

**APPENDIX**

**Wakefield M.D.C. Education, Libraries & Museums  
Museums & Arts**

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**COLLECTING  
POLICY**

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**February 2003**

**Wakefield Metropolitan District Council  
Education, Libraries & Museums: Museums & Arts**

**COLLECTING POLICY**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
1. Collecting Strategy	1
2. Collecting areas	4 - 8
- Archaeology	
- Clarke Hall	
- Fine and Decorative Art	
- Social History	
3. Disposals	9 - 10
4. Non-Permanent Collections	11
- The Print Loan Collection	
- The Handling Collection	
5. Standards and guidelines	12
6. Glossary	13

## **1.0 Collecting Strategy**

### **1.1 Vision**

Museums & Arts collect historic objects, works of art and other material to contribute to the delivery of the Council's vision of:

- 'Strong and distinctive communities, proud of their heritage but now looking to the future and working together for growth and renewal at the heart of West Yorkshire'.

Our Collecting Policy also contributes towards Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts' vision, which is:

- To run relevant and welcoming museum, public hall and arts development services that inspire and enrich the lives of all people who live, work in and visit the Wakefield District, are popular and of high quality.
- To play a key role in the cultural, educational, economic and social development of the Wakefield District and its people.

We will expand the collections of Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts, and access to them, to increase opportunities for inspiration, learning and enjoyment.

### **1.2 Priorities for acquisition**

Wakefield MDC Museums and Arts will consult widely in 2003-4 on the priorities for acquisition. We will actively seek out items identified as priorities during these consultations, or in this policy.

Acquisitions can be made by gift, bequest, purchase or transfer.

### **1.3 Relationships with potential vendors and donors.**

Wakefield MDC Museums and Arts welcomes the development of constructive relationships with potential vendors and donors (consistent with the sector's ethical guidelines). Such relationships will identify items suitable for the collections and enable them to be acquired for the collections.

### **1.4 Funding acquisitions**

The Wakefield MDC Museums and Arts accumulating fund is used for the purchase of acquisitions, along with grant-aid and support from the service's Friends organisations.

We will manage the fund effectively, and maximise funding opportunities to enable us to buy more expensive items.

## 1.5 Policy for refusing items.

Wakefield MDC Museums and Arts will refuse to accept:

- Any item without provenance.
- Any item which cannot be cared for to professional standards.
- Any item which can be better housed by other professional public bodies.
- Any item without a valid title of ownership.
- Any item that has been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin in violation of that country's laws. This includes the UK or any intermediate country in which the object may have been legally owned.

There is a strong presumption against acquiring duplicate material.

Items that are refused will be returned to the owner or disposed of, on their behalf and with their agreement.

## 1.6 Loans

Wakefield MDC Museums and Arts occasionally takes objects on loan for fixed periods of time, which can be renewed. The service does not accept long-term, non-fixed loans.

Wakefield Museums and Arts refuses to lend items to organisations that do not provide a professional standard of collections care. Wakefield MDC Museums and Arts refuses to lend items to individuals.

## 1.7 Disposals

No object can be removed from the collections until its provenance has been firmly established through collections audits and the reconciliation of all documentation.

Other guidelines for disposal are covered more fully in section three below.

## 1.8 General principles

This collecting policy is bound by:

- The Museums Association Code of Ethics.
- The Museums Association Ethical Guidelines on acquisitions and disposals.
- Treasure legislation.
- Regulations relating to human remains.
- Other standards and guidelines as listed at the end of this policy.

The policy will be reviewed on or before October 2007.

This policy applies to collections held by the seven registered museums run by Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts.

All references to the district refer to the area within the current boundary of Wakefield Metropolitan District.

## 2.0 Collecting Areas

### 2.1 Archaeology

Museums & Arts aspires to collect archaeological material which records, interprets and displays the early history of the Wakefield District from prehistoric times to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Collectively, this material is evidence of the way of life and achievements of people living in the District. Archaeological excavation and other forms of fieldwork are the only sound evidence for the distant past; in later periods they provide information on aspects of early life that can't be provided by documentary or other sources.

The main part of the archaeology collections are site archives from large-scale excavations at sites including Roman Castleford, Sandal Castle, Pontefract Castle and Pontefract Priory. These include not only excavated objects but also associated site records, plans, drawings, photographs etc. Some of this material is of regional and national significance, and will continue to be used for scientific work in the future. There are also smaller groups and individual objects from local sites produced by excavations, field-walking, building recording and casual finds.

The archaeology collection consists of all the major excavations carried out in the district in the last 50 years.

