



Accreditation

Collections development policy



2016

Name of museum: Greenwich Heritage Centre

Name of governing body: Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: Tuesday 15 November 2016

Policy review procedure:

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: November 2021

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust cares for historic buildings, memorials and collections including Charlton House, Tudor Barn, a number of memorials and the museum and archive collections, housed within Greenwich Heritage Centre. For the inspiration, education and enjoyment of all, the Trust aims to protect these buildings and collections for future generations whilst ensuring they are accessible.

Key to this the Trust aims to:

- Help people learn and find out about the history and heritage of our region
- Care for our heritage buildings for the benefit of the public
- Promote the use of the buildings, grounds and collections in our care

1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5. The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless

the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

2. History of the collections

While collecting began in 1902, evidenced in the first Accessions Register, Greenwich Borough Museum opened to the public in June 1919 in the upstairs of a Carnegie Library. Typical of many local museums of that era, the museum collected a wide and eclectic range of artefacts. This included natural history, geological and archaeological artefacts, which formed the beginning of the collection. Many of the specimens, collected nationally and internationally, represented examples from across the UK and around the world. The collection developed over time with local clubs and societies donating parts or the entirety of their collections to the museum.

In the 1960s and 70s the development of the collection was influenced by different curators. Reg Rigden, who held the position during this period, had a keen interest in archaeology and this is reflected the archaeological finds collected at this time. In recent years collecting has focused on the social and industrial history of the borough of Greenwich. In 2003 the local history library merged with the local museum to form Greenwich Heritage Centre. At this point the scope of collecting widened to include more photographs, artworks and other paper based artefacts. The archives are situated alongside the museum collections in Greenwich Heritage Centre's onsite store.

In May 2014 Greenwich Heritage Centre became part of the Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust, an independent charity. The Royal Borough of Greenwich Council retains ownership of the museum collections and Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust manages and cares for the collections, under a Service Level Agreement, on the Council's behalf.

3. An overview of current collections

The existing collections fall broadly into the following categories:

3.1 Biological and Geological Material

The Greenwich Heritage Centre (GHC) has good collections, many of which are either of local material, or which have local connections. In the absence of curatorial expertise in these fields, it is deemed advisable that no active collection of biological and geological material should take place within the term of the current policy.

Biological Material

Mammals; Birds, birds eggs, birds nests; Reptiles; Skins (mammal, bird, reptile); Amphibians; Eggs (non bird); Skulls and Vertebrae; Lepidoptera (W.G. Dawson, L.T. Ford); Lepidoptera Larvae; Insects; Molluscs (A.S. Poore); Polyzoa, Hydrozoa, Porifera, Echinodermata; Herbarium (St. John Marriott); Herbarium – Pteridophyta (P. Halligey); Seeds; Musci; Hepaticae; Fungi (C. H Grinling); Herbarium – Fungi (St. John Marriott); Myxomycetes (St John Marriott); Spirit Collections

3.2 Geological Material

Woolwich Royal Artillery Institute Museum Collection; H. W. Busbridge Collection; "O" Collection; A. L. Leach Collection; "Red Crag" Collection; "Fossil Angiosperm Leaves" Collection; "W. H. Butler Brompton Road" Collection; Typed Label Collection; "Mountain Limestone Collection (St

John Marriott); K. G. Lewis Collection; "Glass Topped Box" Collection; "Glass Topped Box" Collection No. 2 (Marriott & EPPS & Others); "Small Box" Collection; Distinctive Labels Collection.

3.3 Archaeological Material

Greenwich Heritage Centre holds excavated archives from several local sites. The service is not resourced to carry out active excavation and does not have storage accommodation to accept archives from current excavations. While we are committed to caring for and providing access to this collection we currently we have no ambition to acquire additional archaeological material.

Material from local sites held at Greenwich Heritage Centre are:

Bell Water Gate, Woolwich, 1984; Charlton Village; Charlton Earth Works; Delftware Sherds, Woolwich Area; Greenwich Park Romano-British site, 1902; Lansdown Lane, Charlton; Lesnes Abbey; Post Medieval Earthenware, Woolwich Area; Vanbrugh Hill, 1981; Woolwich Dockyard; Woolwich Ferry; Woolwich Power Station Site; Catherine Wheel, Shooters Hill; Feathers; Flint Impliments including Swanscombe Acheuleon and Neolithic material; Foyle Road, Greenwich; Post Medieval Pottery; Wricklemarch; Cypriot Pottery.

