

# **Worcestershire County Council**

## **Museum Collection Development Policy**

**2015-2020**

Governing Body: Worcestershire County Council  
Adopted by Joint Museums Committee, xxx 2015

### 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 2020

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.

# Contents

## Overview

Purpose of the Collection Development Policy	2
Museums Worcestershire Statement of Purpose	2
History of Collecting at Worcestershire County	3

## Collections Development

An Overview of Current Collections	4
Working and Educational Collections	7
Themes and Priorities for Future Collecting	8
Themes and Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal	9

## Limitations on Collecting and on Disposal

Collecting Policies of Other Museums	10
Acquisition Procedures	11
Acquisition and Management of Specialist Collections	11
Disposal Procedures	13

## Associated Guidelines

15

# Overview

## Purpose of the Collection Development Policy

This policy sets out the principles that will provide the Joint Museums Committee elected members for Worcestershire County Council and their supporting officers with a framework for the scrupulous and ethical acquisition and disposal of collections using clear procedures and decision-making processes common to UK museums in the Accreditation Scheme.

Implementing the policy will enable Museums Worcestershire to demonstrate the public benefit in their actions relating to the acquisition and disposal of collections on behalf of Worcestershire County. It provides a basis for decision-making and an informed dialogue between governing bodies, donors, funding bodies and other stakeholders.

This policy applies to material which Worcestershire County Council owns or oversees in trust, and has accessioned into the museum collection or intends to own and accession into the collection.

Worcestershire County Council will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

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.

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

Museums Worcestershire will not take in objects on loan as a shortcut to more formally acquiring them. Items will only be borrowed for the purpose of display or to shed additional research information on the existing collection.

## Museums Worcestershire Statement of Purpose

We aim to enrich the lives of people from Worcestershire and beyond, today and for future generations.

We want to inspire them to deepen their knowledge of the City and County and make sense of the world.

We will do this by preserving and interpreting the museum collections and sites; sharing our passion for the unique art, artefacts and stories that have shaped the identity of Worcestershire and its county town for over 2000 years.

Museums Worcestershire roles are to:

- Enable shared experiences, discovery and interaction at the County Museum at Hartlebury Castle, The Commandery, Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, Museum on the Move and the Collections Centre.
- Safeguard the museum collections of Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council, maintaining national standards of care.
- Enrich the cultural heritage and future of Worcestershire and beyond.
- Expand perspectives and opportunities by supporting other museums and organisations in Worcestershire and beyond.

The Worcestershire County collection includes archaeology, social history and decorative arts; some elements of the collection are of national significance.

A range of services is available to make the collections more accessible to the public. These include exhibitions, workshops, events, holiday activities, talks and guided tours on a regular basis; community based projects are also developed for new audiences. The museum website provides access to information on collections both by museum staff and external experts.

## **History of Collecting at Worcestershire County**

The Worcestershire County museum collection comprises material evidence and associated information relating to the history of the County of Worcestershire and the people who have lived and worked there, and reflects the working life of a rural and urban county from earliest times.

The Worcestershire County Museum was founded in 1964, with the core collection of rural life artefacts donated by the Parker family from Tickenhill Manor near Bewdley. This collection is held in a charitable trust for the benefit of the public. Further collecting has continued in the following decades under the governance of Worcestershire County Council.

In 2006 a partnership was formed with Worcestershire City Museum in the formation of a joint museum store on Hartlebury Trading Estate. The majority of the collections have been moved from less-suitable stores and are now stored to a high professional standard in this building, making the collections more widely accessible for visitors, researchers and learning groups.

In 2010 Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council took the decision to merge the management of their collections and museum venues, although ownership remained with each authority and the collections are managed in parallel. The new service was named Museums Worcestershire and is overseen by the Joint Museums Committee, formed of representatives from each authority and, when required, additional external expertise.

# Collections Development

## An Overview of Current Collections

The County Museum primarily collects material under the following disciplines:

### Archaeology

The Museum holds archaeological collections from within the present boundaries of Worcestershire, excluding the area covered by the collecting policy of Worcester City Museums Service and the major excavation archive from Bordesley Abbey. The collection includes finds from research excavations prior to PPG15 and PPG16, sites investigated in response to development, chance finds and treasure items.

