

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM / UTTLESFORD MUSEUM SERVICE

ACQUISITION & DISPOSAL POLICY 2006 – 2011

Uttlesford District Council
Saffron Walden Museum Society

Date adopted: [to be confirmed] by Community Committee
Due for review no later than: 16 March 2011

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1 Introduction

1.1 Collections and Context

1.1.1 Museums are defined by what they collect. This policy sets out what and how Saffron Walden Museum collects, and under what circumstances it may dispose of items from the collections, within the constraints of the Accreditation scheme for museums and the Museums Association's *Code of Ethics (2002)* and *Ethical Guidelines on Acquisition (2004)*.

1.1.2 The definition of a museum used in this policy is that adopted by the UK Museums Association in 1998:

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

1.1.3 The wide-ranging collections of Saffron Walden Museum are unusual for a district museum service in a predominantly rural area, and are a reflection both of its long history of collecting and the extraordinary legacy of collections formed, researched and bequeathed by members of the Saffron Walden Natural History Society, later renamed the Saffron Walden Museum Society, which founded the Museum in 1835 (making it one of the oldest local purpose-built museums in Britain). This policy reflects the dual aspect of these collections: those that are centred on north-west Essex (Uttlesford district) or provide a regional and national context for understanding the human history and natural environment of north-west Essex; and those collections which chart aspects of other human histories and natural histories around the world, and the history of local residents' contacts with the wider world.

1.1.4 Today the Museum's active collecting focuses on north-west Essex (Uttlesford) and its regional context, while development of the world-wide collections is generally the result of occasional passive collecting – acceptance of suitable donations or transfers from other museums. However the Museum is constantly finding new uses for all the collections it holds, in an age where 'global awareness' and information technology raise new possibilities and demands.

1.2 Our Aim

1.2.1 Our aim as Uttlesford Museum Service is to give people a sense of place in the present and inspiration for the future through our wide-ranging collections and the histories they represent and by sustaining a proactive, high-quality service

- 1.2.2 Key Aim 1 in the Museum Service's Forward Plan states that the Museum will:

Maximise and preserve the depth, quality and relevance of collections, information and the stories they tell to reflect the human history, culture and natural environment of Uttlesford and the wider world

- 1.2.3 By definition, the Museum has a long-term purpose and holds and acquires permanent collections in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body accepts the principle that, except for sound curatorial reasons, there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the Museum's collections. Within this framework for acquisition and disposal, sustainability of the collections, for which there are finite resources, has to be addressed.

1.3 Users of the Collections, Actual and Potential

- 1.3.1 Residents of Uttlesford district, present and future
Researchers, students and the educational, scientific and cultural community at large
Visitors and tourists, from the UK and overseas
Anyone, worldwide, whose interests and curiosity can be stimulated by the collections, which the Museum holds
- 1.3.2 Schools and other educational groups: a separate collection of duplicate and replica objects and specimens is kept by the Education Officer for frequent handling and for loaning out to for educational purposes. This Handling & Educational Loan collection is separate from the Museum collections covered by this policy, and is described under 3.5 below.

1.4 Ownership and History of the Collections

- 1.4.1 The collections are owned by Saffron Walden Museum Society, UK registered charity 310666, which founded the Museum in the 1830s to house its collections (being then known as the Saffron Walden Natural History Society). Society members were local gentlemen of learned interests and far-flung contacts, allowing them to acquire collections from all over the world, notably in ethnography and the natural sciences, as well as closer to home. Pre-eminent among the Museum's founders were John Player, a retired civil servant from the Admiralty, and Jabez Gibson, a member of a prominent local Quaker family of brewers and bankers. Later nineteenth century collectors continued to enrich the Museum, such as George Stacey Gibson's herbaria and fossil collections, Joseph Clarke's collection of antiquities and the fine collections of ceramics and glass made by William Tuke (another Quaker family of note) and Dr Henry Stear. Until the 1880s members of the Society curated the collections but in 1880 the first professional curator, George Nathan Maynard, was appointed. The Society continued to run the Museum directly, with the aid of grants from

various sources, until 1974, when the newly established Uttlesford District Council took over the operation of the Museum Service. Saffron Walden Museum Society leases the Museum collections and buildings to Uttlesford District Council under a joint management agreement (last revised 2004). Under this agreement, the Museum Service's governing body is the Museum Management Task Group, a joint committee of representatives from Saffron Walden Museum Society and Uttlesford District Council.

- 1.4.2 The collections of Saffron Walden Museum, estimated to be at least 170,000 objects and specimens, have been developed since 1832. Initially collecting was widespread, reflecting the diverse interests and contacts of the Society membership, and covered natural and human history from around the world, as well as objects and specimens local to northwest Essex. Many of the Museum's most important ethnographic items were collected in its early decades.
- 1.4.3 In the twentieth century, the rise of social history and archaeology as museum disciplines and the disposal of many of the older exotic animal mounted specimens in the early 1960s led to a greater focus on the immediate district (now Uttlesford). That process of refining and targeting collecting continues in the twenty-first century: the Museum must also balance the demands placed by developments such as Stansted Airport, which are producing large volumes of archaeological material, with finite resources. The proposed Heritage Quest Centre and subsequent adjustments to the Museum buildings will set a finite spatial limit on sustainable collecting for the foreseeable future.

