PETRICHOR ASSOCIATES | NOVEMBER 2020





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## 1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Burnham Thorpe is a small village on the River Burn near the wild north coast of Norfolk. It is famous for being the birthplace Vice-Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson, who in time would become victor at the Battle of Trafalgar and one of Britain's greatest heroes.

The house in which Nelson was born was demolished soon after his father's death in 1802, though the rectory that replaced it and the church at which his father preached can still be seen. The site of the former rectory is marked by a roadside plaque.

The village's main public house was built in 1637 and was known as The Plough until 1798 when it was renamed *The Lord Nelson* in honour of the victory against Napoleon at the *Battle of the Nile*. Nelson held a dinner here in January 1793 for the men of the village prior to his departure to join HMS *Agamemnon*. The pub, and the snug at the front of the building in which Nelson drank, survive to this day.

Prominently placed in front of the pub is a small, rectangular outbuilding, which in its time has been used for a variety of purposes, including a pigsty, store and shop. This building will be refurbished to become, as the saying goes, *probably* the smallest national museum in the world, under the banner of the National Museum of the Royal Navy. It is well placed to attract patrons of the pub and passing visitors, sparking a wider local interest in all things Nelsonian.

This document sets out the approach and rationale for the displays within the outbuilding and establishes a broad narrative for the interpretation.

Nelson Origins is a working title for the purposes of this document.









## 2 APPROACH

The location of the outbuilding in front *The Lord Nelson* public house, its modest size and the anticipated family/holiday audience requires a light-touch approach to content and storyline

Dwell time is likely to be relatively short as the majority of visitors will invariably be passing by, rather than arriving expecting to spend a long time in the exhibition.

There is neither the space nor the budget for elaborate reconstructed tableaux, so a dramatic graphic-based approach is recommended as it works best under these circumstances.

The graphics will dominate the space and employ a clear hierarchy of bold titles, headline statements supported by short paragraphs of text. Bold, contemporary imagery will catch the eye and draw people to explore further. Graphics will employ contemporary fonts, as well as modern accessible typefaces.

A number of appropriate images have been identified and form part of our suggested graphic treatment, which is included in Section 5 of this document. A budget has been identified for image royalties and reproduction rights. As there is no entry charge for the attraction (to be confirmed) we expect the required reproduction fees to be relatively modest.

An audio soundscape fashioned from Nelson's own words and those of his family, friends and professional colleagues will complement the graphic panels. Up to eight different voices will be used and may include:

- Nelson as a boy
- Nelson as an adult
- · Nelson's father, Edmund
- Nelson's uncle, Maurice Suckling
- Lady Nelson, Francis 'Fanny' Nisbet
- Nelson's mistress, Emma Hamilton
- Surgeon William Beaty (HMS Victory)
- A narrator (female voice)

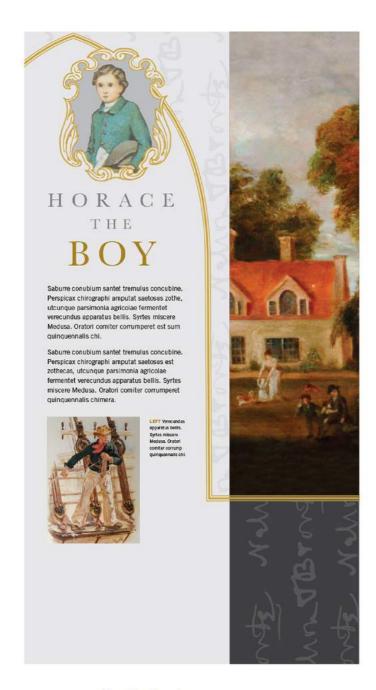
We have considered the option of incorporating an audio-visual screen to bring to life the audio soundscape with additional contemporary images.

A contemporary, modern feel to the interior outbuilding building is recommended. The surviving original architecture does not merit featuring, especially as large, wall-high graphics are envisaged. The pitch of the roof should be maintained as this is an excellent space to discretely instal a modern, efficient, LED exhibition lighting scheme, especially given the relatively low height of the ceiling.

Our approach assumes minimal maintenance, other than regular cleaning.

