

Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2006 - 2011

Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Libraries, Archives & Museum Service)

Governing Body: Haringey Council

Date approved by governing body: tbc

Date at which policy due for review: 2011

Purpose

This policy complies with the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, managed by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

This policy is based on the Museums Association's *Code of Ethics for Museums: ethical principles for all who work for, or govern museums, in the UK* (Museums Association, 2002).

The policy clarifies the scope of collections and priorities for future collecting. It ensures that material is accepted according to recognised strategy and procedures, and serves as a reference document to guide curatorial decisions.

It is hoped the policy will encourage public confidence in Bruce Castle Museum as a suitable repository for collections relating to Haringey and its people.

1. Description of existing collections, including the subjects or themes for collecting

1.1 Bruce Castle Museum's collections cover most aspects of local history for the area comprising the London borough of Haringey, and date from prehistory to the present day. The scope of the collections covers social and working histories, fine and decorative arts, archaeology, photographic collections and oral history. Of particular note are our special collections, which include the following subjects:

- Bruce Castle history
- Sir Rowland Hill
- Alexandra Palace
- The Prince of Wales Hospital
- Early photography of George Shadbolt
- Beatrice Offor Paintings
- W Heath Robinson Drawings
- George Kenner First World War Paintings

1.2 The strengths of the collections overall are:

- Local photographs – approximately 31,000 photographs, mainly of local interest

- Postal history collection – a large collection of c.30,000 items, including the 8,000 items on loan (the Morten collection). Of national importance
 - Social history – approximately 4,000 objects of local interest ranging from domestic artefacts to sporting memorabilia
 - Fine art – approximately 1,600 works, including oil paintings, watercolours, prints, and drawings. Mainly of local interest
 - Costume and textiles – approximately 1,000 items of local interest, including a comprehensive Victorian women’s collection.
- 1.3 There are smaller collections of applied art, archaeology and geology. The archaeological and geological material is of local interest but little of the material has detailed provenance.

2. Criteria governing future collecting policy, including the subjects or themes for collecting

2.1 Bruce Castle Museum’s future collecting policy will be responsive to the needs of the Business Plan for Haringey Libraries, Archives & Museum Service. Our collecting activities will identify perceived gaps and strengths in the existing collections and address community-defined priorities. To give direction to collecting and to ensure the use of newly acquired material, the collecting policy will draw on Bruce Castle Museum’s mission statement and aims, as follows:

- **Mission Statement**
Bruce Castle Museum will work with local people and other partners to collect, record and care for Haringey’ unique cultural heritage and to promote the understanding and enjoyment of that heritage through access and education for all:
- **Key aims**
 1. To acquire cultural material of relevance to Haringey’s past, present and future.
 2. To manage the collections and the museum to relevant local, regional and national standards.
 3. To make accessible the building, collections and associated information by means of exhibitions, publications, events, education and outreach work.
 4. To be relevant, responsive and accessible to all members of the community.
 5. To care for Bruce Castle Museum and to develop it further as a valued community resource.
 6. To contribute to the quality of life of Haringey’s residents including a contribution to the regeneration of the Tottenham area.

- 2.2 It is anticipated that the following collecting themes will be prioritised:
- Oral history testimony, photographs and film (videos and DVDs) relating to Haringey in the latter part of the 20th century onwards.
 - Artefacts, archives, oral history testimony, photographs and film (videos and DVDs) representing the experiences of our diverse communities in Haringey, especially black and ethnic minority populations, past and present.
- 2.3 The following collections will not be added to, except where the material makes a dramatic difference to the coherence of the existing collection:
- geological and biological material;
 - postal history material;
 - archaeological material (with the exception of casual or chance finds in the Haringey area; Archaeological archives from development controlled excavations will be stored at the London Archaeological Archive Research Centre [LAARC] at the Museum of London. Arrangements are in place for Bruce Castle Museum to borrow any archaeological material connected with Haringey, to ensure our local communities can benefit and have access to relevant finds);
 - general social history material, fine and applied art and costume without a very strong association with Haringey and unless it meets the criteria outlined in 2.2 above.

3. Period of time and/or geographical area to which collecting relates

- 3.1 The collection contains material from the Palaeolithic period to the present day, with a strong concentration of material covering the period 1850 to 1950.
- 3.2 The primary collecting area is defined by the present administrative boundaries of the London borough of Haringey (which covers the predecessor authorities for Tottenham, Wood Green and Hornsey). Material collected should have a very strong and special connection with Haringey. For example, an object may have been made and/or used in the borough, or made or used by a Haringey person. Reference will always be made to the collecting policies of other relevant museums (see Section 5 below).