The collections reflect the settlement of Worcestershire from the Pleistocene through to Post-Medieval times and include:

- Large deposits from the key county excavations at Beckford, Madresfield, Bays Meadow Roman Villa, Upwich, Old Bowling Green and Hanbury Road, Droitwich
- Pleistocene mammal, particularly mammoth, remains from excavations during the M5 widening at Strensham
- Bronze Age burial urns from Holt.
- Iron age currency bars from Malvern, a rare crouched Iron Age burial from Church Lench, and a significant and extensive archive from the Iron Age settlement at Beckford
- Extensive collections of Roman Severn Valley Ware pottery, including from kiln sites at Newlands, briquetage from Droitwich, evidence of roman salt working from Droitwich, Bredon Hill and Hartlebury Roman Coin Hoards and the archive, including wall paintings and a mosaic, from Bays Meadow Roman Villa
- Anglo Saxon and early medieval coin hoards from Severn Stoke and Wyre Piddle and a 10<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Scandinavian gold ring from Kyre Park.
- Medieval salt working evidence, including the site of the main well, from Upwich
- Paper archives of site records, notes, maps, plans, drawings, photographs, written reports. Digital material is deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)
- The County Museum holds a numismatic collection that covers most aspects of official coinage from the Roman period to the present day as well as token coinage. Gaps in the

collection include the Iron Age and the seventeenth century with the exception of a rare Charles I half-crown minted at Hartlebury Castle during the Civil Wars.

### **Domestic and Family Life**

Domestic and Family Life is a collection dating from 1890 to 1940 relating to cooking, heating, cleaning and lighting with examples of household furnishings and furniture.

Included within this section are:

- Toys, games and dolls, 1900 to 1940
- domestic textile crafts of sewing, lace making and patchwork of the nineteenth and early twentieth century

### **Transport**

The Transport collection (1830s to 1950s) has both utility and passenger carrying vehicles. The collection includes a unique and nationally important series of gypsy caravans including examples of a Reading waggon, a Bow Top, a Ledge Waggon, an Open Lot and a Square Burton.

In addition it includes:

- Types of farm waggon, drays, and carts.
- Commercial vehicles include a carrier's cart, delivery vans, an ambulance, hearse, hansom cab and hotel omnibus
- Private vehicles including a travelling chariot, phaeton, governess carts and brougham.
- Bicycle collection (circa 1870 to 1960) which has a variety of machines including tricycles, ordinaries, a quadricycle and a range of safety bicycles.
- A motor vehicle made in Kidderminster, the Castle Three car.

### **Costume and Textiles**

The costume and textiles collection comprises material circa 1750 to 1950s and is one of the finest costume collections in the region.

It includes:

- Women's costume is a comprehensive collection of fashionable costume and accessories, such as parasols, fans, shoes and headwear. Of particular interest are the eighteenth-century gowns and shoes.
- Examples of eighteenth-century baby clothes and early nineteenth-century juvenile wear.
- Seventeenth-century man's buff leather coat and men's eighteenth-century waistcoats, as well as uniforms and smocks.

### **Rural Crafts and Agriculture**

The Museum has a varied collection of nineteenth-and early twentieth- century material representing aspects of the rural life and farming throughout the year before modern mechanisation:

- Woodland trades - besom making, basket making, clog sole making, bark stripping
- Leather working - saddler, shoemaker
- Tools and products of the carpenter, wheelwright and cooper and the blacksmith.
- Specialised industries such as Nash's scythe making, the Lewis ironworks, and the Bromsgrove Guild are also represented.
- Ploughs, seed drill, seed fiddle, dibbers, sickles and scythes, flails, hay knives, weeding tools, forks and spades, hoes, harrows.
- Small hand tools are well represented but there are fewer implements.
- Other agricultural items include examples of dairying equipment and veterinary tools.

