

Mount Edgumbe

Britain's historic park by the sea

Acquisition and Disposal Policy Mount Edgumbe House

Governing body: Mount Edgumbe Joint Committee

Date approved by Mount Edgumbe Joint Committee:

Date at which this policy is due for review: (Three years from last approval date)

1. Vision Statement for Mount Edgumbe House and Country Park

A unique, sustainable, nationally important, historic environment with landscape, gardens, buildings and collections, accessible to people of Plymouth, Cornwall and beyond. A beautiful and safe space in which to enjoy, learn and be inspired; achieving an outstanding quality of life.

2. Existing collections, including the subjects or themes and the periods of time and /or geographic areas to which the collections relate

Main Collection

The interior of the house is furnished with 98% Mount Edgumbe family possessions.

The collections may be summarized as predominantly art and decorative art from a variety of periods spanning approximately the last 500 years (with the exception of the earlier Bronze Age horns). Collection items include paintings, frames, antique furniture, tapestries, ceramics, silver etc. There is also a small library of antiquarian books.

There are some very important items in the collections. These include paintings by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Van de Velde, Boulle furniture of exceptional quality, tapestries - fragments of a larger work (late 16th century), and a pair of Bronze Age Horns.

Some of the Reserve collections of prints, drawings and watercolours are housed in stores at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. The vast majority of the collection is housed on site and approximately 2/3 is on display. A reserve collection of furniture is housed in the attic at Mount Edgumbe House. The reserve collection of oil paintings are housed in a dedicated store room in the house.

Loans

In 2003, a further collection of paintings, frames, works on paper, objects and archive material was made available to Mount Edgcumbe House by the present Earl of Mount Edgcumbe. This is a short term loan that is reviewed every three years. This additional collection – approximately 220 items - holds a number of unique and important works of art (including drawings by Van de Velde), and archive material and historical information relating to Mount Edgcumbe and the Edgcumbe family. The condition of the objects in this collection is very varied. These items are stored in two stores within the house.

In the Barrow Park area we display collections of items on loan from the National Trust, Geevor and Weald and Downland Open Air Museum. These loans are to be reviewed in 2012. None of these items are unique or of high value individually. They serve to illustrate tools and equipment that would have been in these workshops and saw mill areas.

The curatorial responsibility for the Mount Edgcumbe collections is vested with the City Curator at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.

3. Criteria governing future acquisition policy including the subjects or themes, periods of time and/or geographic areas and any collections which will not be subject to further acquisition.

Future acquisitions will continue to focus on objects and artworks that belonged to the Edgcumbe family **or** help us to interpret the family or property history. This includes

- Social history artefacts that relate to the history of the Mount Edgcumbe Estate and those who worked on it.
- Artefacts that, though not of Mount Edgcumbe family provenance, are representative of what the Edgumbes may have owned.
- Archive material such as photographs and documents.

We will acquire objects within the following date range: between 1560 and 1950.

4. Limitations on collecting

Mount Edgcumbe 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 such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

5. Collecting policies of other museums

Mount Edgcumbe 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 specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following museum(s):

- National Trust (Cotehele and Saltram House)
- Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery
- Cornwall Records Office

6. Policy review procedure

The Acquisition and Disposal Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

The Regional MLA 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.

7. Acquisitions not covered by the policy

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

8. Acquisition procedures

a. Mount Edgcumbe 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.

b. In particular, Mount Edgcumbe 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).

c. 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, Mount Edgcumbe will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee 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.

d. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, Mount Edgcumbe 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.

e. The museum will not acquire archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the Mount Edgcumbe Joint committee or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

In England, Northern Ireland and Wales the procedures include 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.

f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 8a, 8b, 8c, or 8e will only be because Mount Edgcumbe is either:

acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin; or

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; or

acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin; or

in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970.

In these cases Mount Edgcumbe will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

g. Mount Edgcumbe does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

9. Spoliation

Mount Edgcumbe 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.

10. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

The Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, may take a decision to return objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. Mount Edgcumbe 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 12a-12d, 12g and 12s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

11. Management of archives

As Mount Edgcumbe holds / intends to acquire archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, the Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

12. Disposal procedures

Disposal preliminaries

- a. The Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- b. By definition, Mount Edgcumbe House, as a museum, has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in Mount Edgcumbe's collection.
- c. Mount Edgcumbe will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.
- d. When disposal of a museum object is being considered, Mount Edgcumbe 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.

Motivation for disposal and method of disposal

- e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 12g-12s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.

The disposal decision-making process

- g. Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, the decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the 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. External 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.

Responsibility for disposal decision-making

h. 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 Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

Use of proceeds of sale

i. Any monies received by the Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee 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. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from MLA.

j. 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.

Disposal by gift or sale

k. 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 or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

l. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly 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 an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

m. 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, Mount Edgcumbe may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

Disposal by Exchange

n. The nature of disposal by exchange means that Mount Edgcumbe will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

- o. In cases where the Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 12a-12d and 12g-12h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 12p-12s.
- p. 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.
- q. If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, Mount Edgcumbe will make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals where appropriate.
- r. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the Mount Edgcumbe'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 Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Documenting disposal

- s. 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 de-accession and disposal.