1.5 Future Review and Scope of the Policy

- 1.5.1 The Acquisition & Disposal 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.
- 1.5.2 The East of England Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (EEMLAC) and the Museums in Essex Committee will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.
- 1.5.3 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the Museum's governing body, having regard to the interests of other museums. The Museum's governing body is the Museum Management Task Group (MMTG), which comprises four Saffron Walden Museum Society representatives and four members of Uttlesford District Council. Decisions affecting the collections, especially loans, purchases and disposals, must first be agreed by the Management Committee of Saffron Walden Museum Society (owners of the collections) before being referred to MMTG.

2 What the Museum Collects – Subjects at a Glance and Collecting Area

The scope of the collections is summarised below under headings to reflect the dual local (north-west Essex) and global range of subjects covered. Detailed descriptions, criteria and future collecting priorities for each subject will be found in Section 5 (or on website version, click on chosen subject for more information).

In general, the Museum's collecting area will be defined by relevance to Uttlesford District, the area of north-west Essex defined by the local authority boundary of Uttlesford District Council. Occasionally offers of appropriate objects or specimens may be accepted for subjects which are non-local by their nature, such as ethnography, as described in Section 5.

The time span within which the Museum collects also varies according to subject. For the archaeology and history of Uttlesford, all periods from earliest prehistoric to today are relevant. For geological collections, the time-frame extends backwards to include Pleistocene remains and beyond that fossils from the Palaeozoic, Mesozoic and Caenozoic eras.

2.1 Human History and Culture of north-west Essex, and its regional and British context

Archaeology – excavated finds and records from Uttlesford, all periods from prehistoric to post medieval, and finds made as a result of other fieldwork or by chance. Historically, the Museum also acquired some antiquarian finds from the region and further afield.

Social and Local History: objects, ephemera and documents – made or used in Uttlesford, or associated with local places and people

Pictorial: Prints, Watercolours, Paintings, Drawings and Photos – reflecting the history, people and natural history of Uttlesford, but excluding 'fine art'

Costume, Textiles, Needlework and Accessories – range of English and local

Ceramics and Glass– British and European ceramics and glassware, 16th – 20th century

Woodwork and Furniture - local and English domestic woodwork of 14th – 18th century and a small collection of English furniture of 16th – 18th century

2.2 Natural Environment of north-west Essex and its regional and British context

The natural history collections contain about 70,000 specimens of plants, animals, rocks, minerals and fossils. The founders of the Museum and other

19th century naturalists presented most of these specimens. They collected in Essex and the rest of Britain.

Plants – specimens of flowering plants, ferns, mosses, liverworts, fungi, lichens and algae

Animals - mammals, birds, birds' eggs, amphibians, reptiles, fish, insects, molluscs and other invertebrate groups

Fossils – fossils from the Palaeozoic, Mesozoic and Caenozoic eras of geological time

Minerals and Rocks – minerals; sedimentary, metamorphic and igneous rocks

2.3 Human History and Culture – the wider world

Mediterranean and Egyptian antiquities – a small collection including pre-dynastic to Ptolemaic artefacts and one mummy from Egypt, and pottery from Greece and Cyprus.

Ethnography (historic cultures from around the world) – a collection of international significance, some 6,000 objects mostly collected between the late 18th and early 20th centuries, all continents and many different cultures represented.

2.4 Natural Environment - the wider world

Specimens illustrating the natural environments of continents around the world.

Plants – plants collected outside Britain in the 19th century

Animals – animals collected outside Britain during the 19th and early 20th centuries

Geology - rocks, minerals and fossils found outside Britain

3 Acquisition - adding items to the collections

For subject specific detail, please refer to Section 5

3.1 Aim of Acquisition

To improve the scope, quality and relevance of the Museum's collections, within sustainable limits, in order to fulfil the Service's stated aims.

3.2 Definition

To **accession** is formally to enter an object or specimen into the Museum collections. A record of the object or specimen is made in the Museum's

Accession Register and a unique accession number is issued for the object or specimen.

3.3 General Principles and Methods for Acquisition

3.3.1 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 UK).
- c. In accordance with 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 of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) 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 UK or any 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, such as 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 will only be because the Museum is either:

acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin; or

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; or

acting with permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin; or

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.

3.3.2 Methods of Acquisition

- a. Collections may be acquired by the following methods: donation, bequest, purchase and field collection (for natural history and archaeology in certain circumstances).
- b. Anyone intending to bequeath items to the Museum will be encouraged to discuss and agree future bequests with the Museum, which will keep a record for future reference. Bequests or conditions made without the Museum's prior knowledge and agreement cannot be regarded as binding on the Museum.
- c. Loans will only be accepted for a specific time period and purpose, such as a special exhibition or for comparative study as part of a research project. 'Indefinite loans' or 'permanent loans' are not accepted. Items loaned for the long-term, usually for long-term display, will be accepted as renewable loans and the loan agreement will be reviewed and renewed by both lender and Museum at regular intervals, of not more than five years. Loans will not be accepted simply for storage or 'safekeeping'.

3.4 Other Constraints and Considerations

3.4.1 Limitations on Collecting

Saffron Walden 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 inadequate staffing, storage or care of collection arrangements. In cases where extensive conservation of an acquisition would be necessary, the cost and benefits must be weighed.

3.4.2 Collecting Policies of Other Museums

The Museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and 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 specialisms, in order to avoid

unnecessary duplication and waste of resources. Work in the county and the region on collecting, and the network of subject specialist groups, are likely to establish county and regional priorities and centres of specialisation in future, which will be accommodated into this policy as they arise.

