries

The Bartlett's volunteers welcome all enquiries by phone, e-mail or post. Please call on 01326 214579; or e-mail enquiries to library@nmmc.co.uk. Postal enquiries should be addressed to The Bartlett, National Maritime Museum Cornwall, Discovery Square, Falmouth, Cornwall RT11 3QY.

The Bartlett volunteers will undertake an initial search, of about an hour, free of charge; thereafter we make a modest hourly charge, of which we will advise enquirers before progressing.

As the Bartlett relies entirely on its volunteers for its continued success, donation and contributions towards our ongoing costs are always appreciated. Cheques should be made payable to – National Maritime Museum Cornwall.

The collection

The Bartlett holds some 18,000 volumes on our open shelves, having grown by gift and purchase, from the core collection of 6,000 volumes, generously donated by our benefactor J. V. Bartlett Esq., in 2003.

Significant loans from the Cornwall Library Service [including a number of *Lloyd's Registers*], together with gifts from many individuals have greatly increased the size and value of the collection since our establishment in 2003.

The collection comprises:–

Maritime reference section

Covering everything from supertankers to sailing dinghies, it includes an extensive run of *Lloyd's Registers* from 1764, to near current editions; a good run of *Mercantile Navy Lists*, 1850s to 1960s; *Lloyd's Lists*, the British maritime newspaper (facsimile editions, or microfilm copies), 1841 to 1859. Our books cover such diverse subjects as Shipping Companies, British and foreign; Yacht cruising; Fishing and Fisheries; a selection of Naval material; Maritime Art and Artists; Navigation; Exploration; etc.

Archives, periodicals, magazines and journals

A comprehensive range of Falmouth harbour archives, has been deposited with the Bartlett, by the Falmouth Harbour Commissioners – including Harbour Commissioners, and Harbour Committee minute books; Dredging ledgers; Harbour Masters Journals, 1870's to 1970s. These are held in the Haddon Room. These archives are supplemented by an extensive range of Falmouth Harbour pilotage material, and G. C. Fox & Co.'s Falmouth Arrivals ledgers.

The Haddon Room, also holds runs of yachting magazines and maritime journals – including *Yachts & Yachting*, *Motor Boat & Yachting*, *Yachting World*, *Mariner's Mirror*; *Maritime South West*, *Ships in Focus*, a representative number of the *Nautical Magazines*, and *Lifeboat Journals*, all of which embrace many elements of maritime enterprise from boating for pleasure to academic research.



Learn with us

Our award winning learning programme is the largest and most varied of its kind in Cornwall. We offer school groups unforgettable experiences in the museum's inspirational spaces.

Full programme details: nmmc.co.uk

Painting: Captain William Rogers capturing the *Jeune Richard* 1 October 1807 by Samuel Drummond (1765 – 1844)
Oil on Canvas, lent by the National Maritime Museum, London, (Greenwich Hospital Collection).



Plan your visit

Opening times:

Open every day of the year, 10am - 5pm, except Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Admission fees:

See NMMC.CO.UK for details or call us on 01326 313388

Find us:

National Maritime Museum Cornwall
Discovery Quay
Falmouth
Cornwall

Sat nav:

TR11 3QY

NMMC.CO.UK

01326 313388

Stay in touch:

Sign up to our newsletters + follow us on social media where the team share the latest events and exhibition news, boatbuilding news, museum photography, facts and figures, Falmouth news, offers, prizes and more.

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Subscribe to our YouTube channel:

Youtube.com/MaritimeCornwall

About Falmouth

Based around a thriving harbour (the third largest natural deep water harbour in the world) Falmouth is gateway to the beautiful Fal River which runs through an Area Of Natural Beauty. The town is famous for its creative buzz with art galleries displaying contemporary works and venues showcasing independent films and live bands. The many reasons to visit include, the fascinating maritime heritage; the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty along the Helford and Fal Rivers – perfect for walking and family days out; watersports; boat trips running from the pier and quay; and plenty of family friendly attractions. Falmouth is surrounded by several fantastic family friendly beaches, Castle beach, Gyllyngvase beach, Swanpool beach and Maenporth beach, and is known for its year round events calendar. Falmouth's maritime legacy and coastal culture is a huge part of its charm boasting world class watersports on its sheltered waters including gig rowing, kayaking, diving and regularly hosting sailing events such as Falmouth Regatta, and the Pendennis Cup.