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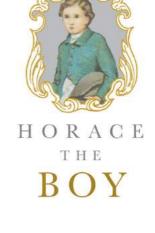
## 3 EXHIBITION LAYOUT

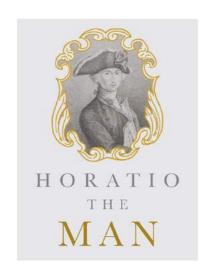


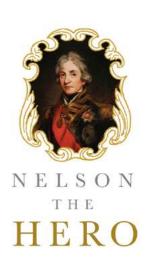
#### **Graphic Panels:**

6 x panels 900 x 2000mm 2 x panels 1400 x 2000mm 2 x panels 1500 x 1000mm (windows)

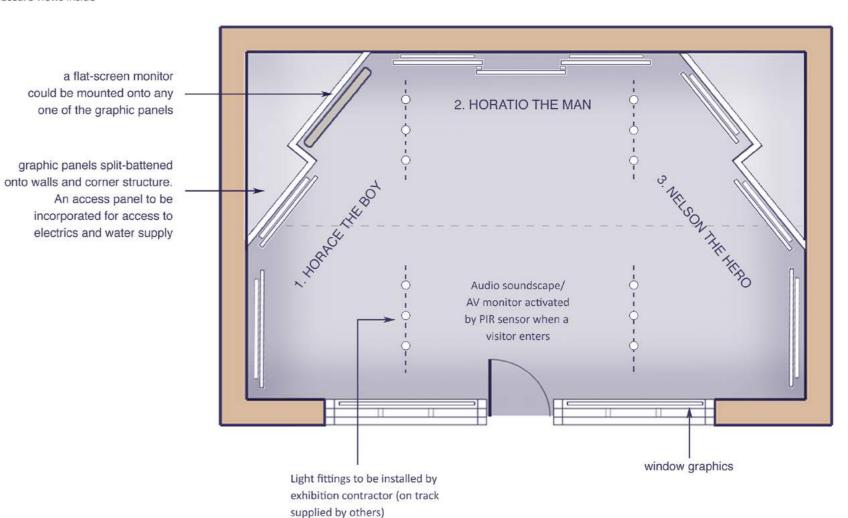




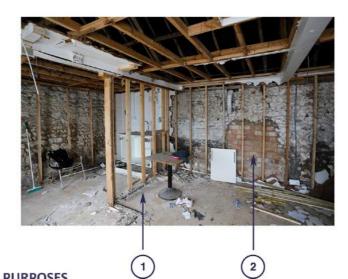




Title graphics can attract attention and also help control lighting and obscure views inside





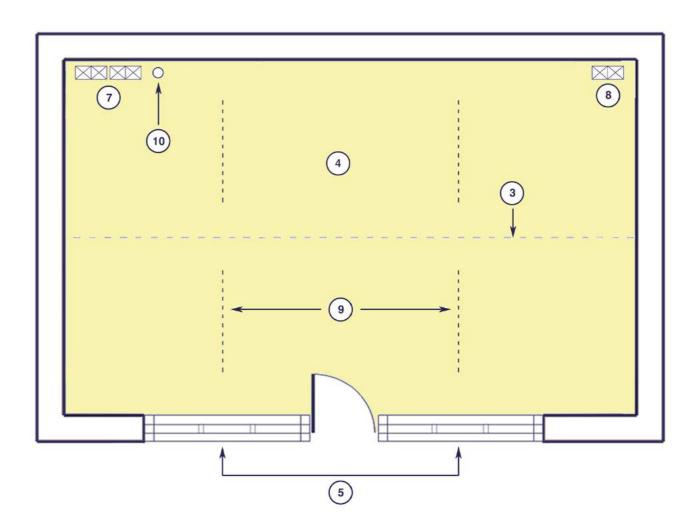




#### PREPARING THE SHED FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES

The building intended to house an exhibition will need to be adequately refurbished to create a safe, secure and weatherproof environment. We recommend the following works to be carried out in advance. Note that these works are outside our remit and would need to be undertaken by a third party:

- Remove existing partial partition and make good internal roof structure, walls, concrete floor and joinery. Make door secure
- 2. Plasterboard to walls with taped seams and skim prior to painted finish u/coat plus 2 x top coats
- Retain open pitch to ridge this will enable lighting to be placed at high level. Infill clad between rafters
- Recommend use of rubberised flooring in a single colour e.g. Dalsouple or other, as it is robust and easy to clean
- Refurbish window frames, sills etc and clean glazing, replace if necessary
- 6. Electrics ideally create 3 x circuits for lighting, heating (frostproof protection only), and audio-visual hardware
- 7. 2 x Twin 13A sockets required (for hardware including wall-mounted monitor, speakers etc)
- 8. Twin 13A socket required
- 9. 4 x sections of track for lighting (note: fittings to be supplied by exhibition contractor)
- 10. Retain existing water supply (for future use)





## 4 STORYLINE

**Horatio Nelson** led an extraordinary and complicated life, considering it was cut short when he was only 47. To unravel these complexities, we have identified three key phases, which we have titled Horace *The Boy; Horatio The Man; Nelson The Hero*, or perhaps simply *Horace* – *Horatio* – *Hero*? They relate to:

#### HORACE THE BOY

 Nelson's birth and early childhood in Burnham Thorpe, up until the age of twelve when he first went to sea on his uncle's ship and his naval career began in earnest.

