

Report To: Museum Committee

Date of Meeting: Monday, 13 March 2023

Report Title: Collections Report

Report By: Alice Roberts-Pratt

Key Decision: N

Classification:

Purpose of Report

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

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

2. Over the course of Esmee Fairbairn (Oct 2021-Feb 2022), Wednesday volunteers have catalogued 519 objects from the Decorative Art Collection (the entirety of the Ceramics Gallery cases and cupboards). As of Feb 2023, 265 Modes records have had core information updated. The inventory of prints and watercolours is still ongoing, with 250 objects catalogued between September 2022 and February 2023. Curatorial inputting of data into Modes remains ongoing.
3. The issue of woodlice and insects entering the upper Durbar displays continues which is due to an issue with the building fabric and damp caused by water leaks from the roof which will have caused rotting wood and attracted the woodlice. Work to address the roof leaks is planned. Frequent cleaning of Upper Durbar cases is taking place as well as emptying pest traps. We have added silica gel cassettes to the cases to help with the relative humidity which will also help with the pest problem.
4. Bone store. We found a large hole in the bone store wall and so have sealed that up. The relative humidity discrepancy is higher than we would like in that store and so have added silica gel cassettes to help keep that at 50% RH.
5. In January we hired scaffold to enable us to gain access to the Hawaiian Cloak case. The rubber seal that should have been on the case between the doors did not exist and so it was essential to get this sorted otherwise pests could enter the case and destroy the cloak. We also used this as an opportunity to rehang a piece of the cloak that had fallen as well as clean the case itself.
6. Curator of Natural Science has begun work to audit the archaeology collection stored at the Tunbridge Wells storage unit. The whole collection of archaeology stored there is poorly packaged and unlocated. To address this it is being brought back to the museum temporarily in batches to be re-packed and listed with the assistance of the volunteer team. Additional racking has been purchased and installed at Tunbridge Wells to improve access and efficiency of space.

7. Blackfoot nation – Curating for Change Fellow has continued a relationship with the Blackfoot Native American tribe who are doing on going research into the objects that have come from the Blackfoot tribe within our collections. He has been doing virtual visits with them and the next one is scheduled for April. We are very grateful for this connection as it means we can interpret our collections in a more transparent and accurate way.

Collections Access

8. Since September the curators have received 61 enquires related to the collections.
9. The local studies room is open for bookings every Wednesday and is manned by our amazing volunteers Andre and Bill. We had some difficulties with the website over the winter in which bookings were being made but confirmation emails were not being sent to the museum so we would have people turn up that we were not expecting. This has now been rectified. We have had 30 research appointments booked despite the issues with the website and lots of happy people. The drop-in sessions on Saturdays are a great way to provide access to the collections and Local Studies room for those people who are not able to book during the week. A drop-in session is a good way to start the ball rolling for future archive visits, or often to answer very simple questions. This is such a great resource for the public and we've received bookings from a variety of researchers, from family research, research for publications and documentaries to academics.
10. Relics Roadshow event – bring in your relics and have them identified by experts as well as seeing the latest archaeological and palaeontological discoveries.
11. Highlights tours – tours online and in person of the exhibitions by the curators
12. Room 101 event – Looking at museum disposal and discussing what should happen to objects as well as the processes that come with that.
13. Dinosaurs in our storeroom event – Discover what we have in our stores and how these objects help understand the past.
14. Other collections access updates: The website has allowed us to write blogs, such as the Legend of the Gay Bogies, which connects directly to objects we have on display. We update the website with our latest exhibitions as well other stories such as Pier 150, this resource allows us to write a longer history and connect this with our objects. Social media has been gaining traction and our engagement levels seem to be increasing. Instagram posts such as our secrets of the store series allow people to see those objects that are never on display but that we like or find interesting. Social media really allows us to engage with the public, to ask

them questions about things we might not be too sure about and to give access to those people who may not be able to come to the museum, locally and nationally.

15. Redeveloping the Plains gallery – This month we have started to clear and move around the Plains gallery. It had been set up as a workstation for volunteers who were repacking the Native American collections and it felt as if the room had no real purpose, there were no labels in the cases and no identity. We have cleared the big planning chests and have acquired two new large cases. We will now be able to add in more collections and actually interpret the collection in there. We will be doing this on minimal budget but feel it is important to address this room and to give it and the Native American tribes a voice.

