

**Care & Conservation Plan**

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# Background

1.1 The Museum’s governing body, the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Richmond (‘the Board’), is responsible for managing the collection, although day to day management is delegated to the Museum’s Curator (‘the Curator’). Ownership of all the items in the Museum of Richmond’s collection is vested in the Trustees of the Museum of Richmond Trust, normally referred to as the Collections Trust (‘CT’). This is a separate charitable trust established by Deed of Trust on 23 May 1988. The Curator normally meets with the CT twice a year. Some of the CT’s Trustees are normally members of the Board also, so they, along with the Curator, are able to present issues relating to the collection to the Board, which meets every two months.

1.2 In the 2016 to 2019 period, the Museum faces a potential change to its operating environment. This concerns the Museum’s location. Since its inception the Museum has been sited on the second floor of the Old Town Hall (‘OTH’) in Richmond. The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (‘LBRUT’), which owns the OTH, is considering revising the use of building and relocating some of the other services which occupy it; the Museum might be relocated within the OTH as part of this process. It is however not known whether these changes will come to pass; if they do, when they will be made and what will be involved; or when a decision will be taken. As a result, the Museum is somewhat limited in terms of planning future conservation projects.

1.3 In addition to this, the Museum has recently had a changeover of staff, with the employment of a new Curator commencing in February 2016. The present assessment represents the new Curator's assessment of conservation and care priorities, taking account of the uncertainties referred to above and in the light of decisions by and discussions with the Board.

# Resources

2.1 The Museum meets routine expenditure on collections care from its operating budget (e.g. the purchase of acid free tissue or polyester sleeves can be met from general funds or wear and tear funds). Fundraising has to be carried out to meet higher costs, such as the purchase of more expensive equipment or remedial conservation of artefacts. In the past, the Museum has been successful in obtaining grants and also sponsorship from private individuals for collections care projects. The Museum raised funds for a major refurbishment (which took place in 2011), during which improvements were made to the conditions of artefacts on display. Collections care needs will have to be met in the same way in future, on a project-by-project basis.

# Collections Condition Overview

3.1 The last major overview of the collection by a professional conservator took place in 2007, when the Museum benefited from a preservation audit visit funded by MLA London. The majority of the recommendations made have since been implemented. Since then visual checks of the store and galleries have been carried out by previous Curators.

3.2 A more thorough review of the state of the collection is intended to begin in the second half of 2016. The Board is conscious of the need to update the Museum’s arrangements for collections management, and has therefore asked the Curator to examine options for acquisition of an electronic Collections Management System, and to make specific proposals to that end by July. If the purchase of such a system is approved, it would be possible to carry out an audit which would involve a condition check of each object. This would record the current state of each object according to a scale ranging from ‘very poor’ to ‘excellent’, and also record further detail regarding the state of the object, identifying damage, moulds, signs of pest damage or any other signs of deterioration. The CMS would make it possible to include more conservation related information and also to manage both the current and previous states of conservation of an object. Currently, our database has only one field for condition, so a new condition check will overwrite the previous one.

3.3 The Museum has, in the past, been able to identify particularly vulnerable objects and carry out remedial conservation on those based upon priority. Currently there are several objects in the galleries which are particularly vulnerable to light damage and these will be monitored carefully and professional advice will be sought when necessary.

# Accessing professional advice

4.1 Advice is generally sought on a cases-by-case basis when conservation issues are identified with particular objects. Advice has previously been received from professional conservators who have visited the Museum and carried out assessments of objects. Feedback has been given through discussions with the Curator and written quotations and reports. Recent cases where advice has been sought include advice on a collection of gas masks (2012) and on a plan of the Richmond workhouse (2015).

4.2 The Curator received training in preventative conservation in 2014 and is able to identify conservation issues within the collection including those objects which are most vulnerable.

4.3 Remedial conservation is only carried out by professional conservators listed on the Conservation Register operated by the Institute of Conservation. Documentation of the conservation of individual artefacts is stored in the artefact files.

# Building maintenance

5.1 The Museum occupies part of the second floor of the OTH. The building is owned by the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (LBRUT) and also houses the Reference Library and Richmond Local Studies Collection (which are LBRuT ran services). The OTH was built in the 1890s, though with later additions and alterations, and is of brick construction with concrete ceilings. Responsibility for the maintenance of the building lies with LBRuT. Major maintenance is organised by LBRuT while the Library Facilities Manager, who is based at the OTH, oversees fire systems, security systems and other smaller contracts. Currently, building maintenance is the responsibility of Babcock International by delegation. This includes alarm systems, CCTV, the lift, the boilers, heating and ventilation systems and clearing the roof guttering.