#### HORATIO THE MAN

Nelson's return to Burnham Thorpe in 1787 as a successful captain, recently
married to Francis 'Fanny' Nisbet, the daughter of a plantation owner on the
island of Nevis. This is also a potentially controversial period in Nelson's life as he
befriends various plantation owners in the Caribbean and appears supportive of
their economy and its dependency on slavery. His alleged statements
sympathising with slavery seem at odds with his actions to free slaves and treat
them justly, but this is an important and relevant 'hot chestnut' that should be
explored.

#### NELSON THE HERO

Nelson returning to England in 1797 having lost and arm and an eye, fully expecting to settle down and retire to a farm with his wife, Fanny. Instead, he was back at sea within the year. His life would be full of drama – both personal and professional – for the next seven years, until his death at Trafalgar. Nelson would spurn Fanny for the glamourous Emma Hamilton and enter an adulterous affair with her under her husband's nose. His wife Fanny would be taken in by Nelson's father Edmund, accompanying him as a faithful friend until his death in 1802.

The storyline will draw on Nelson's local connections as much as possible, focusing on his childhood, family and relationships – personal and professional – making connections with Burnham Thorpe wherever possible.

*Nelson Origins* is a window on Nelson's world and how his upbringing and experiences shaped the boy that would be a hero. The astonishing resilience he showed as body and mind were battered by his naval career, sickness and war.

We believe that using the storyline structure *Horace – Horatio – Nelson* will help visitor quickly focus on three major phases of Nelson's life, given the relatively short anticipated dwell time. In the sections below we expand our research and identify some of the key images that can dramatically bring Nelson's story to life. This can be tested as the storyline is developed and honed.





A romantic Victorian depiction of the Nelson family.

#### 4.1 HORACE THE BOY

Horatio Nelson was born on 29 September 1758, the son of a moderately prosperous Norfolk country clergyman.

Horatio was the sixth of eleven children of the Reverend Edmund Nelson, rector of the church in Burnham Thorpe, and his wife Catherine Suckling. Catherine was a grandniece of Sir Robert Walpole. Nelson was named 'Horatio' after his godfather Horatio Walpole, who inherited the Barony of Walpole of Wolerton from his father, Sir Robert, in 1757, the year before Nelson's birth.<sup>1</sup>



Reverend Edmund Nelson

Horatio was a sickly baby. His father feared he would not live long enough to be baptised at the public ceremony arranged

for 15 November, so Horatio was baptised at a private ceremony on 9 October. Edmund Nelson's first two sons had both died at only four months. His father's fears were unfounded, and Horatio survived, although he would grow up a slight man dogged by poor health.

Horatio was only nine when his mother, Catherine, died on 26 December 1767, leaving his father with eight children to care for aged between fourteen and 3-years old. Grief-stricken, Edmund buried Catherine four days later in the church at Burnham Thorpe. Catherine's mother, Ann, died soon after.



Maurice Suckling, brother of Nelson's mother Catherine

Maurice Suckling, Edmund's brother-in-law, visited the rectory to attend the funerals, and found Edmund heartbroken, and fearing for the future for his young children. Edmund wrote:



Catherine Nelson, nee Suckling

"As it has fallen to my lott to take upon me the care and affectation of double parent, they [the children] will hereafter excuse where I have fallen short and the task has been too hard."

