

Wrexham Museum Service Acquisition and Disposal Policy

Governing Body: Wrexham County Borough
Council

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Policy review procedure.....	2
3. Wrexham Museum Service.....	2
3.1 History of the collection.....	2
3.2 Wrexham Museum Service Sites.....	3
4. Collecting Policies.....	3
4.1 Period of time and geographical area to which collecting relates.....	3
4.2 Subjects to which collecting relates.....	4
4.2.1 Archaeology.....	4
4.2.2 Social History.....	4
4.2.3 Industrial and Economic History.....	5
4.2.4 Fine and Decorative Art.....	5
4.2.5 Natural History.....	6
4.2.6 Military History.....	6
4.2.7 Welsh Football Collection.....	6
4.3 Archival material.....	7
4.4 Loans.....	7
4.5 The Education Collection.....	7
5. Limitations on Collecting.....	8
6. Collecting policies of other museums.....	8
7. Acquisitions not covered by the policy.....	9
8. Acquisition procedures.....	9
9. Spoliation.....	10
10. The repatriation and restitution of objects, and human remains.....	10
11. Disposal procedures.....	10

1. Introduction

1.1 This Acquisition and Disposal Policy aims to clearly set out the principles and procedures that Wrexham Museum Service will follow when acquiring and disposing of objects.

1.2 This policy acts as a tool to assist curatorial staff in the development of a high quality permanent collection that strongly represents the area of Wrexham County Borough.

1.3 This policy supports the mission of Wrexham Museum Service

Wrexham County Borough Museum will be a centre of excellence (actual and virtual) for increasing public knowledge and understanding about the heritage of our community and an inspiration for people to actively engage with their heritage

1.4 The contents of this policy comply with the requirements of the Museums, Libraries and Archive Council Museum Accreditation standard.

2. Policy Review Procedure

2.1 This 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 **2014**.

2.2 CyMAL 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.

3. Wrexham Museum Service

3.1 History of the collection

3.1.1 Collecting originally began in Wrexham in the 1930s with a small museum on the top floor of the Old Library. However by the 1950s this museum ceased to exist.

3.1.2 In 1982, due to a lack of museum provision in the area, a Museum Research Officer was appointed for Wrexham Maelor Borough Council and collecting was re-established. The Wrexham Maelor Heritage Centre on King Street was opened in 1988.

3.1.3 In 1983 Clwyd County Council opened Bersham Heritage Centre in the Clywedog Valley as a museum to interpret the industrial history of Clwyd County with specific references to John Wilkinson and his ironworks. A separate collecting policy for Bersham Heritage Centre was established in 1986.

3.1.4 In 1987 Clwyd County Council acquired the site of Wilkinson's Ironworks at Mill Farm. A period of extensive excavation and restoration followed, with the site opening to the public in 1993.

3.1.5 Excavations at Minera Lead Mines commenced in 1991 and the site was opened to the public in 1993.

3.1.6 Following Local Government reorganisation in 1996, the former Clwyd Council sites and associated collections of Bersham Heritage Centre and Ironworks, Minera Lead Mines and Wrexham Maelor Museum Service amalgamated to form the new Wrexham County Borough Museum Service.

3.1.7 In 1996 Wrexham County Borough Museum moved to its current site at County Buildings, Regent Street.

3.2 Wrexham Museum Service sites

3.2.1 The Museum Service operates three accredited museum sites

Wrexham County Borough Museum, County Buildings:

The flagship museum of the service tells the story of Wrexham County Borough from prehistory to modern day. Open all year.

Bersham Heritage Centre and Ironworks:

Bersham Heritage Centre opened in 1983, and the nearby Ironworks opened in 1993 after excavation and restoration of the site. The two seasonal sites interpret the industrial heritage of the local area with specific reference to John Wilkinson.

Minera Lead Mines:

Opened in 1993, Minera Lead Mines is a seasonal site that tells the story of lead mining in Wrexham County Borough.

3.2.2 The Museum service is also responsible for collections held at the following sites:

Llay Store:

The off-site store at Llay is used to securely house the majority of the large items in the collection.

Bersham Colliery, Rhostyllen:

The site was acquired by Clwyd County Council in 1987 with intentions to set up a mining museum. The site includes the Winding House, housing the electric winding engine for Bersham Colliery, and the lattice pit head that has been classed as a scheduled ancient monument. A number of large industrial items and two tram bodies are also currently stored on the site.

Fenns Moss former Peat Processing Works:

The peat cutting and processing machinery, still in situ at Fenns Moss, was acquired by Clwyd County Council in 1993.

4. Collecting policies

4.1 Period of time and geographical area to which collecting relates

4.1.1 The museum service will continue to collect items from any time period.

4.1.2 The museum service will continue to collect artefacts that help to tell the story of Wrexham County Borough and its people. This includes, but is not restricted to, items made, used, found or purchased in the Wrexham area.

