

Appendix 4 Great Yarmouth Museums

2. History of the collections

The Great Yarmouth collections are based over three museums in the town: The Tolhouse Museum & Gaol, opened in 1883; the Elizabethan House Museum, run in partnership with the National Trust which acquired the building in 1951; and Time & Tide Museum which opened in 2004.

The collections have been informed by the nature of each museum but a significant part came from the Shipwrecked Sailors' Home and the former Maritime Museum. The Sailors' Home on Marine Parade originally opened in 1861. It provided the survivors of shipwrecks with medical help, a change of clothes, food and a bed. It had a small museum which grew as sailors donated the souvenirs they had collected on their travels. The Home closed in 1964 and in 1967 the building reopened as the Maritime Museum which actively collected items relating to Great Yarmouth; the Museum closed in 2002. As the collections originate from a wide variety of sources there are varying levels of documentation across the collections and a range of collections management issues.

Significant individual items include Nelson's funeral drape and an Anglo-Saxon log boat. There is a fine collection of ship models and an important local marine art collection, including Pierhead paintings.

The Captain Manby collection reflects the eccentric owner of the ship rescue mortar. It consists of his famous mortar which is on display, paper ephemera, paintings of Manby and personal items such as his medals, garments and accessories. The collection also includes the monument to him as well as the largest collection of his inventions in model form.

Also significant is the Press Collection. Joseph Press (1847-1851) was a traveller and sailor from an influential Great Yarmouth family who brought back many items he used aboard ship which are on display at Time & Tide. The collection includes photographs and primary source material, including his own books and ledgers detailing his life and work as a merchant sea captain

Collecting now focuses on objects with a context that relate directly to the Borough of Great Yarmouth and the three museums. Since the creation of Time & Tide Museum the curatorial staff have done a great deal of work documenting the lives of fishermen, seaside landladies, offshore workers, the Port Authority, shipbuilders, herring curers and lifeboat crews in the local community. A community curators' forum has been employed to assist with contemporary collecting and commission films and photographs.

3. An overview of current collections

The accessioned collections are largely focused on Great Yarmouth's local history with a strong leaning towards maritime collections. All of the Great Yarmouth museums are situated in listed buildings. Each museum tells the story of a different

period in the town's history and the buildings are collection items in themselves. Time & Tide Museum is located in a renovated Victorian herring curing works, the Tolhouse is a 12th century gaol and courthouse, and the Elizabethan House was built in 1596.

The collection encompasses around 30,000 objects and paintings, as well as a maritime archive of approximately 20,000 photographs and documents. The wide-ranging maritime collection concentrates on fishing, shipbuilding and other maritime trades, merchant trade and lifesaving in Great Yarmouth. The emphasis is on herring fishing and curing from the last two centuries, but the collection as a whole covers archaeology from the Ice Age and ethnography, right up to objects from the 1990's.

The museum holds a comprehensive archive of photographs, plans and charts, research files and a database of Yarmouth registered vessels. The collection's strengths include photographs and shipbuilding plans and objects relating to herring fishing, and meets the key aims of Time & Tide Museum to reflect the diverse nature of maritime Norfolk generally and Great Yarmouth specifically.

A current rationalisation programme is identifying a range of objects that sit outside the museum's current collecting policy, mainly duplicate items or those in poor condition and/or with no Norfolk or maritime connection to Great Yarmouth. However there are no large parts of the collection that are no longer relevant to our purpose.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

Geographical area

The general area covered by the collecting policy of Great Yarmouth Museums is that represented by the Borough of Great Yarmouth. In certain circumstances the Museums may collect from a wider area as defined in the themes for collecting below, with reference to other museums in that area.

The collecting area of the former Great Yarmouth Maritime Museum was once the whole of East Anglia but Great Yarmouth Museums now concentrate available resources on Norfolk alone and particularly Great Yarmouth. The history of the inland waterways and the Broads is no longer within current collecting ambitions and new material will be referred to the Museum of the Broads in the first instance.

Subject areas

Social History – general

Great Yarmouth Museums collect material and associated information which reflects the history of the Borough of Great Yarmouth encompassing industries, trades and crafts, buildings, personalities, community life and events.

The museums hold a collection of costume and textiles which tell the story of life in Great Yarmouth and the surrounding area. Items range from christening robes and children's outfits to adult clothes including notably fishing clothing and local work wear. There is also a collection of accessories and associated handicrafts. Any

further collecting for this collection will be carried out in liaison with the NMS Costume & Textile collections, and will be under the heading of Social or Maritime History collecting categories described below.

Social History – Community Life

1. Collecting will aim to build a picture of the lives of people in Great Yarmouth within living memory and contemporary life, in consultation with local people.
2. Architecture. Limitations of space preclude further collecting of architectural fittings. English Heritage has such a collection in The Rows House and it is our policy to cooperate with them.

Social History – Working Life

1. Trades and Industries. Collecting will concentrate on those objects which relate specifically to Great Yarmouth (i.e. locally produced or branded) including the fishing industry and ancillary trades, and the lives of those engaged in these industries and their families.
2. Holiday Industry. This is an important but not adequately represented area. Collecting will concentrate on material culture which illustrates the lives and experiences of the visitors and the local community.