Falmouth marks the 75th anniversary of the St Nazaire raid during Second World War

This article first appeared in the West Briton and Cornwall Live. Research supported by the Bartlett Maritime Research Centre and the Bartlett Library at The National Maritime Museum Cornwall.

Words: Ginette Davies
Images: West Briton / Cornwall Live

It was a bright sunny day when hundreds of incredibly brave men set off in boats from Falmouth bound for France on what they were told was a "suicide mission" to carry out an audacious raid to destroy a french port.

But it would later become viewed as a turning point in the second World War. The heavily defended port of St Nazaire was destroyed when, fighting off enemy German fire, the men managed to blow up the old destroyer HMS Campbeltown which had been packed with explosives and disguised as a German ship.

Operation Chariot on March 28, 1942, led to the deaths of 168 of the 622 men who left Falmouth and the capture of many more. It also resulted in 89 decorations being awarded for the raid, including five Victoria Crosses.

At the time, Earl Mountbatten of Burma said: "Surely, by far, the highest number of VCs ever awarded for a single operation, and this is the measure of the heroism of all who took part in that magnificent enterprise."

Before they set off the men had been told by their commander that the job was dangerous and he didn't expect anyone to return.

Therefore he didn't want anyone married or with family responsibilities to go and anyone who felt they could not go was given the option to stand down.



Some of the men before they set off on the 'suicide mission' to St Nazaire.

Johnny Johnson - A Falmouth veteran

Johnny Johnson, who was captured as a prisoner of war after he and his fellow commandos were forced to jump from their fire-ravaged boat, died in 2001 aged 81.

For many years he cleaned the memorial stone in Falmouth and would prepare flowers in planters in preparation for the service.

His son David said: "Dad was always keen to keep the memory alive of the ultimate sacrifice that his fellow comrades made. After the ceremony each year; it was poignant to note, that Dad would stand for a while looking out into the harbour in quiet reflection with his own thoughts.

"I am extremely proud of what dad and his comrades achieved. Also, we have deep gratitude to Falmouth Town Council, the St Nazaire Society and Eric Dawkins, who maintain the annual service of remembrance."

Johnny wrote down some recollections of the raid.

He said : "In August 1940 I volunteered to join the Commandos. My commanding officer thought I had an aptitude for blowing things up so I was sent on a course to learn about explosives."

After two years training he said they still "had no idea" why they were specifically looking at dock installations and how to lay demolition charges. They travelled to Falmouth and joined an assault force and for 13 days were not told anything about the operation.

"By this time the Campbeltown had been well-prepared for her last mission," he said. "The explosives had been loaded. We spent the time in physical training, swimming, climbing the cranes in the dock in full gear and rucksacks.

"One morning our commander called us together. His opening words were, 'well chaps, this is it, St Nazaire'. We were briefed as to the various jobs. He ended with the words 'I have been ordered to say this is going to be a dangerous job, in fact he didn't expect anyone to come back. Nobody had to go on this operation if he did not want to go.

"For a while there was complete silence, Then from every throat came a mighty GURCHER. We were told to write our last letters. We were given a scale model of the dock installation and the knowledge we gained would prove invaluable."

He said the day they set off was "bright and clear" and they were waved off by dock workers. "We were close enough for me to see my father-in-law and wave. I yelled 'see you Saturday'. I did see him on Saturday; a Saturday over three years later."

As they approached St Nazaire he said the nerves set in. He was lying flat on the deck with 80lbs of explosives behind one-inch thick armour plating. As the signal was given to drop the German flag and run up the white ensign the Germans opened fire. »



Johnny Johnson only just survived the raid, but spent years in a prisoner of war camp.



Johnny Johnson (front left) with other men in the Prisoner of War camp in Stalag, Germany.



Johnny Johnson pictured during the Second World War.



"Over a hundred guns of the shore batteries and countless small arms went into action. It is difficult to describe the intensity of the barrage.

"The Campbeltown's sides were alive with bursting shells and casualties were now heavy. All the little ML's were doing a magnificent job in engaging the enemy, but they were out-gunned. One by one they caught fire and were sinking."

