



# Collections Acquisition and Disposal Policy

The Bishop's Palace

Start date 15.02.2024  
Revise date 15.02.2025

## Contents

1	Scope and purpose of the policy	2
2	Existing collections covered by the policy	2
3	Criteria governing future collecting	3
4	Acquisition principles and procedures	3
5	Disposal principles and procedures	4
6	Policy review procedure	5

## Collections Acquisition and Disposal Policy

### 1. Scope and purpose of the policy

1.1. The Palace Trust has oversight of The Bishop's Palace collection of artefacts (currently owned by the Church Commissioners for England) and a records archive of material pertaining to the history of The Bishop's Palace and The Palace Trust, since its creation as a charity to govern public access and engagement with The Bishop's Palace site. Its aim is to use these collections:

1.1.1. To enhance the Palace's reputation by raising awareness of the history of the Palace buildings and the bishops who have resided at the site since the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

1.1.2. To facilitate historical and other research.

1.2. This policy covers all accessioned artefacts and material held at the Palace and archive records of the Palace, including items of historic significance.

1.3. The purpose of this policy is to define the present state and use of the Palace's archive and collections and to set out clear policy regarding the acquisition and disposal of material. It ensures material is accepted according to a recognised strategy and serves as a reference document to guide decision making by staff and Trustees.

1.5. This policy is also intended to encourage public confidence in the Palace as a suitable and responsible repository. It complies with the requirements of the Museum, Library and Archives Council's Museum Accreditation Scheme (2008 revision); the Code of Ethics published by the Museums Association (2008); the Code of Ethics published by International Council of Museums in 2006; and the statutory obligations of the Palace as a registered charity. In holding and acquiring museum archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, the College will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).

### 2. Existing collections covered by the policy

2.1. In 1968, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Edward Henderson, formed a charitable trust to care for the Palace and Gardens in Wells and open them to the public for enjoyment and reflection. As part of this remit the limited collections extant at the Palace fell under the care of The Palace Trust. From the formation of the Trust, records have been kept in an archive along with photographs and other publications pertaining to the Palace, its resident bishops and the history of the site. The Church Commissioners for England, as the current owners of the site, hold an inventory of items in their ownership that are on display or stored at The Bishop's Palace. There are a number of other items that have been loaned or gifted to the Palace.

2.2. This policy covers all material accessioned into The Bishop's Palace collection either as artefacts owned by the Church Commissioners, The Palace Trust or items where ownership is undefined. The Policy also covers The Palace Trust's archive collection.

### 3. Criteria governing future collecting

3.1. Acquisition will only be undertaken if the material has demonstrable potential use in engagement, learning and/or research, and also meets the collection-specific criteria detailed below.

3.3. The Palace Trust Collection is subject to collecting in the following areas:

3.3.1. Artefacts associated with the history of The Bishop's Palace site.

3.3.2. Artefacts associated with the Bishops of Bath and Wells, particularly where these relate to the bishop's tenure at The Bishop's Palace.

3.4. Records collected for the archive will include:

- i. Records of Trustee Board and Management and Trustee meetings
- ii. Significant correspondence pertaining to the buildings, gardens, previous staff/residents of The Palace
- iii. Marketing material detailing all public interest events and engagement
- iv. Photograph's of the Palace, its residents, staff and events
- v. Floor plans, maps, elevation drawings featuring The Bishop's Palace site

### 4. Acquisition principles and procedures

4.1. The Palace Trust 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 pragmatic factors including staffing, storage and collection care.

4.2. The Palace Trust will take account of the collecting policies of other museums, archives and organisations collecting in the same or related areas. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialist interest, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

4.3. The Palace Trust will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any item unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum or archive can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

4.4. The Palace Trust 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, such as 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) and its 2003 revisions, or reporting finds through the Treasure Trove procedure (in Scotland).

4.7. Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is either:

4.7.1. Acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin;

4.7.2. 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;

4.8. The Palace Trust will ask all donors and vendors to sign a Transfer of Title Form transferring all rights and titles they may have, including intellectual property rights, to The Palace Trust.

4.9. The Palace Trust will act in accordance with all current legislation impacting upon access and use of acquired material (including Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Copyright and Intellectual Property legislation).

4.12. The Palace Trust reserves the right to appraise material upon acquisition and selectively to retain or dispose according to these stated criteria.

4.13. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by The Palace Trust, having regard to the interests of other museums and archives.

## 5. Disposal principles and procedures

5.1. By definition, The Palace Trust's museums and archives have long-term purposes and should possess (or intend to acquire) permanent collections in relation to their stated objectives. The Palace Trust accepts the principle that, except for sound curatorial reasons, there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any accessioned items in the collections.

5.2. The Palace Trust will establish that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Any decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken only after due consideration.

5.3. When disposal of an item is being considered, The Palace Trust 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.

5.4. Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds.

5.5. Any monies received by The Palace Trust from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections in pursuance of their stated charitable purposes. Advice on these cases will be sought from appropriate professional and regulatory bodies.

5.6. A decision to dispose of an item, 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), will be the responsibility of The Palace Trust Board of Trustees acting on the advice of professional curatorial or archival staff, if any, and not of the individual staff acting alone.

5.7. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift, exchange or sale, directly to other Accredited museums or Registered archives likely to be interested in its acquisition.

5.8. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum or recognised archive to which it was offered directly, then the heritage community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in appropriate professional fora.

5.9. The announcement will indicate the number and nature of items 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 or Registered archives. 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.

5.10. Any monies received by The Palace Trust 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. 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. 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 for museum items.

## 6. Policy review procedure

6.1. The Acquisition and Disposal Policy will be published and reviewed at least once every five years. Appropriate regulatory and professional bodies will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.