



## Collections Development

# POLICY



28 Winchester Street,  
Whitchurch,  
Hampshire  
RG28 7AL

## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Relationship to Other Relevant Policies/Plans of the Organisation: ..... | 2  |
| 2. History of the Collections.....  | 3  |
| 3. An overview of Current Collections.....                                  | 4  |
| 1. The Buildings and Grounds – On loan .....                                | 4  |
| 2. Historic Silk Production – On loan.....                                  | 4  |
| 3. Historic Production Archive (up to 1989) – On loan .....                 | 4  |
| 4. Production Archive – Accessioned collection.....                         | 4  |
| 5. General Collection – Accessioned collection.....                         | 4  |
| 4. Themes and Priorities for Future Collecting .....                        | 4  |
| 5. Themes and Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal .....             | 5  |
| 6. Legal and Ethical Framework for Acquisition and Disposal of Items.....   | 6  |
| 7. Collecting Policies of other Museums .....                               | 6  |
| 8. Archival Holdings.....   | 6  |
| 9. Acquisition.....   | 6  |
| 10. Human Remains.....  | 7  |
| 11. Biological and Geological Material .....                                | 7  |
| 12. Archaeological Material .....   | 7  |
| 13. Exceptions.....   | 7  |
| 14. Spoliation.....   | 8  |
| 15. Disposal Procedures .....   | 8  |
| 16. Disposal by Exchange.....   | 9  |
| 17. Disposal by Destruction.....  | 10 |

**Name of museum:** Whitchurch Silk Mill.

**Name of governing body:** Whitchurch Silk Mill Trust.

**Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:** 29 February 2020.

**Policy review procedure:** The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

**Date at which this policy is due for review:** February 2025.

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

This document follows the template developed by Arts Council England and issued in July 2014, and reprinted November 2018.

## **I. Relationship to Other Relevant Policies/Plans of the Organisation:**

I.1 The museum's statement of purpose is:

Whitchurch Silk Mill is a 200-year-old Grade II\* textile mill on the River Test in the small Hampshire town of Whitchurch. It is the only example in Britain of a working silk mill open to the public, where visitors can watch skilled workers operating the machinery. Our vision is for the Mill to be a thriving living museum which weaves silk and delights all who visit. We have four strategic objectives to guide our activities:

- Maintaining the Silk Mill as a major heritage site in North Hampshire
- Increasing visitor numbers
- Engaging fully with the local community
- Weaving on the Mill's historic machinery

Our heritage and collections underpin all that we do and embody, represent and evidence living weaving heritage at the Mill. They are our core content and their development affect every aspect of our activity. Our current ambitions are derived from our long-term statement of purpose as set out in the Memorandum and Articles that established the Trust:

*To educate the public in the history of the production, design, distribution and sale of silk and other textiles and their connection to Whitchurch.*

*To secure for the benefit of the public the preservation, restoration, improvement, enhancement and maintenance of the features and objects of historical and industrial interest at the Mill and its environs and also the art of silk making.*

I.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

I.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.

- I.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- I.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.
- I.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.
- I.7 The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

## 2. History of the Collections

The origin of the collections can be traced back through the history of the Mill. The Mill was built around 1815 on the River Test in Whitchurch, Hampshire. It has produced silk yarn since 1817 and has been weaving silk cloth since the 1830s. As a working museum is still weaves silk cloth on machinery installed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Through its history the Mill has had several owners, most notably James Hide, who ran it from 1886 until his death in 1955. During his tenure the Mill wove silk linings for the trademark raincoats designed by his brother-in-law Thomas Burberry of Basingstoke. The last commercial owners were Ede and Ravenscroft, makers of academic and legal gowns, who closed the Mill in 1985, by which time the machinery was obsolete and no longer commercially viable, and the building was in poor condition.

At this time Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust (HBPT) stepped in to rescue it as a rare example of a Georgian textile mill, unique in the south of England. After repairs the Mill was opened to the public as a museum in 1990 under the management of Whitchurch Silk Mill Trust.

The Buildings and Grounds, Historic Silk Production Collection and Historic Production Archive are owned by Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust. Whitchurch Silk Mill Trust manages the collections on behalf of HBPT. The Management arrangements are set out in the terms of the lease agreement between the two organisations.

[Clause 1.2] "Demised Premises" means all that piece or parcel of land situate at Whitchurch in Hampshire shown edge red on the Plan together with the silk mill and other buildings standing on such land at any time during the Term (but not including any part of the property shown coloured blue on the Plan (comprising inter alia the mill stream) or any fishing rights therein and the installations looms fixtures and fittings now in and belonging to the said land and buildings specified in the First Schedule hereto"

A total of 12 looms and other historic machinery remain in their original positions in the Mill and are still set up to work and weave the silk. It is a charitable objective of WSMT to weave silk, in so doing preserving the machinery and skills to operate them and delighting visitors. The 'Production Archive

– Accessioned collection’ embodies, represents and evidences weaving at the Mill since 1990, and includes bespoke work for private and commercial clients and our own designs. The ‘General Collection – Accessioned collection’ includes items made from our silk cloth, which can include artworks and banners, in addition to photographs and items purchased or donated to WSMT.

### **3. An overview of Current Collections**

There are five collections in the management of WSMT, which are divided into two categories of ownership: those which form part of the WSMT permanent accessioned collection and those which are ‘on loan’ from HBPT.