The commandos on Campbeltown continued to fight, with Johnny's group laying their charges and detonating them. The order was given to abandon ship, but the water by this time was a burning pool of petrol. He decided to try to swim to the furthest shore a mile away, thinking it was in unoccupied France.

However, cold and exhausted he decided to let the tide carry him and he slipped into unconsciousness. He was found washed ashore and taken to a German aid post and had adrenaline injected directly into his heart. Once recovered, he was taken to a concentration camp.

After the war he worked at the telephone exchange and then became a local painter and decorator for many years, right up to when he passed away.

He was married to Jean for 59 years. She died in 2014. They had five children Kay, Susie, Chris, Debbie and Dave. He is buried in Falmouth Cemetery.

HMS Campbeltown rammed against the dock gates, prior to the charges exploding.

Operation Chariot

In January 1942 the German battleship Tirpitz moved from the Baltic to the Norwegian coast and there was a very real danger it would break into the North Atlantic and wreak havoc on allied Atlantic convoys.

Four separate attempts to bomb the ship failed and a different strategy was required. As the ship needed dry-docking before being deployed it went into St Nazaire and the idea emerged to destroy the lock gate at the port and prevent it from getting through.

It was the most heavily defended area along the whole German occupied Atlantic coast and sandwiched between the River Loire and the waters of the outer harbour of St Nazaire, an area of less than one-square mile.

The outline plan was simple – pack a vessel with explosives, approach the docks at speed, supported by troops who would disembark and blow it up before destroying as much of the port as possible.

HMS Campbeltown, which was originally an American destroyer called USS Buchanan, was stripped, armoured-plated, packed with explosives, disguised as a German gunboat and was to be accompanied by 16 motor launches (ML) and two destroyers.

At 11.30pm on March 27 five RAF squadrons began bombing runs to divert attention away from the sea, but bad weather meant they hit other targets as well as military ones. This unusual behaviour raised concerns with the Germans.

Less than three hours later the convoy crossed the mouth of the Loire estuary and, despite an attempt to deceive the Germans, they opened fire. The convoy was still two miles from the dock gates.

HMS Campbeltown lowered the German flag and raised the white ensign and the intensity of German fire increased. By now all the ships were in range to return fire. Campbeltown was hit several times and increased her speed.

Only two of the MLs landed their commandos, but faced heavy fire. Onshore fighting was ferocious and close-quartered. Many of the little boats burst into flames as their fuel tanks were hit.

Campbeltown cleared the estuary and drove through the torpedo barrier and into the dock gates. At noon on March 28 the explosives finally detonated. It killed the 40 German officers who had gone on board and 400 other soldiers on the quay.

The dock gates were destroyed and not repaired until after the war. The following day delayed torpedoes activated, causing further damage and German casualties.

In total 168 of the 630 British commandos and sailors were killed and a further 214 became prisoners of war.



The troop ship Lancastria was sunk off St Nazaire by German bombers.



Writer Michael Burn being captured when he was a Second World War commando by German troops at St Nazaire in 1942.

The National Maritime Museum Cornwall is indebted to:

Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed has been created with the support of many organisations and individuals.

FUNDERS

Arts Council England
Garfield Weston Foundation
Sir John Fisher Foundation
Heritage Lottery Fund

INSTITUTIONAL LENDERS

Science Museum Group
Wellcome Collection
Museum of London
National Maritime Museum, London
Pitt Rivers Museum
University of Oxford
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
University of Cambridge
Cornwall Record Office
Royal Institution of Cornwall

PARTNERS:

Royal Museums Greenwich

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Royal British Legion | Battling On | FXU
| Sailor Jerry's | Imagemakers

PRIVATE LENDERS

Alex Binnie
Sim Comfort
Gary Cullen
Professor Adrian Forty
Lal Hardy
Timothy J. F Groves
Neil Hopkin-Thomas
Dr Matt Lodder
Carmen Nyssen
Paul 'Rambo' Ramsbottom
Willy Robinson
Jimmie Skuse

THE ARTISTS

Tihoti Faara Barff
Anthony Bennett
Aimée Cornwell
Matt Houston
Rosie Kliskey

We would like to offer our special thanks to each of the 100 individual artists who donated their time and talent to the 100 Hands exhibition. Their individual contributions are acknowledged earlier in the magazine.

