

MUSEUM SERVICE

WELWYN HATFIELD



WELWYN
HATFIELD

Collections Development Policy

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Relationship to other relevant policies/ plans of the organisation:

1.1 The museum's statement of purpose is:

Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service exists to record, collect, conserve, exhibit and interpret the archaeology and history of the Welwyn Hatfield borough (Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and surrounding villages) for the benefit of the public. To these ends, the Museum Service collects artefacts, illustrations, photographs, recordings and data relating to the borough of Welwyn Hatfield. Collections staff work with the aim of building up collections, which reflect the lives of people of all lived experiences, resident or working in the borough both past and present.

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

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

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

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

1.6 The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

- 1.7** In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:
- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
 - the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
 - the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
 - extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken
 - the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established core collection
 - the disposal will follow all ethical guidelines
 - disposal of human remains will be considered in line with the Guidance on the Care of Human Remains in Museums

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History of the collections

The Museum service was not founded on one major collection but has developed its collection in the following ways:

- Donations (make up the majority of our collections)
- Archaeological Depositions
- Purchases (occasional)
- Bequest (occasional)

The collections also relate to our two sites: Mill Green Museum and Mill and Welwyn Roman Baths.

Mill Green Mill was built to grind corn grown by Hatfield's farmers and the adjoining house, now the museum's exhibition galleries, was the home of successive millers and their families. The Mill belonged to the Hatfield House Estate for three hundred years. It ceased to be used commercially in 1911. In 1973, the Hatfield and District Archaeological Society took over the tenancy of the Mill House and laid the foundations of the Museum by holding exhibitions each summer. In 1978 Welwyn Hatfield District Council set up the professionally staffed Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service. The Mill House

opened full time as a local history museum for the area in 1979. The restoration of the Mill, undertaken by the council in partnership with the Mill Green Water Mill Restoration Trust was completed in August 1986 and the mill now operates commercially again.

Welwyn Roman Baths form a small part of the Dicket Mead Villa which was built in the third century AD and occupied for about 150 years before being demolished within the Roman period. It was excavated by the local, amateur Welwyn Archaeological Society in the 1960s who ensured it was preserved. Today the monument is displayed to the public in a steel vault 9 metres underneath the A1 motorway.

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An overview of current collections

Archaeology

The Welwyn Hatfield borough is an area rich in archaeological remains. The present collections represent finds made locally both actively (by excavation or other fieldwork) and passively (by casual find) ranging in date from Palaeolithic to Post Medieval. It also includes archives of archaeological projects.

A small proportion of the material is on long-term loan from Sherrardswood School.

The Museum Service does not undertake its own fieldwork, but liaises closely with all amateur and professional archaeologists working in the borough. Material excavated in the 1970s and 1980s by HADAS (Hatfield and District Archaeological Society) and originally placed on loan to the museum service, was converted to a donation in 1989.

The Museum Service holds a good collection of flint material, but little in the way of early pottery and metalwork. Some of the most significant Iron Age discoveries in Europe have been made in Welwyn and Welwyn Garden City, such as the 'Welwyn Type' Burials (now on display in the British Museum). Excavation by the British Museum at Essendon 1992-1994 revealed an Iron Age sacred site. The gold coins, torcs and weapons have been deposited in the British Museum. The Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service holds a good collection of Iron Age pottery, but little significant metalwork and no Iron Age coinage.

With its proximity to St Albans (Verulamium) and London, the borough, especially Welwyn Village, has a rich Roman past. Two important Roman sites are represented in the Museum and link to one of our sites: Dicket Mead Roman Villa and the Grange Roman Cemetery. In 1996, with the approval of the Community & Leisure Services Committee, Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service purchased the Potters Bar Roman coin hoard.

The Museum collections are very weak in all Saxon material. The Museum Service holds a number of individual items from the Medieval period but has little from a well dated Medieval excavation. No Medieval coinage has been collected. The Museum Service holds a good representation of post medieval material resulting from the excavations of HADAS. The Museum holds a small collection of foreign material including Egyptian items in the

Harrison bequest (a bequest from a former WGC resident) and a number of items from HADAS including foreign coins.

The museum service collection also includes human remains from excavations consisting of 8 complete skeletons, including one infant burial, and a cremation all of Romano-British origin. In addition the collection includes individual bones and part skeletons mainly of Romano-British origin but including one skull from a 13th-18th Century site. Human remains are currently on display at Welwyn Roman Baths.

Natural Sciences

It was originally envisaged that the Museum Service would reflect the flora, fauna and geology of the borough. Two collections, the Alan Bell Collection of Butterflies of the British Isles and the Roger Ferry Collection of Butterflies, Insects, Molluscs, Vertebrae and Skulls together with the Ferry/Dear Collection of Birds Eggs were bequeathed to the Museum Service in 1979 and 1983 respectively. There is also a small collection of fossils.

