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## **Creating Access For All:**

Guidance for Historic Vessels

Appendix 2: Mary Rose Museum

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Victoria Wallworth, 30 August 2018

[www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk](http://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk)

Access for All at the Mary Rose Museum: Decision  
making processes of implementing access solutions

## **Introduction: Philosophy and decision making**

The new Mary Rose Museum, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard opened in 2013. Its architects (Wilkinson Eyre) and the interior design team (Pringle Brandon Perkins + Will) were charged with delivering a fully accessible museum. Indeed, access was integral to the entire project from its inception. Focus groups representing different people with a range of additional needs advised from the start.

Further decision making regarding access was guided by considered response to feedback and evaluation.

This case study considers three aspects of access: (1) physical (2) intellectual (2) people and policies.

### **1. Physical access**

The Mary Rose Trust's inclusive approach to disability is exemplified by the tactile painting of the ship in the first gallery. Commissioned in 2006, the painting by Heather Bowring is designed to be enjoyed by sighted and non-sighted visitors alike. This inclusive approach is also demonstrated by the display cases, which reflect advice taken from specialist advisors regarding height, fonts, colours and text.

#### **1.1 Toilets and showers**

The museum has state-of-the-art features including three wheelchair friendly toilets, one with changing facilities, hoist and shower facilities which are available to the whole dockyard. Three further shower rooms are available in the museum including one with disabled access for staff or volunteers with particular special needs.

#### **1.2 Wheelchair accessibility**

All areas of the museum are accessible by wheelchair and all three floors are accessed by lifts with glass sides affording extraordinary views of the ship to all visitors. The width of the galleries was also designed with wheelchair access very much in mind.

#### **1.3 Responding to feedback**

The Mary Rose takes feedback very seriously. We welcome reviews and comments from our visitors and closely monitor responses via in-house survey, Trip Advisor and social media platforms. Quarterly mystery shopper visits assess the whole museum package including accessibility. They regularly comment favourably on the accessible facilities and praise the museum team's positive attitude and exemplary service.

## **1.4 Visual impairment**

We have made a number of important changes as a direct response to visitor feedback. This is particularly notable in two areas: visual impairment (VI) and mobility.

Due to conservation demands, the museum is intentionally dark. This is also a design feature to add a dramatic sense of place. However, a significant number of visitors reported difficulties with the very low level lighting. To address this issue, we included additional lighting throughout the galleries and improved wayfinding signage including Gobo arrows that project on to the floor. We have also introduced monthly 'lights up' mornings when full house lighting is turned on for two hours. This regular slot on the last Friday of the month is advertised on our website.

A new app is designed to help visitors with VI to orientate themselves in the museum. Further improvements will be implemented following feedback from a RNIB Conference recently held in the museum. The app is available in multiple languages further widening access.

Copies of the exhibition text are available in large print format. They are located in every museum gallery in places which are illuminated by pools of light.

A box of replica artefacts chosen for their sensory appeal is located in the Learning Centre. The team is encouraged to use them to enhance the experience of visitors with visual impairment.

Raised images of the ship are available on the top deck; they are designed to enable visitors with VI to appreciate the scale of the surviving hull. There are also raised versions of two inscriptions on one of the bronze guns.

## **1.5 Mobility**

Some visitors also reported problems traversing the distance to the museum from the Dockyard entrance and insufficient seating in the museum despite the large benches in each gallery. In direct response to these comments, we successfully obtained funding from The Boshier Hinton Foundation in 2016 to buy a six-seater golf buggy which transports visitors to and from the Dockyard Gate. The following year, we invested in wind shields and sides. This complimentary service, manned by volunteer drivers, has been hugely popular with the buggy in frequent use seven days a week. Thanks to generous support, this service has overcome a very longstanding barrier to accessibility at the Mary Rose; visitors of all ages with mobility issues now have an easy and comfortable way to reach the museum.

The purchase of 50 lightweight portable seats has transformed the visitor experience for many people. It is favourably commented in evaluation.

The Museum also invested in two new additional wheelchairs making six in all. They are available free of charge to anyone who needs them.

## **1.6 Hearing impaired**

There is an audio loop system in the exhibition. Transcripts and subtitles for audio visual content are also provided in most areas.

Assistance dogs are most welcome.

