

Interpretation Brief for the Nautical Museum Project

Aims for the Nautical Museum Exhibition:

- The Isle of Man has the world's oldest yacht (1789) Peggy – and we will return her to her home in Castletown at the Nautical Museum.
- The Peggy and her story will sit at the heart of an immersive and engaging visitor experience which will bring to life the Island's international maritime story for diverse audiences.
- Our museum collections will explore pivotal stories of this Island nation and its people in the eighteenth century.
- We will respect the historic authenticity and atmosphere of the Nautical Museum site, our collections and their stories.

Overview:

The Nautical Museum and the legacy of the Quayle family presents the opportunity to explore the Isle of Man in the 18th and early 19th century. We will place the Peggy into the context of the time she was constructed, a turbulent and fascinating period both from a local and international perspective.

Our narrative has a universal and authentic appeal drawn from our historic collections and the extraordinary Quayle Bridge House Papers. We will tell stories of power, politics, innovation and a cosmopolitan Island amidst a changing world. We will explore the Island's active role in the transatlantic slave trade, as well as its legacy and we will pursue, reveal and celebrate both male and female stories.

Audience:

Manx National Heritage serves a diverse audience. As well as the local population, schools and community groups, we attract tourists for at least eight months of the year. The Nautical Museum (prior to the removal of Peggy in 2015) attracted average annual visitor figures of 6,000, and appealed to those interested in general nautical and maritime history as well as the stories and mysteries told by guides concerning Peggy and her owner George Quayle. It is a small and complex site and the interpretation will need to flex with its

surroundings, some of which are of historic significance, while at the same delivering an intriguing narrative for the visitor.

Our aims for visitor engagement include:

- Engender a sense of local pride in Manx heritage and identity
- Delight nautical enthusiasts
- Engage those with non-maritime interests in stories about people and Manx society

The Nautical Museum will engage, educate and delight a wide range of audiences and we would like to ensure that our multi-generational family audiences, especially those with younger children, are considered.

We would expect to see proposals for a range of interpretative tools – from text panels, to animating historic collections, guides, audio and film, together with innovative solutions to the difficulties presented by the nature of the historic site. Theatrical methods of display and interpretation for dramatic impact are welcome as we seek to find the most effective methods for telling a wide range of stories including the complex technology of the boat house, dock and the Peggy to a non-specialist audience.

Key Themes and Messages:

Theme 1: The 18th Century – The Isle of Man on the World Stage

Theme 2: The 18th Century in The Isle of Man

Theme 3: George Quayle and his Family

Theme 4: The Peggy

Theme 5: The Historic Site

THEME 1: The 18th Century - The Isle of Man on the World Stage

International Trade and Politics

Across the world the 18th century was defined by political intrigue, war, international trade, the advancement of science and communications and enlightenment ideals. It saw the rapid growth of European colonies in the Americas and Caribbean; an escalation of the transatlantic slave trade and the birth of the abolition movement; and the growth in British colonial influence. European economies were fuelled by commodities such as sugar, tobacco and rum, carried by ships over great distances.

As a maritime nation the Isle of Man was intimately connected to all aspects of international trade, and huge fortunes could be made. The Island benefitted economically but was also threatened by international political and military challenges. These included the American War of Independence, the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars.

Key Messages

- The Isle of Man was an outward looking nation who traded all over the world. Manx owned ships and Manx mariners travelled great distances to service the colonies. Huge fortunes were made by some.
- Manx people were involved in all aspects of the transatlantic slave trade and the Island profited from the trade. Manx money was invested in the slave trade and plantation economy; Manx mariners were aboard and in command of the ships; Manx families owned land in the colonies and Manx herring fed the crews. The last slaving ship to sail from Liverpool was the Kitty's Amelia under the command of Manx captain, Hugh Crow (1807).
- The Isle of Man was a maritime nation and Manxmen were highly prized sailors. Many were pressed into the Royal Navy and fought in the Napoleonic Wars.
- Manx mariners had many worldwide adventures. Manx men were the main protagonists in the famous mutiny on the *HMS Bounty* (1789); and a Manx man sailed Nelson's *Victory* into battle at Trafalgar (1805).

- The Isle of Man felt threatened by the wars in Europe and feared an invasion. The Manx Fencibles were raised in response with harbour defences strengthened.

