

The Beacon

Acquisition & Disposal Policy
2008 - 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Section 1 Statement of Purpose	6
Section 2 Existing Collections	7
2.1, 2.2 Copeland and Origins of The Beacon collections	7
2.2.1 – 2.2.10 Subject areas	7
Section 3 Future Collecting	9
3.1 – 3.10 Criteria for future collecting and themes	9
Section 4 Limitations	11
Section 5 Other Museums	11
Section 6 Policy Review Procedure	12
Section 7 Acquisitions not covered by the policy	12
Section 8 Acquisition Procedures	12
Section 9 Spoliation	13
Section 10 Repatriation and Restitution	13
Section 11 Management of Archives	14
Section 12 Disposal Procedures	14
Section 13 Review	16

FOREWORD

Against a backdrop of the dramatic Irish Sea, Copeland forms part of the west coast of Cumbria, one of the largest counties in England. From Distington in the north to Millom in the south, the Borough encompasses a variety of landscapes and forms part of the “Lake District National Park“.

Home to people since the end of the last Ice Age the area has spawned trades and traditions from fishing and farming to transatlantic shipping and mining for coal and iron. These origins are reflected in Copeland’s museum collections held by The Beacon.

Began in the 19th century by the Whitehaven Scientific Association the collections comprise social and natural history, fine and decorative arts, coins, textiles, photographs, prints, maps and books. They were later transferred to the former Whitehaven Town Council and subsequently to Copeland Borough Council during local government re-organisation in 1974. With richness and diversity they enable residents and visitors alike to appreciate and understand how the Borough developed from its natural geology to its present nuclear industry.

Today the collections continue to grow through the generosity of many donors and with enthusiastic support from strategic funding bodies and the Friends of the Museum who help us to purchase items of special interest.

New directions in collecting will ensure that as well as enhancing current strengths such as maritime art, acquiring contemporary items will keep the collection relevant, evolving and effective.

Sue Palmer
Beacon Museum Manager
2008

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this policy is to provide terms of reference to strengthen and inform future collecting in Copeland's Beacon Museum. It has been developed in consultation with service staff and other museums and with reference to the Museum Association's *Collecting for the Future*, 2005 and the more recent *Making Collections Effective* report, 2007.

It has been reviewed to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council's Accreditation Standard 2008 and also conforms with the Museum Association's Code of Ethics, 2008.

The policy describes and defines the present state and uses of the Beacon collections and reviews the current practices of acquisition and disposal. It ensures material is accepted according to recognised national standards and serves as a reference document to guide curatorial decisions. It aims to encourage public confidence in The Beacon, Whitehaven as a suitable repository. It establishes relationships with other museum bodies in the region in relation to acquisition of material for the collection and transfer of objects.

Key priorities for collection management and development over the next five years:-

- Continue to address known 'gaps' and enhance existing collections
- Strict approach to selection of items for acquisition
- Rigorous rationalisation of the natural history collections
- Draw out and clarify interdisciplinary themes
- Adopt a practical approach to develop collections which represent Copeland's diverse communities

This Acquisition & Disposal Policy forms part of the Beacon's *Collections Management Policies, Procedures & Plans*. It should be viewed in this context and in relation the objectives set out in the Beacon's annual Forward Plan and their direct links with Copeland Borough Council's vision:-

..... Leading the transformation of West Cumbria to a prosperous future

Copeland Borough Council aims to:-

Achieve Transformation

Collections help grow and develop self-esteem through community involvement in recording personal histories, as vehicles for reminiscence and as a rich resource for life-long learning.

Generic Learning Outcome: *Knowledge & Understanding*
Generic Social Outcome: Health & Well-being

Promote Prosperity

Collections are the source material for a vibrant exhibitions programme, events and displays, attracting visitors from far and wide. They generate pride and pleasure in the Borough's achievements and celebrate its diverse trades and communities.

Generic Learning Outcomes: Enjoyment, Inspiration, Creativity

Generic Social Outcome: Stronger and Safer Communities

Effective Leadership

Collections can be catalysts for change, prompt new partnerships, and influence and inform regeneration and renewal.

