

PART THREE

ACQUISITION & DISPOSAL POLICY

3.1 Introduction

This Policy relates to the collection as a whole currently stored in the three museums. It includes a description of the existing collections, future collection priorities, and a series of ethical and other principles that govern activity in this area of work.

The collection is in many ways typical of a small local authority museum service. With the exception of costume and textiles, and elements of the geology collection, and the literary archive the collection lacks any areas that might be classified as having regional or national importance. The service has demonstrated a cautious approach to acquiring items in recent years, but there is a particular need to re-vitalise this area of activity, to ensure that the collections do not lose their energy and validity. Strategies in certain areas need to be developed and there is a need to establish collecting protocols with other museums in the County.

3.2 COLLECTING POLICY

The collections are sub-divided on the basis of historic collecting priorities, under five headings that are broadly in line with best practice in the sector: Archaeology, Social History, Natural Sciences, Fine & Decorative Art, Archives.

3.2.1 Collection History

i) *Helena Thompson Museum*

The original collection at the Helena Thompson Museum reflects the interests of the family, and their way of life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and certain subjects in which Miss Helena Thompson was particularly interested. The collection consisted of costume and textiles; antiques and curios; family possessions; portraits and domestic chattels dating from the second half of the eighteenth century. The collection has grown over the ensuing years particularly in the last decade with a broadening of the scope to include particularly local trades, industries, and domestic and commercial life in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A significant photographic collection has been acquired.

ii) *Maryport Maritime Museum*

The collection at the Museum was initially based on the donations of items by local resident Miss Annie Robinson, and consists almost entirely of artefacts from or linked to the Town of Maryport. Miss Robinson was instrumental in setting up the Museum in 1974. The collection has grown in all areas since then. During the refurbishment of the Museum in the 1990's several items were obtained on long-term loan to be used in the displays. While the percentage of the total collection is low (40 out of a total collection of artefacts numbering of 1156), some of the most important items on

display are on loan, so there is a need to attach fixed term agreements to these loans as a matter of urgency.

iii) *Keswick Museum*

The collection at Keswick Museum was founded by the local Literary and Scientific Society in 1873, with a particular focus on Natural Sciences. The collection of random, chance finds of local and natural and antiquarian interest, was quickly focused under several local naturalists and geologists, including James Clifton Ward, to active systematic collecting. A number of pieces were bought including Flintoft's model of the Lake District, while the bequest of James Edmonson's butterfly collection forms a focus of the entomological collections today. The important literary collections were begun when Canon H.D. Rawnsley, one of the founders of the National Trust, became a Fitz Park Trustee in the early part of the twentieth century. His fame brought donations and bequest from many quarters including members of the Southey family. The collection is largely provenanced to Keswick and the North Lakes.

3.2.2 Existing Collections & Future Priorities

Following an inventory process, which is now largely complete, the strengths and weaknesses of the collection are more clear now than they have been for a number of years. The Service will look to collect to enhance the weaker areas of the collection, within the framework contained in section 3.3.3.

Statements for the separate disciplines are given below. For each discipline, a general description of the existing collection is given, including a number that indicates the size of the collection. This figure is based where possible on the results of the inventory of the collection. Each statement includes an assessment *in italics* of any priorities that exist for collecting over the period of the Policy.

3.2.3 Archaeology

Number of artefacts: 246

The collection comprises a miscellaneous grouping of mainly Cumbrian artefacts held at the Helena Thompson Museum and at Keswick Museum¹, deriving from a number of sources including bequests, excavations and casual finds. This material can be placed in three categories: Pre-history, Roman, and Medieval.

i) *Pre-history*

Artefacts from the Pre-history and Roman periods are held at Keswick Museum. The bulk of the collection comprises local pre-historic worked stones and axes, including examples from the Langdale Axe Factory sites, showing techniques, from rough outs to highly polished axes, and settlement patterns in the area. The pre-history collection also includes a small number of bronze items, including the Thirlmere bangles.

¹ Tullie House Museum in Carlisle holds the premier collection of archaeological material from Allerdale, ranging from excavation archives through to specific pieces such as the Cockermouth gold neck ring.

ii) *Roman*

The Roman collection is mainly ceramic in nature, from Samian to lower wares, from different local sites, and a few unprovenanced coins.

iii) *Medieval*

The Helena Thompson Museum contains the Clifton Dish, an important eighteenth century find, and associated pottery finds. The collection at Keswick is also largely ceramic in nature, from key local sites such as Lords Island, seat of the Earls of Derwentwater, and a recently acquired lead seal.