Potential Content:



Coconut shell sugar bowl, representing two products of the West Indies.(1954-3387)



The Brig Caesar, belonging to J.J.Bacon and traded with West Indies. (1954-3539). Framed watercolour. Light sensitive.



Sundial from Ballamoore showing time in Jamaica plantation of Sir George Moore (1954-1418).



Manx Fencibles Belt Plate (L21785)

Theme 2: The 18th Century in the Isle of Man

Politics, Economy & Society

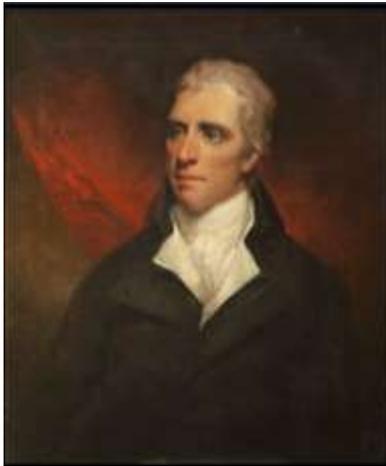
The early years of the 18th century were both exciting and turbulent for the Isle of Man domestically. Still governed as a private domain under the Earls of Derby and then the Dukes of Atholl, the Island was able to set lower tax rates than the UK for imported freight. This was exploited with goods legally landed on the Isle of Man then smuggled covertly to customers around the Irish Seaboard. This was known as the 'running trade' and was extremely lucrative. Many prominent Manx families were involved in the trade. Growing pressure ultimately led to the Revestment Act of 1765 which took control of the Island away from the Dukes of Atholl and returned it to Westminster.

A period of austerity followed, but the transatlantic slave trade and the expansion of Britain's colonial influence brought further wealth and prosperity to the Island. Much of the development of the towns of Castletown, Douglas and Peel has its origins in this period.

Key Messages:

- Smuggling (the Running Trade) was central to the Manx economy and dominated Island life from 1705-1765. The Manx community benefitted significantly.
- The Manx Parliament, Tynwald was a self-elected clique of powerful families. Their influence was strengthened through inter-connected marriages. This included the Quayles of Castletown.
- The towns of Castletown, Douglas and Peel developed and grew. Castletown was the capital. It was a place of style and elegance. English was now the dominant language for the wealthy and ruling classes.
- The Isle of Man was cosmopolitan, with people from all over the world living, working and visiting the Island. Beautiful exotic goods were readily available to the wealthy. The merchant and middle classes grew in prominence.
- Many ordinary Manx people still lived in poverty. Petty crimes committed by the 'lower classes' were harshly punished. For some this meant transportation to the colonies or even execution. The native language (Manx Gaelic) was suppressed. Many sought comfort in the new Methodist movement.

Potential Content:



John Christian Curwen MP and MHK - a member of the powerful families ruling elite. (1982-0047)



Sir Thomas Durie - wealthy Manx merchant (1956-0403). Framed oil on canvas.



Miss Christian Taubman (later Mrs Cunninghame) – by George Romney. (1973-0072)



Silk dress as worn by Alice Curphy, 1740 (L21305)

THEME 3: George Quayle and His Family

Networks, Wealth & Military Might

The Quayles of Bridge House Castletown were one of the most wealthy and influential Manx families of the 18th century. They belonged to a network of powerful Manx clans, interconnected by marriage. Much of the family wealth derived from smuggling prior to 1765 and latterly indirectly from the plantation economy of the West Indies. George Quayle was a prominent Manxman, politician, banker, soldier and inventor during the Napoleonic Wars and at the height of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. He lived in Castletown in the Isle of Man from his birth in 1757 to his death in 1835.

George Quayle is arguably the best documented Manx person of the 18th Century. The Quayle Bridge House Papers shed light on his whole life, covering his formative experiences, character, accomplishments, innovations, travels and familial relationships. The eldest child of thirteen, he was fluent in Italian, played a musical instrument, was fond of wordplay and sketching and to his siblings had a peculiar manner of speech. His records also cover the Manx Fencibles; and banking accounts from the Isle of Man Bank Company (known as Quayle's Bank) which operated from Bridge House.