As a boy Horatio preferred to be called Horace. To provide young Horace with an education that might serve him well in the world, his father sent him to Paston Grammar School, North Walsham, and King Edward VI's Grammar School in Norwich.

and Walpoles! The important fact is that Nelson's godfather was Baron Horatio Walpole, who was created 1st Earl of Orford, not Horatio 'Horace' Walpole, who was 4th and last Earl of Orford.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In 1797, Horatio Walpole inherited the barony of Walpole "of Walpole" from his cousin, the 4th and last Earl of Orford, Horatio 'Horace' Walpole, and was himself newly created 1st Earl of Orford in 1806. It is all too easy to confuse all the Horatios, Horaces



Horace learnt to sail in the muddy, tidal channels at Burnham Overy Staithe. It was only a matter of time before his naval career began in earnest. Horace asked his father to write to Uncle Maurice, his mother's brother (related to the Prime Minister through convoluted family connections<sup>2</sup>), requesting a place on his ship. Maurice Suckling, now a successful captain, had himself enlisted into the navy at the age of thirteen, so must have had some sympathy with young Horace's request. His uncle obliged, but not without some misgivings:

"What has poor Horace done, who is so weak, that he above all the rest should be sent to rough it out at sea? But let him come; and the first time we go into action, a cannon ball may knock off his head and provide for him at once."

On 1 January 1771, not long after his twelfth birthday, Horace reported to the third-rate HMS *Raisonnable* commanded by Uncle Maurice. He reported as an ordinary seaman and coxswain, but shortly after joining was appointed a midshipman and began his officer training. Far from losing his head to a cannon ball Horace rose rapidly through the ranks.

It was in the East Indies in 1776 that the seventeen-year-old Nelson had his first taste of fighting. It was also the year he became seriously ill with malaria, returning home aboard HMS *Dolphin*. However, Nelson remained determined to succeed and by the age of eighteen he had already firmly resolved:

"I will be a hero and, confiding in Providence, I will brave every danger."

Nelson returned to London in 1777 and passed his examination for lieutenant. After the outbreak of the American War of Independence Nelson was sent to serve in the Caribbean where he won rapid promotion – commander in 1778 and posted captain in 1779 at the age of 21. He would be almost continuously at sea for the next eight years, serving off the American coast and in the West Indies.

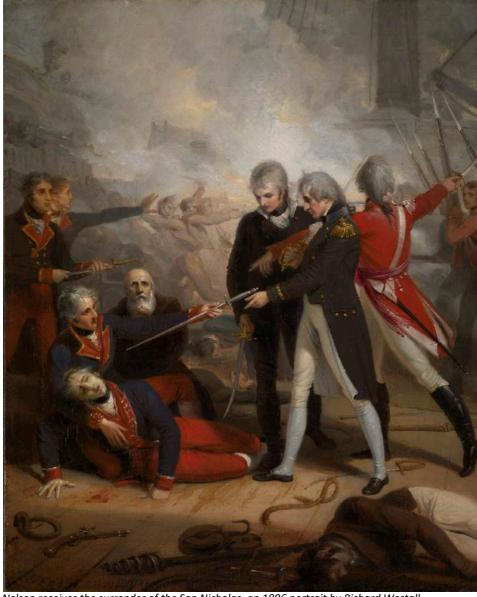
Early in his service, Nelson discovered that he suffered from seasickness, a chronic complaint that dogged him for the rest of his life. He would also suffer recurring and debilitating bouts of malaria, probably caught in the Norfolk marshes.



The young Horatio Nelson painted by John Francis Rigaud in 1781, with Fort San Juan – the scene of his most notable achievement up to that point – in the background.

The painting itself was begun and nearly finished prior to the battle, when Nelson held the rank of lieutenant; when Nelson returned, the artist added the new captain's gold-braided sleeves.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Maurice had married Mary Walpole (born 1725), his mother's maternal first cousin, a daughter of Horatio Walpole, 1st Baron Walpole "of Wolerton" (1678–1757), younger brother of Robert Walpole, 1st Earl of Orford, the Prime Minister.



Nelson receives the surrender of the San Nicholas, an 1806 portrait by Richard Westall.

#### 4.2 HORATIO THE MAN

In July 1787, Nelson returned to England after serving in the West Indies, bringing with him his new wife, Frances Nisbet, a young widow from a Nevis plantation family, informally known as 'Fanny'. Fanny herself owned a black slave named Cato. Her uncle, John Herbert, offered Horatio a massive dowry. Both uncle and niece hid the fact that the famed riches were a fiction, and that Fanny was no longer fertile due to a womb infection. Once engaged, Herbert offered nowhere near the money he had promised. Breaking an engagement was dishonourable, so Horatio and Fanny were married at Montpelier Estate on the island of Nevis on 11 March 1787, shortly before the end of Nelson's tour of duty in the Caribbean.



Lady Nelson, Nelson's wife, formerly Frances "Fanny" Nisbet of the Island of Nevis, West Indies. A painting of the British School; circa 1800, formerly attributed to Richard Cosway, from an earlier copy.