It is not possible for the Service to accept large archives from excavations due to storage limitations. Currently Tullie House at Carlisle in partnership with the Carlisle Archaeological Unit serves as the main repository for such collections from Allerdale. In future Tullie House will only act as a repository for excavation archives from sites within Carlisle District. The exceptions to this are excavations that are carried out under the auspices of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archive Society, and re-excavated sites where the archive already sits in Tullie House. The same criteria apply to archaeological acquisitions other than archive material.

All casual archaeological finds relating to Allerdale District that are reported to any of the Borough museums, should be notified to the Portable Antiquities Reporting Officer for NW Cumbria.

Responsibility for the storage of excavation archives from sites in Allerdale (which fall outside the Tullie House criteria listed above) could be said to sit with Allerdale. This CMP indicates that the Service will not usually accept material of this sort. Although the Service is not unusual in having to adopt this position, the potential for problems arising in the future from this stance should not be ignored, and officers will look to work with Tullie House and other organisations to develop protocols and solutions to this complex and difficult situation.

The Senhouse Roman Museum in Maryport is registered under Phase II of the national scheme. The archaeological collecting policy for the Senhouse targets the Roman heritage of Maryport and the associated coastal defence system of Cumbria. Due to the high standard of archaeological curatorship which exists on the management committee of the Museum (unique in Cumbria), Allerdale Heritage Service will consult closely with the Senhouse on all archaeological material from the area.

Future collecting priorities need to be developed in partnership with Tullie House and the Senhouse Museum. During the course of this policy efforts will be made to add material, other than excavation archive material, to the collection, as most material which could potentially come forward from this discipline would add interest to the collection.

3.2.4 Social History

Number of artefacts: 5000

This part of the collection is wide-ranging, including as it does the evolution of everyday life and local industries in the Borough in the last three hundred years. The broad nature of the scope of this collection means that it has the largest gaps, and it is these gaps in particular that the Service will look to develop during the course of the Plan, prioritising certain subject areas. Photographic material and oral history from the twentieth century will have a general priority.

i) *Costume & Textiles*

The collection covers the general history of women's costume from the late eighteenth century to c.1930, and is representative almost exclusively of the middle and upper classes in Workington during this period. The majority of the collection at the Helena Thompson is made up of artefacts donated by, or given to, Miss Thompson.

A detailed inventory exists, and the principle categories are women's costume, dolls, babies and children's clothes, lace, women's accessories and accessories in general, shoes, hats, parasols, fans, and samplers. The collection also includes the Flather costume collection at Keswick Museum, which comprises mainly 1920s and 30s daily wear and accessories.

During the course of this policy efforts will be made to develop a more representative collection when possible, placing more emphasis on occupational costume and on artefacts from the twentieth century, which needs to be acquired while still more readily available. Contemporary locally produced art textiles will be acquired where these complement the existing collections, and the textile craft activity currently operating out of the Helena Thompson Museum. Future collecting priorities need to be developed in partnership with Tullie House.

ii) *Domestic: leisure/pastimes*

This collection includes pastimes, sport and music, especially the famous Musical Stones at Keswick Museum. The Museum has three sets of stones and a significant archive of associated material. The Helena Thompson has material and balls from the local 'Uppies and Downies' game, and various other sports are represented.

During the course of this policy the Service will look to develop all areas of this collection to complement existing collections, and to focus on sport as a specific subject area which merits a collecting focus.

iii) *Work: industrial, commercial, maritime, agriculture*

This area of the collection covers several major industries. These include iron and steel, mining, shipbuilding and seafaring on the coast, through to bobbin manufacture in Keswick. The collection of maritime artefacts at Maryport is wide ranging and includes tools, instruments, models, ephemera and photographs.

The Helena Thompson includes important artefacts from Workington Iron and Steel works, including samples, models and photographs. The Museum also house collections from several Workington shops and artefacts relating to the World

Ploughing Organisation. Other commercial companies represented include the Cockermouth, Keswick & Penrith Railway and the Keswick Gas, Light & Coke Company.

