

BEDFORD MUSEUM - ACQUISITION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to comply with the requirements of the Registration Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom concerning Acquisition and 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 museum bodies in the area with regard to acquisition of material for the collection and transfer of objects.

If you are considering a donation or bequest to Bedford Museum please contact a member of the curatorial staff. A summary of key parts of the policy is given below:

THE COLLECTING AREA

The collecting area for Bedford Museum's collection covers the whole of Bedford Borough Council and the northern part of Mid Bedfordshire. Specimens originating from within the designated collecting area only will be accepted.

The Museum will take due account of the collecting policies of other museums collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields and will consult with such organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

CRITERIA FOR THE COLLECTION OF SPECIMENS

Bedford Museum shall acquire by gift, purchase, bequest or exchange all manner of material evidence originating from its published collecting area, as considered appropriate for the Museum's purposes, to record, preserve and interpret the natural history and history and prehistory of human settlement and culture in the north Bedfordshire area.

The museum 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.

The Museum will not accept any specimen, whether by gift, purchase, bequest or exchange, unless the staff concerned are satisfied that the Museum can acquire valid title to the specimen and particularly that the landowner's consent has been obtained both to recover the object(s) and to offer it to the Museum.

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 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)

So far as British or foreign archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) are concerned, the museum will not acquire objects in any case where the governing body or responsible officer 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 the failure to disclose the finds to the owner or occupier of the land, or to the proper authorities in the case of possible Treasure Trove.

The Museum will not acquire, whether by purchase, gift 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, 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 or other recognised national/international agreement concerning the collection, export or exchange of cultural property. (For the purpose of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom.)

The governing body of the Museum will not normally accept material on loan (i.e. where the title remains vested in another body or individual) unless for the purposes of temporary exhibition or copying, or where the item is of exceptional interest to the Museum. Any loan will be agreed in writing by the lender and the Museum, including allocation of responsibilities for insurance and transport arrangements and shall be for a specific fixed-term only, renewable in writing.

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, having regard to the interests of other museums, and to the effect of the acquisition on the ability to care for existing collections.