## **2. Intellectual access**

Intellectual access was integral to planning the museum interpretation. The overarching aim was to make the exhibition as accessible to visitors of all abilities including those with learning difficulties. Great care was also taken to address differing learning styles. Different media were used including audio-visuals, games, videos and handling areas. Display cases keep text to a minimum. Text is written in plain language without 'dumbing down'. Indeed, the long galleries opposite the ship have no labels at all. The re-creation of the main gundeck with a wealth of original artefacts was designed as an experience to fire the imagination of all visitors. Dramatic lighting and soundscapes which differ from floor to floor contribute to creating an 'atmosphere' accessible to a wide range of abilities. One of the most important additions of the 2016 works was the introduction of figures which are projected on to the hull of the ship. They demonstrate the crew in action in peace and at war. A range of ambient sounds heightens the experience. No additional explanation is required. The experience speaks for itself.

Alternative media are incorporated into the display cases including short videos of staff and volunteers in costume demonstrating artefacts in use.

Great thought was given to sensory aspects of the exhibition. Three handling tables are located throughout the galleries allowing all visitors to interact with real and replica artefacts. These are supplemented by additional unmanned stations on each floor, which provide further opportunities to touch and smell Mary Rose artefacts. For example, visitors are encouraged to smell and touch Tudor rope which survived intact despite being under the sea for 437 years. This hands-on experience is very popular with visitors of all ages.

For those visitors who want extra factual detail and explanation, 'drill downs' are available on all three decks. These allow visitors to access in-depth expert archaeological information at the touch of a screen.

The Learning Department offers a workshop tailored to the needs of special schools. It was devised in conjunction with local special schools. Care is taken to ensure that it is entirely age appropriate.

### **3. People and Policies**

One of the aspects of which we are most proud is a staff and volunteer force and work experience programme which aims to be inclusive to all. Volunteers and young people on work experience with a wide range of disabilities work side-by-side with their colleagues. Our current team includes two people recovering from strokes, four people with cerebral palsy, two people with head injuries, one person with visual impairment, and individuals on the autistic spectrum and with a variety of mobility problems and learning difficulties. A case study is attached as a separate document.

This approach has necessitated tailor-made induction procedures, careful monitoring of PEEP procedures and buddying partnerships. Special adaptations are made to ensure that everyone can access the full range of opportunities offered at the Mary Rose. For example, adaptations were made to the World Host customer service training course to accommodate people who cannot read.

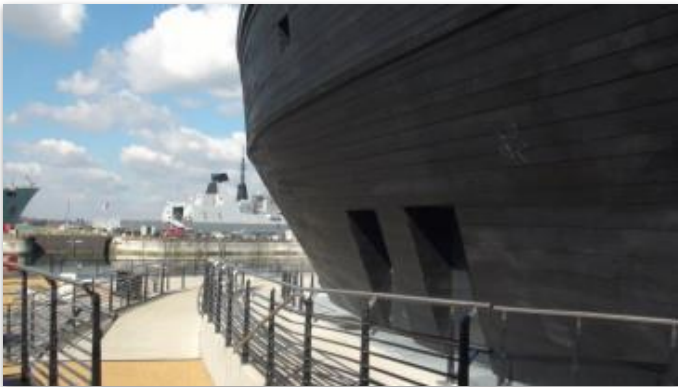
We work closely with organisations such as Enable-ability, a Hampshire based charity which seeks to give focused work experience to young people with additional needs. Great care is taken to support these individuals. We currently have a scheme in place with St Vincent's College, Gosport to help young adults become workplace ready. This scheme is an important bridge from special education to paid employment and has met with success. Through this and other schemes, the museum regularly hosts people with their own support workers who in turn help to develop our team's awareness of special needs. The success of these initiatives has resulted in a happy and cohesive team.