5.2 The Museum’s collection is safeguarded by fire and security alarm systems. The fire alarm system is monitored by ADT and covers the whole OTH building. The fire alarm is serviced quarterly and the fire fighting equipment is serviced annually.

5.3 The OTH building has a Synergistics security alarm. The Museum has an independent security alarm system, which is also monitored by ADT. This alarm is set when the Museum is closed but the rest of the building is open. When the whole building is closed, the Museum has the benefit of being protected by both alarm systems. The security alarm systems are serviced annually.

# Monitoring of the environment

6.1 Monitoring of the collection is carried out by the Curator. Temperature and relative humidity are monitored by dataloggers in the Museum gallery, the store and in the temporary exhibition case. Data is downloaded every 4 to 6 weeks, printed out and stored on the computer. Print outs are examined and annotated, if necessary.

6.2 Light levels are measured by a light meter from time to time, usually when displays are changed or new exhibitions put up. Measures are taken to reduce light levels, if necessary.

6.3 Insect traps are placed at various points around the Museum gallery, the offices and the store. There is also a moth trap in the store. These are examined and findings are recorded at 2 to 3 monthly periods. Infestation has not yet been a problem but professional help would be sought if it occurred.

6.4 Equipment is maintained as far as possible according to the manufacturer’s instructions. The dataloggers, which have been in use since 2005, were recalibrated in 2010 (they required no adjustment). All insect traps are renewed according to the manufacturer’s guidelines.

# Environmental control

7.1 Visible light: the gallery is almost entirely lit by artificial light as all except one of the windows are blocked. The remaining window has a blind which is kept down at all times. Halogen spotlights on a lighting track are used in the gallery. Lower wattage bulbs are used to illuminate light sensitive items. Cases are lit from above with fluorescent tubes, which are separated from the case by a light diffusing panel. Baffles can be placed between the tubes and the panel to reduce light levels as required.

7.2 Relative Humidity and temperature: currently, there are no extra measures that can be taken to control RH. Temperature can only be controlled by the opening office windows and introducing fans into the gallery when it is hot. These measures are necessary for the comfort of volunteers, staff and visitors. A fan heater is used by the entrance desk, for the benefit of desk volunteers, when it is cold.

7.3 Items in the store: most of the items are boxed or kept in costume bags. Some are on open shelves. There are no windows or sources of heat in the store. Lights are only switched on when access is required to the store and the door is kept shut.

7.4 Items on display: The vast majority of items on display are in display cases, though some are on open display. Most of the display cases were purpose built when the Museum opened in 1988, and have wooden carcasses and glass doors. When the gallery was refurbished in 2011, the display cases were repainted and relined with conservation standard materials and seals were installed on the doors to make them airtight. A future priority is likely to be the installation of an alternative lighting system to the Museum’s current halogen lighting.

# Housekeeping

8.1 The Museum gallery is cleaned on a weekly basis by a professional cleaner, who vacuums the gallery carpet and cleans the glass on display cabinets. No chemical-based cleaners are used in the gallery. The cleaner does not touch any exhibits. Exhibits on open display are dusted or brushed, as appropriate, by the Curator as required.

8.2 The store is monitored at least once a week. Most items are in boxes or in costume bags. Brushing or vacuuming of the floor takes place on an occasional basis, as required.

8.3 New donations are examined for insect infestation or other problems and only introduced into the store or displays if clear.

8.4 Pest traps are positioned in the Museum’s store and gallery and are monitored on a monthly basis.

# Future action and priorities

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| **Issue** | **Action** | **Date** |
| Guttering Issue | There had been a leak in the Museum store due to an external guttering issue. The external issue is now resolved but some damage need to be repaired in the store. Curator will liaise with LBRUT about this.  | By August 2016 |
| Plan of the Richmond workhouse | Continue to liaise with conservators, commission work and organise its return to the Museum. | By December of 2016 |
| Store Clean | Carry out annual Store clean. | By December 2016 |
| Collections Audit | Condition checks of every object in the collection will be carried out.  | Ongoing, beginning by September 2016 |
| Light sensitive objects in galleries | Review which objects are at risk, assess options for action and implement.  | By June 2017 |
| Other vulnerable objects | The collections audit will potentially identify vulnerable objects in need of remedial conservation. Funding will be sought as and when this occurs on a case-by-case basis.  | Ongoing, beginning by September 2016 |
| Environmental Control | Investigate the possibility of purchasing a dehumidifier to help control relative humidity. | By June 2017 |
| Museum relocation | In the event of a relocation of the Museum, advice will be sought on environmental issues in the new location.  | Unknown |

**Museum of Richmond Board of Trustees Approval of the Plan**



Sir DB, KCMG

Chair of the Board of Trustees

May 11th 2016