

Appendix A Collections and Building Care Interim Statement 2009

Report from Museums Officer at request of Museum Co-ordinator in respect of Blake Museum's progress in collections care from the time of reporting in November 2005 to the end of March 2009.

I acknowledge that this is sketchy and a bigger document could be produced if I had access to museum records and collections.

In November 2005 the Museum published its medium and long-term aims as part of the Accreditation process.

I no longer have access to the Museum collections database or accessions register so cannot report on the overall number of objects added to the collections during this period or the number of collection records added to the computer database during this period – but it would be interesting to know what we actually achieved on the resources available (Curatorial Assistant 2 days per week). I believe that at least 900 entries were added to the computer databases.

After the documentation plan was agreed, there were brief interruptions in the time that we had a Curatorial Assistant in post due to the need to find temporary replacements for maternity cover. One-day training to improve collections management was undertaken by Curatorial Assistants as and when available.

CCP 5.3.1 – Environment

Spot readings continued to be taken in many areas of the Museum. In the medium term;

- 4 digital recorders of temperature and relative humidity were purchased in 2006 and used continually in key display areas and stores including the Chubb Room and Colley Lane Store
- The replacement of some windows, roof repairs and the installation of a humidistat-controlled fan in the Chubb Room all stood to improve the environmental control of that room, although there is still no compartmentation of room spaces in the Museum.
- A book-rest bag was purchased for safer use of large books by researchers

There were no actions against the long-term objectives beyond the provision of polyester sleeves for many more photographic, printed and archive items in order to reduce problems from handling of objects. About 20 archive items (property deeds mainly) were deposited with the Somerset Record Office because of their nature being more appropriate to Record office enquiries.

CCP 5.3.2 – Storage

- Collections audits were carried out in two store areas and at the Brick & Tile Museum, and the locations records updated on the computer database
- Other object location records were updated as and when found e.g. when objects located for temporary exhibition, objects located as part of an audit of loans
- A scheme for reorganisation of the photograph collection was drawn up in 2008 and preparatory work on marking photos with classification details was commenced but no physical changes to the storage system were made

CCP 5.3.3 – Housekeeping and security

- Two new smoke detection points were installed and the fire alarm system connected directly to a monitoring station in 2007
- Conservation of collections was ongoing within budget, most notably the Chubb collection pictures and the Blake sea chest

Specifically in relation to the Documentation Plan

3.1 – documentation backlog

Work on recent acquisitions was ongoing apart from interruptions referred to above. Of the backlog referred to in 2005, only about 80 items remained by March 2009.

There were backlogs from subsequent years amounting to about 373 items (info from List of items donated intending to be accessioned – March 2009). Therefore a little progress had been made overall in the backlog of unaccessioned items.

3.2 – Location control

Improvements had been made to the records of object locations, mainly as part of audits of stores, and an audit of loaned items carried out late in 2008. In spite of this, over 500 items still appear as “unfound” in the new database, which suggests that the figure of “around 500” given in the 2005 report was an underestimate, or that some entries to this list are caused by duplicate accessioning. In 2007 the Museum obtained a two-screen licence for MODES, so that the Curatorial Assistant and a volunteer under their supervision could both be working on computer records at the same time – this improved the capacity for working on the database.

3.3 – Permanent marking

The only significant progress on this that I can recall is the marking of several hundred photographs in the Don Smith collection.

3.4 – Catalogue

Almost all of the paper records referred to in the 2005 report have been input into the computer database. No progress was made on identification of archaeological items.

3.5 – Brief description

Some work was done on this in 2006. However, as most searching for illustrations was done by keyword search anyway, this was not pursued as it did not make a significant difference to searches of the database.

3.6 – Old Loans In

A review of loans was carried out in 2008 as part of the Museum transfer process. It brought to light numerous anomalies and a fresh look at this will be welcome.