3.4.3 In particular, the Museum will liaise regarding acquisitions of common interest with local museums and galleries which are accredited or actively seeking accredited status, and other institution:

- a. Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden – paintings and other works by North-West Essex artists
- b. Great Dunmow Museum – local history objects from or relating to the town of Great Dunmow and Little Dunmow
- c. Neighbouring museum services in Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire on acquisitions which cross collecting area boundaries and interests
- d. Saffron Walden Town Library - printed and hand-written documents, photographs, pictures, books and other sources of information on Saffron Walden's history. Like the Museum, the Town Library is a special legacy of learned local benefactors from the mid 19th century, and there are close connections between the Town Library's and the Museum's collections.
- e. Essex Record Office, Chelmsford – historic documents and archives that can be more appropriately cared for, interpreted, used and accessed in a record office with archivists and specialist conservation facilities for documents.
- f. Essex Regiment Museum, Chelmsford – items relating to the Essex regiment

3.4.4 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.

3.4.4 Repatriation and Restitution

The Museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the Museum's professional staff, and external specialist advice, and the approval of the Museum Society Management Committee, may take a decision to return human remains, 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.

3.4.6 Human Remains

Human remains from archaeological excavations in Uttlesford may be acquired for long-term research, reference and educational purposes where permitted under Home Office licence, and with the consent of the appropriate church or religious authority for remains from Christian burial grounds. Human remains from burials of other existing religious faiths are not anticipated, given the rural nature of the district, but if they occurred then the same principle of liaison with the appropriate religious organisation would apply. The Museum recognises the special status of human remains which under UK law cannot be 'owned' in the same way that other collections are. Human remains from elsewhere in the UK or from other countries will not be acquired. The only exception may be if human tissue forms an integral part of an artefact, for instance if human hair or teeth have been used in jewellery.

3.4.7 Management of Archives

As Saffron Walden Museum holds and, in certain circumstances, continues to acquire archival material, such as 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 (3rd ed., 2002). For further information on the Museum's archival holdings see 5.1.1 (archaeological archives), 5.1.2 (ephemera and documents) and 5.1.3 (photographs and other pictorial collections).

3.4.8 Shared Acquisitions

Occasionally it may be beneficial for the Museum to seek joint acquisition of an exceptional item with one or more other museums. This may be considered where it is the best or only way of acquiring an important item for public collections, or where a strong interest is equally shared between museums and cannot be addressed by ordinary loan arrangements. In such cases, the terms and responsibilities and administrative obligations of the joint acquisition should be agreed with participating museums before acquisition.

3.5 Authority for Acquiring Items

3.5.1 For donations and bequests, authority to determine acquisitions is delegated to the Curator, acting in consultation with other curatorial staff as appropriate in accordance with this policy, and with external expert advice if necessary.

3.5.2 For purchases, permission must be sought from the Saffron Walden Museum Society, which provides the purchase funds. This should be by the Management Committee of the Society in accordance with its Constitution and Rules.

3.6 Handling & Educational Loan Collection

- 3.6.1 (See 1.3.2 above). It is the policy of Saffron Walden Museum to regard all collections as of educational value and to make all objects and specimens available for educational purposes in ways compatible with their nature and preservation. Nevertheless safeguards have to be in place to prevent any objects or specimens from the Museum collection being exposed to excessive risk from repeated handling or use off the Museum premises without Museum staff present. For this reason, the Museum's Education Officer maintains a separate Handling & Educational Loan collection of objects, specimens and replicas solely for frequent handling by educational groups and/or for Loan Boxes to be used by teachers in the classroom. (These are distinct from Museum objects or specimens which may be *occasionally* shown or handled under supervision of Museum staff for specific purposes).
- 3.6.2 Objects and specimens diverted to the Handling & Educational Loan Collection will be duplicates or otherwise surplus to the Museum collection, and be suitable for handling by all age groups or for use in school classrooms and other educational situations on a regular basis.
- 3.6.3 Donors offering items which are unsuitable for the Museum collection, but accepted for the Handling & Education Loan Collection, will be informed of the difference in risk and status, and must consent to the item(s) being allocated for handling and schools loan use. This should be noted on the signed Entry Form.
- 3.6.4 The interests of other accredited museums take precedence where an object or specimen, which is not acquired or required for Saffron Walden Museum's collection, may be suitable for handling and educational loans but also meets acquisition criteria for another accredited museum which wants to acquire it.
- 3.6.5 Objects and specimens from the Museum collections, which are diverted to the Handling & School Loan collection, should be deaccessioned, i.e. formally removed from the Museum collection, subject to the approval of the Saffron Walden Museum Society Management Committee. This process should ensure that items of potentially high research potential are not placed at unnecessary risk, and keep the Museum's governing body aware of specific educational developments. It should also free parts of the collection for more imaginative use.
- 3.6.6 Because they are unaccessioned or deaccessioned, items in the Handling & School Loan collection are not subject to the disposal policy in section 4 of this document. However, a

register of items in the Handling & School collection will be maintained by the Education Officer, and the loss, damaged or disposal of any item, and the reason, will be recorded in that register.