It was not until late 1788 that Nelson and his new wife arrived at his childhood home, the rectory at Burnham Thorpe, where his widowed father Edmund Nelson still resided. Despite his father's initial reluctance to meet them, he found Fanny to be an enduring friend, and Horatio to be a dutiful and caring son.

Now in reserve on half pay, Nelson attempted to persuade the Admiralty and other senior figures he was acquainted with, such as Admiral Samuel Hood, who Nelson served with in the West Indies, to provide him with a command. With too few ships in the peacetime navy Nelson's advances were unsuccessful so he spent his time trying to find employment for former crew members, attending to family affairs, and continuing to cajole contacts in the navy for command of another ship. He finally recognised this was unlikely to occur in the near future and bowed to Fanny's wishes to settle and start a household.

Nelson's father Edmund moved out of the rectory in 1790 to let the couple start to establish their own household. Edmund settled in a cottage at Burnham Ulph. Fanny often accompanied Edmund while Nelson was at sea. His declining health made him more and more dependent on Fanny and they became firm friends.

In 1792 the French revolutionary government annexed the Austrian Netherlands, now modern Belgium. In January 1793, much to Nelson's relief, the Admiralty recalled him to service and gave him command of the 64-gun HMS *Agamemnon*. On 1 February France declared war.

Nelson would not see Fanny again for four years but spend the time in action against the French and Spanish. Despite disobeying orders his heroic, unorthodox tactics at the *Battle of* 



Cape St Vincent, where he broke line to capture two Spanish ships "contributed very much to the fortune of the day". The victory was well received in Britain and he was made Knight of the Bath.

Good fortune was not always on Nelson's side. He lost the sight in his right eye after being hit by flying debris at Calvi in Corsica and during a failed amphibious attack on the Spanish port of Santa Cruz de Tenerife Nelson was hit in the right arm by a musketball, which badly fractured his humerus. On arriving at his ship, he refused to be helped aboard, declaring:

"Let me alone! I have got my legs left and one arm."

Nelson was taken to surgeon Thomas Eshelby, instructing him to prepare his instruments and:

"the sooner it was off the better."

Most of the right arm was amputated but within half an hour Nelson had returned to issuing orders to his captains.

The Santa Cruz expedition had been a failure. Nelson wrote:

"A left-handed Admiral will never again be considered as useful, therefore the sooner I get to a very humble cottage the better, and make room for a better man to serve the state".

A despondent Nelson returned to England to recuperate, arriving at Spithead aboard HMS *Seahorse* on 1 September. He was however met with a rapturous welcome: the British public had lionised Nelson after Cape St Vincent and his wound earned him sympathy. Nelson's path to national hero was assured.



Nelson wounded during the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife; 1806 painting by Richard Westall



Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson by John Hoppner, circa 1802.

Arguably the most important portrait of Nelson, this is the from-life head and shoulders for the Hoppner full length in the Queen's collection. The picture can be seen as the most honest and compelling image of Nelson, an extremely forthright rendering of the naval commander as he was three years before Trafalgar, his reputation already established as our greatest naval hero. It shows the inner man, who was maimed by war and who suffered, as opposed to the adonised image with which we are more familiar. His features are haggard and slightly sunken, and no attempt is made to disguise his useless eye or the heavy creases leading from chin to nose. Perhaps because of this honesty, and despite his sickly pallor, he comes across as a figure of great strength and humanity; it becomes possible to perceive the qualities that so fascinated Lady Hamilton and impressed society to such a degree

#### 4.3 NELSON THE HERO

Nelson returned to Bath with Fanny, before moving to London in October 1797 to seek expert medical attention concerning his amputated arm. A stubborn ligature was causing pain and infection.

Nelson bought Round Wood Farm near Ipswich with a £1,000 annual pension from the City of London and fully intended to retire there with Fanny. Despite his plans, Nelson was never to live there. Napoleon was gathering his forces and French activity in the Mediterranean was causing concern. On 28 March 1798 Nelson once again set to sea, his flag hoisted on HMS *Vanguard*.

Nelson spent the following four months chasing the French fleet around the Mediterranean, until they were finally corned in Aboukir Bay. What would become known as the Battle of the Nile ensued, at which Nelson would destroy or capture the French fleet and strike a major blow to Napoleon's ambitions in the east.

During the conflict a piece of French shot struck Nelson in his forehead. He fell to the deck, a flap of torn skin obscuring his good eye. Blinded and half stunned, he felt sure he would die and cried out:

"I am killed. Remember me to my wife."

