



ACCREDITED
MUSEUM

Collections Development Policy MonLife Heritage Museums 2024-2029

Museum, Caldicot Castle, Chepstow Museum,
Shire Hall Museum, Monmouth (*formerly Monmouth Museum / Nelson
Museum and Local History Centre, Monmouth*)



Name of museum:

MonLife Heritage Museums

comprising of:

Abergavenny Museum, Caldicot Castle Collection, Chepstow Museum, Shire Hall Museum, Monmouth (formally Monmouth Museum / Nelson Museum and Local History Centre, Monmouth)

Name of governing body:

Monmouthshire County Council

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:

Policy review procedure:

Museums staff will review the policy annually. Unless there are any significant changes to be made it will be renewed and approved by the governing body in line with Museum Accreditation timeframes.

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: January 2025 (Internal review)

Welsh Government Culture Division will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

Statement of Purpose for MonLife Heritage Museums 2024- 2029

We have a 10-year Heritage Strategy 2022-2032 with a clear set of vision, mission and goals, which we follow within our annual Heritage and Culture Delivery Plan:

The Management of all heritage assets within MonLife to enhance the vibrancy of Monmouthshire, deliver inspirational and inspiring experiences and promote a deeply rooted sense of place.

- **Goal 1:** Contribute to the delivery of both the Council's key policy objectives and Welsh Government Priorities – including the Programme for Government, the Well Being of Future Generations Act, the Anti Racist Wales action plan and Curriculum for Wales, in order to deliver excellence at our sites, whilst including tackling social injustice, climate change and promoting our service for everyone.
- **Goal 2:** Build a future focused, resilient business model for MonLife heritage which is competitive and an exemplar of sustainability.
- **Goal 3:** Create county-wide engaging, quality, impressive and interconnected experiences which inspire passion, learning and exploration of collections, the built environment and the wider landscape, bringing our heritage to life.
- **Goal 4:** To engage a wide range of audiences, making the heritage physically and intellectually accessible for everyone, and for future generations.
- **Goal 5:** Ensure that, colleagues, volunteers and audiences are able to co-produce the future of MonLife Heritage ensuring that the stories which are presented, together with their significance, is understood by all and generates a real sense of pride and wellbeing.
- **Goal 6:** Build strong and lasting relationships with stakeholders and the communities in which our sites are based, to engender a shared responsibility for our heritage and develop a way to co-produce the presentation of this.

We sit under the Service Grouping of MonLife which has its own overarching Statement of Purpose:

MonLife Statement of Purpose:

Our purpose is to help build sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations in Monmouthshire, which is a shared purpose with our public service board partners, and this is at the heart of everything we do.

We contribute to delivering the Council’s well-being objectives, which align to the Public Service Boards objectives, as set out in the Community & Corporate Plan (2023-2028). We are also seeking to align closely with the emerging Marmot principles. The specific priorities we contribute to are:

MCC Purpose	To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health, and dignity for everyone at every stage of life
MCC Well-being Objectives	Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced
	Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions, making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency
	Thriving and ambitious place where there are vibrant town centres, where businesses can grow and develop
	Safe place to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure
	Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued
	Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential
Gwent PSB Well-being Plan 2023-28 Objectives	We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all
	We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations

The Purpose of MonLife is to deliver high quality customer experiences and encourage more visitors to the Monmouthshire area, supporting resilient and active environments to enhance and showcase the rich and diverse opportunities for people to enjoy.

Within MonLife’s Business Plan our activities are grouped under three overarching actions. All our activities within MonLife Heritage Museums meet one of these actions

MonLife Heritage's three actions:

- To ensure we have a resilient and sustainable Heritage and Culture Service which provides our residents and visitors with high quality opportunities to engage with our culture and history.
- Provide a new cultural offer incorporating the Monmouth Museum within Shire Hall
- Deliver a high quality formal and informal learning and engagement service that is relevant to the needs of our audiences.