## Supporting Documents



## Supporting Evidence

### 1.1 Physical accessibility



Fully wheelchair accessible museum





Additional seating available throughout the museum



The popular buggy service in use



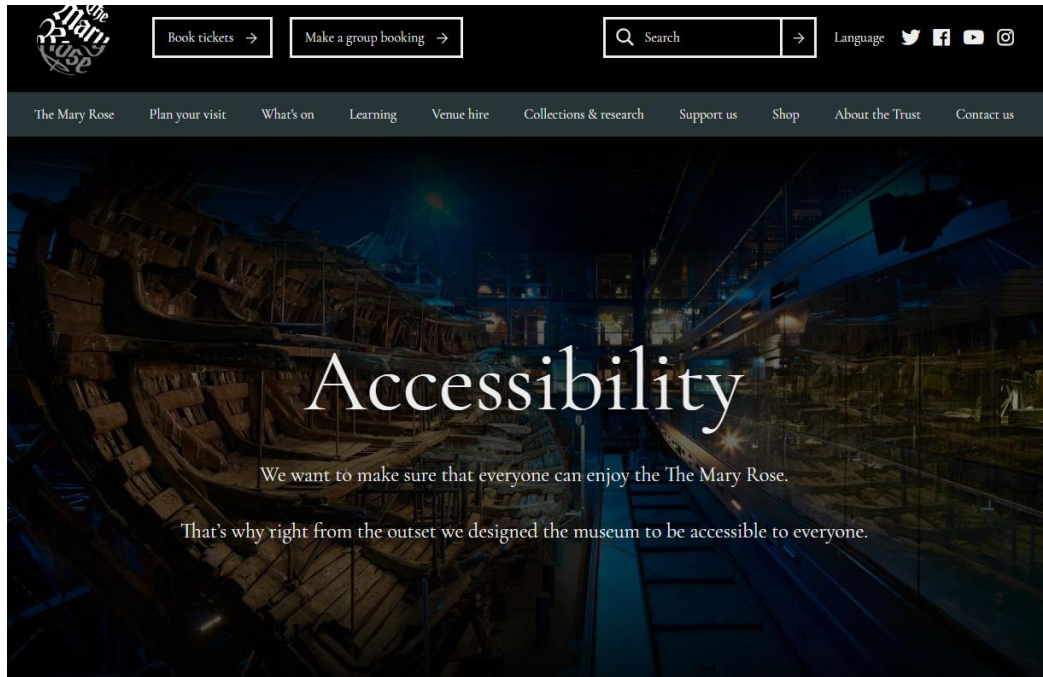
Sensory handling experiences for all





## 1.2 Technology and other media

[www.maryrose.org](http://www.maryrose.org) Accessibility



### Visually impaired visitors

Information and guides are available in large print formats. We also offer sensory resources, including tactile plans and painting of the ship. Visitors are also welcome to handle certain artefacts, both historical objects and replicas. The light levels in the museum are kept low for conservation purposes, so if you have any issues please speak to a member of our team and they will help you with your journey. We hold Light-Up Days on the last Friday of the month, check our news section for more details

[Lights Up Mornings →](#)

### Hearing impaired visitors

There is an audio loop system in exhibition spaces. We also provide transcripts and subtitles for the audio visual content in most areas. All guide and assistance dogs are most welcome.

## Foreign languages

Visitors' guides are available in different languages, and we also provide children's guides in Bengali, Chinese, Polish, French, German, Italian and Spanish. If you have any concerns about your visit to the Mary Rose please call +44(0) 2392 812931.

## Audio guide

Audio Tours in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Japanese are available on our free App, available on iOS and Android

[App for iPhone / iPad →](#)

[App for Android →](#)

## Learning difficulties

We offer hands-on experiences for visitors, given by members of our team who are fully experienced and trained. We can also provide a short introductory guide in symbol-supported text.

## Any special requirements?

Guided tours are available to suit individuals or groups. Adult changing facilities are available in our disabled toilets. Please contact us if you have any further questions.

[Contact us →](#)

# 'Lights Up' Mornings

As an initiative to engage with all our visitors, the lights in the museum will be at a higher level on the mornings of the **4th Friday of the Month**, from **10am to 12 noon**.

## May "Lights Up" Morning at the Mary Rose



25 May - 25 May 2018

### History becomes a heartbeat closer

The lighting within the Mary Rose Museum is designed to create a stunning atmosphere and display, as well as helping protect the delicate collection of artefacts within the gallery showcases. Some visitors with a visual impairment or those with other medical and physical conditions can find our lighting levels to

## June "Lights Up" Morning at the Mary Rose



22 Jun - 22 Jun 2018

### History becomes a heartbeat closer

The lighting within the Mary Rose Museum is designed to create a stunning atmosphere and display, as well as helping protect the delicate collection of artefacts within the gallery showcases. Some visitors with a visual impairment or those with other medical and physical conditions can find our lighting levels to

Mary Rose free downloadable app, available in multi-languages, and for visitors with visual impairment




 Download the **Mary Rose APP**  
[www.maryrose.org/app](http://www.maryrose.org/app)