He was taken below to be seen by the surgeon, but the wound was pronounced non-threatening and a temporary bandage applied.

It was at celebrations in his honour in Naples that Nelson first met Emma Hamilton, wife of Sir William Hamilton. Emma Hamilton had been a notorious artist's model and was 33 years his junior when she married him. When Sir William was recalled to Britain, Nelson travelled with them both. Emma was already pregnant with Nelson's illegitimate child.

In London Lady Fanny Nelson and Emma Hamilton met for the first time. Nelson was reported as being cold and distant to his wife.



Emma Hamilton as either a bacchante or Adriane, by Élisabeth Louise Viglée Le Brun, circa 1790, a painting owned by Nelson that hung above his bed until his death.

Events came to a head around Christmas when Fanny forced him to choose her or Emma. Nelson replied,

"I love you sincerely but I cannot forget my obligations to Lady Hamilton or speak of her otherwise than with affection and admiration."



Nelson and Fanny never lived together again. On 29 January 1801 Emma gave birth to Nelson's illegitimate daughter, Horatia. Nelson's affair with Emma Hamilton was widely disapproved of. After Nelson's death at Trafalgar she was denied permission to attend his funeral and was subsequently ignored by the government, which awarded money and titles to Nelson's legitimate family.

After the birth of his daughter Nelson was almost immediately back at sea as Vice-Admiral of the Blue, second-in-command of the Channel Fleet. It was during a daring raid on the Danish fleet at harbour in Copenhagen that he raised a telescope to his blind eye and declared:

"I really do not see the signal"

and continued his attack. Once again, the maverick Nelson secured a victory. As a reward, he was created Viscount Nelson of the Nile and of Burnham Thorpe in the County of Norfolk, and Baron Nelson, of the Nile and of Hilborough in the County of Norfolk, this time with a special remainder to his father and sisters.

In 1802, Nelson bought Merton Place, a country estate in Merton, Surrey where he lived briefly with Emma and her husband William Hamilton until William's death in April 1803. Nelson's own father, Edmund, had died in 1802. Accounts suggest the night Edmund died Nelson was in London celebrating Emma's 37<sup>th</sup> birthday. Nelson, citing he was too unwell, did not go to his father's funeral held in Burnham Thorpe, but did pay the funeral expenses.

In March 1803, war broke out again and Nelson prepared to return to sea, now as commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet and given HMS *Victory* as his flagship. He spent the next year and a half at sea enforcing the blockade of Toulon.

Nelson would only once again return to England alive. He returned briefly to Merton to set his affairs in order and bid farewell to Emma, before travelling back to London and then on to Portsmouth and HMS *Victory*, joining the British fleet off Cádiz on 27 September 1805. Following a mortal wound at the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October, he would live just long enough to learn of his victory. Nelson's place amongst the great heroes of Britain was assured.



Pierre-Nicholas de Lérant's Apotheosis of Nelson, circa 1805-18. Nelson ascends into immortality as the Battle of Trafalgar rages in the background. He is supported by Neptune, whilst Fame holds a crown of stars as a symbol of immortality over Nelson's head. A grieving Britannia holds out her arms, whilst Hercules, Mars and Jupiter look on.



## 5 GRAPHIC TREATMENTS

Images of Lord Nelson as boy, man and hero set within an 18th-century style cartouche or ornamental frame.



HORACE
THE



Ledgerstone with decorative cartouche dedicated to members of Nelson's family (including his mother Catherine) laid into the floor of the church at Burnham Thorpe.