During the course of this policy the Service will look where possible to develop all areas of this collection, concentrating on local industry and the maritime trade.

iv) *Community: schools, religion, political/military*

The Helena Thompson Museum contains a small collection of weaponry and militaria. At Keswick Museum, the collection includes covers local schools and ‘celebrities’, such as Sir J G Woodford. The collection features two significant models – Flintoft’s relief map of Cumbria, made in 1834 and a scale model of Workington Hall.

During the course of this policy the Service will look where possible to develop all areas of this collection.

3.2.5 Natural Sciences

Number of artefacts: 19050

i) *Vertebrate Zoology*

Contained in both the Keswick Museum and the Helena Thompson Museum, the collection includes the display collection of approximately 600 mounted British birds and mammals, some not found in Cumbria today, some osteological material, and several hundred clutches of birds eggs and nests.

The collection in Workington derives mainly from Victorian naturalists and includes the collection donated by Workington collector W.C. Laurie. It includes artefacts from Britain, Australia and Indonesia. The collection of British birds eggs contains some 1000 specimens.

The collections at Keswick Museum formed the original basis of the Museum and most specimens date from the nineteenth and twentieth century. Most is of local and regional significance with some specimens of national interest, such as the Vendace, a local relict of the ice age, together with published examples of taxidermy, for example, Greenwell Blakett’s Buzzard. Most have close associations with notable local naturalists such as Joseph Flintoft, and Linneas Eden Hope who helped develop the collections.

During the course of this policy future specimens will only be acquired if they have a local history context being, for example, the clearly identified work of a local tradesman; to add to items from an existing collector such as Laurie; to replace existing collections; or fill gaps in existing collections.

ii) *Invertebrate Zoology*

Keswick Museum houses a large entomological collection of mainly British Lepidoptera and Micro-Lepidoptera, and a comprehensive collection of local

Coleoptera. The collection includes fish, reptiles, and amphibians, preserved wet, dried and mounted, with a significant collection of freshwater and marine shells from Britain and the world.

The Helena Thompson has a collection of butterflies and moths assembled from 1870-1900 from various collectors.

The collection at the Helena Thompson Museum is closed. At Keswick Museum material will only be acquired to replace existing collections or to fill gaps in existing collections.

iii) *Botany*

The herbarium at Keswick Museum includes over 1000 sheets of pressed material. The Helena Thompson contains the M. Laurie collection of lichens and a miscellaneous collection of algae, ferns and mosses.

The collection at the Helena Thompson Museum is closed. At Keswick Museum material will only be acquired to replace existing collections or to fill gaps in existing collections.

iii) *Geology (Rocks, Minerals and fossils)*

Keswick Museum contains an important collection of rocks, minerals and fossils including the collection assembled by James Clifton Ward who surveyed the geology of Keswick for the British Geological Survey. The size and information associated with elements of this collection makes it of regional significance.

The geology collection contains a good balance of rocks, minerals & fossils, mostly from local sites and well representing the complex local geology, industrial activity and the work of important nineteenth century collectors. A large proportion of the mineral and rocks are from named collections, including that of Ward, Robert Harkness, John Postlethwaite and Jonathan Otley, all early geology pioneers. The Museum also holds a small collection of minerals collected by John Ruskin, the great Victorian author, artist and social reformer and has specimens donated by twentieth century geologists such as Edgar Shackleton. Cumbria has the greatest number of mineral species in the country and the minerals of the Caldbeck Fells, an internationally important mineralogical area, now collecting restricted, are well represented, including many irreplaceable specimens. Local commercial exploitation and use of stone is also documented in the collections. Graptolites and other marine fauna of the Skiddaw Slates are well represented in the fossil collection, with some type and figured material of national importance. Plant fossils of the Coal Measures are also well represented and the Museum has one specimen of reptile footprints in Eden Valley Sandstone.

During the course of this policy, the Service will look to acquire specimens of rocks, fossils and minerals that are under represented or new to the collection. Future collecting priorities need to be developed in partnership with Tullie House.

3.2.6 Fine and Decorative Art

i) *Fine Art (Oils, Prints, Watercolours)*

Number of Artefacts: 700

A collection of prints, watercolours, oils and drawings covering the period c.1700 to the present day, with the majority of the works dating from the nineteenth century.