- 1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- 1.3. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.
- 1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5. The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.6. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, or bequest, 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.
- 1.7. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the collections

2.1 Abergavenny

The Museum was founded on 2nd July 1959. The idea for a museum was around from as early as 1903 when it was discussed and minuted by the Abergavenny Free Library Committee. At this meeting permission was given for the library to begin collecting objects. These collections remained at the library until the 1940s when it was said that they were disposed of. The demolition of the historic buildings in Tudor Street and Castle Street during the 1950s once again made people aware of the need for a museum. Alfred Jackson addressed the Rotary Club on 22nd October 1957 and a committee was formed. Alfred and Ernest Jackson and Duggan Thacker led a group of enthusiastic volunteers and the Museum opened on 2nd July 1959.

2.2 Caldicot

When the Chepstow Rural District Council purchased Caldicot Castle from the Cobb family in 1963, they also acquired a quantity of furniture, fittings and other decorative objects which the family has used to furnish the Castle while it was their home (from the 1880s - 1940s). The "Cobb Collection" also included a considerable costume collection, with some fine examples of men and women's 18th century dress and items associated with HMS Foudroyant, a major area of interest for 2 generations of the Cobb family. More recent collecting included archaeological material and social history items related to Caldicot and the surrounding villages.

2.3 Chepstow

Chepstow Museum was established by the Chepstow Society in 1949. The Society itself was founded in 1948 and immediately began collecting with a view to opening a museum. As an organisation which concerns itself with all aspects of the local environment, the collections included some natural history specimens as well as material relating to the history of the town and district and to the everyday and working lives of its inhabitants. The premises occupied by the Museum were limiting - essentially one room above the medieval town arch which spans the High Street. Lack of space and adequate storage facilities eventually led to the decision by the Society in the 1960s to deposit the greater part of the Museum's paper collections in the County Record Office. While this included documents, the deposit also included a substantial quantity of "ephemera" - posters, programmes, billheads etc. At the same time, the large collection of antiquarian and other reference books of local interest were given to the Chepstow Library on condition that they remained in the town. The Chepstow Society transferred the Museum and its collections to the care of Monmouth District Council in 1976.

2.4 Monmouth

The Nelson Museum was opened in April 1924, following the bequest to the town of Monmouth of Lady Llangattock's Nelson collection on her death in 1923. The Nelson collection comprises mainly the material bequeathed by Georgiana Rolls, Lady Llangattock (d.1923) who was perhaps the foremost collector of 'Nelsoniana' of her time. Her wealth enabled her to obtain some of the prime Nelson items which came onto the market, including his fighting sword and an important range of manuscript material, including autograph letters, official letterbooks and ships' logbooks.

In 1969 the museum was moved to the Old Market Hall, Monmouth, at which time a local history display was added.

The local history collections relating to Monmouth and the surrounding area have as their foundation the archives of the old Borough of Monmouth, which ceased to exist in 1974.

In 2021, the opportunity was taken to consider its long-term future. As a result, the decision was made to bring Monmouth Museum into Shire Hall, Monmouth to create one new, sustainable museum offer.

Shire Hall Museum is work in progress. We are increasing the displays within the building and will be carrying out some minor building improvements, including new museum storage to support this. These works are being funded by Monmouthshire County Council and supported by grant aid from Welsh Government.

Our long-term plans are to adapt the building to allow us to better tell Monmouth's stories and to redisplay our collections, including the Nelson collection, in an exciting, accessible and engaging way. The plans are currently being developed following successful development phase funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

3. An overview of current collections

3.1 Abergavenny

Since Abergavenny Museum opened in 1959, it has accepted over 27,000 accessions.

The museum possesses over 5,000 photographs of Abergavenny and the surrounding district. These include two important municipal collections of views of the medieval and Elizabethan areas of the town which were demolished under slum clearance schemes between 1957 and 1972. These represent the only record of many of the buildings demolished and have been published in a volume entitled *Vanished Abergavenny*.

