

EAST KENT MARITIME TRUST
COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY

For: East Kent Maritime Museum (also known as Ramsgate Maritime Museum)

Governed by: East Kent Maritime Trust (E.K.M.T.)

This edition was approved by E.K.M.T. on: 19th November 2001

To be reviewed by October 2006

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to comply with the requirements of the Re:source Registration Scheme concerning Acquisition & Disposal of collections and to encourage public confidence in the museum as a suitable repository.

It also defines the present state and use of the collections and reviews the current policy of acquisition and disposal. It ensures material is accepted according to a recognised strategy and serves as a reference document to guide curatorial decisions.

It establishes relationships with other museums in the area with regard to acquisition of material for the collection and transfer of objects.

This policy has been written with reference to the former Museums and Galleries Commission guidelines, the Museums Association Code of Conduct for Museum Authorities and with advice from the South East Museums Agency.

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THE NATURE OF THE COLLECTION

The Maritime Museum was opened in 1984 as a project allowed under the constitution of the East Kent Maritime Trust. The museum was established to further the Trust aim of promoting the study of the Maritime Heritage of East Kent.

The existing collection reflects that original aim and includes:

Artefacts related to the development and function of the harbour at Ramsgate.

Items raised from wrecks on the Goodwin Sands, principally from the wreck of the '*Stirling Castle*' a 17th Century Man of War. Some of these items are of National/International significance. This sub-collection is the property of the Thanet Archaeological Society, which has close links with the Trust; it is the intention of both organisations that these items will remain permanently as part of the Museum's collection.

Items concerning the history of the lifeboat service (mainly at Ramsgate) in East Kent.

Navigational equipment. The Museum building once housed a specialist 'outstation' of the Royal Observatory and is the site of the Ramsgate Meridian, an important (though obscure) part of the search for accurate timekeeping at sea, one of the associated clocks has been returned to the building.

Items of a more general nature relating to the various maritime trades and crafts (fishing, boat building, trade, smuggling etc.)

Illustrations; prints, lithographs, watercolours, oils and photographs related to the above.

The collection also includes full size original vessels amongst which are a Ramsgate Wherry, a 1941 Trawler and the Dunkirk Little Ship Motor Yacht *Sundowner* which are owned by the Trust.

The Museum has on loan the Steam Tug *Cervia* and the Dunkirk Little Ship *New Britannic*.

The collection includes approximately 2000 accessioned items or groups of items, of these approximately 15% are on long-term loan. The East Kent Maritime Trust owns the majority of the collection.

The museum also holds a substantial collection of photographic and documentary material related to the main Collection, a research library and a small archive of original documents mainly related to Ramsgate Harbour.

ACQUISTION POLICY

1. E.K.M.T. will acquire items and associated information relating to the heritage of East Kent from the earliest evidence of human occupation to the present day. It may also acquire other material that, although not directly connected with East Kent, may nevertheless be used to illustrate its history.

Current collecting priorities are:

- a. To work with The Trust for Thanet Archaeology, Seadive and others to investigate, record conserve, display and interpret items from the 1703 Great Storm Wrecks.
- b. To bring together items of local Maritime interest currently displayed or stored in other Thanet museums, with due regard to the collecting policies of those museums and with particular regard to the proposal for the possible development of the Ramsgate Museum (K.C.C.)
- c. To discover and if possible acquire examples of vessels typical of those built locally or engaged in trade with the area. (Particular consideration to item 3 of this policy must be given when considering possible acquisition of large objects.)

Collecting in all other fields will be passive.

2. E.K.M.T. will acquire items by gift, bequest, purchase, exchange and loan. Loans may be either short-term, relating to specific displays or activities or they may be long-term. All loans will be for a fixed period. Long-term loans will be only sought in exceptional circumstances and the loan period will be reviewed by both parties.

3. E.K.M.T. recognises its responsibility, in acquiring material, to ensure adequate conservation, documentation and proper use of such material and takes into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as inadequate staffing, storage and conservation resources. E.K.M.T. will not acquire any item that is beyond their capacity to store, conserve or utilise (either in display or for research and reference or in other appropriate ways).

4. E.K.M.T. will only acquire natural history material if it relates to maritime history: for example 19th century display specimens.