As a result of demolition of historic buildings in the 1950s and 1960s, there is also a collection of material collected from local buildings ranging in date from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

There is also a collection of British coins, banknotes, medals and tokens.

This comprises upwards of 50,000 separate artefacts.

- Wakefield MDC. Museums & Arts acquire material only from identified sites that lie within Wakefield Metropolitan District at the time of donation. Where sites lie across district boundaries, adjoining collecting museums will be consulted.
- Exceptionally, unprovenanced material or material arising from sites outside the district may be collected for specific reasons.
- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts acquire the results of systematic archaeological investigation including excavation, field-walking, surveying monuments, recording buildings etc. This includes not only objects but also all associated records, plans, photographs, x-rays etc.  
Wakefield MDC are currently exploring the issues around digital data transfers, and an addition to this policy will be produced by the end of 2003.

- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts normally only accept this material if it is accompanied by the associated documentary archive, together with copyright for it or the right to use it for interpretation and display. It is the responsibility of the archaeological contractor to ensure archives are prepared in accordance with the requirements of Wakefield MDC before transfer.
- Wakefield M.D.C. Museum & Arts will record casual finds or finds from responsible metal detectors, but only acquire them where they are in good condition or have some research potential.
- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts will not acquire archaeological material when we have reasonable cause to believe that the circumstances of their recovery involved the recent unscientific or intentional destruction or damage of ancient monuments or other known archaeological sites, or involved a failure to disclose the finds to the owner or occupier of the land, or to the proper authorities in the case of possible finds covered by the Treasure Act.
- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts collect British coins, banknotes, medals and tokens up to the present day, with particular emphasis on local and regional examples.
- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts will encourage responsible excavations and related work in areas where local archaeological knowledge is poor e.g. prehistoric sites and post Roman sites.

## 2.2 **Clarke Hall Educational Museum Collection**

The collection of Clarke Hall Educational Museum reflects as much as possible the social and economic lifestyle of the wealthy middle class Clarke family of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century, and that of the region, including the community of the parish of Stanley. It is bound by the Collecting Policy of Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts, with the following amendments: -

- All items within the house are regarded as a special handling collection. Therefore only items which could be handled safely will be considered for the collection.
- When no original artefacts are available for display use it is the policy of Clarke Hall to commission historically researched accurate reproduction 17<sup>th</sup> century items, or to acquire original but later items which are very similar in material and design. These are classed as part of the collections.

- Clarke Hall will accept items on loan when such items cannot be purchased or are otherwise unavailable. The nature of the collection and the likely usage of each item are always made clear.

### 2.3 **Fine and Decorative Art**

Museums & Arts aspires to collect fine and decorative art which enhances a distinguished collection of modern British art, including items by locally born sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, which are of international significance. Within the next five years Museums and Arts is proposing the development of a new gallery at the Wakefield Waterfront, which will act as a catalyst for the further expansion of the collections. For example at the core of the new facility will be displays devoted to the work of Barbara Hepworth, including a major gift of original plaster sculptures from the artist's estate. The new facility will also allow the gallery to more fully represent the key movements in modern British art, as it will overcome the current collecting limitations relating to the size of work acquired and the accommodation of loans in from outside bodies.

The new development will enhance the existing high quality art collection, which includes strengths in other areas such as local and regional topography. For example the Gott collection contains over 1,000 works on paper relating to the topography and architecture of Yorkshire from c. 1700. There are also works of particular distinction within the fields of Edwardian and Victorian painting, British portraiture and 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian and North European paintings and drawings.

Within the Decorative Art collection there is a particular emphasis on locally produced ceramics and glass. There is a wide variety of 18<sup>th</sup> century British and European wares and a small collection of studio pottery and contemporary craft from 1950 to the present.

- Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts will actively acquire items that reflect the diversity of British visual art and crafts production from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards.
- Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts will prioritise the acquisition of fine and decorative art material that has associations with the district specifically and the Yorkshire region in general.
- Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts will support contemporary artists and crafts people within the Yorkshire region by active acquisition of their work.
- When appropriate, Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts will acquire examples from contemporary art and craft exhibitions originated by the service.

- Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts will maintain the subscription to the Contemporary Arts Society and acquire items from their biannual distribution scheme.
- Exceptionally, Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts will consider gifts, donations and bequests outside these criteria to strengthen and/or enhance weaker areas of the existing collection (e.g. portraiture from the 17<sup>th</sup> century).

## 2.4 Social History

Museums & Arts aspires to collect social history material which enhances an extensive collection depicting the changing lives of all people in the Wakefield District since 1700.