Maritime History

Maritime History is a key strength of Great Yarmouth Museums' collections, and cuts across traditional collections boundaries. The Museums will collect material and associated information which:

- Interprets the maritime heritage of the Borough of Great Yarmouth
- Reflects the maritime history of Norfolk to the present day, encompassing the development of ports and shipping, the maritime trades, crafts, industries and lives of people and communities associated with the sea.
- Is from outside the collecting area but provides a context for Norfolk material.

The criteria below will guide acquisition policy in the following specific collections:

1. Original Vessels. Work with other agencies to ensure the preservation of significant material.
2. Fishing. Collecting will concentrate on the important North Seas fishery collections and lives of families associated with it as they relate to Great Yarmouth.
3. Merchant Passenger Shipping. Collecting will concentrate on material relating to vessels of Norfolk origin or with Norfolk associations, and the families associated with these vessels.
4. Naval History. Collecting will concentrate on vessels, actions and personalities relating to Norfolk, (including Nelson) and particularly the collection of material and information concerning Norfolk naval bases and the two World Wars.
5. Shipping and associated industries. Collecting will concentrate on the development of the material culture relating to Yarmouth shipbuilders and their vessels, and the lives of the people who worked in the industry.
6. Navigation. Collecting will concentrate on material culture which relates to Norfolk.
7. Marine Engines. Will only be collected if they have a strong association with Norfolk.

8. Life-saving. Collecting will concentrate on material culture relating to life saving in Norfolk and the families and personalities associated with life-saving activities.
9. Ship Portraits. Collecting will concentrate on enhancing the existing fine collection of 'Pierhead portraits', with particular emphasis on portraits of fishing vessels by artists of the Yarmouth/Lowestoft school who are not currently represented, and on portraits of Norfolk vessels in foreign ports.
10. Offshore Industry. This represents an important but neglected field in the collections, but the complexity of the industry and its dominance by heavy engineering pose problems for the collection of representative objects. Collecting will concentrate on the development of material culture relating to the lives of people in the offshore industry.

Fine art

Collecting will concentrate on developing the existing collection of representative works by local artists of regional significance and works of local topography, local significance (including specifically local personalities and events) and marine art.

Decorative Arts

Collecting will focus on material and associated information which represents the works of local artists of at least regional significance, craftsmen and manufacturers to the present day, and which relates to specifically local personalities and events or local topography.

1. Ceramics. Collecting will concentrate on developing the existing collections of locally manufactured, decorated or inscribed pieces, particularly by Absolon.
2. Glass. Collecting will concentrate on developing the existing collections of locally manufactured, decorated or inscribed pieces, particularly by Absolon.

Archaeology

Collecting will be restricted to the acceptance of small finds, in consultation with the NMS Archaeology Department. Areas of interest include the pre-Roman settlement of the district, the Roman sites of Burgh Castle and Caister and the medieval and post medieval urban areas.

Natural History

Collecting will be restricted to mounted bird and other specimens related to local personalities or occupations and to the acceptance of small geological finds from the district, in consultation with the NMS Natural History Department.

Ethnography

Currently the Museums hold a collection of approximately 120 objects from the North West Canadian and American coast, Africa (across the continent), Asia, and Australasia. There are Haida, Tlingit and Maori objects in the collection. The North West Canadian coast collection has been described as being of particularly good quality, on a par with that held by national museums in Britain. Objects include weapons (swords, spears, and arrows), carved wooden artefacts (bowls, masks, and spoons), scrimshaw, shoes, accessories, religious items, baskets, pipes and pots. The collection is essentially closed but very limited collecting may take place, restricted to items complementing the existing collections or from the same individuals represented in the collections.

Limitations on collecting

Museum storage space at Yarmouth is very limited which is a severe constraint on collecting significant local material. This makes it essential at present to be very selective when adding to the collections. This lack of space needs to be addressed; relocation of some material may be possible. Some storage space is available at the Norfolk Collections Centre at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse, but that too is limited.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

Rationalisation will focus on duplicate items and collections which have no known provenance, and material which does not relate specifically to Great Yarmouth (with the exception of the ethnographic collections).

Priorities for rationalisation and disposal at Great Yarmouth Museums are:

1. duplicate objects within the collections
2. objects that are duplicated in other museums, both in NMS and the wider sector
3. objects with little or no provenance
4. objects with no known relevance to the local history of the area
5. poor quality objects that now require large conservation resources to be of display standard

7. Collecting policies of other museums

As well as the general considerations for NMS as a whole, Great Yarmouth Museums will make special consideration and reference to the collecting policies of The Rows House, the Nelson Museum, the Museum of the Broads, the Lydia Eva & Mincarlo Trust and Lowestoft Maritime Museum.

In cases where local material is perceived to be significant to the collections of specialist NMS departments or museums it should be accessioned there but made available on loan to Great Yarmouth Museums for display if required.

