

## **Disposal Report for - :Loan in 1937.95.1 model of H.M.S. Royal William (1719)**

### **Introduction**

The RCAGM (Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum) is considering the disposal of the above in-line with sections 4.1 and 4.2 of its Collection Development Strategy which has identified that some areas of its collection, including maritime history, are surplus to requirements and constitute a drain on limited resources.

Section 2.15 of the Collection Development Strategy identifies much of the non-fine art material within the RCAGM's Maritime Collection as incompatible with the 'Core Offer'<sup>1</sup> of the RCAGM. Section 2.15.4 specifically recommends the disposal of such material.

### **Object Description and Provenance**

The specific details of the item under consideration in this report are as follows<sup>2</sup>:

: Loan in 1937.95.1 - 1/48th scale model of H.M.S. Royal William featuring a fully planked hull coloured white with a black dividing line, dark yellow top edge and hand painted classical frieze. This model war ship features carved wooden guns on each side and three large masts with rope rigging but no sails. The deck has red coloured detailing with the bow of the ship displays an ornately carved figurehead, beneath the bow spit, that depicts a man mounted on a rearing horse. The ship is mounted on a wooden shaped stand with a small label which reads 'Royal William 100 guns 1718 Tons (1719) scale 1/48'.

The model is in good condition overall but there are areas of damage, especially to the rigging and some of the spars. The object would benefit from a through clean.

H.M.S Royal William was a warship far ahead of her time. She was built from the reclaimed oak of H.M.S. Prince (1692) and launched in 1719 at Portsmouth Dockyard. Because ship rot caused irreversible damage to hull structure of vessels of the time, the useful life of ships of the era averaged only six years. To discourage rot, the builders of H.M.S. Royal William charred the hull framing prior to laying the planking. This innovative technique assured the vessel of a longer life. The Royal William remained in active service until 1813, nearly a hundred years after her construction. She was the pride of the Royal Navy during the Seven Year's War against the French and she served as General Wolfe's flagship in the battle for Quebec in 1760 and returned with his body. As a result, the Royal William was instrumental in establishing British rule in Canada.

This model was given as a loan in 1937 by one Mr L.F. Paget who gave his address as the Undura Tea Estate, Dikom, Assam, India. There has been no contact with Mr Paget or any family members (presuming he had any) since.

The display history of this object is obscure until 1969 when it featured in the 'Treasure from the Sea' exhibition at the Rothesay Museum. It also featured in

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for the full text of the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix for images of the item

‘The Age of Sail’ display which ran from 1972 until 1985 at the same venue until the Rothesay Museum was shut down. The records are unclear but it is very likely that the model has been in store since then.

The model appeared in the RCAGM Bulletin of October 1969 (pages 7-8 - see appendix) and the catalogue ‘The Age of Sail: A Guide to the Bournemouth Marine Collection’ (page 2 - see appendix).

As part of its Collection Development Strategy the RCAGM invited Simon Stephens, the Curator of Models at Royal Museums Greenwich<sup>3</sup>, along with his assistant, Nick Ball, to survey the ship model collection in 2017. As part of this process items in the collection were given a merit/quality rating of ‘excellent’, ‘good’, ‘acceptable’ or ‘none’. This model was rated ‘good’.

Dimensions: H1340 mm x W650 mm x D1570 mm

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<sup>3</sup> Formerly known as the National Maritime Museum

## **The Case for Retention**

### **Meeting the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM**

This object does not fit within the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM (see below).

### **Relevance to the RCAGM Interpretation Strategy**

This object is completely irrelevant to the RCAGM Interpretation Strategy (see below).

### **Public Benefit**

The retention of this model by the RCAGM would not benefit the public in any way.

### **Effect of Disposal on Remaining Collections**

The disposal of this model by the RCAGM would have no detrimental effect on the rest of its collections.

### **Implications for Public Collections Holding Similar Material**

No other public collections in the UK would suffer from the RCAGM disposing of this model.

### **The Costs of Retention (Including Conservation)**

The model is in good condition overall but with some damage. Currently this model does not place an excessive cost the RCAGM other than storage and insurance (although that cost is small as it is a low value item). The cost of repairing the damage to the model is estimated at no more than £800.

## **The Case for Disposal**

### **Meeting the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM**

This model does not meet the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM. The vessel it depicts was not connected to the Founders.

### **Relevance to the RCAGM Interpretation Strategy**

This model is not relevant to the RCAGM Interpretation Strategy as it does not meet the 'Core Offer' around which the strategy is based. It is very hard to see any reason why the RCAGM would use this model in its public programme as there is no dedicated maritime display space in the RCAGM and Bournemouth is a coastal resort community and not a maritime one.

