

Collections Development Policy

Helena Thompson Museum

2022 - 2027

Name of museum:

Helena Thompson Museum

Name of governing body:

Allerdale Borough Council as Trustee of the Helena Thompson Museum Trust

Charity no. 1119567

Managing body:

Workington Heritage Group LTD

Charity no. 1127084

Company no. 05378881

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 23 November 2022

The policy will be published and reviewed at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: November 2027

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1 Charitable objective of the **Helena Thompson Museum Trust** is to provide a museum for the town of Workington and district

1.2 The statement of purpose of **Workington Heritage Group Ltd** is:

The purpose of the Helena Thompson Museum is to interact with the people of Workington and visitors to the area through presenting exhibitions and displays, through interaction with visitors using Museum artefacts and through talks on different aspects of lifestyles as portrayed in the Museum.

Workington Heritage Group Ltd want to achieve the continued presence of the Museum within the town of Workington by making the townspeople and visitors aware of the facilities available.

We do it for the people of Workington and District, visitors to the area and for future generations in order that they may appreciate their heritage.

- 1.3. The governing body (Allerdale Borough Council) will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- 1.4. By definition, the Museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the Museum's collection.
- 1.5. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances and then only after proper consideration by the governing body or responsible officer of the Museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.
- 1.6. The Museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.7. The Museum will undertake 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.
- 1.8. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

2. History of the collections

The original collection at the Helena Thompson Museum reflects the interests of the family, and their way of life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Miss Helena Thompson was interested particularly in the history of fashion and costume. The collection consisted of costume and textiles; antiques and curios; family possessions; portraits and domestic chattels dating from the second half of the eighteenth century.

The collection has grown over the ensuing years particularly in the last decade with a broadening of the scope to include particularly local trades, industries, and domestic and commercial life in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As industries have closed in Workington the Museum has acquired artefacts relating to their production and histories. A significant photographic collection has been acquired; many of these are old glass slides and early photographs of the town and people which has been digitised.

Workington Heritage Group Ltd was granted the lease to run the Museum on the 1st April 2005.

3. An overview of current collections

Archaeology

The collection comprises a miscellaneous grouping of mainly Cumbrian artefacts¹, deriving from a number of sources including bequests, excavations and casual finds. This material can be placed in four categories: Pre-history, Roman, Medieval and Early Modern.

i) Pre-history

Artefacts from the Pre-history are not held at the Museum.

ii) Roman

The only objects identified as Roman artefacts at the Helena Thompson Museum are a few pottery sherds and a loom weight, donated by J Lister in 1988.

iii) Medieval

Artefacts from the medieval period are not held at the Museum.

iv) Early Modern Period

The Clifton dish is a very rare survival (one of only two survivors in this country) of the

¹ Archaeological material from Allerdale, ranging from excavation archives through to specific pieces such as the Cockermouth gold neck ring are part of the collection at Tullie House Museum in Carlisle.

work of a pottery at Clifton, near Workington. Made circa 1700 to 1750, this red earthenware press-moulded slipware marriage dish is nearly 16" in diameter and has the words 'Clifton Dish' inscribed on the back. The design of the dish is based on the British Royal Arms and clearly shows the influence of the Staffordshire slipware tradition.

Social History

This part of the collection is wide-ranging, including as it does the evolution of everyday life and local industries in the Workington area for the last three hundred years. The broad nature of the scope of this collection means that it has the largest gaps, and it is these gaps in particular that the Museum will look to develop during the course of this Policy, prioritising certain subject areas. Photographic material and oral history from the twentieth century will have a general priority.

i) Costume and Textiles

The collection covers the general history of women's costume from the late eighteenth century to c.1930, and is representative almost exclusively of the middle and upper classes in Workington during this period. The majority of the collection at the Helena Thompson is made up of artefacts donated by, or given to, Miss Thompson.

An inventory exists, and the principle categories are women's costume, dolls, babies and children's clothes, lace, women's accessories and accessories in general, shoes, hats, parasols, fans, and samplers.

ii) Domestic: leisure / pastimes

The Helena Thompson has material and leather balls from the local 'Uppies and Downies' game, and various other sports are represented. 'Uppies and Downies' is an annual mass football game dating back into the 18th Century. Other similar mass football games in the country are in the Orkneys and Ashbourne.

The Museum holds glass slides, magic lantern slides, negatives, photographs and photographic equipment. A large part of this collection is from Workington photographer William Lawrie. He described himself as a Photographic Chemist. He built bird hides high on the crags in order to take close up shoots of Buzzards, Peregrines, Sparrowhawks etc. as well as photographing local scenes to sell as postcards. Lawrie's family has also passed on the copyright to Lawrie's photographs to the Museum. Other glass slides, magic lantern slides, photographs, negative and colour slides have been donated. Several magic Lantern lectures by W H Youdale on spiders and ants, including exercise books containing hand written lecture notes are also held.

iii) Work: industrial, commercial, maritime, agriculture

This area of the collection covers several major industries. These include iron and steel, mining, shipbuilding and seafaring on the coast.