INDIVIDUALS

Dr Gemma Angel
Dr Katy Barrett
Jeremy Coote
Rosalind Croker
Charlie Fairbairn
Rachel Hand
Malcolm Hocking
Murial Hocking
Helena Jaeschke
Matt Kirby
Sarah Lockwood
John McKibbin
Nikki Markham
Chloe Phillips
Jessica Reid
Rebecca Rhodes
Kate Scott
Chris Slesser
Alice Snape
Emma Steveson
Rebecca Storr
Professor Nicholas Thomas

EXHIBITION DESIGNERS

Imagemakers Design and Consulting Ltd

EXHIBITION CONSTRUCTION & FABRICATION

Parc Signs
NMMC Boat Team Volunteers
NMMC Maintenance Team



Captain Bligh: Myth, Man and Mutiny was created in close collaboration with Royal Museums Greenwich.

FUNDERS

Arts Council England
Garfield Weston Foundation
The Swire Charitable Trust
Sir John Fisher Foundation
The Adrian Swire Charitable Trust
Tanner Trust
Gosling Foundation
Arts Council England / Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund

INSTITUTIONAL LENDERS

Royal Museums Greenwich
The Royal Collection
Eyemouth International Sailing Craft Association

Captain Bligh: Myth, Man, and Mutiny was curated by Dr Pieter van der Merwe, MBE, DL General Editor and Greenwich Curator at Royal Museum Greenwich.

BOUNTY LAUNCH
RECONSTRUCTION
Andrew Nancarrow,
Principal Boat Builder

Reuben Thompson,
Conservation Apprentice, NMMC
Olie Crediton, Trainee Curator of Boats,
National Maritime Museum Cornwall

Boat building volunteers:
Mike Stonehill, Peter Gates, Steve Bishop

Andrew Bains,
Head of Historic Ships, National
Museum of the Royal Navy

Michael Lobb,
Archaeologist, HMS Victory,

Simon Stephens, Curator of Ship
Models, Royal Museums Greenwich

Nick Ball,
Assistant Curator of Ship Models, Royal
Museums Greenwich

Bartlett Library volunteers,
National Maritime Museum Cornwall

THE PEGASUS AWARD
Dogbite film crew
St Ives Secondary School
RNLI Penlee Lifeboat Station



Skeleton was created with the support of:

Feast
Cornwall Council



Our Volunteers

We are extremely grateful for the continued support of our volunteers whose time and effort contribute so much to the museum.

Our crew of volunteers are very highly valued members of the museum team, helping in almost every aspect of what we do and contributing their time and skills to the successful running of the museum, working alongside our staff team.

- 180 volunteers give over 30,000 hours a year
- Over 60% of our volunteers have been with us for over 5 years
- Over 40% of our volunteers have been with us for over 10 years

"Backroom tattooists, professional tattoo collectors and sailor culture have all been scrutinised in one of the most extensive reappraisals of body art put on in the UK."

– The Guardian

"A groundbreaking exhibition..."

What emerges is no less than a mass, mobile art form through which the history of Britain's larger cultural shifts can be observed."

– Daily Telegraph

"The tattoo, it turns out, is far more than skin deep."

– The Times

"By definition, documenting the history of a perishable artform is difficult. But with inking having transcended class, gender and age barriers in recent years, this show feels timely."

– The Guardian

"A comprehensive and ground-breaking history of British tattooing"

– The List

"Come and appreciate this somewhat neglected area of popular artistic culture... Plenty of time to stop making excuses and get yourself on a train down to Cornwall!"

– Jonathan Ross, Arts Show, BBC Radio 2



Back cover image: rare example
of early tattoo flash from the Jessie
Knight collection. Courtesy of Neil
Hopkin-Thomas.
Opposite: photo by Luke Hayes

SPONSORS



Thank you to Sailor Jerry for sponsoring
our preview night.

drinkaware.co.uk



Having delved into the Jessie Knight
archive, Tatty Devine have created a
beautiful necklace (£20) and brooch
(£25), which will be on sale through
the NMMC shop and website, as well
as Tatty Devine's stores, from early
May 2017.

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ISBN 978-1-78808-520-5



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