The Wakefield Museum social history collection consists of approximately 26,000 objects, 10,000 pieces of ephemera and 8,000 photographs covering the history of Wakefield District and the life of its people. It also includes a costume collection of about 5,000 items and a small ethnography collection. Additionally, the collection of natural history specimens collected by Charles Waterton (1782-1865) of Walton Hall is on loan from Stonyhurst College. The current loan agreement runs from 1997 to 2022, and will be reviewed in 2017.

Over the next five years, Museums & Arts will extend its collections relating specifically to Castleford, to support the development of the Castleford Forum.

The Pontefract Museum collections, which include a small number of items from the original museum at Pontefract Castle, are mainly social history. The collections record change in Pontefract and the immediate surrounding area. They include photographs, ephemera, and material relating to the major industries of the area, glass making and liquorice.

- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts only acquires material relating to the history of the city of Wakefield and all the towns and villages in the district, and the lives of their people, both locally and worldwide. This can include ethnographic material.
- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts recognises the cultural and economic diversity of the district, as well as its unique strengths.
- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts acquires contemporary, as well as historic material.
- Material acquired for the Pontefract collection will have a clear connection with Pontefract and its immediate area. It must provide evidence of life specifically in the Pontefract area or have a tie with the area that is worth recording.

- In specific areas of strength, Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts will avoid identical duplicates, but we will fill in associative, chronological or material gaps e.g. topographical photographs, the liquorice industry and Bagley's glass.
- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts has collected widely in the following areas and is unlikely to acquire further material – World War One; royalty 1880-1980; women's costume 1860-1990; rugby league programmes 1960-1990; cookery books, sewing machines and knitting/sewing patterns before 1980; and photographic portraits 1860-1960.
- In specific areas of weakness, W.M.D.C. Museums & Arts will prioritise filling gaps which are significant for the district and its people, e.g. non-Christian religion, caring for children, photographs of domestic and industrial interiors.

### **3.0 Disposals from the Permanent Collections**

- 3.1 By definition museums have a long-term purpose and we accept the principle that there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the permanent collection.
- 3.2 In those cases when Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts is legally free to dispose of material, any decision to dispose will be taken only after due consideration and extensive consultation. Any decision to dispose of accessioned material will be made by the governing body acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff and not by the curator acting alone. Full records will be kept of all decisions and arrangement made for the transfer of documentation relating to the items concerned. Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds. When a decision has been taken, priority will be given to retaining the item within the public domain and it will be offered first to a registered museum before disposal to other interested individuals or organisations is considered.
- 3.3 In cases in which an arrangement for the exchange, gift or sale of material is not being made with an individual registered museum, the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of material. This will normally be through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal and other professional journals if appropriate. The announcement will indicate the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed.
- 3.4 Where archival material is being transferred from the permanent collections to a suitable archive, it will be deposited without loss of ownership.
- 3.5 Within the archaeology collection, Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts may dispose of some material from an excavation archive if there has been no agreement over selection strategy before deposition, or when serious research will be aided by destructive testing.
- 3.6 Within the archaeology collection, material which is not stable, but may have research potential, may be held on reviewable status for a fixed period. At the end of this period it will be disposed of, accepted into the non-reviewable permanent collection, or retained for a further fixed period of reviewable status.
- 3.7 Attention is drawn to the important advice on the legal position included in the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Sale of Works of Art by Public Bodies (HMSO 1964) as follows:

‘The basic principle upon which law rests is that when private persons give property for public purpose the Crown undertakes to see that it is devoted to the purposes intended by the donor, and to no others. When a work of art is given to a museum or art gallery for general exhibition, the public thereby acquires rights in the object concerned and these rights cannot be set aside. The authorities of the museum or gallery are not the owners of such an object in the ordinary sense of the word; they are merely responsible, under the authority of courts, for carrying out the intentions of the donor. They cannot sell the object unless authorised to do so by the courts or by the Charity Commissioners or the Minister of Education on behalf of the Courts, because they have themselves nothing to sell. If they attempt a sale in breach of trust it is the function of the Attorney General to enforce the trust and protect the rights of the public in the object by taking proceedings in the Chancery Division’.

- 3.8 It should also be stressed that where financial assistance has been obtained from an outside source (for example central government grant-in-aid, National Art-Collections Fund, Friends of the Museum organisation or a private benefactor) disposal would require the consent of all parties who had contributed to the purchase.
- 3.9 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 but in exceptional cases improvements relating to the care of collections may be justifiable. Advice on these cases may be sought from Resource.

## **4.0 Non-permanent collections**

There are two collections managed by Museums & Arts to which we apply a different level of care – the Print Loan Collection and the Handling Collection.