The Helena Thompson includes important artefacts from Workington Iron and Steel works, including samples, models and photographs. The Museum also houses collections from several Workington shops and artefacts relating to the World Ploughing Organisation. Other commercial companies represented include Alcan, the aluminium makers and British Steel.

iv) Community: schools, religion, political/military

The Helena Thompson Museum contains a small collection of weaponry and militaria.

Natural Sciences

i) Vertebrate Zoology

The collection includes the display collection of mounted British birds and mammals, some not found in Cumbria today, some osteological material, and several hundred clutches of birds eggs and nests.

The collection derives mainly from Victorian naturalists and includes the collection donated by Workington collector W C Lawrie. It includes artefacts from Britain, Australia and Indonesia. The collection of British birds' eggs contains some 1000 specimens.

ii) Invertebrate Zoology

The Helena Thompson Museum has a collection of butterflies and moths assembled from 1870-1900 from various collectors.

iii) Botany

The Helena Thompson contains the M. Lawrie collection of lichens and a miscellaneous collection of algae, ferns and mosses.

iv) Geology (rocks, minerals and fossils)

The collection comprises of several boxes of specimens donated by local collectors.

v) Human remains

The collection comprises of a number of human bones that have been wired together to form an anatomical specimen, possibly from a doctor's office or hospital and an allegedly mummified 'human' hand. (now identified as a baboons). The artifacts have not been dated but are believed to be over 100 years old.

Fine and Decorative Art

i) Fine Art (Oils, Prints, Watercolours)

A collection of prints, watercolours, oils and drawings covering the period c.1700 to the present day, with the majority of the works dating from the nineteenth century.

ii) Metal and Glass

The Helena Thompson Museum contains a collection of silverware relating to Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling and other sports, and a range of civic regalia. The glass collection at the Helena Thompson includes various vases, decanters, jugs, glasses, and lusters, many of which have links with local sea captains.

iii) Ceramics

The collection consists of eighteenth and nineteenth century porcelain and other material from the Helena Thompson. Other items of specific interest include a number of char dishes and various ceremonial items with a maritime theme, and a small collection of locally produced vernacular pottery.

iv) Furniture

There are several pieces of furniture in the collection, principally from the house collection at the Helena Thompson Museum, including clocks, chairs and various pieces of cased furniture. The furniture includes a beautiful working German made coin operated Symphonion and a conserved Jacobean style open settle made of oak with a delightfully carved high back.

There is also a Jacobean style dresser, which is reputed to contain part of a bed post from the bed in which Mary Stuart slept while being given shelter at Workington Hall.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

Future collecting activity will relate to the area of Workington and its surrounds from pre-history to modern times. Specifically within the postcode CA14, although special consideration will be given to artefacts outside this area which have local interest providing permission is given by the Allerdale representative.

Due to limited storage and display space, only unique items with good provenance and which contribute clearly to the story of the area, complementing current collections, will be collected. Large items will not generally be collected except in exceptional circumstances.

Archaeology

It is not possible for the Museum to accept large archives from excavations due to storage limitations. Currently Tullie House at Carlisle in partnership with the Carlisle Archaeological Unit serves as the main repository for such collections from Allerdale. In future Tullie House will only act as a repository for excavation archives from sites within Carlisle District. The exceptions to this are excavations that are carried out under the auspices of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archive Society, and re-excavated sites where the archive already sits in Tullie House. The same criteria apply to archaeological acquisitions other than archive material.

All casual archaeological finds reported to the Museum, are notified to the Portable Antiquities Reporting Officer for NW Cumbria.

Responsibility for the storage of excavation archives from sites in Workington and its immediate area (which fall outside the Tullie House criteria listed above) could be said to sit within the Helena Thompson Museum's collecting area. This Acquisition and Disposals Policy states that the Museum will not usually accept material of this sort. Although the Museum is not unusual in having to adopt this position, the potential for problems arising in the future from this stance should not be ignored, and officers will look to work with Tullie House and other organisations to develop protocols and solutions to this complex and difficult situation.

Future collecting priorities need to be developed in partnership with Tullie House and the Senhouse Museum. During the course of this policy efforts will be made to add material, other than excavation archive material, to the collection, as most material which could potentially come forward from this discipline would add interest to the collection.

Social History

i) Costume & Textiles

During the course of this policy efforts will be made to develop a more representative collection when possible, placing more emphasis on occupational costume and on artefacts from the twentieth century, which needs to be acquired while still more readily available. Contemporary locally produced art textiles will be acquired where these complement the existing collections, and the textile craft activity currently operating out of the Helena Thompson Museum. Future collecting priorities need to be developed in partnership with Tullie House.

ii) Domestic: leisure / pastimes

During the course of this policy the Service will look to develop all areas of this collection to complement existing collections, and to focus on sport as a specific subject area which merits a collecting focus.

iii) Work: industrial, commercial, maritime, agriculture

During the course of this policy the Museum will look where possible to develop all areas of this collection, concentrating on local industry.

iv) Community: schools, religion, political/military

During the course of this policy the Museum will look where possible to develop all areas of this collection.