Key Messages:

- The family were wealthy and influential. Grandfather Sir George Moore was Speaker of the House of Keys and father John Quayle, was Clerk of Rolls. He was a rich man as a result of his position.
- George Quayle and his brothers served in the armed forces during the Napoleonic Wars. George raised Dragoons at his own expense as a result of the perceived threat of invasion from the French.
- Sir George Moore had profited from the running trade prior to 1765, whilst George Quayle worked in a counting house in Smyrna at the age of 21 and later worked in London. George Quayle opened one of the earliest banks on IOM and the banking business was intricately linked to the legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
- George Quayle lived the life of a wealthy gentleman, mixing with social elites and becoming an MHK through social contacts, not through democratic means
- George Quayle was eccentric, and was fascinated by technology and invention. This aspect of his character appears repeatedly in various areas of his life.

Potential Content:



Miniature of Sir George Moore (2018-0015)



Silk slippers Margaret Quayle (L21778)



Fire screen of Lady Moore (1973-0146)



Chair from Bridge House (1954-5713)



Helmet (2004-0062)



Uniform Gorget (1954-6366)



Quayle's Telescope (1954-7101)



Quayle Banknote (1969-0008)

THEME 4: The Peggy

The Peggy is one of the world's oldest surviving boats. Locally built in 1789, with an accompanying dock and boathouse, she sailed in Castletown bay and beyond.

The Nautical Museum will present The Peggy, fully rigged. It will explain, to our diverse audience, her significance to George Quayle and to maritime history.

In her design and manufacture, and in her worn paintwork and timbers, The Peggy conjures a time when all Manx people relied upon the sea.

Key Messages:

- The Peggy was originally built for speed. Her design incorporated all the latest innovations from Britain and North America. She represents crucial and unique evidence from a lost age of sail.
- She was locally built using centuries-old traditional crafts. The traces of the hand tools used to make her are clearly visible. The materials used to make her came from far afield.
- Peggy was remodelled in 1802. She could therefore be said to be not one, but two of the oldest surviving boats in the world.
- Recent conservation work has transformed our understanding of The Peggy and her story.
- By reconstructing her rig we can recreate the impact of seeing her under sail and appreciate her properly for the first time.
- The lost art of sailing small boats once was as normal to people on this Island as breathing air.

Theme 5: The Historic Site

The Bridge House complex of buildings was acquired and developed by George Quayle during his career in politics and business on the Isle of Man, 1789-1815. Adjacent to the grand family house are stables and sties, a coach house and yard, a stone-built banking safe, and the boat house and dock built for The Peggy. Each building illustrates an aspect of George Quayle's activities and interests and, in turn, the preoccupations of the day.

Key Messages:

- The architecture of the Bridge House complex preserves a rare and authentic 18th century ambience. Interpretation will be 'light-touch'.
- The character and interests of George Quayle are best represented by the Cabin Room and boat cellar – a small suite of significant and eccentric period rooms. Their décor was chosen carefully to match that of The Peggy. The cellar provides the only clear view of the dock and the arch & gateway on to Castletown harbour.
- The buildings are part of the 18th century harbour. The dock adjoining the boat house is a marvel in miniature and retains the archaeological remains of Quayle's ingenious dock gates. It directly connects the complex to the sea in an obvious and tangible way.
- The Peggy in context. The yard, stables and coach house provide the backdrop for the display of the Peggy. The stables are perhaps the buildings that had been most altered during the 19th century and these might be suitable to conversion to modern use.
- The periphery - Bridge House is in private hands and while it will remain inaccessible to visitors to the Nautical Museum, they should be afforded some idea of its original aspect, design and décor. Quayle's Bank safe stands in the yard and against the side of Bridge House. It contains an intricate and eccentric locking mechanism. The structure is not physically accessible but its design and operation should be interpreted for visitors.



Period cabin room



Nautical Cog found in dock



Remains of original gate in the dock



Coconuts found in dock (2014-0013/2&3)

Note on Collections:

Many of our historic collections are extremely sensitive to light, heat and humidity – and include artworks (both oil and watercolour paintings); textiles (including silks, leather and woollens); metal (including military items and medals); wood and organic material (including coconut shells); and ceramic materials.

Consideration will need to be given to appropriate display and environmental conditions, including appropriate display cases and lighting. A full conservation audit on the items to be exhibited will need to be undertaken by Manx National Heritage.