4 Deaccessioning and Disposal – removing items from the collections

4.1 Aim of Disposal

The Museum and its governing body accept that there is a strong presumption against disposal, as stated in 1.2.3 above, unless there are sound curatorial reasons. Where such reasons apply, however, disposal is a valid and useful means of improving the relevance, quality and sustainability of the collections as a whole, and of releasing specific items where they could fulfil a more useful role outside the Museum's collections.

4.2 Definitions

In this policy **deaccessioning** is defined as 'a museum process that objects/specimens undergo before being removed from the collection', and **disposal** is defined as, 'the act of removing material from the collection using various different methods'.

4.3 General Principles for Disposal

4.3.1 The Museum will establish that the Saffron Walden Museum Society is legally free to dispose of an item. Any decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken only after due consideration of the wishes of the donor or successors, if possible. The decision to dispose will only be taken once all relevant sources of information have been consulted and where necessary specialist curatorial advice has been considered.

4.3.2 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.

4.3.3 Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds.

4.3.4 Any monies received by the Saffron Walden Museum Society from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions but in exceptional cases improvements relating to the care of collections may be justified. Advice on these cases will be sought from MLA (Museums Libraries Archives).

4.4 Reasons for Disposal

The disposal of any item may only be justified for the following reasons:

- a. Items that are too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of further use for the purposes of the collections, or where the condition of the items would require more conservation work than their significance and usefulness merits.
- b. Disposal of duplicate or unprovenanced items that have no discernible role or relevance within the collection, or could fulfil a much greater role if deaccessioned and transferred to another use or institution.
- c. Transfer to the ownership of another accredited museum of a museum object or specimen may be preferable because of changes in public demand, social or educational need, administrative responsibility, development priorities, or the establishment of a new accredited museum.
- d. The Saffron Walden Museum Society Management Committee and Museum Management Task Group, acting on the advice of Museum staff and external expertise where appropriate, may take the decision to return human remains, objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. In such cases the legal and ethical implications will be carefully considered.
- e. Items posing a Health and Safety risk to staff, the public or to the building or other collections, where the risk cannot be sufficiently reduced or eliminated.

4.5 Authority to Dispose

The decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, sale, exchange or destruction (for items damaged or deteriorated beyond use), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the Museum, acting on the advice of the curatorial staff, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone. A report outlining the case for disposal and including Spectrum's recommended points (see *Spectrum. The UK Museum Documentation Standard*, procedure 19 p.179) will be submitted to the Management Committee of Saffron Walden Museum Society by the curator. Any decision made to dispose must be made by the Saffron Walden Museum Society Management Committee and confirmed by the Museum Management Task Group (the Museum's governing body, comprising officers of Saffron Walden Museum Society and members of Uttlesford District Council, to whom the collections are leased).

4.6 Disposal Procedure

- 4.6.1 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, exchange or sale, directly to other accredited museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 4.6.2 If the material is not acquired by any accredited museums to which it was offered directly, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museum Association's *Museum Journal* at minimum, and other professional publications if appropriate.
- 4.6.3 The announcement will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved and the basis on which the material would 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.
- 4.6.4 If not wanted by another accredited museum or appropriate institution, deaccessioned items will be considered for the Handling and School Loan collections or as display props (for instance on open display or as part of an interactive exhibit) where use of accessioned items from the Museum collection would be inappropriate.
- 4.6.5 Where objects or specimens are dangerous, damaged or no suitable alternative home can be found, they may be destroyed and disposed of discreetly, and a record kept of the method and site of disposal.

4.7 Documentation of Disposal

Full records will be kept of all decisions on deaccessions and 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 (*Spectrum. The UK Museum Documentation Standard, procedure 19*). The curator or other authorised member of Museum staff will amend, sign and date the object's or specimen's original entry in the accession register.

5 Collections in Detail

This section provides more information and subject-specific guidance, additional to and subject to the general acquisition and disposal criteria set out in sections 3 and 4.

5.1 Human History and Culture of North-West Essex, and its Regional and British Context

5.1.1 Archaeology

Scope and Role of Collections

Single finds and excavation archives (the finds and records from archaeological fieldwork) covering all periods from earliest prehistoric (Old Stone Age) to recent centuries (Post Medieval). The role of the collection is to preserve and interpret evidence of human activity and sites, especially those that have been damaged or destroyed by development, agriculture or by natural erosion. It is also to help us understand the long history of changing human cultures and interaction with the landscape and environment. The collection includes early coins, from Iron Age to Post Medieval, recovered from archaeological sites, and antiquarian coins and numismatics of no fixed provenance. Capacity is currently an urgent problem for the housing of all finds and records, and the future development and use of the archaeology collection will rely on the provision of the proposed Heritage Quest Centre to replace inadequate off-site storage.

For future use, the special strength of the archaeology collection will be as a large archive of multi-period sites reflecting the evolution of a rural landscape and sites within it from prehistoric to recent times. The nature of the developments at Stansted Airport, coupled with road schemes, pipelines and community projects, will provide a unique archive of regional as well as local importance. In national terms, this will be a significant corrective to the high volume of archaeology from urban sites, which comprise a disproportionate percentage of museum collections nationwide when one considers that until the Industrial Revolution most of the population lived on the land or in small villages and market towns.