#### **1. The Buildings and Grounds – On loan**

These are owned by HBPT and maintained by WSMT in accordance with the terms of the lease agreement between the two organisations. The Mill itself is a Grade II\* Listed Building dating from 1815.

#### **2. Historic Silk Production – On loan**

The production machinery is predominantly Victorian and covers all processes in the production of woven silk – from substantial items such as looms to smaller items such as bobbins and baskets. These are all owned by HBPT and maintained and operated by WSMT in accordance with the terms of the lease agreement between the two organisations:

#### **3. Historic Production Archive (up to 1989) – On loan**

This consists of the written records and samples relating to the silk produced at the Mill during its working life (up to 1989). The archive belongs to HBPT and forms a critical component of the historic collections, providing much of the underpinning context.

#### **4. Production Archive – Accessioned collection**

This consists of the written records and samples relating to the silk produced at the Mill during its working life since 1989. The archive belongs to WSMT and forms a critical component of the collections, providing much of the underpinning context.

#### **5. General Collection – Accessioned collection**

This consists of items relating to all aspects of the Mill’s history and the historic production of silk and other textiles, not included in the four core collections. These objects belong to WSMT and are held in order to support the charitable objectives of the Trust. The collection includes items made at the Mill, art work made with Whitchurch silk, photographs, related to historic textile production and other similar items.

### **4. Themes and Priorities for Future Collecting**

All those collections listed above and delineated as being ‘on loan’ are the property of HBPT. Any decisions regarding changes to use or ownership will be made in full consultation with HBPT, the owner. It is not envisaged that further acquisitions will be made, unless relevant artefacts with clear

provenance become available to purchase or are offered as donations. In such cases, new items will be accessioned by WSMT as part of the permanent general collection.

The production archive is a living archive and will grow as new production records are created. No further acquisition is envisaged unless documentary records with clear provenance become available to purchase or are offered as donations. As above, any identified rationalisation will be carried out according to ACE guidelines and must be endorsed by the Board.

The General Collection may be developed, the priorities for collecting are:

- Material and archives which have become detached from the site will be added to the collection where it has research value or will assist in the future management of the Mill.
- Items made from Whitchurch silk with a specific historic context, e.g. robes manufactured by Ede & Ravenscroft during their tenure at the Mill. It is not intended to collect samples of all silk woven at the Mill or all items created for sale, as they will be recorded in the production archive
- One-off objects created by artists or craft workers from Whitchurch silk, with information about the creator and production process for context, where it has research or display value
- Historic artefacts relating to silk and textile production that have a use in helping to educate and inform visitors
- Historic artefacts, documents and images that relate to the history of the Mill and its local, regional and national context

## 5. 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 process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. 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.

5.2 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.

**The Buildings and Grounds:** this collection will not be rationalised.

**Historic Silk Production:** this collection will not be rationalised.

**Historic Production Archive:** this collection will not be rationalised.

**Production Archive and General Collection:** Should rationalisation of our own accessioned collections be deemed necessary it will only be undertaken for legal, safety or care and conservation reasons (for example, spoliation, radiation, infestation, repatriation). Any rationalisation will be carried out under professional supervision as part of a planned programme, approved by the Board of Trustees.

## **6. 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.

## **7. Collecting Policies of other Museums**

7.1 The 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 specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

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

Hampshire Cultural Trust – including specialist staff at the Collections Headquarters, Willis Museum (Basingstoke) and Andover Museum and Milestones Museum.

## **8. Archival Holdings**

The Mill's archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, have been accessioned as part of the Production Archive and General Collection and will be managed to the same standard of care. We will aim to document them and make them available for the purposes of learning, research and enjoyment. Digitisation of archival materials will be considered alongside digitisation of collections themselves.

Whitchurch Silk Mill will not seek to acquire archives which do not support its existing collections or form supporting material for new acquisitions. It will work with other organisations, particularly the Hampshire Record Office to find appropriate homes such archive material.

As it holds archive its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).

## **9. Acquisition**

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

All acquisitions are subject to the provisions of this Collections Development Policy.

9.1.1 Offers of gifts to the Museum may be accepted by the Mill Director or Visitor Experience Manager. Any query will be referred to the Mill Director for decision.

9.1.2 Any item that is being considered for purchase will initially be discussed with the Mill Director. The Director may approve any purchase where the cost is below the current delegation level to the Director (£5000), subject to available funds. All purchases above this level will be agreed by the Board of Trustees. If a decision is required in the period before the next scheduled Board meeting, then the purchase may be agreed by the Chair and reported to the next Board meeting.

9.1.3 Any item that is being offered for loan will initially be discussed with the Mill Director. All loans will be agreed by the Board of Trustees. If a decision is required in the period before the next scheduled Board meeting, then the loan may be agreed by the Chair and reported to the next Board meeting.

9.2 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).

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.

## **10. Human Remains**

10.1 The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

## **11. Biological and Geological Material**

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

## **12. Archaeological Material**

12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material.

## **13. 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.

## **14. 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. Disposal Procedures**

15.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.

15.2 The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

15.3 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.

15.4 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.

15.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only 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.

15.6 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 for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

15.7 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 likely to be interested in its acquisition.

15.8 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, an announcement in the

Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

15.9 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.

15.10 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 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 the Arts Council England.

15.11 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.

15.12 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**

15.13 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.

15.13.1 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 15.1-5 will apply.

15.13.2 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.

15.13.3 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).

15.13.4 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**

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

15.15 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.

15.16 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.

15.17 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.

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