The museum's social history collections are mainly comprised of material reflecting the history and way of life of the town and surrounding district. There are particular emphases on rural life, agriculture and its associated industries and domestic and working life. Particularly significant collections include the contents of a complete Welsh kitchen c.1890, a saddler's shop c.1910-1930 and Basil Jones grocer's shop c.1948-1950 (the Basil Jones Collection totals some 1314 items). The museum also houses the nationally important archive of the Father Ignatius Memorial Trust. In addition, the museum maintains collections of books and documents which supplement and illustrate these themes.

As a result of an intensive programme of archaeological excavation between 1962 and 1973 and a further season in 1986, the museum houses extensive and very significant collections of archaeological material ranging from the Mesolithic to post-Medieval. The collections produced by excavations of the Roman fort of Gobannium are of particular importance. The following is a summary of the museum's archaeology holdings in terms of standard museum boxes (40cm x 30cm x 10cm).

General prehistoric collection (published) - 2 boxes

Flannel Street and Castle Street, 1962-1969 (Roman fort) - 30 boxes

Castle Street Orchard Site 1972-1973 (Roman fort) - 52 boxes

19 Cross Street 1986 (Roman fort and vicus) - 17 boxes

Roman metalwork from the above sites - 4 boxes

Demolition Finds 1962-1972 (all periods) - 5 boxes

Other sites (all periods) - 20 boxes

Total: 130 boxes

Recent funding programmes have allowed the museum to enhance its archaeological collections by purchasing items of Treasure via the Portable Antiquities scheme. These include several bronze axe hoards featuring south Wales socketed axe heads found by metal detectorists in the communities around Abergavenny.

The museum holds around 900 individual items of costume. These include an 18th century open robe and full Regency female wedding outfit. The collection is particularly strong in women's costume of the late 19th century, containing many well-preserved full outfits that illustrate the changing fashions of the period. The collection also contains a considerable collection of children's clothes and underwear from the 19th century.

Abergavenny museum also holds a collection of Welsh costume and textile which is of significance. The most important is a complete Welsh costume donated by Llanover school, possibly commissioned by Lady Llanover, dating between 1840-1900. The museum collection holds other items associated with Lady Llanover and early eisteddfodau.

The museum has a small natural history collection, but does include some star objects of local importance, including "Whisky" the only surviving taxidermy example of a turnspit dog. There were several other items recognised during the 2014 "Linking Natural Science Collections in Wales" collections review as having historic, aesthetic, social or educational value including coal measures fossils, holy rhubarb leaf, and powder horn with Waterloo engraving.

Many of the items in Abergavenny museum's collection have links to empire, slavery and colonialism, which have been recognised in a recent report funded by Welsh government. Items of significance include letters from John Jarett sent from estates in St Vincent and Dominica between 1824-1828. The letters provide evidence of the number of people enslaved on the estates, how they were treated and Jarett's own opinions towards them and emancipation. Other items are linked to the products of enslaved and indentured labour including tea cups and sugar tongs.

3.2 Caldicot

The majority of Caldicot Castle's collection consists of items that belonged to the Cobb family when they lived in the castle from the 1880s-1940s. This includes furniture, fittings and other decorative objects which the family has used to furnish the Castle while it was their home (from the 1880s - 1940s).

The "Cobb Collection" also included a considerable costume collection, with some fine examples of men and women's 18th century dress believed to have been brought with the Cobb family when they moved to the Castle from Oxfordshire. Highlights include a silk polonaise dress and "moire" embroidered silk male wedding suit. There are also examples of 19th century dress and two 1930s dresses marking the end of the Cobb's residency in Caldicot Castle.