4.1.3 In addition, the museum service will continue to actively acquire items for its Welsh Football Collection. This includes items with a strong link to professional and non professional Welsh teams, and the Welsh National Team. It also includes items with a strong link to Welsh footballers including those who play/have played for non Welsh teams. The interests of other museums will be taken in to account.

4.2 Subjects to which collecting relates

4.2.1 Archaeology

Current collection

4.2.1.1 The current collection is relatively small but includes a significant proportion of nationally and regionally important finds. The collection includes the Brymbo man beaker burial, the Bronze Age Rosset hoard, the medieval Llay coin hoard, roman material from Plas Coch, and industrial material from John Wilkinson's Ironworks at Bersham.

4.2.1.2 In the past, due to a lack of local museum provision until the 1980s, archaeological material from the Wrexham County Borough area was collected by other museum services namely The Grosvenor Museum in Chester and National Museum Wales.

Collecting Policy

4.2.1.3 Wrexham Museum Service will continue to collect by gift, bequest or purchase, archaeologically material of any age, found through scientific excavation or casual find, from the Wrexham County Borough area.

4.2.1.4 Wrexham Museum Service will continue to act as a depository for archaeological material from Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust and any other archaeological organisation operating in the Wrexham County Borough area.

4.2.2 Social History

Current Collection

4.2.2.1 Wrexham Museum Service has a well established social history collection that aims to represent the daily life of the people of Wrexham County Borough. Themes covered by the collection include the home, religion, work life, sports and leisure pursuits, the stages of life, health, local clubs and societies.

4.2.2.2 The majority of acquisitions to the collection are made through generous donations by members of the public.

4.2.2.3 Although the collection is well established it often lacks the local provenance that is so important. This essential information has often been unrecorded, misplaced or, for items with no Wrexham connection, it never existed in the first place.

4.2.2.4 A past eagerness to collect all items with any kind of link to Wrexham County Borough has resulted in a high number of duplicate items in the collection. With storage almost full to capacity, there is a need to consider rationalisation of the collection to ensure resources remain available to acquire items that fill gaps in the collection.

Collecting Policy

4.2.2.5 Wrexham Museum Service will continue to collect items of social history that represent the daily life of the people of Wrexham County Borough by gift, bequest and purchase. More emphasis will be placed on the importance of recording the provenance of all new acquisitions.

4.2.3 Industrial and economic history

Current Collection

4.2.3.1 The industrial and economic history collection is another well established collection, with the majority of Wrexham industries being represented to some extent by artefacts. This includes; shops and businesses in the Wrexham area; pharmacy; brewing; coal mining; lead mining; clocks and watch making; Iron and steel; local transport such as trams and buses; the bricks, tiles and terracotta industry; printing.

4.2.3.2 The industrial and economic history collection suffers from many of the same problems as the social history collection; duplicate objects; lack of provenance; and a lack of suitable storage space especially for large objects.

Collecting Policy

4.2.3.3 Wrexham Museum Service will continue to acquire objects by gift, bequest or purchase with a strong association to the industrial and economic history of Wrexham County Borough.

4.2.3.4 Before Local Government reorganisation in 1996 Bersham Heritage Centre had a separate collecting policy stating that it would collect industrial material relating to the whole of Clwyd County. This separate policy no longer exists and Wrexham Museum Service will only acquire items relating to the area of Wrexham County Borough.

4.2.4 Fine and Decorative Art

Current Collection

4.2.4.1 The current collection consists of fine and decorative art in a range of media including oils, watercolours, prints, sculpture, textiles and ceramics. The collection is particularly strong on prints and paintings depicting the past views of the county borough, with particular emphasis on Wrexham town.

4.2.4.2 Storage space for framed items is full to capacity. There is therefore a pressing need to address this to ensure Wrexham Museum Service is able to continue to acquire framed works of art.

Collecting Policy

4.2.4.3 Wrexham Museum Service will continue to acquire through gift, bequest and purchase works of fine and decorative art including paintings, works on paper and applied art. Only items with a strong association to Wrexham County Borough will be acquired. This includes works by local artists, and works that depict local scenes, people or events.

4.2.5 Natural History

Current Collection

4.2.5.1 The museum currently holds a small collection of natural history objects in the form of preserved zoology and geology.

Collecting Policy

4.2.5.2 Although little has been collected previously, the museum service will continue to collect natural history objects with a strong association to the area of Wrexham County Borough. However it may in some cases be more appropriate to suggest an alternative accredited museum that has a more established natural history collection and the specialist staff required to curate such collections.

4.2.6 Military

Current Collection

4.2.6.1 The collection consists of objects including firearms and weapons, uniforms, badges and medals that relate to the people of Wrexham County Borough who have served in the forces. Particularly strong areas of the collection include the military during World War II and the Royal Welch Fusiliers and their role in Wrexham town.

