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The National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) and the University of Birmingham's School of Electronic, Electrical and Computer Engineering announce a new academic partnership to exploit and develop Virtual Reality technologies to support projects in naval heritage, both past and present.

The partnership will highlight the work of the University's Human Interface Technologies Team and will initially focus on one of the world's iconic ships, HMS *Caroline*, the last floating survivor of the Battle of Jutland in World War One. Captain John Rees, NMRN Chief of Staff and Senior Responsible Owner of the *Caroline* restoration programme believes that this is an exciting and unique opportunity.

"Academic partnerships for Museums normally develop with University History or Archaeology Faculties, but this new initiative offers some very stimulating ways in which computer technologies and virtual environments can be brought to bear in telling the naval story," said Captain Rees.

Professor Bob Stone, Director of the Human Interface Technologies Team, has worked successfully with Captain Rees in the past, helping him and his previous Royal Navy Training Team to install the first ever Virtual Reality Close-Range Weapons Simulators at HMS Collingwood in Fareham. He said:

"Working with the NMRN and HMS *Caroline* is a challenging prospect. My team and students have been involved in a number of maritime heritage projects where this type of technology can effectively help to tell the story and enhance the visitor experience. The ship offers a unique environment for project work to help future students enhance their degrees."

Captain Rees sees that this type of partnership can flourish.

"Visitors to museums and heritage attractions are ever more demanding customers and expect world class visual material. Computer gaming techniques and technologies can play a role in showing visitors naval artefacts that no longer exist, or places in ships which are very difficult to reach," he says.

### About HMS *Caroline*

- Built in Merseyside in 1914, HMS *Caroline* is the last survivor of the Battle of Jutland, the First World War's longest, most strategically important sea battle and the only time the full German and British navies engaged directly. A light cruiser, weighing 3,750 tons and 446ft long, when built she was technologically groundbreaking. It was her maximum speed of close to 30 knots that enabled the British Navy to respond to the increasing threat of long range torpedo attack on battleships, locating the enemy fleet and then rapidly carry news back to the British battleships.
- When the war ended she became a static training ship based in Belfast. During World War II, HMS *Caroline* was back in action, acting as a key base for operations to protect the North Atlantic convoys from U-boat attacks. In 1945 she returned to her role as a static drill ship in Belfast until decommissioned in 2011, making her the longest ship in commission in the British Navy after HMS *Victory*.
- The most significant warship of the 20th century, HMS *Caroline* is one of only 200 vessels in the National Historic Fleet. What is even more significant about her is that she is barely unchanged from the day she was constructed and is 80 per cent complete.