At Keswick Museum the collection is primarily of works on paper, of regional significance. The exceptions are nationally important works by Nash and Westall, primarily of nineteenth century Southey family portraits and contemporary views, and a significant collection of watercolours and etchings by Brangwyn. Other notable artists include Sir Charles Holmes, Collingwood and Longmire. The easel paintings are again mainly nineteenth century in date and of regional importance, though the collection does include a number of works by Durden, and a recently acquired portrait of Robert Southey by Opie and a Redpath oil. Local artists represented elsewhere in the service include a number of works by William and James Mitchell and Percy Kelly.

During the course of this policy the Service will continue to collect works that reflect life within Allerdale Borough. This includes the work of local artists, but also representations of local subjects. The Service will look to acquire work by twentieth century artists whose work is poorly represented, in particular Sheila Fell, Percy Kelly, Albert Rosser and Sheila Redpath.

ii) *Metal and Glass*

Number of artefacts: 80

At Keswick Museum the collection mainly consists of metal work from the Keswick School of Industrial Arts, founded by Canon H D Rawnsley in 1884. The collection includes some early pieces of repousse and chased copper articles, by named artists including W H Mawson and a portrait of Rawnsley in bronze relief by Edith Maryon, and various sporting trophies and shields, some silver, but the bulk is later stainless steel commemorative ware. There are also some KSIA fixtures and fittings in the building itself. The busts of the Lake Poets include a nationally important bust of Hugh Walpole by Epstein. The Goldscope Cup is a fine piece of silversmithing, but its main importance lies in the locally sourced silver.

The Helena Thompson Museum contains a collection of silverware relating to Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling and other sports, and a range of civic regalia. The glass collection at the Helena Thompson includes various vases, decanters, jugs, glasses, and luster's, many of which have links with local sea captains.

During the course of this policy the Service will continue to collect in this area when material has significant local connections. Particular efforts will be made to acquire material from the Keswick School of Industrial Art.

iii) *Ceramics*

Number of artefacts: 450

The collection consists of eighteenth and nineteenth century porcelain and other material from the Helena Thompson. Other items of specific interest include a number of char dishes and various ceremonial items with a maritime theme, and a small collection of locally produced vernacular pottery.

During the course of this policy the Service will look to acquire material which is locally provenanced, with an emphasis on material produced by the local industry. The Helena Thompson collection will only be added to in a passive manner.

iv) *Furniture*

Number of artefacts: 35

There are several pieces of furniture in the collection, principally from the house collection at the Helena Thompson Museum, including clocks, chairs and various pieces of cased furniture. An eclectic collection at Keswick includes a fine vernacular chair by a local maker.

During the course of this policy the Service will look to acquire examples of furniture by local makers including examples of the local vernacular which is under represented in the collection. Contemporary pieces by local makers will only be acquired with a functional purpose, such as to fill a need for seating in a Museum galleries.

3.2.7 Archive Material

Number of artefacts: 2800

This bulk of this collection is held at Keswick Museum. The core of the archive is the literary collection of manuscripts; letters, poems and prose and associated material of the Lake Poets and writers, especially Robert Southey who lived in Keswick for 40 years, and, to a lesser degree his contemporaries; William Wordsworth, De Quincey, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Later authors Hugh Walpole, Canon H D Rawsley and John Ruskin are also well represented. The Southey collection has been built up over several decades primarily from donations and bequests made by members of the Southey family, including a recent bequest of many unpublished letters and early manuscripts of published poems. It is an internationally important archive, in the top 10 repositories of Southey material in the Country.

The Museum has an important collection of geological maps associated with James Clifton Ward, who surveyed the area for the BGS, and other locally significant archives, including that of the Fitz Park Trust who used to own and manage the Museum. The strengths of the library lie in the areas of early tourism and nineteenth century guidebooks, and geology, and the Museum holds a run of the weekly newspaper, the English Lakes Visitor & Keswick Guardian, from the 1870s to 1910. The photographic archive details the work of important local photographers; the Abrahams, Maysons and Pettitts. The Abrahams firm in particular holds national

significance as photographers of pioneering mountaineering climbs locally and elsewhere.

The Maritime Museum holds a small collection of maritime material such as technical manuals, discharge certificates and books.

During the course of this policy the Service will look to fill gaps in the existing collection.