3.4 History Collections

These may be broadly defined as local and social history items dating from the 17th to the 21st centuries. It is this area that GHC will seek to expand its collections in line with its objective of collecting, safeguarding and making accessible artefacts and specimens on the history of Greenwich.

3.5 Paintings

The art collection comprises many thousands of items, including around sixty oil paintings and 1200 watercolours and drawings. These range in date from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth, mostly are by unknown or little-known artists; though some famous names include Paul Sandby a founding member of the Royal Academy of Arts. In the main, the pictures are topographical views of places within the present-day Royal Borough, though there are a number depicting places elsewhere by artists who were local. The rest are mostly portraits and figure studies, with some still life subjects and cartoons.

3.6 Prints

The print collection, principally engravings, etchings and lithography is even more numerous. There is a similar emphasis on topography, though it is rich resource for social and industrial subjects, such as the famous Greenwich Fair or work within the Royal Arsenal, and also portraits. The collection contains examples of prestigious editions, such as Thomas Lawrenson's 1740s views of Greenwich Hospital with its royal dedication, as well as a great many produced for a much wider audience.

3.7 Photography

The photograph collection also numbers many thousands of items, the bulk of them showing the borough in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These are particularly popular with present or former residents, and those researching their family or house history. There are some vintage Victorian prints, such as the unique image of a prison hulk at Woolwich in the 1850s.

3.8 Postcards

The postcards are chiefly photographic views, often coloured, of places in the borough from the late Victorian and Edwardian period. Mostly of famous or picturesque locations, there are nevertheless many of every day residential streets. The fact that many bear messages and have been sent through the post adds to their value as a resource.

3.9 Posters

The poster collection contains around three thousand items ranging from nineteenth-century 'broadside' messages, featuring rewards for lost livestock to notices of forthcoming elections, to twentieth-century advertisements for all manner of activities and events - flower arranging to rock concerts – organised both privately and by the local council. Many of these naturally feature arresting visual imagery and typography.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 Current position and collecting principles

There is currently a moratorium on collecting. This has been put in place to address a collections backlog (in particular location and movement control) in the heritage centre's onsite store. In addition, this freeze enables the Collections Manager to focus on the relocation of the overspill off-site store. This position will be reviewed annually. The museum will not actively collect until the freeze is lifted by a decision of the board of trustees.

When collecting recommences, the focus will be upon artefacts the Trust actively wishes to acquire on behalf of the Council, based on the research, learning and public engagement programme opportunities they present. In this way new acquisitions will aid the Trust's aim to share Royal Greenwich's diverse and inspirational stories with the public, to help people learn about the history and heritage of the borough. It is anticipated that collecting will take place in the following modes:

- **Collecting by type:** acquisitions that enrich the collections for the purposes of research, learning or public engagement, categorised by type, whether social history artifact, archaeological material, painting or drawing.
- **Collecting by theme:** acquisitions that enrich the collections, combining collections development with public engagement, collected in a thematic, cross-disciplinary way and incorporating the views and opinions of people as part of the collecting process.

4.2 Greenwich Heritage Centre's Collecting Scope

While donations might still be accepted where the Acquisitions Committee deems their importance in telling key borough stories is strong (for example, a person linked to the borough, a family connection to the borough or an artifact linked to local built heritage), the Heritage Centre's main Collecting Scope to 2021 will focus on, in no priority order, five areas:

4.2.1 The changing lives of women

Focusing particularly, but not exclusively, on WWI and WWII, artifacts that significantly contribute to stories about women who lived or worked on the Arsenal, at Charlton House, Progress Estate or Tudor Barn, whether relating to the workplace, the home, recreation or leisure time. Items might include a WWI VAD nurse's uniform, a munitions worker's attaché case, WWI and/or WWII munitions worker's uniforms or WWII Air Raid Precaution Centre material.

4.2.2 Stories about our built heritage

Artifacts that significantly contribute to stories that are unique to our built heritage whether building or monument. Stories might focus on business and industry, owners and residents, architects and architectural features.