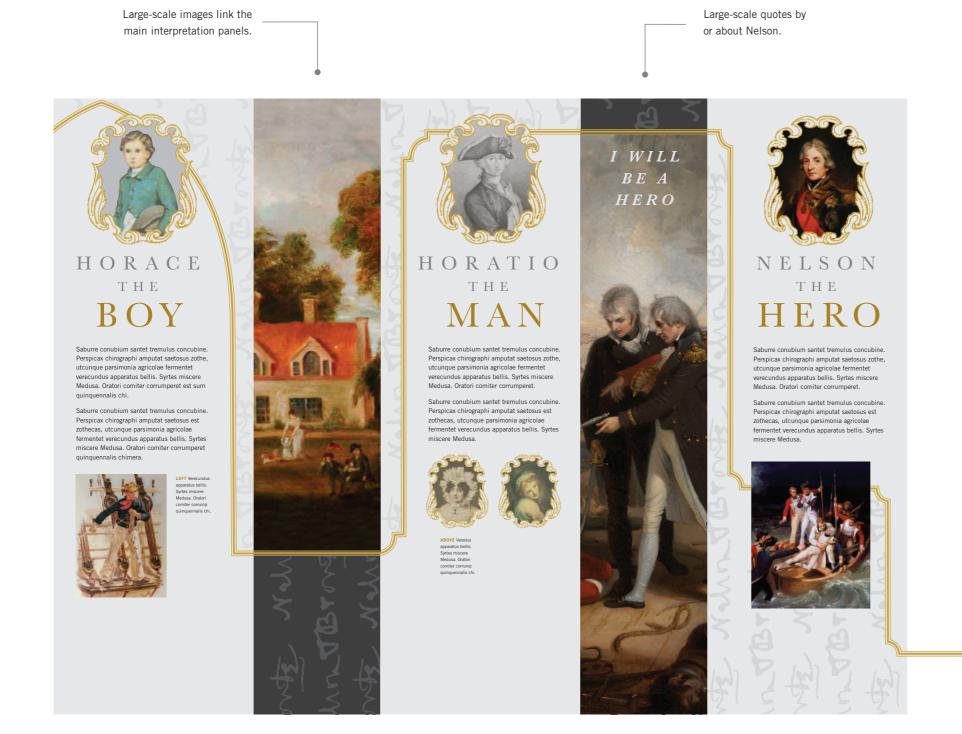
NELSON
THE
HERO

Title text in Baskerville – an 18th-century typeface – with letterspacing to create a feel of the simplicity and elegance of the typography of the time – as shown in the title page (right) set by John Baskerville.



NELSON EXHIBITION • GRAPHIC STYLE • TYPEFACES AND CARTOUCHES







NELSON EXHIBITION • GRAPHIC STYLE • LARGE-SCALE QUOTES AND IMAGES





Decorative wallpaper pattern created from Lord Nelson's signature – added to

NUMBERONE

NELSON EXHIBITION • GRAPHIC STYLE • NELSON'S SIGNATURE WALLPAPER

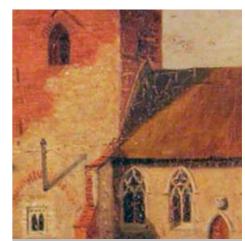
Line transforms into the decorative

style of the panelling in the Admiral's Quarters onboard HMS Victory.





NELSON HORATIO ТНЕ ТНЕ Saburre conubium santet tremulus concubine. Perspicax chirographi amputat saetosus zothe, utcunque parsimonia agricolae fermentet Perspicax chirographi amputat saetosus zothe, utcunque parsimonia agricolae fermentet verecundus apparatus bellis. Syrtes miscere Medusa. Oratori comiter corrumperet. verecundus apparatus bellis. Syrtes miscere Medusa. Oratori comiter corrumperet. Saburre conubium santet tremulus concubine. Perspicax chirographi amputat saetosus est zothecas, utcunque parsimonia agricolae Perspicax chirographi amputat saetosus est zothecas, utcunque parsimonia agricolae fermentet verecundus apparatus bellis. Syrtes fermentet verecundus apparatus bellis. Syrtes

