

MANSFIELD MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL POLICY

THE FOLLOWING ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL POLICY HAS BEEN DRAWN UP IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES COMMISSION GUIDELINES (1995).

INTRODUCTION

At present, Mansfield Museum and Art Gallery holds the following collections:

Natural History.

- Whitaker Collection of birds and animals.
- Webb Collection of birds.
- Foreign birds.
- Birds' eggs.
- Butterflies and Moths.

Porcelain.

- Porcelain relating to William Billingsley.
- Manners Collection of Lustreware.
- Tagg Collection of Ceramics.

Fine Art.

- Watercolours by A.S. Buxton.
- Watercolours by Seddon-Tyrer.
- Collection of prints, paintings and drawings.

Social History.

Collection of items for:

- domestic and personal life.
- trade and industry.
- leisure and social life.
- local government and amenities.

Photography.

- Collection of photographs of the local area.
- Collection of negatives of the local area.

The Museum also keeps small quantities of:

- Firearms.

- Coins.
- Archaeology.
- Costume.
- Geology.
- Palaeontology.

Mission Statement.

Mansfield Museum and Art Gallery will enhance public understanding and appreciation of the historic, social and economic importance of Mansfield and the surrounding area through the careful management, interpretation, display and development of its collections and to ensure maximum visitor satisfaction by providing a frequent change of temporary exhibitions of interest and relevance to local residents.

Mansfield Museum and Art Gallery is a good quality local museum concentrating on the social history of the town and its immediate area. It aims to provide the local community both with information about the history of the town and a varied programme of interesting and stimulating temporary exhibitions.

The Museum's collecting policy needs to reflect this local theme as the Museum cannot compete in size and scope with the nationally important collections held at Nottingham, Sheffield, Derby and Lincoln. It is also entirely appropriate that a local Museum should record the history of the people in its immediate area.

ACQUISITION POLICY.

It is proposed that the Museum should restrict its collecting to the following categories.

1. Social History.

The Museum collects objects, including photographs pertaining to the life of the people in the town. These are:-

- a) household and personal items.
- b) items related to local trade and industry.
- c) items related to social and leisure industry.
- d) items relating to local government and amenities.

In most cases archival material should be stored at the Nottinghamshire Archives in Nottingham which already has much of the material relating to Mansfield District Council. Where archival material is kept at the Museum, including photographs and printed ephemera, the Museum will be guided by the **Code of Practice on Archives for Museums in the United Kingdom.**

2. Ceramics.

The Museum will collect items of porcelain/pottery with associations with the area. The famous porcelain decorator William Billingsley lived in Mansfield for a short period of his

life and therefore examples of his work, from any factory he worked at, will be collected. Other ceramic objects related to the town, such as commemorative mugs or plates, will also be collected.

3. **Archaeology.**

The Museum currently holds a small amount of its own archaeological material together with material belonging to the Sherwood Archaeological Society, which is held under a long term loan agreement. The Museum will continue to house the collections of the Sherwood Archaeological Society under the terms of the loan agreement, which is reviewed every five years.

There is currently no trained Archaeologist on the Museum staff, and without the relevant expertise, it is the Museum's policy not to actively collect new archaeological material. The only exception to this would be in the case of significant local finds, unearthed in the process of an official dig carried out by a recognised group of professional archaeologists. These items would be accepted in to the Museum's collections, subject to the following terms.

'The Museum will not acquire by purchase objects in any case where the Curator or Leisure Services Committee has reasonable cause to believe that the circumstances of their recovery involved the recent unscientific or intentional destruction or damage of ancient monuments or other known archaeological sites, or involved a failure to disclose the finds to the owner or occupier of the land or the proper authorities in case of a possible Treasure Trove.'

4. **Fine Art.**

The Museum has a fine collection of watercolours by Albert Sorby Buxton. The majority of these were given to the Museum by Mrs. Buxton in 1938, and since then the collection has been added to by the kind donations of local individuals and occasional purchases from the Museum's acquisition fund. The collection currently numbers around two hundred, of which the majority are on permanent display. The Museum will continue to add to this collection by this important local figure. Paintings by Seddon-Tyrer, another well-known local artist, will also be collected.

The Museum also has a varied collection of other paintings some of which are relevant to the town while others are not. It is the Museum's policy only to collect works that are either by local artists or of local scenes/personalities.

General Conditions.

Objects collected in the above categories must also meet the following conditions:-

- a) **Definition of the Collecting Area.**

Items will usually only be collected if they are from within or associated with, the Mansfield District Council Area. In all cases the offer of material falling within the published collecting policies of neighbouring registered museums will be offered first to these institutions.

b) Storage Capacity.