The most significant item of the Cobb's collection is the 18th century gentleman's dressing gown, known by the Anglo-Indian word, Banyan, an informal coat popular with wealthy European gentlemen. The outer fabric is a blue green floral silk damask woven in China in about 1700. It is the lining of the Banyan which gives its significance, having been cut from a woven silk textile from Assam in north-east India. It is one of a group of similar textiles now known as *Vrindavani Vastra* and only about 20 pieces of this type of textile survive today, in collections around the world. The textile depicts dramatic scenes from Krishna's life and avatars of Vishnu in strips of motifs woven in still vibrant colours on a dark background. The Banyan is believed to have reached the Cobb collection via JR Cobb's wife, Emily Powys de Winton whose grandfather and great uncle both made their fortunes with the East India Company. Emily was married to Joseph Richard Cobb had purchased the Castle to restore it in 1885. The Banyan is stored at Chepstow Museum where more stable environmental conditions for its long-term care can be achieved.

Another aspect of the Cobb collection reflects a major object of interest of the two generations of Cobbs - HMS Foudroyant, both the original, Nelson's flagship, which the Cobbs rescued and restored, and its successor which was used as a training ship on which a number of local boys served. Large objects from the original Foudroyant include the ship's figurehead and a cannon.

Smaller items include objects made from salvaged materials after it was wrecked. This core collection became the nucleus of the Museum's collections.

In addition to the core collection there is a small collection of social history material of local interest, relating to Caldicot and the surrounding villages, including photographs as well as paper material and object collections.

Archaeological material includes Roman pottery from the Caldicot kiln site, finds from the Severn estuary and material recovered from the Castle itself during maintenance work. Excavated material of significance, has come from the "lake site" in Caldicot Castle's Country Park. This waterlogged site produced a large quantity of worked wood, as well as environmental evidence, bone, some metalwork and pottery.

Natural History collections of Caldicot castle include some specimens that are of local importance including locally collected whale baleen for a whale stranded in Sudbrook in 1925, fossils, birds, and mammals, while others may have some educational value.

We acknowledge that the collections at Caldicot Castle are not as well interpreted as those in our other museums. This is largely due to the conditions at the castle not being as suitable for the display of museum objects. We are looking at ways of increasing the presence of collections at the castle.

There are 1789 collections on Caldicot's 2006 Modes catalogue, however future inventory work is required to confirm the full size of Caldicot's collections (see Documentation Plan).

3.3 Chepstow

Chepstow Museum's collections are predominantly of local and social history, 18th 19th and 20th century material. The main emphasis is on items that relate specifically to Chepstow and the surrounding district, either in their production, use, origin, ownership or subject matter.

Works on paper include a very good collection of topographical prints. Chepstow, Tintern and the Lower Wye Valley were popular destinations for artists and tourists from the late 18th century. Chepstow Museum has been able to build a significant collection relating to the Wye Tour fashionable in the late 18th and early 19th century which brought artists and writers as well as tourists to the Wye Valley earning it the accolade of the "birth of tourism" in Britain. Thanks to a National Lottery Heritage Fund Collecting Cultures grant the museum now has original artworks by significant landscape artists of the day, - watercolours and drawings, as well as prints, printed tour books and manuscript tour journals. A recent addition is a watercolour by JMW Turner of Chepstow Castle, purchased with grant aid.

There is a good, but not fully comprehensive collection of Monmouthshire maps. Original copies of the local newspaper, the Chepstow Weekly Advertiser, are held for the majority of its life (1855-1902). These are available on microfiche for research as is microfilm of the remainder of the run 1903-1916.

"Ephemera", mostly printed material, relating to many aspects of Chepstow life forms a large part of the paper collections (some of these are complemented by large photographic collections). This includes items related to:

- 19th century election posters, traders billheads and public notices
- Chepstow Castle pageants and fetes posters and programmes,
- the Severn crossings,
- the search in Chepstow for manuscripts by Francis Bacon that would prove he "wrote Shakespeare's works" around 1910;
- plans and blueprints for ships, bridges etc built by Finchs - the local shipbuilding and engineering company,
- the making of the film Ivanhoe by the Imperial film company around Chepstow in 1913,
- advertising material (c1900 - 1960) from a Chepstow shoe shop,
- collections of several local printers' workshops.

