

Report To: Museum Committee

Date of Meeting: Monday, 9 March 2020

Report Title: Collections Report

Report By: Damian Etherington, Museum and Cultural Development Manager

Key Decision: N

Classification:

Purpose of Report

To update the committee on collections care, access, acquisitions, loans and objects being considered for rationalisation.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To accept this report and recommend approval by Cabinet.**

Reasons for Recommendations

Introduction

1. This report outlines the collections related activities that have taken place at the museum since the last formal meeting of the committee.

Collections Care

1. Over the past three months the curators and volunteers have been undertaking collections care and documentation work as part of *Wunderkammer*. The process they are following includes assessing the object's condition, measuring it, entering basic object information to a spreadsheet, photographing and re-packing it. To date, the team have processed over 1000 objects from across the collections. This work has been mostly been carried out on-gallery during the volunteer working days, Tuesday-Thursday.
2. Alongside the on-gallery collections documentation work the volunteers and museum team have been making improvements to the museum stores. This has included reorganising how objects are stored to increase the space we can use and improve the way our collections are kept in these areas. This work has resulted in us now having over 40m² more shelf space than we did previously.
3. However, it means that all available storage space in the museum is effectively in use – there is no further space to expand into and the space we have is now almost at capacity. The museum's offsite store still needs to be closed and the collections brought back to the museum. Due to the continuing budget pressures it is unrealistic to expect the council to invest in new storage buildings. The lack of storage space is the main collections challenge the museum is facing.
4. In addition to this work, the Curators, supported by the Visitor Services Team, have been carrying out an inventory exercise to check and update documentation of all the objects on display in the Upper Durbar Hall, Subarctic and Plains Indians galleries to ensure this information is accurate.
5. The museum is continuing with its Integrated Pest Management system. The cardboard style blunder traps have been replaced with a more modern version. These new traps reduce the capture of non-invasive species of insects. New trap locations have also been identified. The new locations are within display cases close to objects at risk of pest attack. A new cleaning regime has been put in place. It aims to reduce the risk from pests. At risk objects have also been identified and their condition is now been actively monitored.
6. We are continuing to improve our environmental monitoring as well. New locations have been assigned to some of the data loggers for monitoring temperatures and relative humidity. The new locations are intended to reduce the monitoring of the ambient environment and be more focused on the conditions around the collections themselves. This means we can more accurately determine the effects of the environment may be having on the collection.

Collections Access

7. Since September, the curators have received 88 enquires related to the collections. Local history remains the most common collection asked about. The Local Studies Room continues to welcome a small stream of, mostly, regulars on Wednesdays and the first Saturday of the month. Other collection-focused events such as *Collections Conversation* and *Object in Focus* need some more time to become established.
8. Our PhD Brassey researcher, Sarah French, is now half way through her funding period. She has contributed to the cataloguing of the Brassey Collection during the *Wunderkammer* collections care project. She also gave a 'highlights tour' of related material included in the show to museum visitors. Her 3-month fellowship at the Huntington Library, California to research the Brassey photograph albums begins on 24 February 2020. She is currently planning an exhibition *Hastings to Honolulu: Photographs from the Brassey Collection* for the walkway gallery this autumn.
9. In January, the museum hosted a two-day research visit by a PhD researcher from the University of British Columbia. During the research, a wide selection of material collected by artist Clare Sheridan was examined. They were able to identify specific objects which would be of interest to the contemporary community of the Kainai Nation and has offered to facilitate an introduction to community representatives. This will enrich the documentation and description of this collection. It will also allow us to explore opportunities for collaboration with the source community in the future.
10. The Collections and Engagement team supported a local history project run by MSL Hastings. *Our Past, Our Future* was a month-long programme of creative media workshops for older creative people held at the museum during November 2019. The project was a chance for people to get involved in history by creating their own stories. Participants were supported to investigate the museum's collections as part of their research. This project has been followed up by supporting an artist-in-residence for the America Ground area. This MSL project will see an artist work in the area and draw on the museum's collections.

Acquisitions

11. The museum has accessioned the follow objects since the last formal meeting:

HASMG: 2020.1	Bottle/jar from the wreck of the Amsterdam
HASMG: 2020.2	Flint arrowhead or spearhead implement found on the West Hill, Hastings.
HASMG:2020.5	#StopthecoupHastings letter to Amber Rudd MP, signed by opposition parties, 2019.
HASMG: 2019.3.1-5	A group of postcards dating from 1911-1917

Loans

12. Tate Britain resubmitted an amended loan request for HASMG:2006.17 *Hastings; Fishmarket on the Sands, Early Morning*' by JMW Turner (1775-1851). This was discussed and declined

at the informal committee meeting December. This decision was communicated to Tate Britain.

13. No loans have been returned in this period.

Rationalisation

14. In line with our Collections Development Policy, contained within the Collections Management Framework, the curatorial team have advised the following objects be removed from the collection:

HASMG:1709.1 Regency Card Tables (D2020.1)

A pair of card tables mahogany and satinwood card tables. They have been in long-term storage for several years. It is unlikely that they will be on public display or be used for engagement, learning or research activities and do not fit with the museum's Collections Management Framework. The museum is legally free to dispose of these objects.

Reason for disposal: To improve access, increase enjoyment of and engagement with the item by the public in another museum or historic site. To create space in the stores in order to assist with the improved care and continued acquisition of collections.

Method of disposal: By gift, and through a notice on the Museum Association's Find an Object web listing service.

HASMG:1975.101 Otter board (D2020.3)

Otter board designed to ensure effective use of trawling net by holding the net open. It is unlikely that this will be on public display or be used for engagement, learning or research activities, does not fit with the museum's Collections Management Framework, and would be more relevant to a collection focussing on maritime and fishing history. The museum is legally free to dispose of these objects.

Reason for disposal: To improve the context for the item. To create space to improve storage of other collections.

Method of disposal: By direct approach to the Fishermen's Museum and Shipwreck Museum.

HASMG:1955.63 Serpentine chest (D2020.45) and bookcase (D2020.46)

A Sheraton design serpentine chest, c.1800, and a Victorian bookcase or cabinet top, enclosed by two panelled doors. Currently in storage these pieces of furniture are unlikely to be on public display. They are not going to be useful for engagement, learning or research activities. The museum is legally free to dispose of these objects.

Reason for disposal: To improve access, increase enjoyment of and engagement with the item by the public in another museum or historic site. To create space to improve storage of other collections.

Method of disposal: By gift, and through a notice on the Museum Association's Find an Object web listing service.

HASMG: 1949.25 Box Mangle (part of) (D2020.47)

Part of a country type of box mangle. It has been in long term storage. It is not in a suitable condition for display and is not useful for engagement, learning or research activities. The museum is legally free to dispose of it.

Reason for disposal: Due to condition. To free up resources to better care for and utilise other parts of the collection.

Method of disposal: By gift, and through a notice on the Museum Association's Find an Object web listing service.

15. The rationalisation of these objects will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection. The process used to make these recommendations meets professional standards including and the Museum Association's Code of Ethics.

Collections Policies

16. There are no updates due on any collections-related policies.

Timetable of Next Steps

2. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Discussion by Museum Committee	Museum Committee	March 2020	Museum and Cultural Development Manager
Approval by Cabinet	Cabinet	April 2020	Museum and Cultural Development Manager

Wards Affected

All Wards

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 43.5

Have you used relevant project tools? Y

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No
Legal	No

Additional Information

Officer to Contact

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