Generic Learning Outcome: Activity, Behaviour and Progression

Generic Social Outcome: Strengthening Public Life

ACQUISITION & DISPOSAL POLICY

Museum: The Beacon, Whitehaven

Governing Body: Copeland Borough Council

Date on which this policy was approved by Governing Body: [To be added](#)

Date at which this policy is due for review: July 2013

1.0 Statement of Purpose

The Beacon's Mission

“To enable everyone to explore Copeland’s rich and diverse history by collecting, preserving, interpreting, and displaying artefacts for inspiration, learning and enjoyment.”

2.0 Existing Collections

2.1 Copeland – With the exception of a small number of towns, much of Copeland is rural landscape or developments along the coast. This rural nature is part of Copeland's charm but also adds to its isolation, being about an hours drive away from the nearest motorway. The sea and coast have been used since prehistoric times for fishing, and later for salt, shipping and shipbuilding industries. Evidence of agriculture dates from Neolithic times and Herdwick sheep farming from before the Viking settlements. Mining for coal and iron took place across the Borough for many centuries, coming to an end during the closing years of the 20th century. These have now been replaced by light industry, nuclear power, reprocessing, and tourism.

2.2 Origins of The Beacon's collections

Originated by the Whitehaven Scientific Association, Copeland's early collections were begun in the mid 19th century, in the Association's Howgill Street premises, Whitehaven. These early collections comprised mostly items of fine and decorative art, natural history, prints and books. Finds of archaeology and social history ephemera, numismatics, photographs and maps formed later additions.

The nucleus of existing collections, they were later housed and exhibited in an early museum run by Whitehaven Town Council in the Public Library on Catherine Street. In 1974 during local government reorganisation the collections were transferred to Copeland Borough Council when its museum service was established in the Old Market Hall, Market Place, Whitehaven, in 1975. The museum was later relocated to the Civic Hall's Dunboyne Hall in 1987 where it remained until 1996 when the purpose-built Beacon was completed on the Harbour front. The Beacon and its associated Resource Centre are now the permanent homes for the Copeland Museum Collection.

Most recently The Beacon has undergone complete refurbishment (2007-08). It has seen the establishment of new storage areas for its fine art collections, new thematic displays throughout, a refurbished Harbour Gallery for temporary and touring exhibitions and has seen many artefacts exhibited for the first time following a major programme of conservation work.

The total collection now numbers over 30,000 items covering the following subject areas:-

2.2.1 Social History – A broad range of artefacts relating to the communal, domestic, personal and working life of the people of Copeland since Medieval times. The collection includes items which relate to coal mining, iron mining, shipbuilding and maritime history, local industry and technological developments, agriculture and rural crafts, costumes, military history and archival materials and ephemera.
(11,963 items)

2.2.2 Fine Art – A collection of paintings, water-colours, drawings and sculpture either by local artists or works that depict local views or local people. The collection includes an important group of maritime paintings featuring nationally and internationally renowned marine artists such as Joseph Heard who lived and worked in Whitehaven before moving to Liverpool in 1832 and Whitehaven-born Robert Salmon whose work was much influenced by Dutch marine painters of the period. (1,172 items)

2.2.3 Decorative Arts – The decorative art collections include substantial amounts of 19th century Whitehaven-made pottery, silverware and ceramics commemorating the launch of local ships and an exemplary 18th century enamelled glass goblet by William Beilby. Beilby was the first person in England to fire enamels into glass so that the enamel almost became part of the glass itself. The Beacon's Beilby goblet commemorates the launch of the King George slave ship and commends "Success to the African Trade of Whitehaven". (700 items)

2.2.4 Archaeology – A varied collection of local archaeology including the St Bees Shroud c1300AD; the d'Irton tombstone; a 'series' of quernstones; a glass bottle from Hardknott Roman Fort; some bulk archaeology and three excavation archives. The St Bees Shroud and associated artefacts are well known locally and are displayed at St Bees Priory Church, the site of their excavation and as part of a Medieval lead coffin burial during the 1980s. (430 items)

2.2.5 Natural Sciences – Comprises a large geology collection; an herbarium; a small collection of stuffed birds, animals and birds' eggs. (2,043 specimens)

2.2.6 Numismatics – These include 131 local trade tokens used in 19th century and a number of coins found in the Borough. These range from early Roman examples to a 2007 issue, £2 coin to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. A selection is now on display following the museum's redevelopment.