Human remains from archaeological excavations, skeletal or cremated, will continue to be collected (subject to storage space) for long-term research and educational potential where appropriate, and according to the terms of the Home Office licence issued and other necessary permissions, e.g. from Church authorities. (see also Guidelines below)

Collecting Area and Priorities

Fieldwork archives, provenanced finds from Uttlesford including finds which have been declared treasure and which the Museum Society is willing and able to purchase (with grant-aid if necessary). Subject to the Heritage Quest Centre project, special priority will be given to acquiring major archives from Stansted Airport, the A120 and related large-scale fieldwork from associated developments, and to smaller archives from parish projects (Heritage Sampford and others) where local communities working with professional advice have undertaken systematic in-depth studies or fieldwork.

In all cases, it is necessary to establish that finds are acquired legally with the landowner's consent, or in keeping with the Treasure Act 1996 where appropriate, and to avoid acquiring 'tainted cultural objects' as defined under the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003.

Sampling, Selection and Retention

For large-scale linear projects e.g. pipelines, roads across district boundaries, deposition of the archive should be made on archaeological criteria, to prevent illogical division of archives across collecting area boundaries, and provided copies of documentation are deposited with other museum services involved. An example is the archive from the Cambridge-Matching Green Gas Pipeline 2002 which will be deposited at Saffron Walden Museum, by arrangement with Cambridgeshire Archaeology Service and Epping Forest District Museum.

Large quantities of common finds such as potsherds, unworked animal bone, waste products of industrial processes and building materials will be preserved through samples and records rather than in their entirety, unless there are special reasons for preserving all finds from a particular context intact. The Museum will work with excavators and specialists to refine the content of archives before acquisition as far as possible.

Large quantities of common finds from archives already in the collection may be reviewed and sampled in future, in consultation with appropriate specialists, with the aim of maintaining collections within sustainable limits while retaining, through records and scientifically viable samples, the information essential to preserve the archive's usefulness and integrity of purpose. The long-term retention of very small quantities of common finds from evaluations and watching briefs may also be reviewed in future, if subsequent fieldwork or research shows that they are not significant.

In sampling and disposal, care will be taken to preserve evidence of individual sites and ensure every parish in Uttlesford remains represented in the collection: a small Romano-British farmstead in

Elmdon, for example, is not the same as one near Great Dunmow, and the collections retained should allow comparative studies of the distribution of sites across the landscape. The needs of local educational and community projects for access to finds from their own parish will be observed.

Sampling of archaeological material for destructive techniques, such as Radiocarbon dating or DNA analysis, may be permitted if appropriate.

Antiquarian collections with material from outside Uttlesford may be retained where these form a distinct group with its own story or purpose. Examples might include the collection of Joseph Clarke, a distinguished local antiquarian, or a collection amassed for broader comparative purposes e.g. the prehistoric lithics (Stone Age flint and stone tools) which cover south-east Britain, and extend to comparative material from a few French sites.

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

Finds identified in conjunction with researchers and specialists as having insufficient context or research potential to justify retention.

Isolated finds or small groups of finds from other parts of Britain, where they do not contribute significantly to understanding the archaeology of Uttlesford and its context, and another accredited museum could put it to better use.

Guidelines

Guidelines for Deposition of Archaeological Archives with museums in Essex (Essex Museum Workers group)

Towards an Accessible Archaeological Archive, 2005, Society of Museum Archaeologists

Guidelines for the Selection, Retention and Disposal of Archaeological Collections, 1993, Society of Museum Archaeologists

Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England, The Church of England and English Heritage, 2005

For ethical treatment of human remains, see also under 5.3.2 Ethnography below

5.1.2 Social & Local History: Objects, Ephemera and Documents

Scope and Role of Collection

A wide range of objects connected with the history of Saffron Walden and the district of Uttlesford. It includes collections of traditional building material used locally and objects relating to local trades. Of particular interest is the agricultural collection, which contains farm tools and vehicles of local significance. There are also several discrete

collections of domestic metalwork, timepieces, medical instruments, scientific pieces, and lighting instruments. The general collection of British coins and numismatics includes a good collection of 17th century tradesmen's tokens, and local bank notes. Examples of Saffron Walden clockmakers' work are also a special local feature. The small collection of toys and dolls has some good examples of 18th-20th century dolls and dolls clothes from the 17th –19th century, which are of regional importance.

There is an extensive collection of documents and ephemera relating to the administration of the town with some items of regional significance. It also includes good documentation on the Museum's own beginnings. Items of national importance include some Robert Southey manuscripts, William Penn letters, and annotated books from Gabriel Harvey's library and a collection of autograph letters collected by G S Gibson. There are some historic maps and large-scale 19th century OS plans of Saffron Walden and the surrounding area.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Additions will only be made to this collection provided that the objects offered are associated with people, places, events or industries in the Uttlesford District, or fill gaps in the existing collections. Items that do not have a local connection but which represent nationwide trends and are of a high quality will be acquired, provided that no other accredited museum has a stronger claim. In future acquiring toys and dolls from the 20th century could develop a comparative collection. Toys and dolls with a local connection and that fill gaps in the current collection will continue to be collected.

Particular priority needs to be given to reflecting the social life and changes in Uttlesford through the 20th century, particularly in domestic and personal life and changes in the local economy and industry. Generally restrictions of space for display and storage will prevent acquisition of large machinery and equipment, domestic appliances or vehicles, so the emphasis will be on smaller objects, good examples of printed items and ephemera.

Firearms will only be collected if of local relevance (e.g. local militia, poacher's guns) and within the scope of the Curator's Firearm and Shot Gun licences. Live ammunition, or anything containing explosives or unstable chemicals will not be collected.