4. Limitations on collecting

- 4.1 Bruce Castle Museum recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting

imposed by such factors as inadequate staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

5. Collecting policies of other museums

- 5.1 Bruce Castle 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 specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 5.2 Specific reference is made to the following museums:
- **For possible subject overlap** – The British Postal Museum & Archive - The Postal Heritage Trust (for postal history material); Museum of London (for archaeological and social history material); National Army Museum (for Middlesex Regiment collections).
 - **For possible subject or geographic overlap with neighbouring boroughs**- Forty Hall, Enfield; Hackney Museum; Vestry House Museum, Waltham Forest; Church Farmhouse Museum, Barnet; Islington Museum.

6. Policy review procedure

- 6.1 The Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Council) Acquisition and Disposal Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.
- 6.2 MLA London (the Regional Agency) will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

7. Acquisitions not covered by the policy

- 7.1 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by Haringey Council, as the governing body of Bruce Castle Museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

8. Acquisition procedures

- 8.1 Bruce Castle Museum will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless Haringey Council (the governing body) or a responsible officer is satisfied that Bruce Castle Museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

- 8.2 In particular, Bruce Castle 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).
- 8.3 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, Bruce Castle 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 DCMS in 2005.
- 8.4 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, Bruce Castle 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.
- 8.5 Bruce Castle Museum will not acquire archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) in any case where Haringey Council (the governing body) or a responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures, such as reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure as defined by the Treasure Act 1996 (in England, Northern Ireland and Wales) or reporting finds through the Treasure Trove procedure (in Scotland).
- 8.6 Any exceptions to the above clauses 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, or 8.5 will only be because Bruce Castle Museum is either:
- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin; or
 - acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded; or
 - acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin; or
 - in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970.

In these cases Bruce Castle 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.

- 8.7 Bequests and gifts shall only be accepted on the basis that any conditions are approved by Haringey Council, and in all cases reference will be made to the limitations on collecting as specified in the policy. Haringey Council as the governing body shall reserve the right to refuse any offer of material.
- 8.8 Haringey Council will not normally accept material on loan unless for the purposes of temporary exhibition or copying, or where the item is of exceptional interest to the museum. Any loan will be agreed in writing by the lender and the museum, including allocation of responsibilities for insurance and transport arrangements and shall be for a specified fixed-term only, renewable in writing. The use of term 'permanent loan' shall be avoided and items will not be accepted on this basis.
- 8.9 Due to the nature of the museum's activities, the museum 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.
- 8.10 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.

9. Spoliation

- 9.1 Bruce Castle 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.

10. Repatriation and Restitution

- 10.1 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, 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.

11. Management of archives

- 11.1 As the museum holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, Haringey Council (as its governing body) will be guided by the

Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002). It is recognised that Haringey Archives Service is the appropriate recipient of written records for the borough.

12. Disposal procedures

- 12.1 By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and should possess (or intend to acquire) permanent collections in relation to its stated objectives. Haringey Council, the governing body, accepts the principle that, except for sound curatorial reasons, there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in Bruce Castle Museum's collection.
- 12.2 Bruce Castle Museum will establish that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Any decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken only after due consideration (and, if appropriate, legal advice will be sought).
- 12.3 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.
- 12.4 Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds.
- 12.5 Any monies received by Haringey Council, as the museum's 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 will be sought from Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).
- 12.6 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 in the case of an item posing an unavoidable health and safety risk or unavoidable serious conservation threat to other items in the collection; or in the case of an item being a duplicate of another item in the collection and surplus to the research potential of the collections, and is unsuitable for use in the handling collections; or if an item would receive more appropriate levels of care, security or access in another accredited museum or similarly approved institution), will be the responsibility of Haringey Council, as the governing body of the museum, acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff and not solely of the curator of the collection acting alone.
- 12.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift,

- exchange or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 12.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museum to which it was offered directly, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's *Museums Journal*, and in other professional journals where appropriate.
- 12.9 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. 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.
- 12.10 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.

Bruce Castle Museum's Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2006-2011 replaces previous versions: 2001-2006; 1997-2000; 1993-1994.