A large photographic collection of locally relevant material, including, ship and bridge building and other local business and industrial enterprises. Contemporary recording of changes to the locality and notable events is another aspect of these collections.

Our costume comprises mainly 19th and 20th century men and women's material with local connections. This collection was greatly enhanced by the acquisition of the "Edgar collection" - a large quantity of costume (in addition to a wide range of other items, - the Edgars were active in many aspects of Chepstow life) from the Edgar family home. Continuously occupied since the 1890s, Robert Edgar was a tailor and outfitter in Chepstow and a number of items carry the business label. The highlights of the Edgar collection are the material swatches and samples and other accessories of his trade which provide a huge amount of detailed information on fabrics, costs and the garments made. Costume belonging to members of the family, from the 19th century onwards, was also collected.

Objects and furniture include items that are not specifically local in terms of production and were in widespread use in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, but have a local relevance because of their ownership and illustrate the way people lived in the area.

Of more specifically local interest are the items relating to aspects of the town's past industrial and commercial life and people's education and leisure activities. These include:

- a notable collection of longcase clocks by Chepstow makers,
- tools and models from the shipyard/bridge works,
- products from the industrial brush manufactory; wine jars from local wine and spirit merchants,
- equipment and furnishings from a long-established hairdressing business,
- salmon fishing equipment including a stop-net boat,
- items produced or customised by other local businesses, shops, dairies etc,
- sporting trophies and medals,

The history of the museum building itself has also influenced the collections. As the local hospital from 1921 to 1976 (and during the First World War, a Red Cross Auxiliary Hospital) furniture and medical equipment used on the premises has been actively collected, as well as collections of instruments and other medical items from surgeons who worked there. There is also material from the other local hospitals in Chepstow.

"The Beachley Collection". A large body of material was given to Chepstow Museum by the Army Apprentices College at Beachley, Chepstow, when it closed in 1994. Material transferred to Chepstow Museum was confined to that relating to the history of the College (which had been established some 70 years), and to the boys while they were at the School itself. This is a

large body of material, including, photographs, uniform, objects - apprentice pieces, trophies etc; paper - school magazine, programmes, posters etc.

The archaeology collections have grown considerably as the results of local excavations from the 1970s onwards have been processed for publication and deposited in the museum. From within the town itself the majority of the material is medieval and later. Excavations on Thornwell Farm prior to its development for housing, have given us late prehistoric - Romano British settlement material and some prehistoric burials.

Natural history material collected by the Chepstow Society form part of the collections including a small number of fossils birds' eggs, and stuffed animals. Some specimens are of local importance including and geological specimens from the Severn Tunnel, he locally collected butterflies (Lepidoptera) and whale baleen and vertebrae of a whale which was washed up on the Severn shore at Sudbrook near Chepstow, Others have aesthetic, historical or educational value, including the more recently collected entomological watercolour illustrations by Georgiana Ormerod.

Many of the items in Chepstow Museum's collection have links to empire, slavery and colonialism, which have been recognised in a recent report funded by Welsh government. Items of significance include items related to the Piercefield estate, which was purchased in 1740, by Colonel Valentine Morris and later developed by his son, also named Valentine. The Morris family were plantation owners in Antigua, and the labour of the people they enslaved made it possible for the young Valentine Morris to create a network of walks along the edge of the Wye Valley with spectacular views from the viewpoints he constructed, which made Piercefield famous. Piercefield estate was later brought in 1802 by Nathaniel Wells. He was both the son of a plantation owner and an enslaved woman, and an owner of enslaved people himself. He was a prominent person in the local area and became Britain's first Black sheriff. Other items are linked to the products of enslaved and indentured labour including teacups and sugar tongs. Chepstow Museum's collection also has links to colonialism and empire via the records of local ship building enterprises. Colonial attitudes are also depicted through collections related to local "minstrel" performances and depictions of blackface.

There are over 18,000 items in Chepstow's collection. This is the number of entries on our Modes Collections Management System. However, this number is likely to be much higher as all items from the collection are not fully catalogued and there is a significant accession backlog.