Local & Social History Collections

Our local and social history collection reflects the changing nature of the borough and therefore consists of largely agricultural artefacts prior to 1920 and items relating to its associated crafts and trades, retailing, brewing and inn-keeping and the railway.

The establishment of a Garden City in purpose-bought fields near Welwyn in 1920 heralded major change. In the early 1930s the de Havilland Aircraft Factory moved to Hatfield, a crucial event in the history of the town. Both Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City were designated New Towns in 1948.

The social composition and industrial base of the borough have therefore changed dramatically. Agriculture has declined in importance due to the loss of land to housing, factories, railways, roads, and motorways. The two main developments of the past 30 years have been the closure of British Aerospace's Hatfield site (1993/94) and the vast expansion of the University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield. In Welwyn Garden City several large employers have also closed, including ICI, Rank Xerox, and SmithKline Beecham. Hatfield town centre is due for complete redevelopment.

We have good representative collections of these industries across our collections which can be further broken down into the following areas:

Agriculture, Crafts & Trades

The collections consist of building tools, agricultural hand tools, horse-drawn equipment, barn machinery and water-powered milling tools and equipment. In 1988 a late nineteenth century side flue oven from Chuck's Bakery, Welham Green was purchased for the collection with assistance of the Hertfordshire Heritage Fund and has been dismantled and placed in our storage. The Museum Service also holds material (primarily archival and photographic) relating to the great houses and estates of the borough.

Industry & Retailing (including Inn-keeping)

Building on the Industry Year initiative of 1986, progress has been made in acquiring material representing both existing and past industries of the borough. There is a comprehensive collection of British Aerospace (and its aircraft industry predecessors) journals. The Museum Service holds a small number of shop fittings and a large packaging and bottle collection. Recent developments in retailing are represented largely through ephemera and textiles.

Domestic & Community Life

The collections include kitchen fittings and cooking and laundry equipment, bathroom fittings and bedroom furniture dating from 1870 to 1960; recreational material, including children's games dating from 1910 to 1950, a small First World War collection including fragments from the Cuffley Schutte-Lanz airship (known as the Cuffley Zeppelin) and related archival material and a larger selection of objects showing life on the Home Front 1939 to 1945. There are a small number of local tokens, medallions and badges.

Photographs & Film

The Museum Service has an extensive photographic collection of views of all parts of the borough. There are a handful of nineteenth century examples but most date to post 1900.

Costume & Textiles

The Museum Service has a collection of approximately 300 items made, used or worn locally. The dress collection includes work wear from local factories and shops and uniform from local schools. There is a small, but important, collection of Cresta Silks fabric samples and examples of local weaving produced by Mary Kemp (died 1935) and Rasma Budins.

Fine & Applied Art

The present collection includes two bronzes by the sculptor David Evans; a small collection of Arts and Crafts tiles and British Studio pottery, five posters advertising Welwyn Garden City by Charles Paine c. 1920s, a number of works by members of the Soper family and a small collection of local topographical works. A major acquisition was made in 1994 with the purchase of 150 cartoons and caricatures by Cyril Hards (1911-1991).

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Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 Limitations of Collection

The 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 staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

Digital Preservation

The museum has recently started collecting born-digital material and now has a dedicated drive for digital preservation storage. This is of vital importance as the social history of the area is increasingly produced and represented via born-digital methods such as digital photographs and films taken on mobile phones or digital cameras, or documents produced and distributed solely online rather than through print methods. As a new area of collecting, processes are being regularly reviewed and staff are increasing their knowledge and expertise in this area.

4.2 Themes and priorities for future collecting

Archaeology

- To collect all Pre-historic, Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval material with local provenance.
- To move away from preserving 100% bulk archaeological finds (such as tile and animal bone) in favour of collecting only a selected sample, due to constraints on space and resources and taking into consideration the limited long-term benefit of storing such materials. The Museum service will also therefore charge per box of archaeological material and archive deposited.
- Where objects of national importance found within the borough are acquired by the British Museum or other national institutions, the Museum Service will endeavour to obtain them on loan for exhibition, or to acquire high quality replicas from the institution concerned to enhance our learning sessions.
- The Museum service will follow the Hertfordshire Archaeological Archival Standards in all its archaeological collecting.

Local and Social History

- The Museum's collection will record the history of the urban and rural environments, local agriculture, industry, politics and the experiences of work, leisure, home and personal life.
- A priority collecting area is pre 1900 material with a local association.
- Offers of mass-produced twentieth century items should be treated with caution regardless of their local associations.
- Unique items with strong local provenance will still be considered across a range of material such as ephemera, maps, plans and oral history recordings.
- Collection of material on the Garden City and Town and Country Planning movements should continue without duplication of the work of the Garden City Heritage Foundation, Letchworth.
- The Museum will not undertake any contemporary collecting until a clear strategy is in place.