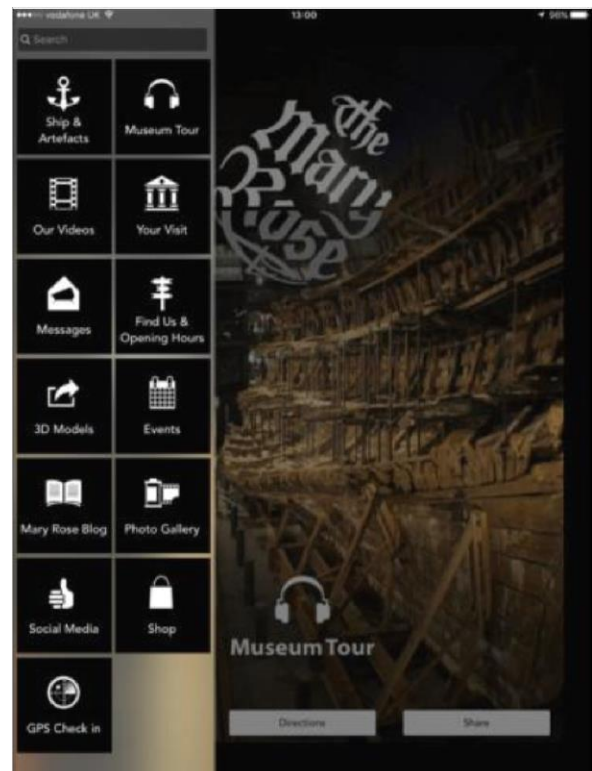


**Featuring:**

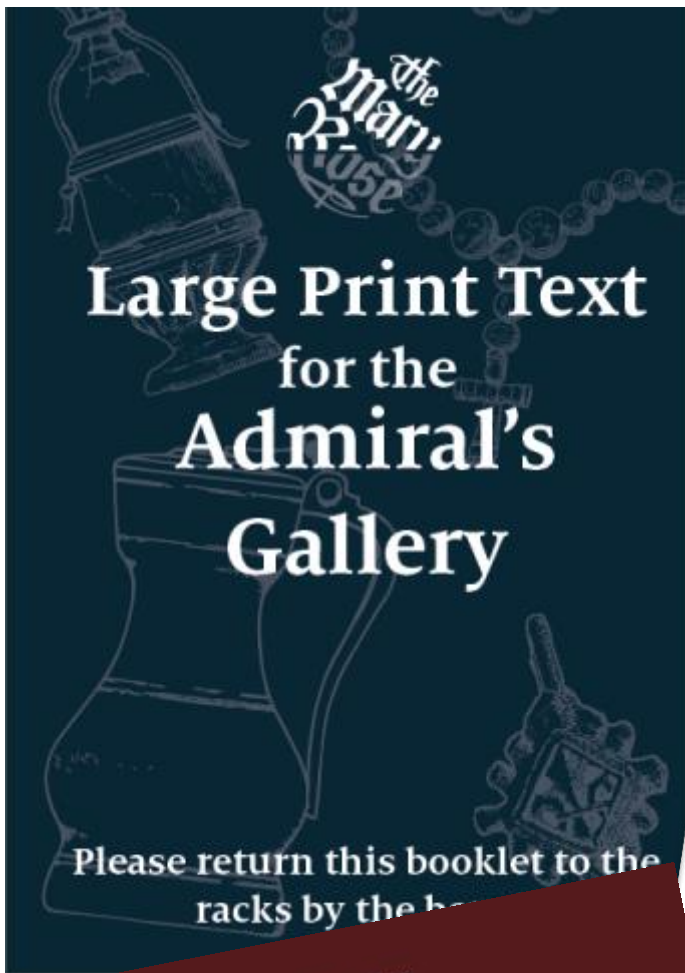
- **Audio Highlights Tour:** languages include
  - English
  - German
  - Italian
  - French
  - Spanish
  - Polish
- **Museum Maps**
- **Large Print Guides**

The Mary Rose Museum App requires an internet connection  
Free Wifi is available in the Mary Rose Museum - Connect to Historic\_Dockyard

Produced by Mobilize Limited  
www.mobilize.com





In every museum gallery, large print gallery text books are available. These are also available free via the museum app



## 1.3 THE MARY ROSE TRUST ACCESS POLICY

### The Museum's Mission

The ship and its contents are held in trust by the Mary Rose Trust on the basis that this unique collection should be made available to the public....providing reasonable access to its material under conditions and safeguards laid down by its conservators to ensure its safety, security and long term preservation. *Mary Rose Trust Code of Practice 3.0 & 3.1*

Within these parameters the Mary Rose Trust is committed to ensuring an optimum level of access to the ship, her collection and the services provided by the organisation. In order to achieve this goal, we need to ensure that barriers to access are reduced or overcome. These barriers are identified as physical, cultural, social, financial, intellectual, emotional and distance.

