

YORK MUSEUMS TRUST
Acquisition & Disposal Policy

Date approved by YMT Trustees: _____

Date approved by City of York Council: _____

Due for review: **July 2006**

MISSION

To cherish the collections and buildings entrusted to us, presenting and interpreting them as a stimulus for learning, a provocation to curiosity and a source of inspiration and enjoyment for all.

1. Existing collections, including the subjects or themes for collecting

The whole of the Collection managed by York Museums Trust is Designated as an outstanding collection, recognising its national importance. The Trust manages the collection and makes new acquisitions on behalf of the City of York Council, in whom ownership of the collection is vested. The Collection consists of the following broad subject areas:

- Archaeology & Numismatics
- Arts
 - Fine Art
 - Ceramics & Glass
 - Costume & Textiles
- Natural Science
 - Biology
 - Geology
 - Astronomy & Scientific Instruments
- History
 - Social History
 - Military History

We are only seeking to collect actively within subject areas where there is curatorial skill to identify appropriate objects for acquisition and to make best use of those objects once they become part of the collection. New acquisitions will be considered in the context of how we can make the collections as a whole more widely accessible than previously, including their potential for use in learning programmes.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

2. Criteria governing future collecting policy, including the subjects or themes for collecting, by subject area**ARCHAEOLOGY & NUMISMATICS**

The archaeology and numismatic collections are some of the most comprehensive and important such collections in the U.K. The archaeology collection numbers some 55,000 objects ranging from the Palaeolithic up to the 20th century. The excavation archive represents important sites from York and North Yorkshire. The most significant objects within the archaeology collection, in no particular order, are:

The Middleham Jewel, Coppergate Helmet, Ormside Bowl, Head of Constantine, 12th century statues from St. Mary's Abbey; infirmary mortar from St. Mary's Abbey, Castle Yard hanging bowl, Gilling West Sword, collection of Anglo-Saxon stycas.

York Museums Trust wishes to establish a streamlined, effectively exploited archaeological collection rigorously selected and managed and, in all its elements, of social benefit to a wide range of communities. We will concentrate collecting on objects and assemblages that are of high archaeological (primary context) and museological significance to build a collection that represents:

- the peculiar, particular, significant, and regional characteristics of the archaeological record of the city of York and the North Riding of Yorkshire.
- the history of the Yorkshire Museum and Gardens and its archaeological collections.
- the architectural and archaeological development of St Mary's Abbey and St. Mary's Castlegate, York.

To achieve this, we will collect archaeological material which tells the story of the people of York, North Yorkshire or the North of England from earliest times to the present day covering the prehistoric, Roman, Anglian, Anglo-Scandinavian and Medieval periods. Although the existing collection contains some material from outside Yorkshire and the UK, it is not our policy to collect from outside Yorkshire. There is a presumption that newly acquired material will be accompanied by reliable locality data (at least a 6 figure grid reference, contextual information and all accompanying documentary and digital archive).

We will acquire archaeological material through the planning process; donation; purchase and field collection. Sources of new acquisitions will include:

- Existing collections amassed by individual collectors.
- Excavation archives. Material found during excavation, survey or by other means.
- Individual objects which are often offered to the museum following an enquiry.
- Treasure – objects will continue to be purchased through the DCMS treasure process if they meet all other policy criteria.
- We will build links with relevant collectors to identify what individual objects or assemblages currently in private collections would enhance the collection.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

SCIENCE**Geology**

York Museums Trust wishes to build upon the enormous strengths of the existing geology collection to create a scientific resource that reflects the geological wealth of the Yorkshire region and its wider geographical, temporal, historical and scientific context. Emphasis will be placed on acquiring specimens that demonstrate rigorous scientific methodology, site conservation and preservation as well as those of exceptional quality and scientific or historical significance. The aim to develop this designated collection into the primary UK resource for:

- The geological evolution of Yorkshire
- The mineralisation of the north of England
- The petrology of the north of England
- The history of the Yorkshire Museum and its geological collections with particular reference to the role of the museum and the YPS in the history of geology.
- Historical vulcanology

To achieve this, we will collect fossils and associated contextual material from Yorkshire and minerals and rocks from the north of England. Where it occurs within existing private collections, fossil material from other UK sites akin to those in Yorkshire will be considered if they are shown to enrich our understanding of Yorkshire geology. There is a presumption that newly acquired material will be accompanied by reliable locality data, contextual information and all accompanying documentation. In addition we insist that specimens are excavated responsibly, legally and scientifically and evidence to that end is available.