2.2.7 Photographs – A strong local collection of photographic prints, postcards, glass plate negatives, magic lantern slides, 35mm slides and over 5000 black and white negatives relating to Copeland, especially its towns, harbours, shops and people. Frequent requests are made to view the photographic collection and plans are underway to digitise the entire collection and make it accessible via gallery information points and online via the Beacon's website. (10,107 photographs, 5000 plus B/W negatives)

2.2.8 Prints – A small collection of engravings, etchings and lithographs of local places or people. (110 items)

2.2.9 Books – A library of over two and a half thousand books on a variety of subjects, mainly relating to the existing collections and history of Copeland. They also include bound newspapers such as the 18th century Cumberland Packet and Cumberland Chronicle papers, and the Whitehaven News since 1907. Due to their fragility access to these items is restricted and researchers are supervised on a one

to one basis. The Beacon is working in partnership with Cumbria County Record Office and Archives to review its collecting policy relating to archives and ephemera and with the aim of cataloguing its Library collections more effectively to improve it as a research facility and learning resource and thus increase its use. (2,504 books)

2.2.10 Maps – A combination of both originals and copies of maps and plans relating to Copeland. (1,689 items).

3.0 Criteria governing future acquisition policy including the subjects or themes, periods of time and/or geographic areas and any collections which will not be subject to further acquisition

3.1 Enhancing Existing Collections Following the completion of a major cataloguing project between 1994 and 1997, the strengths and weaknesses of the collection became clearer. Strengths include; maritime paintings, an extensive photographic collection, Victorian costume and 19th century Whitehaven-made ceramics whilst areas for re-consideration and concern include; the geology and stuffed animal and bird collections. This is due to a combination of lack of expertise and overall poor condition of the specimens. During the next five years the Beacon will continue to collect items which 'address the gaps' highlighted by this process. (e.g. Copeland since the 1940s; examples of gentlemen's clothing and World War 2 items) with the intention of deepening and enriching the existing collections.

3.2 Duplication Duplicates of items already in the collection will not be accepted unless they are in better condition than the existing example.

3.3 Resource considerations Collecting will take place providing that suitable accommodation (display and/or storage within appropriate environmental conditions) is available supported by staff time and skills for accessioning, cataloguing, research, cleaning, etc. Financial resources must also be available and in place for purchases or for preventative and remedial conservation.

3.4 Rationalisation – The Beacon will seek to rationalise its natural history collection and discontinue active collecting of this material (excluding geology). Where possible, the current natural history collection will be transferred to other appropriate institutions.

3.5 Consultation – The Beacon will only add to its collection of paper archives with the agreement of Cumbria County Council Record Office and Archive Service, Whitehaven.

3.6 In collaboration with Libraries & Archives The Beacon will work in collaboration with Cumbria County Council's Record Office and Library Service regarding collection care requirements for archive material, access arrangements and the development of an oral history archive.

3.7 Contemporary Collecting The Beacon will acquire items made by contemporary artists and makers where relevant to Copeland and will collect artefacts which represent Copeland's many communities since the 1940s.

3.8 Period of time and/ or geographical area to which collecting relates

3.8.1 The Beacon has a responsibility to preserve and display or make available for study, evidence of human and natural history of the Copeland area, the boundaries of which were designated under the Local Government reorganisation of 1974.

3.8.2 In certain fields (including geology and geology based-industries, maritime history and photographic record work), these man-made boundaries are inconsistent with the proper understanding and presentation of the subject and some 'overlap' with adjacent areas is unavoidable. Where any possible conflict of interest might arise between museum collecting areas, this will be resolved by negotiation and mutual agreement. For specific organisations see 5.0.

3.8.3 As all periods of history are represented by The Beacon's collection; future collecting will not be restricted to specific periods of time.

3.9 Subjects/ Themes for active collecting:-

3.9.1 Social History All aspects, especially coal mining and maritime history as they form key elements in the historical development of the area.