We are committed to the principles of social inclusion. We offer inclusive services for all sections of the community regardless of age, gender, sexuality, social status, ethnic origin or ability.

### Access across the Mary Rose Trust

Our commitment to accessibility extends to staff, volunteers and work placement students. The importance that we attach to access drives our work across the organisation. It is reflected in our policies and practice. We are committed to diversifying our staff and volunteers to represent a variety of different groups from our community. As our Equal Opportunity Policy makes clear, we welcome applications from all sections of the community. In order to accommodate individual needs, we adopt a flexible approach to working conditions as far as operationally possible.

Our Learning programme aims to cater for as wide an audience as possible. Activities are designed to overcome barriers faced by people with learning disabilities, sensory impairments and limited mobility.

We are committed to providing on-going training on access issues.

### Barriers affecting access

- **Physical** – we will ensure that all our public areas are accessible for visitors with physical disabilities and wheelchair users. We will make provision for visitors and staff with impaired vision or hearing to ensure that they are able to enjoy the Mary Rose.
- **Intellectual** – We recognise that people have different learning styles. We are committed to providing interpretation which appeals to visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners of all ages.
- **Cultural** – We recognise that Henry VIII and aspects of Tudor naval history may pose an intellectual barrier to people from other cultures. We are committed to finding ways of making the story of the Mary Rose relevant to people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- **Emotional** – We recognise that many people find museums an alien and uncomfortable environment which is outside their range of experience. We are committed to finding ways of ensuring that all our visitors feel welcome and engaged within the museum environment.

- **Financial** – As an independent organisation, the Mary Rose Trust is largely dependent on income from admission charges. However, we recognise that finance can be a significant barrier to enjoyment of the Mary Rose. In order to minimise this barrier, we provide a low-cost nation-wide outreach and community engagement service. We ensure that a range of low price items is always on sale in the shop.
- **Distance** – For those who are precluded from visiting the Mary Rose by distance, we provide a website which contains detailed information on the ship and her collection. The Mary Rose Information Group of volunteers provide a nation-wide network of trained speakers who are available to present illustrated talks to a wide range of community groups.
- **Organisational** – The Trust recognises that there are organisational barriers to access. We address these issues through on-going staff training, evaluation and liaison with Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. We work to promote our image as an accessible organisation through partnership working and community engagement. Through our outreach and community engagement programmes we take every opportunity to meet non-users at a time and place convenient to them.

### **Access to Buildings**

We are committed to ensuring equal access to our current buildings and in the planned new museum. The new museum will be fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Health and safety reviews are carried out on a regular basis.

### **Access to Collections**

Access to the secondary collection will be available by arrangement or on special tours.

### **Accessibility of Information**

The Mary Rose Trust considers information in the archive to be a matter of public record, constituting part of its accountability to the public. Information will be made available through display, publications, seminars, lectures and the website.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation of Services**

We regularly review and evaluate our progress and achievements and amend our practice in the light of feedback.

Date for next review: June 2018



## 1.4 Social media and TripAdvisor Reviews relating to excellence in accessibility and inclusivity





alaskan\_red  
Maidstone,  
United  
Kingdom  
258 113

Reviewed 2 weeks ago

## STUNNING MUSEUM - MADE ME PROUD TO BE BRITISH

I have been fortunate enough to visit many of the world's best museums, but the new Mary Rose museum bears comparison with the very best.

The starboard side of the vessel is brilliantly displayed, in ever-changing light, against a gently moving backdrop at the prow end which gives an impression of the ship sinking then rising again. The 3 levels of the walkways follow the lines of the decks and in lieu of an actual port side there are recreations of cabins, gun ports and other features. Beyond the ends of the ship are extensive galleries that display a marvellous range of artefacts recovered from the wreck, again fabulously well lit and displayed in a way that tells the stories of several ranks among the crew including their roles, living conditions and actual possessions.