Pharmaceutical and medical items containing stable residues of historic identified drugs will be retained intact, and the appropriate Home Office licence obtained if necessary (the Museum is currently licensed from the possession of opiates in respect of a Victorian doctor's portable medicine cabinet).

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

Objects that have no local connection or provenance and the condition of which is such as to necessitate more conservation work than their significance merits will be prioritised for disposal.

Duplicate items such as single examples of common tools and other common equipment or household items will be assessed for disposal and other uses as part of the transfer of collections to the Heritage Quest Centre. Care will be taken however to preserve intact collections of associated tools from named local workshops or craftsmen.

The Museum's small collection of horse-drawn vehicles is a particular issue, due to lack of a display venue and inadequate storage. Unless this is resolved by the building of the Heritage Quest Centre or other means, some vehicles may be considered for disposal in future as a preferable option for preserving them and providing public access.

Guidelines

Best Practice Guidelines for Archives 1993-2000, Society for Archivists
Code of Practice for Archivists and Record Managers under Section 51 (4) of the Data Protection Act 1998, PRO, PRONI, National Archives for Scotland.

5.1.3 Pictorial Collections: Prints, Watercolours, Paintings, Drawings and Photographs

Scope and Role of Collection

Prints, drawings, photographs and paintings form a comprehensive collection of Saffron Walden topographical representations from 18th century to 20th century, with good coverage of other parts of the county. There is a collection of portraits of Essex personalities and some early photographs, though not necessarily of local people. The Clarke collection of Essex views and portraits is the most significant single collection. There are important collections of natural history prints by Thomas Bewick and prints of Roman Mosaic floors.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Prints, drawings and paintings are acquired primarily as historical or topographical records and must possess aesthetic or historic merit and depict people, places and events in Uttlesford, and/or be by local artists. The Museum does not collect from a 'fine art' perspective and will refer works by the Great Bardfield group of artists (Bawden, Ravilious and associates) and other recent north-west Essex artists to the Fry Art Gallery (North-West Essex Collection).

Past and present photographs of named people and places in Uttlesford, especially outside Saffron Walden, should be actively acquired and with copyright, or record of the copyright holder, wherever possible. Film collections will be referred to the Essex Record Office or East Anglian Film Archive where specialist facilities for their care, use and preservation are available.

Priorities for documents, manuscripts and books should be the acquisition of printed documents, ephemera and where applicable maps that relate to the more recent history of the Museum and the Uttlesford district. Books should not be actively collected as there are current difficulties in storing early books; only volumes in good condition with a very direct relevance to items in the collection should be accepted. Isolated examples of manuscripts or other documents may be collected where these relate closely to objects in the Museum's collection and do not have special archival needs beyond the Museum's scope, such as an account book amongst a group of items from a local shop, or a diary with other belongings of a famous local resident.

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

Offers of historic manuscripts such as deeds, wills and other documents with specialist archival needs will be referred to the Essex Record Office. This will include comprehensive archives from local businesses, such as series of ledgers, accounts.

An antiquarian collection of brass rubbings from various counties will be considered for disposal to relevant museums or archives where possible, only Essex examples retained.

Some disposal from photographic and glass plate negative collections will be considered to remove non-local images which do not form part of a coherent collection.

Guidelines

Preservation of Photographic Materials, 1999, National Preservation Office

5.1.4 Costume, Footwear, Textiles, Needlework and Accessories

Scope and Role of Collection

This collection ranges from the 17th century to the 20th century with costume and accessories not necessarily of local origin. In particular there is a significant collection of Chinese costume and textiles. Samplers, lace samples and equipment, children's costume and stump work are of regional significance. Important individual items include a late 16th century glove said to have belonged to Mary Queen of Scots.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Storage problems in the costume and textile store will restrict acquiring large examples or collections of costume and or textiles for the immediate future. The Museum will acquire locally-related costume and textiles in good condition if they can be accommodated. Priority will be given to men's clothing, uniform relating to the First and Second World Wars, work wear for men and women, and clothing reflecting 20th century trends as experienced by people living in Uttlesford. Children's clothing from the 20th century is also a priority, but christening robes and wedding dresses will not be collected except in exceptional circumstances.

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

The current Living Costume project in Essex may result in further countywide priorities for collection, and identify museum collections which will specialise in certain types of costume or textiles.

Guidelines

Standards in the Care of Collections: Costume and Textile Collections (1998), Museums and Galleries Commission.

5.1.5 Ceramics and Glass

Scope and Role of Collection

Two local benefactors, William Tuke and Dr Henry Stear, made the core collection of British and European ceramics and glass in the late 19th century, with some later additions. This collection contains some pieces of national importance, particularly in the field of tin glazed earthenware, and also includes cream ware, stoneware and English drinking glasses of a high quality. English porcelain, medieval earthenware and Staffordshire figurines are also represented. A small collection of Castle Hedingham pottery (19th century art pottery) provides a local dimension.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Ceramics and Glass will be acquired if the items offered fill a gap, have a local connection or will add to important or high quality pieces already in the collection. The Museum should be actively seeking to acquire donations, bequests or affordable purchases of pieces, which extend the collection into the twentieth century, concentrating on the development of tablewares and domestic pottery. Studio pottery will continue to be represented by long-term renewable loans for the foreseeable future, as acquisition would require funds and expertise

beyond the Museum's scope. Braintree District Museum is considered the primary collection of Castle Hedingham ware in Essex, and will take priority for any pieces offered at public auction.