The number and size of items that can be accepted is ultimately restricted by the amount of storage capacity. Since the building of the new stores the Museum has been in the enviable position of having ample storage. It does not, however, have the facilities to store large or heavy items, for example pieces of industrial equipment.

c) Storage Conditions.

Items will only be collected if they are in good condition and if the Museum has the facilities to keep them in this condition. At present the Museum's storage areas are of a sufficient standard to maintain the collections well.

All collections in the Museum's possession, including those to which additions are not currently planned, (e.g. Biological Material), will be stored in a suitable environment. Their condition will be periodically reviewed in accordance with the Museum's Environmental Policy, and any necessary steps taken to maintain them.

d) International Law.

The Museum will not acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any work of art or object unless the Curator, or governing body is satisfied that the Museum can acquire a valid title to the specimen in question, and that in particular it 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.

5. Items not to be Collected

a) The following will not be collected:-

Birds and birds eggs

- Mammals
- Fish & Reptiles
- Any other mounted specimen of natural history
- Any moth, butterfly or insect
- Geological material
- Ethnographical material
- Costume - unless it falls into one of the above categories, e.g. Social History

b) Items which do not fall within the bounds of this collecting policy and which are offered to the Museum and Art Gallery should be routed, with the permission of the prospective donor to another museum or suitable institution. The Museum is aware of the collection policies of neighbouring museums so that members of the public can be referred to an appropriate establishment to make their donation.

- c) The museum will not 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, and that in particular it 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.)
- d) 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 (eg British court in the case of a specimen seized from a third party under the Protection of Birds Act.)
- e) So far as British or foreign archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) are concerned, in addition to the safeguards under sub-paragraph a. above, the Museum will not acquire objects in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has reasonable cause to believe that the circumstances of their recovery involved the recent unscientific or intentional destruction or damage of ancient monuments or other known archaeological sites, or involved a failure to disclose the finds to the owner or occupier of the land, or to the proper authorities in the case of a possible Treasure Trove.

DISPOSAL POLICY.

1. By definition a museum has a long-term purpose and must possess (or intend to acquire) permanent collections in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body accepts the principle that there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the museum's collection except as set out below.
2. In those cases where the museum is legally free to dispose of an item (if this is in doubt, advice will be sought) it is agreed that any decision to sell or otherwise dispose of material from the collections will be taken only after due consideration. Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds. Once a decision to dispose of an item has been taken, priority will be given to retaining the item within the public domain and with this in view it will be offered first, by exchange, gift or sale to Registered museums before disposal to other interested individuals or organisations is considered.
3. In cases in which an arrangement for the exchange, gift or sale of material is not being made with an individual Registered museum, the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of material. This will normally be through an announcement in the Museums Association's *Museums Journal* and other professional journals if appropriate. The announcement will indicate the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed.

4. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by exchange, sale, gift or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone. Full records will be kept of all such decisions 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.
5. Any monies received by the governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions but in exceptional cases improvements relating to the care of collections may be justifiable. Advice on these cases may be sought from the MGC, or its successor body.
6. The Museum's governing body, acting on the advice of curatorial staff, may take a decision to return human remains, objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. This is entirely a matter to be considered on an individual case basis taking into account the ethical implications and legal position. Under such circumstances it is recognised and accepted that it would be inappropriate to apply the procedure outlined in paragraphs 2 and 3.

LOANS

1. Only items for specific temporary exhibitions will be accepted by the Museum on short term loan for a fixed period of time. A loan period should not exceed 6 months. It is the Museum's policy that no items should be accepted on long-term loan. This is to avoid the Museum having to relinquish items which have been integrated into permanent displays and also to avoid possible legal or financial problems due to deterioration or damage to items on long term loan.
2. However, Mansfield Museum and Art Gallery is willing to store specified collections for bona fide bodies, such as The Sherwood Archaeological Society, under the terms of a loan agreement. This will only be undertaken, however, if the Museum can adequately accommodate such material, and if the storage of it is to the mutual benefit of both parties. In such cases, collections temporarily stored will be regarded as totally separate from those of the Museum.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the end of September 2005, or sooner if the need arises. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy should only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the Leisure Committee of Mansfield District Council (or subsequent Committee, following the restructuring as part of the Modernisation of Local Government), having regard to the interests of other museums. The Area Museum Council will be notified of any changes to this policy.

EW/LDT June 1995
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