Collecting Policy

4.2.6.2 Wrexham Museum Service will continue to acquire by gift, bequest or purchase material that relates to the role of the forces within Wrexham County Borough, and material that relates to Wrexham County Borough residents that have served/serve in the armed forces.

4.2.6.3 All potential acquisitions of Royal Welch Fusilier related material will be discussed with the curator of Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum.

4.2.7 Welsh Football

Current Collection

4.2.7.1 The national Welsh football collection was set up in 2001 following successful grant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Football Association Wales. The collection includes objects, textiles, works of art and archival material that aim to tell the story of football in Wales from its origins in the late 19th century to the present day. The collection was further supplemented with the acquisition, again with the assistance of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, of the John Charles collection.

4.2.7.2 Unlike the other areas of collecting, the Welsh football collection receives few items by gift of bequest and items are therefore acquired mainly by purchase. The lack of gifts and bequests is due in part to a lack of awareness of the collection by both the public and other museum services.

Collecting Policy

4.2.7.3 Wrexham Heritage Service will continue to actively acquire through gift, bequest or purchase objects, textiles, works of art and archival material that represent the history of Welsh football. This includes items with a strong link to professional and non professional Welsh teams, and the Welsh National Team. It also includes items with a strong link to Welsh footballers including those who play/have played for non Welsh teams. The Museum Service will not acquire original film footage.

4.2.7.4 The museum service will continue to liaise with other museums that have an interest in Welsh football and/or Welsh footballers.

4.3 Archival Material

4.3.1 In the past the museum service collected archival material, including photographs and printed ephemera. This ceased in 1996 when Wrexham Archive service was established. All archival material collected before 1996 is due to be transferred to the Wrexham Archive Service, this process has commenced but is yet to have been completed.

4.3.2 As the museum currently holds archival material, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

4.4 Loans

4.4.1 Wrexham Museum Service will only accept items on loan for an agreed fixed period and for an agreed stated purpose such as exhibition or for identification. This is due to a number of implications associated with loan objects, insurance costs, storage, and the potential withdrawal of the objects with little if any notice.

4.4.2 In the past museums often took items in on permanent or long-term loan and Wrexham was no exception to this. All items currently on long-term or permanent loan to the museum service are undergoing review.

4.5 The Education Collection

4.5.1 A separate education collection has been established by the Education and Access Officer. The collection consists of items gifted or purchased to form an unaccessioned temporary collection used mainly for handling.

4.5.2 The education collection is not governed by the principles and procedures set out in this Acquisition and Disposal Policy.

4.5.3 Items offered to the museum service that do not fit the requirements of the Acquisitions and Disposal Policy will continue to be offered for the education collection as long as approval is first sought from the donor.

4.5.4 The education collection will continue to be maintained and managed by the Education and Access Officer with guidance available from the Collections Manager.

5. Limitations on collecting

5.1 Wrexham Museum Service 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.

5.2 Wrexham Museum Service will not acquire objects where restrictions by the depositor or legal owner would prevent effective curation. We will not accept objects on condition that they are placed on permanent or long-term exhibition, or that they form a discrete collection.

6. Collecting policies of other museums

6.1 Wrexham Museum Service 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.

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

6.2.1 Museum Services in surrounding counties

Flintshire County Council Museum Service

Denbighshire County Council Heritage Service

Cheshire West and Chester County Council Museum Service with particular reference to The Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

Shropshire County Council Museum Service

Powys County Council Museum Service

Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum

6.2.2 National Museums and Institutions
Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales
The National Library of Wales

6.2.3 Museums with significant football collections
National Football Museum, Preston
Club museums including Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool
The Welsh Sports Hall of Fame

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 WCBC and the museum service itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

8. Acquisition procedures

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

8.2 In particular, the 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, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. WCBC 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.

8.4 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

8.5 The museum will not acquire archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) in any case where WCBC or the responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

8.6 In England, Northern Ireland and Wales the procedures include 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.

8.7 Any exceptions to the above clauses 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, or 8.5 will only be because the 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 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.

8.8 As the museum 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.

9. Spoliation

9.1 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.

10. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects, and human remains

10.1 Wrexham County Borough Council, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, 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. Wrexham Museum Service 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 procedures described in 12a-12d, 12g and 12s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

10.2 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”.

11. Disposal procedures

11.1 WCBC will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.

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

11.3 The museum will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.

11.4 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.

11.5 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 11.7-11.15 will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.

11.6 The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

11.7 Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, the decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by WCBC only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the 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. External 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.

11.8 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 for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of WCBC and the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, and not of any one member of staff acting alone.

11.9 Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied 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 MLA.

11.10 The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated

that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

11.11 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 or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

11.12 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly 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 an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

11.13 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.

11.14 The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

11.15 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.