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

Damaged pieces where a duplicate in better condition exists or can be acquired, unless part of a set. Specialist advice will be sought if any disposal is contemplated.

5.1.6 Furniture and Woodwork

Scope and Role of Collection

One or two pieces of national importance are contained in this collection: a Tudor bed, an oak stool, plus other items of high quality such as chests. The majority of the collection consists of decorated panels and structural timbers of local interest. Occasional additions to the collections are made through local donations or bequests but the Museum does not have the space, purchase funds or in-house expertise to actively pursue collecting.

Collecting Area and Priorities

The Museum will not acquire large items of furniture or woodwork that cannot be adequately displayed or stored; this means that little is likely to be acquired for the foreseeable future. The priority will be to improve care and interpretation of the existing collections, including links with textiles (tapestries), ceramics, glass and social history collections.

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

There is little scope for rationalisation or disposal envisaged at present, and expert advice would need to be sought if any were contemplated.

5.2 Natural Environment of Uttlesford (north-west Essex) and its regional context

The natural history collections contain about 70,000 specimens of plants, animals, rocks, minerals and fossils. The founders of the Museum and other 19th century naturalists presented most of these specimens. They collected in Essex and the rest of Britain.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Acquisition of specimens found in north-west Essex will be given priority over material from elsewhere in Britain and the rest of the world.

Field collection and survey at sites in Uttlesford will not be undertaken without permission of the landowner. The Museum will not collect or record on SSSIs without official permission.

Sampling, Selection and Retention

Natural history specimens should be accompanied with full data, such as species/object identification, exact location found, date collected, name of collector.

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

Duplicates of common species, or specimens, which do not have associated data and are in poor condition.

Objects that pose a health and safety hazard that cannot be controlled or isolated.

Guidelines

The Museum will support the protection of the natural environment, as outlined in the Museums Association *Code of Ethics for Museums*.

It will comply with British legislation for protection of threatened plant and animal species as provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (UK) 1981.

The 1981 Act repealed and re-enacted the Protection of Birds Acts of 1954-67 and sets out the legal requirements for the storage and documentation of birds' eggs. It is no longer possible to keep eggs in private collections unless documentation exists to prove that they were collected before 1981. Eggs will not be acquired if such documentation is unavailable.

The Museum will follow the guidelines for collectors of rocks, minerals and fossils published by the Geological Curator's Group.

5.2.1 Plants

Scope and Role of Collection

The historic herbarium is of considerable regional importance. It contains about 14,000 dried specimens of flowering plants, ferns, mosses, liverworts, fungi, lichens and algae. Essex botanists such as George Stacey Gibson, Joshua Clarke, W.L.P. Garnons and Frederick Brocas collected many of these plants in Britain during the 19th century. The Museum has a copy of G.S. Gibson's *Flora of Essex* and some field notebooks of wild flowers records.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Biological records of sightings of plants in northwest Essex. The Museum undertakes surveys of plants at sites designated under the Special Roadside Verges Project in Uttlesford.

The Museum will collect voucher specimens of plants that are found in north-west Essex.

5.2.2 Animals

Scope and Role of Collection

Mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, fish, insects, molluscs and other invertebrates can be found in the zoology collections. A small collection of mainly British mammals includes the famous “Wallace the Lion” who was born in Scotland, but later belonged to menagerie-owner George Wombwell, who came from a village near Saffron Walden. Historic specimens of British birds form the main part of the bird collection. Joseph and Joshua Clarke, Jabez Gibson, John Gould, Stephen Salmon, and Mr Stevenson presented birds. There is a field notebook of bird records. The birds’ egg collection includes material from W.M. Tuke and H.E. Smith. Breastbones from different species of birds are part of the bone collection.

The insect collection includes large numbers of British beetles, butterflies and moths, including micro-moths. Shells from Britain are found in the mollusc collection and the local material has extensive data.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Biological records of sightings of animals in northwest Essex. Mammals and birds found in north-west Essex. The Museum may acquire historic mounted specimens with data and modern specimens that have died of natural causes.

Birds’ eggs will not be accepted unless legal paperwork complying with the Wildlife and Countryside Act (UK) 1981 is available, the specimens have collection data and the eggs fill gaps in the collection.

Specimens of insects and other invertebrates from north-west Essex will be collected, however, the acquisition of butterfly and moth collections is not a priority.

5.2.3 Fossils

Scope and Role of Collection

Fossil remains of animals from the Chalk and Red Crag seas that once covered East Anglia are the strengths of the fossil collection. It is particularly rich in Crag fossils from Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, amassed into a collection by G.S. Gibson. There are local chalk and boulder clay fossils and remains of animals from the Ice Ages of the

Pleistocene period. Most fossils date from the Cenozoic and Mesozoic eras of geological time.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Cenozoic and Mesozoic fossils found in north-west Essex.

5.2.4 Minerals and Rocks

Scope and Role of Collection

The mineral collection contains specimens from Britain collected in the 18th and 19th centuries by Sir John St.Aubyn, Dr W. Babbington, G.S. Gibson and J.E. Drew. Many of the mines in Cornwall, Derbyshire and northern England where these minerals were collected are now closed. The rock collection has examples of igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Rocks, minerals and fossils found in northwest Essex.