## **Working and Educational Collections**

The power of museum objects can sometimes only be fully accessed through handling the artefact, or seeing it work in its original function. In order to preserve significant items, it is important that some specific objects are designated or collected as handling/working items. These items are not considered part of the main collection and the processes of acquisition, documentation and disposal is less formal than for the main collection.

### **Education Collection**

Handling items enable visitors, particularly in formal learning groups, to interact direct with objects by touching, feeling and wearing. These items might be original historic items or replicas. Although treated with care, it is assumed that some will be damaged or destroyed with use and that eventual disposal may be necessary.

Museums Worcestershire have a number of objects that have been collected or prepared especially for handling, particularly by school groups, the majority of which are not accessioned. Donations of historical objects have also sometimes been designated as handling rather than refusing the offer.

**During the lifetime of the policy, Museums Worcestershire learning staff will rationalise the education collections of both city and county and dispose of objects which have little or no handling value. As part of this process gaps in the handling collection will be identified through consultation and items actively collected to fill those gaps.**

### **Working Objects**

Working items are restored, sometimes with the addition of new parts, to more fully demonstrate the purpose they were originally used for. The restoration should not transform the original purpose or original look of the object: if parts are removed as part of the restoration they will be kept alongside the object. The decision to restore an object to 'working' should only be made to add to visitors' understanding of that item rather than simply to make it look more attractive. Once an object has been restored to work it should, wherever possible, be maintained in a working state.

**As part of the full audit of the social history collections during the life of this policy, a small number of items may be designated as working.**



## Themes and Priorities for Future Collecting

### Archaeology

Worcestershire County Museum will continue to seek to acquire excavated material, chance finds and paper archives from every period from the Palaeolithic to the present day from within the boundary of the County of Worcestershire, and from property belonging to Worcestershire County Council.

Archives of excavated finds will be subject to a rationalisation and selection process undertaken on a site by site basis in discussion with the Museum, Archaeological Contractor and City Archaeology Officer. Internal rationalisation and selection strategies devised by archaeological units will not be applied without discussion in the County of Worcestershire.

The acquisition of private and historical archaeological collections of relevance to the County or County people will be considered on a case-by-case basis if offered.

Archaeological material from outside the County boundary may be considered for acquisition on liaison or in partnership with other accredited museums in exceptional circumstances.

Worcestershire County Museum will seek to acquire the more significant treasure items found within the County boundaries where it can.

### Social History

The county museum collection should build on the strengths of its other collections and future collecting should be guided by themes in the existing collections, with a preference for objects relating to the period before 1890 and post 1945.

Because of the limitations of storage space, staff and conservation resources, care will need to be exercised in selecting only new acquisitions that have a Worcestershire provenance or fill an identifiable gap in an existing collection. New acquisitions must be selected using the criteria of local *i.e.* county manufacture, use or association.

Priority will be given to objects which fill identifiable gaps in the existing collection. Current gaps include:

- Objects relating to the smaller community trades such as shops and pubs.
- Objects relating to the sporting strengths of the county.
- Examples of everyday and occupational costume with a strong provenance and story of Worcestershire people.

- Contextual material relating to gypsy life, particularly when relating to Worcestershire to give background information to the important gypsy vehicle collection.

## **Themes and Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal**

Museums Worcestershire 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.

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. The procedural process is laid out in the *Acquisition and Disposal Procedures* document associated with this Collections Development Policy.

During the lifetime of the policy, Museums Worcestershire will identify, research and, if appropriate, process objects for disposal that are:

- Damaged beyond repair
- Contain hazardous materials with risks that cannot be sufficiently mitigated
- Were previously overcollected in duplicate, in bulk without sampling or selection or are unprovenanced and have no relevant context
- Or are not part of the collection but were abandoned loans or unaccepted gifts.

From the Worcestershire County museum collection, this work will focus on incomplete vehicles and duplicated and damaged domestic and rural craft objects.

## **Limitations on Collecting and on Disposal**

Worcestershire County Council and Museums Worcestershire recognise their responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

Museums Worcestershire 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.