Natural Sciences

i) Vertebrate Zoology

During the course of this policy future specimens will only be acquired if they have a local history context being, for example, the clearly identified work of a local tradesman; to add to items from an existing collector such as Lawrie; to replace existing collections; or fill gaps in existing collections.

ii) Invertebrate Zoology

The collection at the Helena Thompson Museum is closed.

iii) Botany

The collection at the Helena Thompson Museum is closed.

iv) Geology (rocks, minerals and fossils)

The collection at the Helena Thompson Museum is closed.

v) Human remains

The museum will not be collecting any more human remains.

Fine and Decorative Art

i) Fine Art (Oils, Prints, Watercolours)

During the course of this policy the Museum will continue to collect works that reflect life within Workington and the surrounding area. This includes the work of local artists, but also representations of local subjects. The Museum will look to acquire work by twentieth century artists whose work is poorly represented, in particular Sheila Fell, Albert Rosser, Sheila Redpath, Edward Thompson, Monica Barry, Len Roope and Percy Kelly in consultation with other local museums and art galleries detailed in section 7.2.

ii) Metal and Glass

During the course of this policy the Service will continue to collect in this area when material has significant local connections.

iii) Ceramics

During the course of this policy the Service will look to acquire material which is locally provenanced, with an emphasis on material produced by the local industry. The Helena Thompson collection will only be added to in a passive manner.

iv) Furniture

During the course of this policy the Museum will actively look to acquire examples of furniture by local makers including examples of the local vernacular which is under represented in the collection. Contemporary pieces by local makers will be acquired with a functional purpose, such as to fill a need for seating in the Museum galleries and there will be efforts to pursue donations from local makers. Acquisition of pieces associated with the Curwen family / Workington Hall.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 The Museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

5.3 On-going reviews of the collections at The Helena Thompson Museum may highlight the need to consider disposal for legal, safety or care and conservation reasons (for example, spoliation, radiation, infestation, repatriation) and may result in one of the following:

- removal from the collections any item that is too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any further use for the purposes of The Helena Thompson Museum
- duplicate or unprovenanced material
- material better suited to another public collection eg another museum or archive.

- 5.4 These reviews and any subsequent recommendations for disposal will be by agreement with the owners of the collection, the Workington Heritage Group and any external specialist advice as required.

6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

The Museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7 Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1 The Museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museums / organisations:

Tullie House Museum, Carlisle
The Beacon, Whitehaven
Penrith Museum (Eden District Council)
Senhouse Roman Museum, Maryport
Ruskin Museum, Coniston
Keswick Museum and Art Gallery
Maryport Maritime Museum
Kendal Museum
The Wordsworth Trust
The Mountain Heritage Trust

8 Archival holdings

The Museum holds a quantity of books, pamphlets, maps and leaflets associated with the local area. Ephemera and general reference books are also held. The governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002). The Museum will also adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in its acquisition, care and management of archives collections.

During the course of this policy the Museum will look to fill gaps in the existing collection in consultation with the Whitehaven Record Office which holds the archives for the north west of Cumbria.

9 Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

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.

Appropriate items offered for inclusion are accepted for consideration by the museum's collection manager prior to approval by the appointed representative for Allerdale Borough Council.

Items offered for inclusion into the Museum's collection will be dealt with in either of the following ways:

- a. If the item's value is £1000 or over or is perceived to be over £1000 then Allerdale Borough Council's appropriate officer (currently responsibility of the Sport, Art and Leisure Officer) will be consulted as to the Council's view in acquiring the item.
- b. If the item is of a lesser monetary value then the decision to acquire the item will be made collectively between Museum staff, volunteers and where appropriate local residents and experts. Decisions will be made in an open and transparent way and with due regard to all the appropriate guidance and documentation. The Museum Curator recommends acquisitions to Allerdale Borough Council at the end of every financial year for confirmation of acceptance of the items into the collection. Items may then be accessioned by the Museum Curator.

9.2 The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

- 9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10 Human remains

- 10.1 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.
- 10.2 The museum does not intent to acquire further human remains.

11. Biological and geological material

So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12 Archaeological material

- 12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (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.
- 12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

13. Exceptions

Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the Museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

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. The Museum will document when these exceptions occur.

14. 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.

15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

15.1 The Museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the Museum’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005) , objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The Museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

15.2 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’.

16. Disposal procedures

16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.

16.2 The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

- 16.3 When disposal of a Museum object is being considered, the Museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.
- 16.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.
- 16.5 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 public benefit, the implications for the Museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. 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.
- 16.6 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 or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.9 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end

of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the Museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

- 16.10 Any monies received by the Museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.
- 16.11 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.12 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.

Disposal by exchange

- 16.13 The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
 - 16.13.1 In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.
 - 16.13.2 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.

- 16.13.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.13.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum'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.

Disposal by destruction

- 16.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 16.15 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- 16.16 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.17 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- 16.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.