### **Public Benefit**

The RCAGM is not benefitting the public in any way by retaining this model. The RCAGM is not a maritime museum (despite having some such material in its collections) and it is not perceived as such by the visiting public or researchers.

### **Effect of Disposal on Remaining Collections**

The disposal of this model by the RCAGM would have no detrimental effect on the rest of its collections. Unlike some of the other maritime items in the collections it is not part of a wider donation, such as the Dixon Collection, which includes fine art and ethnography as well as items relating to the naval service of the donor. The disposal of this single model will not adversely impact the integrity of other collection items.

### **Implications for Public Collections Holding Similar Material**

No other museums/collections in the UK would suffer from the RCAGM disposing of this model. This model is of high quality and provenance as well as being of an interesting vessel. It is likely to be very much desired by Royal Museums Greenwich and/or any other maritime collection holding museums connected with the vessel it depicts such as Portsmouth City Museums or the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

### **The Costs of Disposal**

The cost of disposing of this model would be minimal. There is no grant aid or funding to be repaid.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The disposal of this type of material is indicated in the Collection Development Strategy under section 2.15.4. This object lacks relevance to the RCAGM and its current activities which are based around its 'Core Offer'. While the RCAGM holds maritime related material, it is primarily art or souvenir related or embedded within and integral to wider collections of ethnographic artefacts. This model stands alone and does not relate to the 'Core Offer'.

It hard to see how it would ever been displayed in the RCAGM or as part of its public programme. Future maritime exhibitions held by the RCAGM would be focused on art rather than models such as this. Such an object is much better in the hands of an organisation specifically interested in and dedicated to maritime history. The disposal of this item would also free up much needed storage space.

Although this object is a loan to the RCAGM there has been no contact with the lender, who must have been deceased for some considerable time, or his family.

Therefore, this report recommends that this model is disposed of, ideally by transfer, to the Royal Museums Greenwich or to Portsmouth City Museums or the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

If none of these institutions are not interested, then sector best practice and the RCAGM's own procedures mandate that all disposals should be advertised to the wider museum community via the Museums Association's website and the Museums Journal. This will allow any museum or public collection to express an interest.

Transfer to another collection holding institution would mean that the item remains in the public domain should any members of the lender's family ever come forward.