Allow between 90 and 120 minutes for a meaningful visit. You can download an App to access a self-guided tour on your mobile.

different finds and stories. There are three levels where they have recreated the ship, using the finds to give a feel for the set up of the original. Which is really creative and better than simply seeing things in cases, there were also many interactive sections again helping digest the information. I attended with my mum who is disabled and struggles with lots of walking, but they have benches but also you can take a light weight fold out stool, so you can sit and read each section with ease. There's also a lift to get between the decks. I would recommend this to everyone even those with children, one of the best exhibits in the historic dockyard.

United  
Kingdom  
46 7

You Retweeted



**Stephen Candy** @StephenCandy · May 1

Amazing tour of @MaryRoseMuseum today, thanks to Mike from @MaryRoseLearn.

He really helped bring things to life for the group of @CollyersHorsham SEN students I was accompanying. Engaging, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. A perfect guide.



You and The Mary Rose

1 6



Karyn M.  
London  
3.35

Reviewed 4 weeks ago via mobile

### Fabulous exhibition

So easy to get to, the entrance to the historic dockyard is only 200 yards from Portsmouth Harbour train station. A golf buggy is provided to take people with difficulty walking to the far end of the dockyard where the Mary Rose museum is located. The museum is crammed with interesting information about the ship, it's crew and the sinking. Portable seats are provided for people who have trouble standing for long periods looking at the artefacts and reading about them. I was there with my elderly mum and the seat was so useful. The display of the remains of the ship is so brilliantly done with the actual hull on one side and a mirror image on the other showing what the ship would have been like before it sank and displaying artefacts found. You could spend 3 hours easily looking and reading everything. There are volunteers on hand to answer any of your questions and are really knowledgeable. There is a cafe on site providing sandwiches, cakes and hot and cold drinks, with tables inside and outside looking out over the water. Buy your ticket online. It's an annual ticket and you receive a discount for booking online. We had a great day out. It's a great exhibition for people of all ages and a fascinating look into our history. Well worth a visit.

Ask Karyn M about The Mary Rose Museum

1 Thank Karyn M

This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor LLC



fcd101  
Whitchurch,  
United Kingdom  
3.32

Reviewed 15 April 2018

### Amazing for history and salvage buffs

Internal display of the salvaged remains and artifacts over 3 floors. Little light so had to be careful with mum with her walking stick - she loved it. They have very light folding stools you can collect at the start of the exhibition which was brilliant for her. If you visit with a less able person ask them for a lift - they have a golf buggy style shuttle service which leaves from Mary Rose ticket office. The staff manning the service are brilliant.

Show less

See all 8 reviews by fcd101 for Portsmouth

Ask fcd101 about The Mary Rose Museum

4 Thank fcd101

This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor LLC

## 1.5 Case Study Neil Clements Volunteer Guide

<https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/news-features/changing-lives-still-waters-run-deep-mary-rose-museum>

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the article. The URL is <https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/news-features/changing-lives-still-waters-run-deep-mary-rose-museum>. The page features the Heritage Lottery Fund logo and navigation links. The article title is "Changing lives: still waters run deep at Mary Rose Museum" with a date of 15/02/2018. The text describes how a National Lottery-funded project helped Neil Clements after a life-changing accident. A photo of Neil Clements is included. A sidebar on the right lists "In this section:" with links to "What we do", "Who we are", "News, features and blogs", "Our corporate strategy 2018-2021", "Research and evaluation", "Corporate information", "Contact us", "Press office", and "Jobs and committee opportunities".

Excerpt from case study (please see web link for full text): “Neil’s role at the Museum includes meeting visitors and showing them a range of objects that were perfectly preserved on the 500-year-old sunken Mary Rose. He credits his time there as helping him get back his life, albeit a very different one to his days as a Royal Navy Petty Officer: “My favourite role is working on the handling table where you can actually touch a piece of the Mary Rose. Working at the Museum has helped me improve my social and communication skills, I can speak a lot more clearly to the public who visit.”

Links:

For more visitor reviews search us on TripAdvisor, or follow this link:

[https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction\\_Review-g186298-d318573-Reviews-The\\_Mary\\_Rose\\_Museum\\_Portsmouth\\_Historic\\_Dockyard-Portsmouth\\_Hampshire\\_England.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g186298-d318573-Reviews-The_Mary_Rose_Museum_Portsmouth_Historic_Dockyard-Portsmouth_Hampshire_England.html)

Website:

[www.maryrose.org](http://www.maryrose.org)

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/maryrosemuseum](http://www.facebook.com/maryrosemuseum)

Twitter:

@maryrosemuseum

Instagram:

@maryrosemuseum