Worcester County Council will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

### **Collecting Policies of Other Museums**

Museums Worcestershire 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 specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

#### **Worcester City museum collection.**

The two museum collections managed by Museums Worcestershire have complementary strengths and themes. All potential acquisitions and disposals are discussed by a curatorial panel and, when required, by the Joint Museums Committee to ensure that each collection continues to grow its strengths and neither duplication nor gaps occur.

In addition, specific reference is made to the following organisations:

- Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service which is the main repository for documentary items relating to Worcester City and Worcestershire County.
- Avoncroft Museum, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Gordon Russell Museum, Kidderminster Railway Museum, Kidderminster Carpet Museum, the Wythall Transport Museum, Worcester Porcelain Museum, Elgar Birthplace Museum, Worcestershire Masonic Library & Museum Trust George Marshall Medical Museum who collect items connected to specific parts of Worcestershire's history.
- Worcestershire Regiment Museum Trust and Worcestershire Yeomanry Museum Trust who collect items relating to Worcestershire's military history.
- Bewdley Museum, Malvern Museum, Tenbury Museum, the Almonry Museum in Evesham and Bromsgrove Museum who collect objects relating to geographical areas within Worcestershire.

## Acquisition Procedures

- a. The policy for agreeing acquisitions is laid out in the *Museums Shared Services Partnership Agreement* between Worcestershire County Council and Worcester City Council, 2010, schedule 7. The procedure will follow the Acquisitions and Disposal Procedures document associated with this Collections Development Policy.
- b. Museums Worcestershire 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.
- c. Museums Worcestershire 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).
- d. 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, Museums Worcestershire 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.
- e. Museums Worcestershire will seek to acquire copyright along with artefacts and research being added to the collection, but where this is not possible will follow current legal obligations and guidance with regard to artefacts and research for which it has responsibility.

## Acquisition and Management of Specialist Collections

- a. As the Worcester County museum collection 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.
- b. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, Museums Worcestershire 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.
- c. Archaeological material

- I. Museums Worcestershire 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.
  - II. 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).
- d. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains
- I. 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 decision procedures described in the 'Disposal Procedures' section will be followed but the remaining procedures describing the method of disposal are not appropriate.
  - II. 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'.
- e. Museums Worcestershire 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.
- f. Worcestershire County museum collection holds a small quantity of archives, including photographs and printed ephemera that were either acquired before the formation of Worcestershire Record Office/Archives Service or have a strong relationship to the other museum collections. Its governing body will be guided by the *Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom* (3rd ed., 2002) and will consider in the future if accreditation by the National Archive's Archive Service Accreditation Scheme should be sought
- g. 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 Museums Worcestershire will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. Museums Worcestershire will document when these exceptions occur.

## Disposal Procedures

- a. All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or as a last resort - destruction.
- e. 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.
- f. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, 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.
- g. 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.
- h. 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 (if appropriate).
- i. 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.

- j. 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.
- k. 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.
- l. 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 deaccession and disposal.
- m. Disposal by exchange: Museums Worcestershire will not dispose of items by exchange.
- n. Disposal by destruction
  - I. If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
  - II. 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.
  - III. 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.
  - IV. 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.
  - V. The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

## Associated guidelines

Worcestershire County Museum Collection Development Policy is referenced by the following documents:

### **Collections Management Policy**

This policy outlines the approach and framework to develop and care for these collections to ensure the people of Worcestershire today and for future generations continue to access and understand their culture and heritage.

### **Human Remains Policy**

Worcestershire County museum collecting has been guided in the management of the human remains it curates, by its Policy for the Care of Human Remains. It is based on DCMS 2005 *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums*.

### **Conditions for Deposition of Archaeological Archives**

Intended principally for use by archaeological contractors, this document sets out the requirements of Museums Worcestershire when acquiring artefacts and archives resulting from of archaeological excavations. It aims to ensure consistency of approach and ease of future access to the information.

### **Acquisition and Disposal Procedures**

This document lays out the process to be followed when objects are considered for acquisition or for disposal. It is partly based on the Museums Association's *Disposal Toolkit* and has integrated advice from the Museums Association to Museums Worcestershire.