Duncan Walker - Curator, RCAGM

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Images







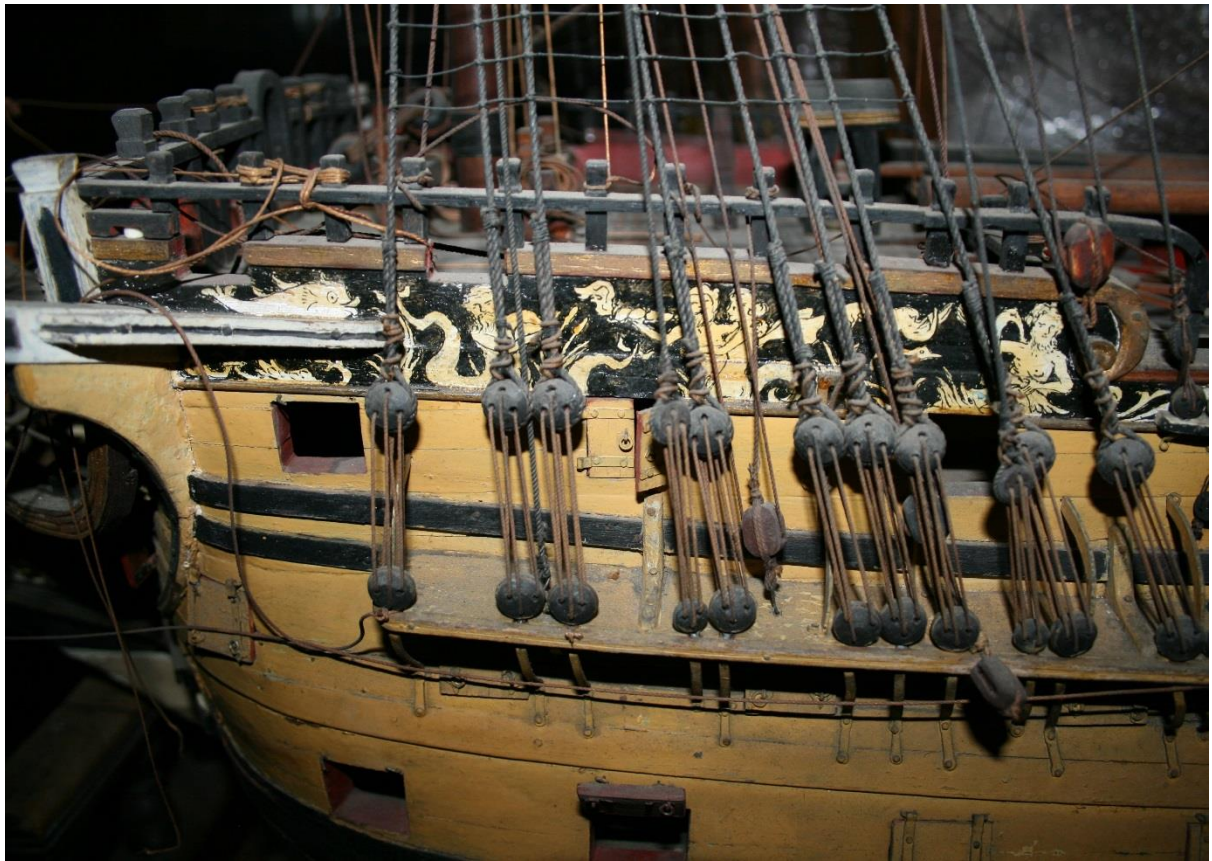






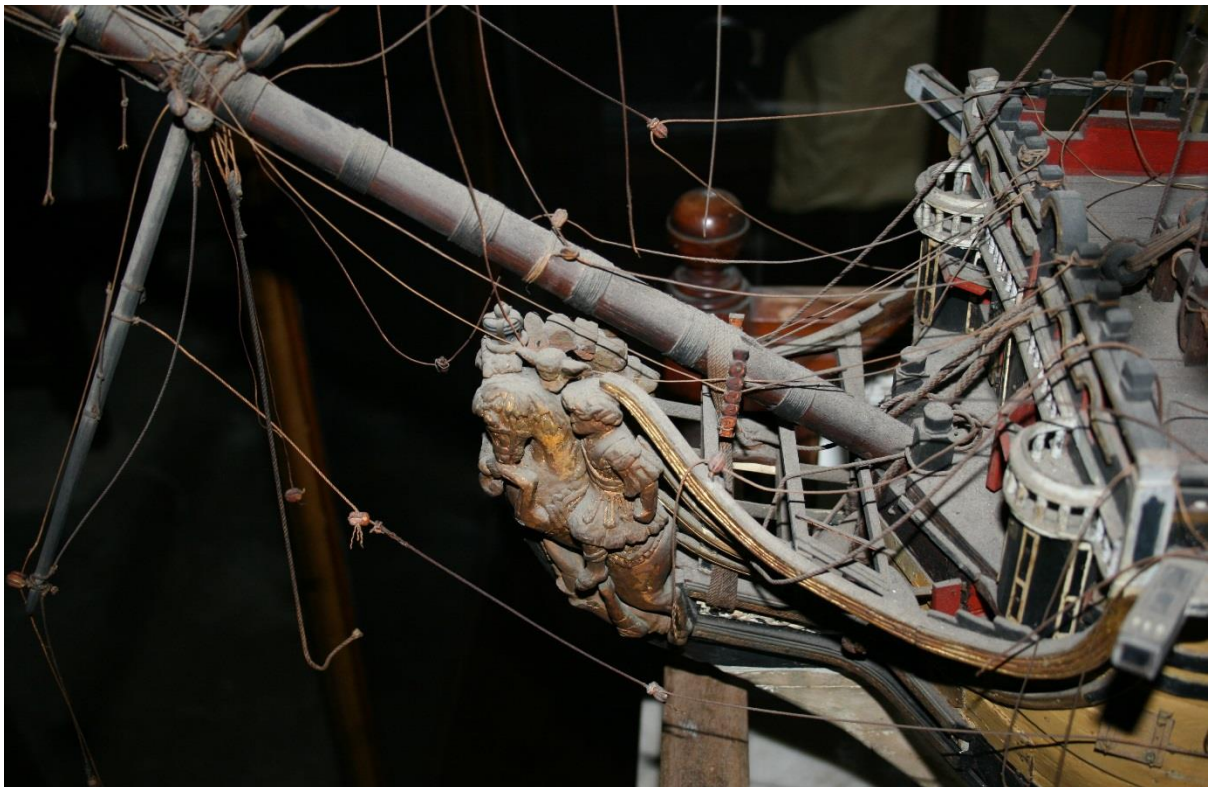
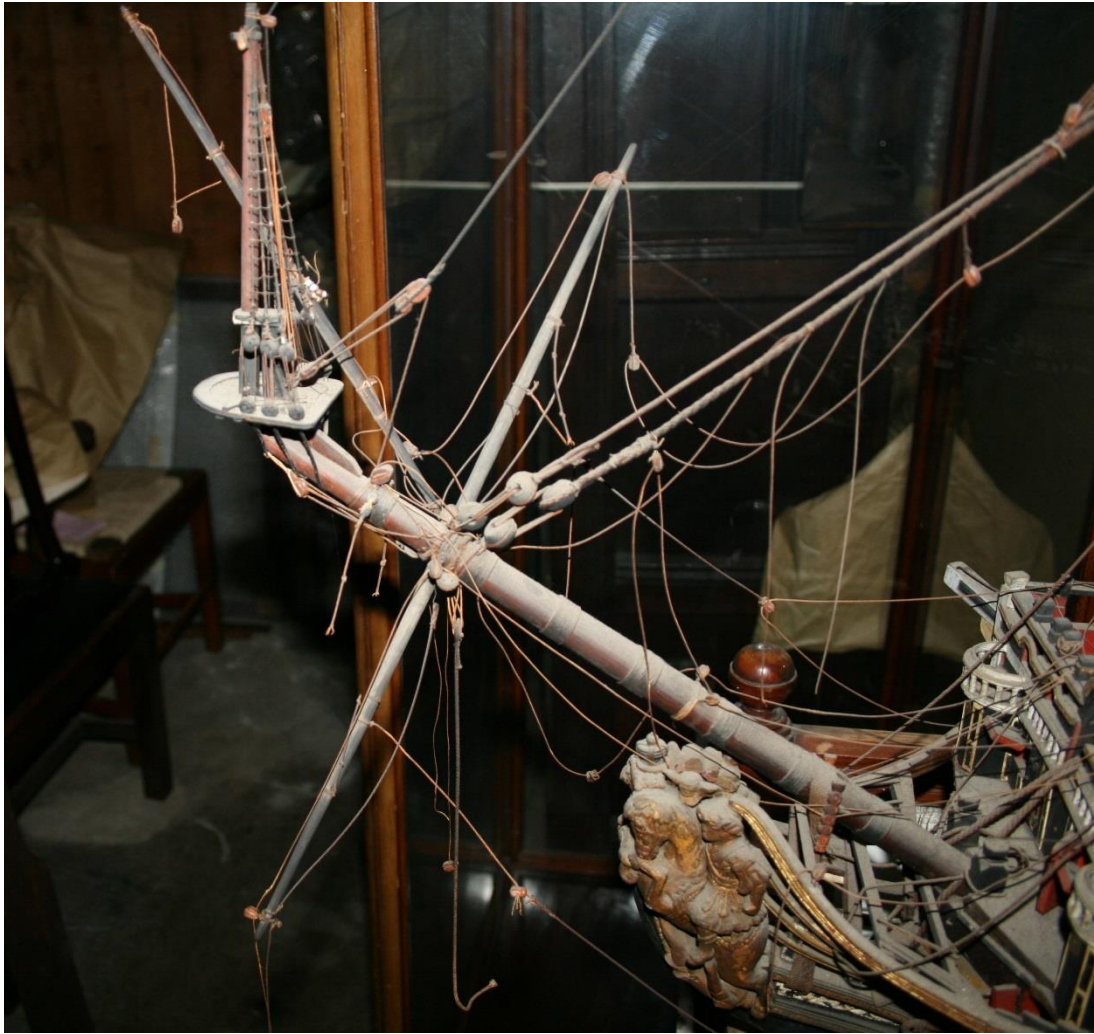