3.9.2 Costume Examples of uniforms or work-wear from the 1920s to the present day will be collected in particular, plus examples of male costume, providing that they have been worn or made locally and are of display quality.

3.9.3 Contemporary material will be collected wherever possible in addition to 1950s memorabilia and 1980s clothes, games and music illustrating 20th Century life in Copeland. Archival material will only be collected where it relates directly to the specimens in the collection or assists in the interpretation of the history of the area. (potential donors will be advised to contact the Whitehaven Record Office and Local Studies Library as a possible, alternative repository).

3.9.4 Fine Art The Beacon will continue to add to the fine art collection when opportunities arise and resources are available providing that the item refers to a local subject/ theme or has been created by a local artist.

3.9.5 Decorative Art Some additions will be made to the collection of Whitehaven - made ceramics. It is also intended that the scope of this collection be widened to include contemporary Whitehaven ceramics and glassware where appropriate.

3.9.6 Geological specimens will continue to be collected until The Beacon has a representative collection of local rocks, mineral and fossils.

3.9.7 Photographs, postcards and prints The Beacon will actively add to its photographic collection in the form of original prints and negatives, and also as copy negatives. This policy also applies to postcards and prints.

3.9.8 Books will be added to the collection only where the subject relates directly to Copeland and its history (potential donors will be advised to contact Whitehaven Record Office and Local Studies Library as a possible, alternative repository).

3.9.9 Archaeology Single finds will be accepted into the collection if there is a direct link to the area and the item is of historical and aesthetic value and suitable for display. We will not accept large quantities of bulk finds from excavations or unidentified material.

3.10 The following list indicates those subjects where The Beacon does not intend to add to the existing collections -:

3.10.1 Archaeological excavated material It is not possible for The Beacon to accept large archives (i.e. over 30 boxes) from archaeological excavations due to storage limitations. Currently Tullie House at Carlisle serves as the main repository for such collections. Storage difficulties at Tullie House require that this issue be regularly reviewed by their Keeper of Archaeology and the Curator at The Beacon and policies amended where necessary.

3.10.2 Natural History For the period of this Policy there will be no expansion to the collection of natural history specimens due to storage restrictions and the lack of specialist expertise.

4.0 Limitations on collecting

The Beacon 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 and care of collection arrangements.

5.0 Collecting policies of other museums

The Beacon will take into 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 specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following museums: -

Haig Colliery Mining Museum
Helena Thompson Museum

Kendal Museum
Keswick Museum
Millom Folk Museum
Senhouse Roman Museum
Tullie House (Carlisle City Council)
Whitehaven Record Office and Local Studies Library (Cumbria County Council)

6.0 Policy Review Procedure

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

MLA Northwest will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition & Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

7.0 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 Beacon itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

8.0 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 Beacon 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 purpose 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 Beacon 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 Department for Culture Media and Sport in 2005.

d. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, The Beacon 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.)

e. The Beacon 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, including 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. (in England, Northern Ireland and Wales) or reporting finds through the Treasure Trove procedure (in Scotland).

f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 8a, 8b, 8c, or 8e will only be because The Beacon 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 the 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 Beacon 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 Beacon 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 the Department of Culture Media & Sport in 2005.

9.0 Spoliation

The Beacon 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.

10.0 Repatriation and Restitution

The Beacon’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, may take the decision to return human remains, objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The Beacon 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 12a-12d and 12g and 12s 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”.

11.0 Management of Archives

As the Beacon holds 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 (3rd Ed., 2002)

12.0 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 Beacon, Whitehaven 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 Beacon’s collections.
- c.** The Beacon 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 Beacon 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 12g-12s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.
- f.** The Beacon will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

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 Beacon'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 MLA.

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 the item within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by, by exchange, 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, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of material, normally be through an announcement in the Museum 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 Beacon 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 nature of disposal by exchange means that the Beacon will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that the issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

o. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 12a – 12d and 12g – 12h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 12p -12s.

p. If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

q. If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

r. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the Beacon's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Documenting disposal

s. 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.

13.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in July 2013 or before as required.