5. In considering acquisitions, E.K.M.T. will take into account the acquisition policies of other Museums in Thanet; i.e. The Powell-Cotton Museum, Dickens House, Margate Museum (under EKMT Governance), Minster Agricultural Museum, Crampton Tower, Ramsgate Museum (Kent County Museum Service) and any others that may come into being - and of the museums in Canterbury and Dover Districts. With regard to archives, it will take into account the interests of the Kent Archives Service and with regard to ephemera, books and photographs it will take into account the interests of Kent Arts & Library Service local studies collections.

6. E.K.M.T. will not acquire by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the East Kent Maritime Trust, or when appropriate, the Museum Director is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the object and that in particular it 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 purpose of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom.

7. E.K.M.T. will not collect foreign archaeological antiquities. So far as British archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) are concerned, in addition to the safeguards in paragraph 6 above, E.K.M.T. will not acquire objects in any case where the East Kent Maritime Trust or the Museum Director has 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 of the land or to the proper authorities in the case of a possible Treasure Trove, (or Bona Vacantia, in Scotland) or in the case of material recovered from wrecks, excavation and/or acquisition without proper authority from the Department of Trade and Industry, Maritime Coastguard Agency and/or H.M. Receiver of Wreck.

8. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, E.K.M.T. 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.g. a British court in the case of a specimen seized from a third party under the Protection of Birds Acts).

9. As the museum holds and intends to further acquire archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, the governing body shall be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums in the United Kingdom and shall also aim to meet the standards outlined in the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts' Standards for Record Repositories.

DISPOSAL POLICY

By definition, museums have a long-term purpose and possess, or intend to acquire, substantial permanent collections in relation to their stated objectives. The East Kent Maritime Trust accepts the principal that there will be a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in E.K.M.T. collections. The only circumstances in which items will normally be considered for disposal are as follows:

- a) Where the items are not appropriate to the stated objectives of E.K.M.T.
- b) If E.K.M.T. are not able adequately to store, conserve and utilise the items.
- c) If the items are too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of E.K.M.T.

In disposing of items, the procedures set out below will be followed.

1. In those cases where the museum is legally free to dispose of an item (if this is in doubt, advice should be sought) it is agreed that any decision to sell or otherwise dispose of material from the collections will be taken only after due consideration. Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds. Once a decision to dispose of an item has been taken, priority will be given to retaining the item within the public domain and with this in view it will be offered first, by exchange, gift or sale to Registered museums before disposal to other interested individuals or organisations is considered. The collecting interests of other registered Thanet and Kent museums will be considered when deciding where to offer items.

2. In cases where there is no obviously appropriate museum with whom an arrangement for exchange, gift or private treaty sale can be made, the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material. This will normally be through an announcement in the Journal of the Museums Association. The announcement will indicate the number of specimens involved, the prime objects concerned and the basis (sale, gift etc) on which the items would be transferred to another institution. A period of at least two months from the appearance of the announcement will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed.

3. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by exchange, sale, gift or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

Cont/d.

Full records, including appropriate committee minutes, will be kept of all decisions to dispose of material from the collections of E.K.M.T. and of the items involved. Proper arrangements will be made for the preservation or transfer, as appropriate of the documentation relating to the object concerned, including photographic records where practicable.

4. Any monies received by the East Kent Maritime Trust from the disposal of items from the collections of E.K.M.T. will be applied for the benefit of the museum collection. This will normally mean the purchase of new items for the collections but in exceptional circumstances improvements relating to the care of collections may be justifiable. Professional curatorial advice will be sought before taking such a decision. Advice on these cases should be sought from Re:source/the South East Museums Agency.

5. Where a museum object has been acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation, that organisation will be consulted before the object is de-accessioned or transferred to another museum. If the object is sold repayment of the original grant may be required.

GENERAL PRACTICE

This acquisition and disposal policy will be made available to users of E.K.M.T., whenever appropriate, and to all potential providers of material for the Museum's collection. Copies will be made available to other museums in Thanet and Kent and to the South East Museums Agency, who shall be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

The policy will be reviewed every five years and interim alterations to the policy will not normally be made. Curatorial advice will be sought when the policy is reviewed or altered. Acquisitions outside the scope of the policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances having regard to the collecting interest of other museums and then only after due consideration by the East Kent Maritime Trust on the recommendation of the Museum Director who will have consulted with the Curator and other colleagues.

"Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society."

Museums Association definition of a Museum