3.3 ETHICS AND OTHER PRINCIPLES

3.3.1 Significant departures from this policy will be exceptional and only after due consideration by the relevant ABC committee. Resource and the North West Museum Service will be advised of any changes the Acquisition and Disposal Policy and the implications of such changes for the future of existing collections.

3.3.2 The policy shall be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date of the next planned review is March 2004, although it is likely this will be brought forward when the Service is the subject of a Best Value review. The Service intends to develop the main existing permanent collections. No new areas of collecting will be opened up during the period of operation of this policy, unless the Borough Council so directs.

3.3.3 Offers of gifts and bequests will only be accepted if:

- i) The item is of exceptional interest and of high quality
- ii) The item adds significantly to the strength or improvement of the present collections
- iii) The item is actively sought to complete one of the collections
- iv) The item retains sufficient related historical data.

3.3.4 The principle area which future collecting activity relates to will be the Borough of Allerdale.

3.3.5 The Service recognises its responsibility, in acquiring material, to ensure adequate conservation, documentation and proper use of such material and takes into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as inadequate staffing, storage and conservation resources.

3.3.6 As the Service holds or intends to acquire archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums in the United Kingdom (1996). The Museum will also aim to meet the standards outlined in the Royal Commission on Historic Manuscripts Standards for Record Repositories (1990).

3.3.7 Collecting policies of other museums

The Service will take due account of the collecting policies of other registered museums collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields and will consult with

such organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

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

Tullie House Museum, (Carlisle City Council)

The Beacon (Copeland Borough Council)

Penrith Museum (Eden District Council)

Senhouse Roman Museum, Maryport

Ruskin Museum, Coniston

Cumbria County Council has the post of Cultural Services Manager who operates in effect as County Museum Officer. He will be consulted on collecting issues where and when appropriate.

3.3.8 Principles Governing Acquisition

The majority of these principles are prescribed both in their wording and content by Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries.

- i) Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the Service itself having regard to the interests of other museums.
- ii) The Service 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 Service 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.
- iii) So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the Service 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 (e.g. a British court in the case of a specimen seized from a third party under the Protection of Birds Acts).
- iv) So far as British or foreign archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) are concerned, in addition to the safeguards under the subparagraph a above, the Service 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 finds to the owner or occupier of the land, or to the proper authorities in the case of a possible Treasure Trove.
- v) Gifts and bequests shall only be accepted on the basis that any conditions are approved by the governing body of the Service, and in all cases reference will be made to the limitations on collecting as specified in the policy. Allerdale Borough

Council, acting with the advice of professional curatorial staff reserves the right to refuse any offer of material.

- vi) The Service will not normally accept material on loan unless for the purposes of a temporary exhibition or copying, or where the item is of exceptional interest to the Service. Any loan will be agreed in writing by the lender and the Service, including allocation of responsibilities for insurance and transport arrangements and shall be for a specified fixed-term only, renewable in writing. Use of the term 'permanent loan' shall be avoided and items will not be accepted on this basis
- vii) Due to the nature of the Service's activities, the Service may occasionally acquire certain items that are not intended to be retained for the permanent collections. These items may be used as educational or school handling collections, or, in the case of industrial or transport Services, as spares or consumable working parts

In the case of such material, documentation will clearly show the intended use of the object and donors will be made aware of this possibility at the time of entry and informed as soon as a decision has been made regarding the material. These objects will be recorded separately outside the main accession record and shall not be treated as part of the permanent collection since their intended use implies that preservation cannot be guaranteed

3.3.9 Principles Governing Disposal

- i) By definition a museum has a long-term purpose and must possess (or intend to acquire) permanent collections in relation to its stated objectives. Allerdale Borough Council accepts the principle that there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the Service's collection except as set out below.
- ii) Where a museum object has been acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation, permission from that organisation will need to be sought before the object is deaccessioned or transferred to another museum. If the object is sold, repayment of the original grant may be required.
- iii) In those cases where the Service is legally free to dispose of an item, 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 principle 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.
- iv) 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 on the intention to dispose of material. This will normally be through an announcement in the Museum Association's Museum Journal and other appropriate professional journals if appropriate. The announcement will indicate the number and nature of 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.

- v) 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 Allerdale Borough Council 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.

- vi) Any monies received by Allerdale Borough Council 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 will be sought from Resource and the North West Museum Service.