## **Appendix 2 - The RCAGM Statement of Purposes - Our Core Offer**

Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum is an outstanding celebration of late-Victorian art collectors; their passions and achievements; how they lived and encountered the world; and how they presented their collections to enrich the lives of others.

We are entrusted to present the Russell-Cotes' personal vision and legacy in the most authentic way possible, and to enable learning, enjoyment and access to the house and collections for residents and visitors to Bournemouth.

The 'core offer' is focused on the historic building, East Cliff Hall, its stunning seafront setting, and its internationally-known collections, which attract and astound visitors. However, this is only part of the offer. In addition to the original house, we also have four art galleries added in the early 1900s. We will use this offer to:

1. Explain the story of the Russell-Cotes, the Victorian/Edwardian house and world cultures/art collections, putting it into local, national and international context
2. Encourage use of the galleries, collections, and unique energy and atmosphere of the house to inspire great art, and to stimulate creativity and curiosity
3. Explore aspects of the human condition, which were recognised by the Victorian innovators, philanthropists and social reformers, and which matter to communities today.

Finally, the spaces available at Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum are not the exclusive domain of the Victorians. We are developing a vibrant cultural programme which, while rooted in the era of our founders, will be a stage for wider participation and engagement. We will continue in the spirit of two of Bournemouth's most forward-thinking citizens by striving to make a significant contribution to the development of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum as a cultural flagship for Bournemouth. (MBTS, 2012)

We want our art gallery and museum to do what the very best galleries and museums do: to be spaces where the past, present and future come together in an irresistible mix of life, culture and heritage - a place where everyone can feel at home with a world of art.

## Appendix 3 - RCAGM Bulletin References

See overleaf