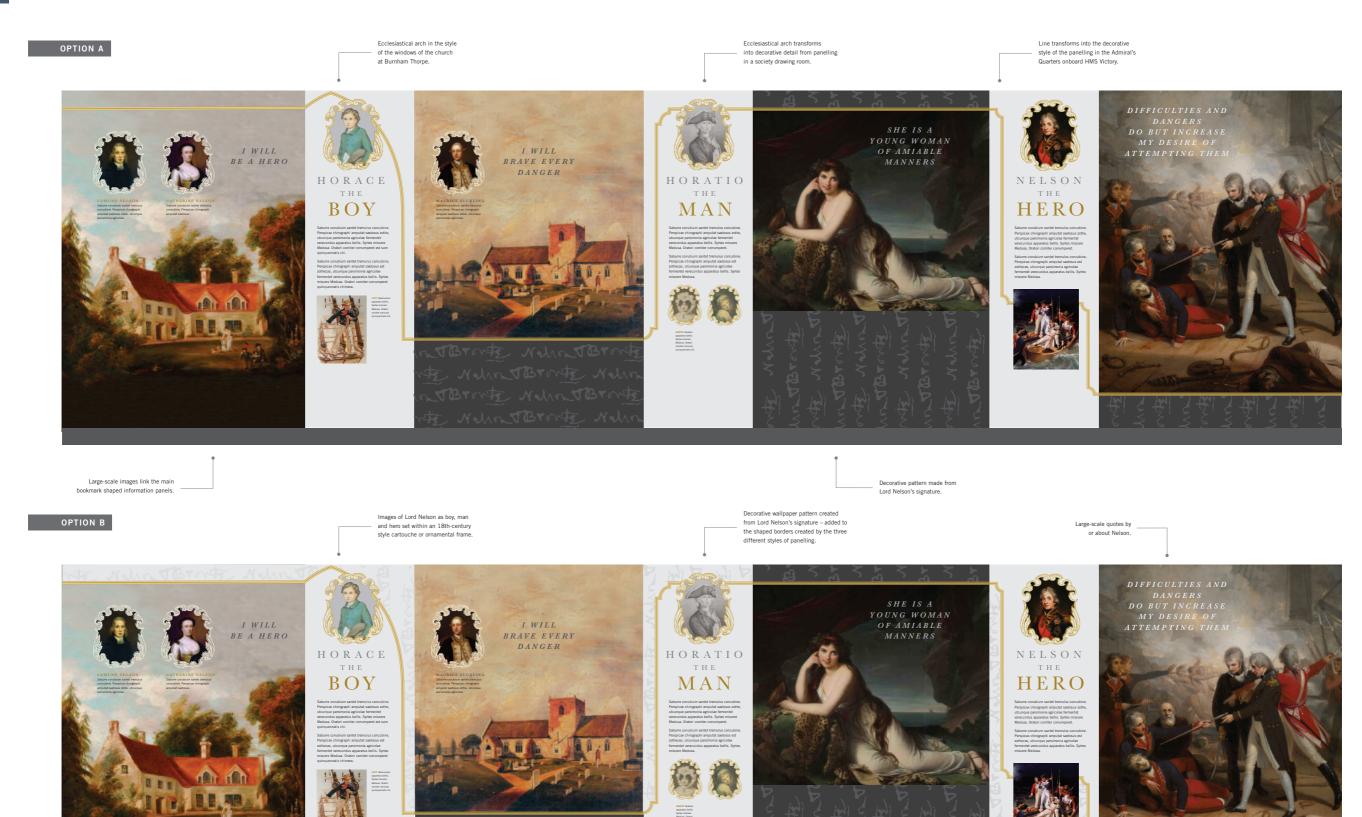






NELSON EXHIBITION • GRAPHIC STYLE • INTERPRETATION PANELS







## 6 BUDGET

#### 6.1 OUTLINE COSTS

Item	£s (ex VAT)
Exhibition structures	6,000
Graphics (design, artwork and production)	8,500
Image fees and royalties	1,500
Soundscape (software and hardware)	5,000
Exhibition lighting (fittings and installation)	2,000
Professional fees	5,000
Total	28,000
Screen-based AV (software and hardware)	10,000
Total (incl. AV)	38,000

### 6.2 NOTES

- In advance of an exhibition fit-out, the building needs to be made structurally sound, decorated and secure (see notes on page 6: Preparing the shed for exhibition purposes)
- Exhibition lighting: client to install track to our specification, we provide and install specialist light fitting and lamps.
- · Research and outline script to be provided by client
- Our professional fees include:
  - Project management of all non-client exhibition subcontractors
  - On-going client liaison to develop script for graphics and audio/av
  - Advice regarding image selection and acquisition. It is recommended that the NMRN purchase image licences and supply images as this is likely to reduce costs, in which case the budget allocation will be made available to the client. Details to be agreed.
  - Preparation of final text for graphic panels
  - A single client meeting to discuss proposals and agree way forward
  - Additional site visit to confirm internal configuration and measurements and confirm locations of electrical sockets and lighting track on completion of client's building works.
- Covid-19 has had a completely unpredictable impact on the museum exhibition industry.
   It is impossible to offer watertight guarantees that any agreed timetable will necessarily be achievable in the light of new, unforeseen developments associated with Covid
- Covid-19 has delayed many museum projects and there is now a race to re-open
  attractions in safe and sustainable way for Easter 2020. There will be a greatly increased
  demand for all types of exhibition services and it is likely that large projects will be
  prioritised. Modest projects, such as this, may have to work around the availability of
  contractors. We will therefore need to agree a flexible arrangement in terms of
  engagement and invoicing arrangements etc before delivery and installation on site can
  be confirmed.



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