We will acquire geological specimens through; donation; purchase and field collection. Sources of new acquisitions may include:

- Existing collections amassed by individual collectors.
- Material from the region that has been described, cited or figured in the scientific literature.
- Individual objects which are often offered to the museum following an enquiry.

With few exceptions, much of the scientific value of geological specimens lies in their associated geographical and geological context. It will normally not be our policy to acquire specimens without adequate documentation, unless they have overwhelming display or historical interest.

Biology

York Museums Trust wishes to consolidate the biology collection as a record of the natural history of Yorkshire. This rationalised collection will be resource for a wide range of communities and will contribute to a multi-level understanding of ecology, biodiversity, the history of the natural sciences and also how the natural world is meshed with our own.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

We will focus on collecting specimens that demonstrate rigorous scientific methodology, site conservation and preservation as well as those of exceptional quality and scientific or historical significance. We aim to develop the collection to represent:

- The natural history of York and Yorkshire
- Biodiversity past and present with particular reference to disappearing habitats
- The history of the Yorkshire Museum and Gardens and its biological collections with particular reference to the role of the museum and the YPS in the history of science.

To achieve this, we will collect biological material from York and Yorkshire, chiefly through existing private collections and natural history organisations. Although the existing collection contains some material from outside Yorkshire and the UK, it is not our policy to collect from beyond Yorkshire. There is a presumption that newly acquired material will be accompanied by reliable locality data, contextual information and all accompanying documentation. In addition we insist that specimens are collected responsibly, legally and scientifically and evidence to that end is available.

We will acquire biological specimens through; donation, purchase and field collection. Sources of new acquisitions may include:

- Existing collections amassed by individual collectors or organisations
- Material from the region that has been described, cited or figured in the scientific literature.
- Individual specimens which are offered to the museum following an enquiry.

With few exceptions, much of the scientific value of biological specimens lies in their associated geographical and ecological context. We will not acquire specimens without adequate documentation, unless they have overwhelming display or historical interest.

Scientific Instruments

York Museums Trust wishes to modestly develop the scientific instrument collection to reflect the history of the physical sciences in York. This small and focused collection will contribute to a wider understanding of York's scientific heritage and legacy.

We will normally only acquire scientific instruments which have a significant association with the history of science and scientific instrument-making in York, or a relevance to other existing collections. Such acquisitions should normally be in good condition and be accompanied by adequate historical and technical documentation. Size and weight are important factors in the storage, conservation and health and safety issues, and in general there will therefore be a presumption against larger and heavier objects.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

Specifically we look to acquire:

- Telescopes and other instruments made by Thomas Cooke of York
- Timepieces manufactured in York
- Instruments made by other York instrument makers
- Material relevant to history of Science and Astronomy in York.

Although the existing collection contains some material from outside Yorkshire and the UK, it is not our policy to collect from beyond York. There is also a presumption against acquiring scientific instruments dating after 1945.

We will acquire scientific instruments through donation or purchase. Sources of new acquisitions may include:

- Existing collections amassed by individual collectors or organisations
- Auctions
- Individual objects which are offered to the museum following an enquiry.

ARTS

Fine Art

The Fine Art Collection aims to provide a survey of post-medieval painting in western Europe and a works on paper collection with appropriate local emphasis. Sculpture is collected to complement the 2 dimensional collections. Our aspiration is for high-quality targeted acquisition to complement our current holdings.