3.4 Monmouth

3.4.1 Nelson

The Monmouth collection is one of three large public collections of Nelson material in Britain, the others being in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, and the Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth. Recent assessment has identified that Monmouth's Nelson collection is are of national and international importance. Their significance lies both at the individual and the collective level.

The collection can be roughly broken into four categories: firstly, personal items belonging to, or associated with Nelson; secondly, commemorative material produced during his lifetime; thirdly, commemorative material produced since his death; and fourthly, general naval or social history material relating to the period but with no direct Nelson connection. The collection

includes many fake or dubiously attributed relics and mementoes which have been in production since before his death.

The Nelson collection is extensive in scope and varied in the materials and mediums of its items. The collection is particularly strong in items exploring Nelson's relationship with women. Unique highlights of this collection include Nelson's fighting sword and the swords of two enemy admirals surrendered at Trafalgar (including the overall commander of the Franco-Spanish fleet, Admiral Pierre-Charles Villeneuve); Nelson's letters to his wife, Frances; and the last image created of Nelson before the loss of his right arm. Especially strong categories of the collection include ceramics, silverware, and the extensive set of manuscript documents.

There are approximately 3500 items in the Nelson collection. The collection is documented according to object type (silver, ceramic, costume, prints, etc) and is currently being inventoried.

3.4.2 Local History

The material in this archive dates mainly to the 19th century and before, and includes council minutes, court records (quarter sessions, Court of Record, Hundred Court), election records, fiscal records, and a mass of receipts, vouchers and other ephemera from council routine. This local archive is reinforced by a local history reference library, a newspaper archive (Monmouthshire Beacon, 1837 – 1963, and Monmouthshire Merlin 1829 – 1891), and collections of photographs, paintings, prints and maps.

A special collection within the local material relates to the Rolls family, who owned the local Hendre estate and were closely involved with Monmouth. The material is mainly photographic, covering the late 19th/early 20th century period when the family of John Allan Rolls (Lord Llangatock from 1895) and his wife Georgiana (founder of the Nelson Museum) was at the height of social and economic fortune. A significant proportion of the collection is concerned with the Honourable Charles Stewart Rolls, co-founder of Rolls-Royce Motors Ltd., recording his exploits in balloons, early aeroplanes and motor cars.

The museum's object collection relates to the social history of the town and surrounding area. Because of the relatively late development of the local history museum (from 1969), and the emphasis upon the local archives as the basis for that museum, Monmouth's collection of social history objects is limited, in comparison with Chepstow and Abergavenny.

Monmouth Museum also has a limited archaeological collection. Although archaeological investigation of the town has been carried out over many years, particularly by the Monmouth Archaeological Society (M.A.S.), the bulk of excavated material and information remains in the hands of the excavators. Many of these excavations took the form of an intense series of rescue digs in the face of development, during which the importance of the archaeology surviving beneath the modern town was demonstrated. A major collecting challenge potentially facing the museum in the future exists in dealing with this huge backlog of archaeological material. MonLife Heritage Museum service currently does not have financial or staff resources to provide appropriate care of and access to this collection.

The textile collection at Monmouth is small, but contains the Monmouth cap, which is a significant object within the collection. The cap is believed to date from the 16th century and be the only known original example of the knitted Monmouth cap.

Some of the items in Monmouth's collection have links to empire, slavery and colonialism, which have been recognised in a recent report funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Items include links to colonial conflict, especially items related to the Second Boer war. There are other items that tell the story of emigration from Monmouth to the colonies. Other items are linked to the products of empire, many produced through enslaved and indentured labour including tea buyers and sellers and a 1924 account book of a trader who specialised in the sale of groceries and luxury goods.