### **4.1 The Print Loan Collection**

- The Print Loan Collection continues to be developed as a public lending scheme for residents of the Wakefield District and their dependants. It consists of original artists' prints (e.g. etchings, lithographs, and screenprints) which can be borrowed for a limited period on payment of an appropriate fee.
- Artists' limited edition prints acquired for the loan scheme are not collected in perpetuity and may suffer loss or damage because of public use.
- The Keeper of Art may transfer items from the print loan scheme to the permanent collection. Once formally accessioned these transferred items are governed by the permanent collection management and acquisition policies.

### **4.2 The Handling Collection**

- The Handling collection continues to be developed as a resource for public use. It contains objects specially selected to be touched and investigated by visitors of all ages. This collection includes a broad range of original and reproduction artefacts, from Roman finds handled by children studying the history curriculum to domestic objects from earlier this century which bring back memories for older people.

For more information about the Handling collections see the current Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts Education & Outreach Policy.

- Wakefield M.D.C. Museums & Arts will acquire objects for the handling collection through gift, bequest and purchase. Exceptionally duplicate items, or those that do not meet the current collecting policy, may be transferred from the permanent collections.
- Objects acquired for the handling collection are not collected in perpetuity. They may suffer loss or damage because of public use.
- If, exceptionally objects are transferred from the handling collection to the permanent collections, they will then be governed by the appropriate collecting and collection management policies.

## 5.0 Standards and Guidelines

5.1 This collecting policy is governed by the following published standards and guidelines, which embody best professional practice:

- The Museums Association Ethical Guidelines on Acquisition and Disposal.
- The Museums Association Code of Ethics for Museum Professionals.
- Standards for Museum Care for Archaeological Collections, 1992, Museums Galleries Commission.
- Guidelines for the Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections, Society for Museum Archaeologists, 1993.
- Towards an accessible Archaeological Archive, Society of Museum Archaeologists, 1995.
- Treasure Act, 1997.
- Regulations relating to human remains.
- Agreement on archives for Museums in the U.K. produced by the Museums and Galleries Commission for the Association of Independent Museums, the Museums Association and the Society of Archivists.
- SPECTRUM – The UK Museum Documentation Standard.
- Standards in Action: Working with Archaeology by Christine Longworth and Barbara Wood, published by the MDA 2000.

## 6.0 Glossary

<b>Accessioned</b>	An accessioned object is one that has been added to the permanent collections of Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts. This usually involves giving the object a unique reference number [an accession number].
<b>Archival material</b>	Books, ledgers, maps and other similar items. They are cared for by the West Yorkshire Archive Service rather than Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts.
<b>Bequest</b>	Any item left to Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts in a will.
<b>Central Government Grant in Aid</b>	Various government schemes which help museums and galleries buy objects for the permanent collections.
<b>Deposit</b>	Some archival material owned by Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts is kept on deposit with the West Yorkshire Archive Service, which has specialised preservation and access facilities. The items still belong to Museums & Arts, but are cared for by the Archive Service.
<b>Destructive Testing</b>	Research carried out on an object that will cause its total or partial destruction.
<b>Ephemera</b>	Posters, leaflets, letters and other paper-based objects in the museum collections.
<b>Ethnography</b>	Collections relating to the history of cultures and civilisations outside the UK.
<b>Friends of the Museum</b>	Membership groups that support the work of Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts.
<b>Museums Association</b>	Membership organisation which represents and reflects the interests of museums and galleries and the people who work for them.
<b>National Art Collections Fund</b>	A registered charity that helps museums and galleries buy objects for museum collections.

<b>Permanent Collection</b>	The objects and specimens that Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts owns for the benefit of present and future generations. The Handling Collection and the Print Loan Collection contain similar items, but these are not held on a permanent basis.
<b>Provenance</b>	Information about the origins of an object, including who made it, who owned it and where it comes from.
<b>Registered Museum</b>	A museum or gallery that complies with the minimum standards set by Resource. A Registered Museum's performance is measured to provide an assurance of quality and public accountability.
<b>Resource</b>	The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, set up by the Government in 2000. It provides strategic leadership, advocacy and advice for England's museums, archives and libraries, replacing both the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) and the Library and Information Commission (LIC).
<b>Reviewable Status</b>	Some archaeological items, such as soil and environmental samples, may be too unstable to preserve permanently. Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts hold them on reviewable status, which allows for possible disposal at a later date.
<b>Title</b>	The legal right of ownership, which is transferred to Wakefield MDC Museums & Arts when an object enters the collections.