To provide this survey, we will concentrate on acquiring works by important artists who are not yet represented in the collection. We will seek to acquire :

- works from the 14th – 18th centuries, with the exception of landscapes. There is an aspiration to acquire works by Stubbs, Gainsborough, Devis, Romney, Wright of Derby and Raeburn.
- 19th century French paintings, particularly a good example of work by the Impressionists and the Post-Impressionists.
- 19th century British paintings including works by Turner, Constable, Wilkie, Bonington, Leighton, Alma-Tadema and Poynter, as well as examples of Pre-Raphaelitism.
- 20th and 21st century paintings, particularly from the period after 1960 which is not well represented. We will actively pursue the acquisition of works by the St Ives School.
- Sculpture of the 20th century, particularly Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth.
- Watercolours, drawings and prints devoted to the topography of York and North Yorkshire where they provide new topographical information and are of aesthetic significance.
- British watercolours of aesthetic significance that complement the paintings collection.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

- We will work in partnership with the Contemporary Art Society to inform and enhance our approach to contemporary collecting.

We will acquire works through purchase, donation, bequest, commission and membership of the Contemporary Art Society.

Decorative Arts

The ceramics collections represent a survey of ceramics in Britain from its earliest appearance in prehistory through to the foremost collection of contemporary studio pottery in Britain in the Milner White and WA Ismay collections. This section of the acquisition policy deals with all non-archaeological ceramics.

The Glass collection consists of a small but important selection of painted glass by Henry Gyles and William Peckitt of York; English glass of the 18th and early 19th centuries and post-war studio glass. We have a small collection of York silver and other metalwork.

- WA Ismay stated that he wanted the collection to continue. We will continue to acquire studio pottery that is complementary to the WA Ismay collection.
- We would acquire examples of post-medieval painted glass with particular reference to Gyles or Peckitt, although such opportunities are likely to be rare.
- We would like to acquire an 18th century silver chocolate pot as this was a significant item for the period and there is not an example in the collection.

Costume and Textiles

The costume and textile collection is one of the largest and most comprehensive regional collections in the UK, representing English fashion from c1700 to the 21st century and includes women's dress, children's clothes, needlework tools, fans, quilts, jewellery, lace and fashion accessories.

The collection straddles both social history and decorative arts and provides a continuous survey of dress as actually worn by individuals. In the last thirty years collecting has focussed on material from York and Yorkshire. The collection embraces changes and developments in technology, living standards, taste, production and consumption, trade, domestic and working life, and design history. Through such links it can be used in many different ways with the other collections held by the trust.

Whilst the collection is generally strong, there are some gaps we wish to address to ensure historical continuity which is especially important in a fashion context where new styles develop out of what went before. We will seek to acquire:

- Objects from 1790 – 1810 and pre-1900 men's clothes. Both are areas where items rarely become available, so they are highly sought after when they do.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

- Late 20th and early 21st century items with a York or Yorkshire provenance. Over the next year we will develop a focussed and pro-active approach to building the more recent areas of the collection.
- Outfits and accessories associated with Ascot in York.

HISTORY

Most of the collection relates to York and Yorkshire, but some material is nationally based. The size and scope of these collections allow us to be focussed and selective in new acquisitions. In general, material acquired for this collection will have strong York or North Yorkshire provenance or association.

Social History

The Social History collection is made up of objects drawn from everyday life as well as rare and exceptional items. It can tell the story of how ordinary people lived in York and the surrounding area from c1700 to the present day in a way and a depth that no other museum in the region can.

We will seek to acquire items which reflect the changing life and aspirations of the people of York and its region, and which recognises their economic and cultural diversity. This will include contemporary as well as historical material. Items must have clear local provenance, and a recorded history and clear documentation of ownership. Future collecting will be predominantly project based and have strictly defined outcomes and limits.

Items we wish to acquire:

- Georgian Armchair for the Georgian Drawing Room
- Hornsea Pottery – a local pottery that is not represented in the collections which illustrates the good design available to the mass market through local department stores
- An example of mass market post-1950s table ware
- Examples of mass market post-1950s kitchenware.
- Items which reflect significant local events – e.g. Ascot 2005
- Items relating to significant local trades and industries not adequately represented in the existing collection, including archives from Terry's
- Items relating to the history of York Castle both as a prison and as a Museum

Military History

The Military History collection represents regional associations with all aspects of English military history. Much of the Military material we would wish to acquire is not often available – opportunities to acquire it are rare. We will review the list of desired objects in association with the Royal Armouries and other military collections in the region and continue to keep close and regular contact with regimental and corps museums in our region, and also with other relevant military collections nationally via the Army Museum Ogilby Trust and the specialist national museums.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