Industry and Retailing

- To collect items which illustrate the development and products of local industry.
- We will continue to collect items from de Havilland Aircraft Company and its associated and successor companies, liaising with the de Havilland Aircraft Museum and Stevenage Museum as appropriate.
- We will restrict the acquisition of material from some local businesses and industries where we already hold large collections e.g. Murphy Radio products, to exceptional items.

Photographs and Film

- Moving image film will not be collected but will be transferred to the East Anglian Film Archive. DVD or digital copies will be obtained where possible for use in exhibitions and research.
- Born-digital photographs relevant to the local area can be accepted.

Costumes and Textiles

- The Museum Service will restrict its collecting in this area to items made in the borough and particularly workwear from borough factories, offices or shops and that linked to the work of local craftspeople.

Fine and Applied Art

- To collect works of artists and craftspeople with strong local connections.
- To collect works of art depicting local scenes, being mindful of the conservation and storage requirements of multi-media composite works.

Natural Sciences

- Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service will not collect any biological or geological material.

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Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 5.1** The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined, will be through a formal review
- 5.2** The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.
- 5.3** 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.

- 5.4** Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service is currently undertaking an inventory of its social history collection and the results of this will be examined to ensure that our collection meets the criteria laid out in this document. In particular, generic social history items non-specific to the local area will be candidates for rationalisation and those items in poor condition or that pose a risk to the care of the rest of the collection.
- 5.5** A future priority for rationalisation is the archaeology collection. An initial audit has been carried out but more in-depth work into the relevance of areas of the archaeology collection needs to be carried out.

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Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

- 6.1** The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.
- 6.2** The museum shall normally restrict its collecting to the historic District of Welwyn Hatfield as defined by the Local Government Act 1972 and the borough boundaries as defined when it received borough status in 2005.
- 6.3** Duplicate material will not generally be collected unless specifically required for our Resource collection to support object handling and learning or if the object offered is in much better condition than the one already in the collection.
- 6.4** Un-provenanced and/or non-local material will only be collected if required to fill a gap in display and one of local provenance cannot be found. Such objects will sit in our Resource collection rather than our accessioned collection for use in educational and/or handling sessions.
- 6.5** Gifts and bequests with conditions attached to them, such as regarding display, will not be accepted by the Museum Service.

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Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1 The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

De Havilland Aircraft Museum
Hertford Museum
Stevenage Museum
St Albans Museum and Verulamium Museum
North Herts Museum
Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust
Garden City Heritage Foundation, Letchworth
Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies
Hatfield House Archives
The Ware Museum

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Archival holdings

The museum is guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).

The Museum service holds archives relating to archaeological projects within the Welwyn Hatfield borough where the finds are also held by the museum service, or, in certain instances where appropriate an archive may be held without finds, for example in the case of a negative archaeological project. Hertfordshire's Archaeological Archival Standards will be followed in all cases.

The museum does not accession its handling collections. They are instead listed in a separate paper register and also on the Modes Collections Database with individual Resource numbers.

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Acquisition

- 9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

All acquisitions must meet at least one of the criteria laid out in this policy, the responsibility for ensuring this lies with the Manager and Curator. Donors will be asked to provide information on the provenance, use and condition of an object, including photographs where possible before a decision is made. T

- 9.2** The museum will not acquire any object unless it is satisfied that the object has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).
- 9.3** In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

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Human remains

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

11

Biological and geological material

- 11.1** The museum will not acquire any biological or geological material.

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Archaeological material

- 12.1** The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.
- 12.2** In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

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Exceptions

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

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

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

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Spoliation

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

15

The repatriation and restitution of objects and human remains

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

15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums.'

Disposal procedures

- 16.1** All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum procedures on deaccessioning and disposal and guided by the Museum Association 'Off the Shelf' toolkit for ethical transfer, reuse and disposal.
- 16.2** Museum curatorial staff will produce a written report to be signed off by the designated portfolio holder to ensure ethical and legal disposals.
- 16.3** When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.
- 16.4** When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort – destruction.
- 16.5** The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the council after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.
- 16.6** A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction will be the responsibility of the council acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7** Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other accredited museums and actively offer to any likely to be interested in its acquisition.

- 16.8** If the material is not acquired by any accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service.
- 16.9** The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10** Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections 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. The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.11** The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.12** Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with

Spectrum procedure on deaccession and disposal.

Disposal by exchange

16.13 The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

16.13.1 In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.

16.13.2 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

16.13.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

16.13.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

16.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

16.15 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

16.16 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases

where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

16.17 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

16.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