Acquisitions

16. The museum has accepted the following objects for accessioning since the last formal meeting:

HASMG:Number	Brief description
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HASMG:2022.47	– Jackie and the Queens photographs and placard from Jack in the Green
HASMG:2022.48	– Digital photographs of the Gay Bogies

Both are related to LGBTQ+ history; collected through Esmee Fairbairn work

Loans

17. Loan requests received since September – Laetitia Yhap, *The Boat*, Oil on board, 1987 (HASMG:1991.62) For an exhibition: *Sussex Landscape: Chalk, Wood and Water at Pallant House Gallery*, 8-9 North Pallant, Chichester, PO19 1TJ. 12 November 2022 – 23 April 2023. The painting was condition checked and cleaned prior to going to Pallant House, at their expense.

Sussex Landscape: Chalk Wood and Water 12 November 2022 – 23 April 2023 Pallant House Gallery is delighted to announce a forthcoming exhibition *Sussex Landscape: Chalk Wood and Water*. The exhibition will reassess the rich artistic lives and work of British artists connected with the Sussex landscape. Sussex is a county defined by its iconic chalk-cliff coastline and the rolling expanse of the South Downs to the North. This enduring landscape has inspired artists and writers across the centuries, most notably in the twentieth century, when Sussex was home to leading artists and writers of the day. While some artists found solace and reflection in the landscape, for others, it provided the vital space to explore different ways of living and artistic innovation. Following in the footsteps of these artists, tracing the routes they took across the chalk hills and beside the mercurial sea, this exhibition will tell a fascinating story of an area that continues to inspire. The exhibition will include work by leading British artists, including; J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), John Constable (1776 – 1837), William Nicholson (1872 – 1949), Vanessa Bell (1879 – 1961), Duncan Grant (1885 – 1978), Ivon Hitchens (1893 – 1979), Eric Ravilious (1903 – 1942) and Edward Burra (1905 – 1976). Alongside, new work by contemporary artists will extend the dialogue between artistic expression and the landscape. As a connection between creative expression, personal freedoms and a commitment to understanding the landscape is being discussed with increasing urgency, this exhibition offers a moment to consider the work of those who have gone before and have captured a changing world.

18. No loans have been returned in this period

Disposals

19. 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:

Accession Number (if any)	Description	Disposal Number	Reason for disposal	Preferred method of Disposal
HASMG:1709.1	Card Tables	D2020.1	Objects which do not meet the themes and priorities for collecting	Offer to another museum
HASMG:1973.139	Door of Albert Memorial	D2020.2	-Objects which do not meet the themes and priorities for collecting -Poor quality objects that require large resources to be of display standard	Offer to another museum such as Park Green house?
HASMG:1975.101	Otter Board	D2020.3	Objects which do not meet the themes and priorities for collecting	Offer to another museum
HASMG:1976.43	Double Old School Desk	D2020.4	Objects with little or no provenance	HMAG Education
HASMG1988.15	Cobblers Shoe Lasts and Tools	D2020.5	Duplicate objects within the collection	Keep one of each and offer the rest to other museums
HASMG:1974.30.1-2	2 Georgian doorways from 25 the Bourne	D2020.6	Poor quality objects that require large resources to be of display standard	TBC
HASMG:1994.6.2	Gladstone Bag	D2020.7	Objects with little or no provenance	HMAG Education
HASMG:2001.31.307	School Trunk	D2020.8	Objects with little or no provenance	HMAG Education
HASMG:1974.66	Wicker Beach Chair	D2020.9	Poor quality objects that require large resources to be of display standard	Offer to another museum
HASMG1980.38	1940s Bicycle and pump used by nuns during 1939-1945 war	D2020.10	Objects which do not meet the themes and priorities for collecting	Offer to another museum
HASMG:LA.344	Pot stand and Ratchets	D2020.12	Objects which do not meet the themes and priorities for collecting	Offer to another museum
HASMG:1985.44	Ship Dead Eye dredged up by trawler named "Skipper"	D2022.1	Objects which do not meet the themes and priorities for collecting	Offered to Fisherman's Museum

Collections Policies

20. No updates

Options

21. To accept this report and recommend approval by Cabinet.

Public Exemption

22. This report contains no exempt information.

Timetable of Next Steps

23. 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		
Approval by Cabinet	Cabinet		

Wards Affected

All Wards

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 43.4

Have you used relevant project tools?: Y

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

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	N
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	N
Risk Management	N
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	N
Economic/Financial Implications	N
Human Rights Act	N
Organisational Consequences	N
Local People's Views	Y
Anti-Poverty	N
Legal	N

Additional Information

NA

Officer to Contact

Report Template v30.0

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