4.2.3 Significant individuals & their contribution to society

Whether soldier, business owner, famous individual or founding museum collector, significant

individuals have shaped the Royal borough and contributed to wider society. Focusing on people stories, items might include artifacts that help to tell the story of Woolwich soldiers; and/or Eltham resident and famous author, Edith Nesbitt and the development of her novel, *The Magic City*; and/or George Dawson, Lepidopterist and a founding Greenwich borough collector.

4.2.4 Industry, shopping and the high street

Focusing on industry, business, shopping and the high street, artifacts that significantly contribute to stories that are unique to our Royal borough. Acquisitions might include social history costume, whether work wear or fashion worn by residents across a range of eras; or might include items sold in the Co-operative Store, as well as other shops on Powis Street Woolwich,

4.2.5 Community diversity & contemporary collecting

As the make-up of communities in the borough (and in particular, but not exclusively, Charlton, Eltham and Woolwich wards where our buildings are situated) continues to develop and change, investigate opportunities to collect objects that best reflect the diversity and cultural mix of Greenwich residents. Items might include artifacts relating to a specific community whether Somalian, Nigerian, Nepalese, Chinese, Caribbean or other; and might relate to any number of themes whether custom, dress, food, identity or home. Contemporary collecting may include 'popular culture' with a wide audience appeal.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

To make best use of limited staff and resources, a process of rationalisation will take place, primarily at the Heritage's Centre's offsite overspill store and additionally over a longer timeframe, at its onsite store. A thorough process of rationalisation is outlined in the Greenwich Heritage Centre's Documentation Plan. The main criteria for recommended disposal of an item or group of items from the collections will be based on where an artefact:

- In no way aids telling 'Royal borough' stories across any period
- Are beyond economic repair or in too poor a condition to be of use in terms of research, learning or display
- Are in poor and unsafe condition, where health and safety risks outweigh the item's value in the collection

5.1 The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

6.1 The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7 Collecting policies of other museums

7.1 The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

Bexley Museum
Bromley Museum
Fan Museum
National Maritime Museum
Museum of London

8 Archival holdings

Greenwich Heritage Centre holds archival material on behalf of Royal Greenwich Borough Council. These items, while sitting next to the museum collections within the store, are held separate from the museum collections and managed in accordance with guidance from The National Archive.

9 Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

Where a member of the public has an object, or collection of objects they wish to donate to Greenwich Heritage Centre, they will complete an 'application to donate' form and send it, along with images of the item/s, to the Collections Manager. The Collections Manager will review the application against the Heritage Centre's future Collecting Scope (Ref. 4.2), which sets out what we collect and why.

The Collections Manager will then take the application to the Acquisitions Committee. The Acquisitions Committee, made up of museum staff and a Trustee member of the Museum Sub Committee. Where collections expertise may not exist in house specialist advice will be sought.

The Committee will meet once every three months to review the latest applications to donate. The Committee might be called to meet on an adhoc basis where an object of interest is offered for a time limited period. The Committee will make recommendation to either accept or refuse each offer. These recommendations will be taken routinely to the full Board of Trustees Meetings (the full Board meets bi-monthly) for agreement and sign-off. In their decision-making role, Trustees will consider any cost implications associated with each proposed acquisition.

If the Trust accepts an offer, the owner will be contacted and asked to sign a Transfer of Title form, legally transferring the ownership of the object(s) to the Royal Borough of Greenwich collections, cared for and managed by the Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust.

9.2 The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in

violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10 Human remains

10.1 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

11 Biological and geological material

11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12 Archaeological material

12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

13 Exceptions

13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases, the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

14 Spoliation

- 14.1** The museum will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

15 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

- 15.1** The museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.
- 15.2** The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’.

16 Disposal procedures

- 16.1** All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- 16.2** The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
- 16.3** When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.
- 16.4** When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.
- 16.5** The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum’s collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

- 16.6** A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7** Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8** If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites.
- 16.9** The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10** Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.
- 16.11** The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.12** Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on de-accession and disposal.

Disposal by exchange

- 16.13** The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
- 16.13.1** In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.
- 16.13.2** If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.
- 16.13.3** If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites.
- 16.13.4** Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

- 16.14** If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 16.15** It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- 16.16** Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.17** Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- 16.18** The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the

destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

AUTHORISATION

Date

**Signature of
Cabinet Member for Culture and Creative Industries
Cllr Denise Scott-Macdonald**

Date

**Signature of
Chair of the Board of Trustees
Len Duvall, OBE**