5.3 Human History and Culture – the Wider World

5.3.1 Egyptian and Mediterranean Antiquities

Scope and Role of Collection

A small historic collection formed mainly in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Mediterranean antiquities are principally Greek and Cypriot pottery. Egyptian antiquities range from pre-dynastic to Ptolemaic, including one human mummy. These collections are heavily used by the Education Officer for teaching National Curriculum topics on Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece to visiting school classes, Saffron Walden Museum being the only museum in Essex to offer Ancient Egypt as a standard part of its schools' programme. Most of the Egyptian antiquities are common items from funerary contexts but some are more significant, such as a Middle Kingdom double statue, a stela and a pot for sacred milk from the temple of Hathor.

Collecting Area and Priorities

The Museum does not intend to actively add to these collections: besides the relative restrictions on acquiring ancient Egyptian and Mediterranean antiquities today, purchase costs, lack of space and lack of specialist staff in these fields make it inappropriate. Offers of small items by gift or bequest may be considered only if they fit with the existing collections and are of sound provenance. Efforts will be concentrated instead on researching and widening the uses of the

existing collection, through involvement with The Fitzwilliam Museum (East of England Hub), British Museum and other appropriate networks.

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

No scope for rationalisation and disposal is seen in the foreseeable future; the collection includes a small number of items of significance, and others, which are likely to benefit from further research.

5.3.2 Ethnography

Scope and Role of Collection

An internationally important collection of some 6,000 objects, mostly domestic artefacts, worldwide in scope. Significant early acquisitions include the Bennet collection (Polynesia), Helder Wedge collection (Australia) and objects reflecting the native cultures of North America. Oriental collections include an early suit of Samurai armour and a collection of costume from a Chinese family spanning 1870 to 1970 (referred to above, 5.1.4). The collection asserts the creativity and skills of many different historic cultures around the world, and records cultures which have since disappeared (often as a result of European intervention) or changed dramatically in the last two hundred years. It also reflects the trading, missionary and colonising context, in which the ethnographic collections were made during the 19th century, and the stories of individual local collectors and their travels. In recent decades, Saffron Walden Museum has also become the repository for small collections of ethnography from other museums in Essex; therefore it also holds a countywide responsibility for historic collections relating to Essex collectors and travellers in general.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Acquisitions will be restricted to donations of provenanced items, which relate to or complement existing collections, and especially any associated with collectors, families or explorers from north-west Essex. In assessing offers for the collection, the Museum must be able to establish that the object(s) were not exported illegally from the country of origin.

The Museum will not collect human remains from outside the UK (see Archaeology above), unless as artefacts incorporating small amounts of human tissue (e.g. hair, teeth). Active collection from present-day communities is outside the Museum's scope, so the Museum will concentrate on interpreting historic collections in their context.

Reference will be made to Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology and to the Rhodes Museum, Bishop's Stortford, where appropriate.

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

Fuller documentation and research may reveal a small number of unprovenanced, duplicate items suitable for handling collections or disposal, otherwise disposal is not envisaged.

A large collection of items placed on long-term loan by the Cuming Museum in the 1960s will be re-assessed with the Cuming Museum.

Repatriation

In the event of the Museum receiving any requests for repatriation of artefacts, each request will be considered on its own terms and advice will be sought from the Museum Ethnographers Group and other sources of appropriate expertise and guidance.

There are no human remains in the ethnographic collection, except for human components such as hair and teeth used in a few artefacts, and one skull in the Cuming Museum loan. There were previously two *Toi moko* (Maori preserved and tattooed heads), which were repatriated in 2005.

Guidelines

Guidelines on Management of Human Remains, 1994, Museum Ethnographers Group

Guidance Notes on Ethical Approaches in Museum Ethnography, 2003, Museum Ethnographers Group

Working Group on Human Remains Report, 2003, DCMS

5.4 Natural Environment - the wider world

Material was collected from Europe and all over the world during the 19th century. These specimens illustrate the natural environments of continents around the world.

Collecting Area and Priorities

Not a priority unless specimens represent groups not found in the collection and can be used for education; for example to illustrate animals found in different habitats, or the types of materials found around the world.

Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

Duplicates of common species, or specimens, which do not have associated data and are in poor condition.

Objects that pose a health and safety hazard that cannot be controlled or isolated.

Guidelines

The Museum will support the protection of the natural environment, as outlined in section 8 of the Museums Association *Code of Ethics for Museums*.

It will comply with international legislation for protection of threatened plant and animal species as provided by the Berne Convention, CITES (the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species) and the European Community Directive on Environmental Protection.

The Museum will support the UNESCO Convention on the means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property as it applies to specimens of scientific importance.

5.4.1 Plants

Scope and Role of Collection

The herbarium has a small number of plant specimens and tropical seeds collected outside Britain. The collection also contains some examples of products from the cotton and rubber industries.

5.4.2 Animals

Scope and Role of Collection

The Mammal collection contains some European material. Birds were collected from Europe and there is a wealth of fine artistic Victorian taxidermy with examples of humming birds, Birds of Paradise and other species from Africa, Asia, North and South America and Australia. A small number of foreign Reptiles and Amphibians are represented.

Local Essex donors have presented insects and other invertebrates from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Shells from around the world are found in the mollusc collection.

5.4.3 Geology

Scope and Role of Collection

Some fossils, minerals and rocks were collected in elsewhere in the world. There is an interesting collection of volcanic rocks.