

1. Collections Development Policy

Revision 3: October 2010

Name of governing body: Royal Engineers Museum, Library & Archive Committee

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:

January 2013

Date at which this policy is due for review:

January 2014

1. Museum's Statement of Purpose

The Royal Engineers Museum, Library & Archive's (hereafter the Museum) mission is to curate the Designated Collection and develop the galleries, facilities and services in order to preserve and present the military and civil heritage of the Royal Engineers, promote scholarship and provide an excellent, accessible, relevant and stimulating education experience for today's audience, including the public, students, schools, the Armed Forces and the Corps and to contribute to the recruitment, motivation and inspiration of today's soldier.

2. An overview of current collections

The broad subject of the Museum's collecting is defined in its Charter:

...to memorialize and promote the work, deeds and history of the Corps of Royal Engineers and to advance public education therein. It will acquire, conserve and exhibit material evidence of military engineering, the work of the Corps and individuals connected with the Corps....

The story of the Corps is taken to mean the history of the development of the Royal Engineers and the smaller regiments, companies and squadrons making up the whole as a military unit. The 'story' also includes the social and biographical histories of the men and women serving in the Royal Engineers as well as the history of their role, responsibilities and experiences within the British Army and the development of British military engineering.

The Corps was founded in 1716, however the Museum's collection also includes items relating to the earlier, pre 1716, history of British military engineering and engineering as a more general discipline of warfare. This helps to explain and set into context the establishment of the Corps as a unit of the army, its role in the army and the technical developments surrounding this role.

In 1986, when the Museum moved to its current location in the Ravelin Building, Brompton Barracks, there were approximately 15, 000 accessioned artefacts or groups of artefacts in its Primary Collection. Now, in 2012 there are over 33, 000 items in the Primary Collection. The Library & Archive collection, founded in 1812 and held in a separate building to the Museum, comprises at least 400,000 items.

Object types are listed below:

- Personal archives
- Official archives
- Printed books
- Technical plans and drawings
- Maps
- Prints and drawings
- Ephemera
- Memorabilia
- Photographs
- Medals and decorations
- Badges
- Uniform
- Textiles
- Ethnographic objects
- Small military equipment
- Large military equipment
- Military vehicles
- Models
- Weapons

The Museum also maintains a Secondary or 'Handling' Collection composed of material available to users of the Museum's Education and Learning Service.

3. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The period of time to which the collecting of the Museum relates is not restricted. A larger part of collecting does and will focus on a period beginning with the formation of the Corps of Engineers in 1716 and ending with the present day. However, the Museum also aims to discuss the development of military engineering in Britain and as a more general discipline of war. As a result, the Museum seeks to collect a limited amount of material relating to the early history of military engineering which can be dated back to the ancient world.

The geographical area to which the collecting of the Museum relates is not restricted. The Royal Engineers operated in all areas of the British Empire and

were often seconded to countries independent of British rule. Many of the engineering units in Commonwealth armies are direct descendants of the Royal Engineers and a limited amount of material relating to these will be collected. Additionally, for the reasons given above, the Museum aims to collect a limited amount of material relating to the very early history of military engineering on a worldwide scale.

The Museum will collect artefacts and specimens as detailed below:

- Items of uniform, weapons, medals, decorations and equipment issued to, worn or used by members of the Royal Engineers, their predecessor units and other British and colonial units of military engineers.
- Artefacts or natural or scientific specimens used, made or collected by members of the Royal Engineers, their predecessor units and other British and colonial units of military engineers.
- Items relating to the daily life, work, professional interest and training of members of the Royal Engineers, their predecessor units and other British and colonial units of military engineers.
- Items relating to military operations, civil and semi-civil projects and emergency operations, colonial and other policing and administrative duties and other activities in which members of the Royal Engineers, their predecessor units and other British and colonial units of military engineers have had involvement.
- Artefacts including models, actual equipment and written academic works illustrating engineering and scientific techniques of relevance or interest to military engineers.
- Items relating to the social, political and military history of the Medway Towns and the surrounding area where these in some way reflect the presence of a military garrison in the towns.
- Medals and decorations awarded to members of the Women's Royal Army Corps serving with the Royal Engineers Postal and Courier Service during World War Two.
- Items for use in the Learning and Education programme of the Museum.

Specific areas to which collecting are targeted are listed below and are selected based on gaps in the current collection, especially in areas where further interpretation is planned.

- Items illustrating the work and daily life of the Royal Engineers and associated Regular and Territorial Army engineer unit during the late 20th and early 21st century.
- Contemporary items illustrating the work and daily life of the Royal Engineers and associated Regular and Territorial Army engineer.

- Items which support the training of the contemporary Corps, as and when they do not conflict with material held in MOD or other Corps sponsored repositories and official MOD and Government archives.
- Engineering equipment used by members of the Royal Engineers, their predecessor units and other British and colonial units of military engineers during the 18th and 19th centuries.
- Items relating to the daily life, work and training of Other Ranks and NCOS of the Royal Engineers, their predecessor units and other British and colonial units of military engineers during the 18th and 19th centuries.
- Items relating to the everyday social history of the those associated with serving members of the Corps of Royal Engineers, their predecessor units and other British and colonial units of military engineers during the 18th to 21st century.
- Items and material relating to female members of the Corps of Royal Engineers.
- Items of uniform worn by members of the Royal Engineers, their predecessor units and other British and colonial units of military engineers during the 18th to mid 19th century.
- Items of uniform worn by NCO's and Other Ranks of the Royal Engineers, their predecessor units and other British and colonial units of military engineers during the 18th to mid 20th century.

4. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

Responsible, curatorially-motivated disposal takes place as part of a museum's long-term collections policy, in order to increase public benefit derived from museum collections¹. All disposal will be carried out in line with clauses 13 (e) and 13 (f).

Specific areas for rationalisation and disposals are listed below:

- The Museum will seek to reduce the number of duplicate items it holds, unless they are of specific individual historical provenance and interest.
- The Museum will dispose of items which are in a relic condition and/or in need of extensive remedial conservation unless of an extremely significant nature to the history of the Royal Engineers.
- The Museum will dispose of material relating to units of the British Army derived from the Royal Engineers, e.g. The RFC or the REME, after their foundation date unless reflecting the combined history of the units.

¹ See Museums Association 'Disposals Toolkit' pg 5.

- The Museum will dispose of material relating to units of the British Army which have no significant link or relevance to the Royal Engineers.

5. Limitations on collecting

The museum recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its 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 staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

Specific areas for which collecting is limited are listed below:

- The Museum will not accept items which duplicate those already held in the collection unless they relate to specific units, events, campaigns or individuals significant to the heritage of the Corps previously unrepresented or underrepresented in the collection. Duplicate material includes officially issued forms and personnel papers providing an insignificant amount of additional information on their subject.

Material duplicating that held in the Primary Collection may be acquired for the Handling Collection.

- The Museum will not accept Ministry of Defence material of a restricted or secret nature without confirming its release and declassification from the appropriate authority.
- The Museum will not accept large items of equipment, including vehicles, models or large archival collections unless a realistic method of display or storage exists or is included as a condition of acquisition. The Museum will ensure that the history of development, use and maintenance of large equipment and vehicles is represented through the collection of appropriate archives, photographs and film.
- The Museum will not accept items in a relic condition and/or in need of extensive remedial conservation unless of an extremely significant nature to the history of the Royal Engineers.
- The Museum will not collect material relating to units of the British Army derived from the Royal Engineers, e.g. The RFC or the REME, after their foundation date unless reflecting the combined history of the units.
- The Museum will not purchase medals unless they are proved to be of extreme relevance to the history of the Corps. The only Victoria Cross which the Museum will attempt to purchase if and when it becomes available is that of Lieutenant John R M Chard VC.
- The Museum will not accept unattributed photographs and minor textiles unless the subject is of a rare historic and/or technical nature.
- The Museum will only collect squadron, name or commemorative plaques of a historically significant nature, for example the 19th Century

lists of Engineers in Chief or those listing significant historical personalities. These will be decided on a case by case basis. Any historically significant information presented on boards refused by the RE MLA will be digitally captured and made available for reference within the RE MLA research facilities.

6. Collecting policies of other museums

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.

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

- The National Army Museum
- The National Army Museum Cotemporary Collecting Policy
- The Imperial War Museum
- The Royal Air Force Museum
- The Tank Museum
- The Royal Artillery Museum, Firepower
- The Royal Signals Museum
- The Museum of Army Flying
- The Royal Logistics Corps Museum
- The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Museum
- The Royal Naval Air Service Museum
- The Royal Naval Submarine Museum
- The Guildhall Museum, Rochester
- Chatham Historical Dockyard Trust
- RE Technical Information Centre
- RSME Technical Libraries (those at both the Construction and Combat Engineering Schools)
- Medway Council Archives Service
- The National Archives.
- The Directorate of Corporate Information (formerly Army Historical Branch)

7. Policy review procedure

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

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 existing collections.

8. 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 museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

9. Acquisition procedures

- a. The museum 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 museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- b. In particular, 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).
- 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 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.
- d. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum 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 museum 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.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include 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.

- f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 9a, 9b, 9c, or 9e will only be because the museum is:
- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
 - 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
 - acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin
 - in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970

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.

- g. As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

10. Spoliation

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.

11. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

The museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 13a-13d, 13g and 13o/s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

12. Management of archives

As the museum holds / intends to acquire archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).

13. Disposal procedures

Disposal preliminaries

- a. The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- b. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.
- c. The museum will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.
- d. 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.

Motivation for disposal and method of disposal

- e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 13g-13s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.
- f. In exceptional cases, the disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below in paragraphs 13g-13m and 13o/s will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
- the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
- the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored

The disposal decision-making process

- g. Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, 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 the 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. External 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.

Responsibility for disposal decision-making

- h. 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 of the collection acting alone.

Use of proceeds of sale

- i. 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. 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.

- j. The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

Disposal by gift or sale

- k. 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 or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- l. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly 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 an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.
- m. 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.

Disposal by exchange

- n. The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

Documenting disposal

- o. 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.