The list of desired acquisitions is long established for the Military collection, and is drawn up to secure items that are missing from the corpus of the collection, whose presence would complete series or bridge gaps and items which would enhance the collections beyond their individual value e.g. uniform and equipment to go with weapons and armour we already have. Particularly, we would seek to acquire:

- A piece of medieval armour, preferably a helmet
- a set of late 19th Century Infantry Equipment - Valise or Slade Wallace Equipment
- an 18th century 'other ranks' uniform or tunic of a relevant regiment
- a set of 18th century military infantry equipment - cartridge box, belt, knapsack etc.
- an 18th century soldier's hat of a relevant regiment
- 17th century military equipment - 'apostles' cartridge bandolier
- 17th century military long arms - a matchlock and a doglock, either muskets or carbines
- an example of 17th century uniform - tunic or coat
- Second World War portable infantry support weapons:
 - a Projector Infantry Anti-tank weapon - Used from 1942 until 1952 - many Yorkshiremen were awarded medals for effectively using one.
 - a 2" Mortar
 - a .50in Browning Machine Gun
 - an aircraft machine gun either a Browning or Vickers .303in or .50in calibre
- a set of First World War pattern '08 Webbing

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

The York Museum Trust collections generally cover the area of York and Yorkshire, and all time periods. Where there is more specific focus to collecting, it is discussed under the appropriate subject heading.

4. Limitations on collecting

The Trust recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to the City Council's 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

The Trust 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.

Specific reference is made to the following museums:

Due to the over-arching nature of York's collections, we will take account of all museums in North Yorkshire, and other subject-specialist museums, as appropriate to each collecting area.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

The overriding impetus for our approach to regional collecting is that important material should be held in public collections with appropriate standards of collection care and interpretation, whether we or another are the most appropriate museum. We will work with other museums and museum services to develop the collections regionally, to ensure that collections get the best care, and are in those places where they will best meet the needs of the users.

We have a defined first interest geographical collecting area for archaeological objects, including individual finds as reported through the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Treasure Act that respects, and is respected by, other North Yorkshire and subject specialist museums. We also have an overriding collecting policy across North Yorkshire for archaeological and Geological material to ensure that no area lacks provision for the deposition of important material. However, we recognise the collecting areas and periods of other museums in the region, and consider that the more local museum, assuming it has appropriate staff and resources, has an abiding interest in collecting material from its locality.

In order to facilitate the open discussion required for the above statement to work, we will convene an archaeological curators group from across the Yorkshire region to discuss collecting policies. We actively participate in the Yorkshire & Humberside Natural Science Collections Research Unit.

6. Policy review procedure

The Acquisition and Disposal Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every two years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

The Yorkshire Museums, Libraries and Archives Council 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

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 Trust itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

8. Acquisition procedures

a. The Trust will exercise 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 Trust can acquire for the City Council a valid title to the item in question.

b. In particular, the Trust 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).

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

c. 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 Trust 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.

d. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the Trust 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. The Trust will not acquire archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures, 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).

f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 8a, 8b, 8c, or 8e will only be because the Trust 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 Trust will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

9. Spoliation

The Trust 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.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

10. Repatriation and Restitution

The Trust's governing body, acting on the advice of its professional staff, may recommend a decision to be taken by the City Council to return human remains, objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The Trust will take such decisions on a case by case basis, within its and the City Council's legal position and taking into account all ethical implications.

11. Management of archives

As the Trust holds archives on behalf of the City Council, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body and that of the City Council will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

12. Disposal procedures

a. By definition, a museum has a long-term purpose and should possess (or intend to acquire) permanent collections in relation to its stated objectives. The Trust accepts the principle that, except for sound curatorial reasons, there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

b. The Trust 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.

c. When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the Trust 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.

d. Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds.

e. Any monies received by the Trust 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 MLA.

f. 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), will be the responsibility of the City of York Council acting on the recommendation of the Trust's Board of Trustees, having taken advice from professional curatorial staff. It is not the responsibility of the curator of the collection acting alone.

g. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, 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.

YMT Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2005 - 2006

h. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums 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.

i. 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.

j. 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.