There are over 12,000 items in Monmouth's collection. This is the number of entries on our Modes Collections Management System. However, this number is likely to be much higher as all items from the collection are not fully catalogued and there is a significant accessioning backlog. Inventory work of Monmouth's collection is currently in progress funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 Themes and priorities for all our sites

4.1.2 Inclusive Collections

One of our future collecting priorities is to collect items that enable us to tell more diverse, representative, and inclusive stories within Monmouthshire. This will be informed by our current community engagement work being carried out across all three Monlife Museum sites which will help to identify the stories that are important to our communities. The community engagement will also enable us to recognise gaps in our collections.

This work will take place in 2023/4 as part of ongoing projects, and while community engagement will always be at the heart of our museum service, the current, concentrated approach will inform specific and targeted areas of future collecting.

4.1.3 Archaeology

Due to limitations on the size of storage space available at our sites and very limited funding for conservation, decisions to accept deposits of archaeological archives found in Monmouthshire will be made on a case-by-case basis. Acceptance of archaeological archives will be made with reference to the following documents:

- Monmouthshire Museums: Guidelines for the preparation and deposition of archaeological archive
- National Panel for Archaeological guidelines in Wales (2019) "Archaeological archive: selection, retention and disposal guidelines for Wales."

4.1.4 Portable Antiquities Scheme

We will continue to work with colleagues at Amgueddfa Cymru to accept objects as defined in the Treasure Act (1996) which are offered to the MonLife Heritage Museums via the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Decisions of whether to acquire items will be based on assessment of their significance within the local area, engagement potential, research interest and representation of items already in MonLife's collections and on the resources available. The museum service consists of small museums with a wide remit and does not

have any specialist curators in these areas and so are not able to accept items of Treasure for their research value alone. The museum service does not have a specific budget to fund acquisitions of Treasure and accepts that this may be a limiting factor.

4.2 Abergavenny

Abergavenny Museum collects items related to the history of Abergavenny and the surrounding area.

The following have been identified previously as areas of focus:

- Items which tell the story of the 20th and 21st century in Abergavenny and the surrounding area.
- Works of art by local artists depicting local scenes
- Items associated with Capel y ffin, Llanthony Abbey and the Llanthony Valley.

Currently at Abergavenny we will not look to actively collect artefacts. The lack of storage space and capacity amongst the team has led us to conclude that the responsible course of action is to collect only on a limited and passive basis.

4.3 Caldicot

Caldicot Castle collects items related to the history of Caldicot and the surrounding area.

- Those that tell the story of the 20th and 21st century in Caldicot and the surrounding area

Currently at Caldicot Castle we will not look to actively collect artefacts. The lack of storage space and capacity amongst the team has led us to conclude that the responsible course of action is to collect only on a limited and passive basis.

4.4 Chepstow

Chepstow Museum collects items related to the history of Chepstow and the surrounding area.

The following have been identified previously as areas of focus:

- Items, which tell the story of the 20th and 21st century in Chepstow and the surrounding area.”

Currently at Chepstow Museum we will not look to actively collect artefacts. The limited storage space, accessioning and cataloguing backlog, and capacity amongst the team has led us to conclude that the responsible course of action is to collect only on a limited and passive basis.

4.5 Monmouth

Shire Hall Museum, collects items related to the history of Monmouth and the surrounding area.

Monmouth Museum is currently moving into the Shire Hall. Subject to funding this work will be completed around 2027. We are undertaking consultation work with our communities and our future collecting priority is to collect items that enable us to tell more diverse, representative and inclusive stories that are related to the history of Monmouth. These themes will be identified through a focus on community engagement and internal research to identify themes currently underrepresented in our collections 2023/4.

In addition the following have already been identified as an areas of focus:

- Those that tell the story of the 20th and 21st century in Monmouth and the surrounding area
- Monmouth's current collection is currently very document and photograph heavy and so collection of artefacts will also be prioritised.

4.6 Nelson

As part of the Shire Hall redevelopment project research is currently being undertaken into our Nelson collection, the stories it tells and any relevant gaps within the collection. Priorities for any future collecting within the Nelson collection will be identified in 2024 in light of this work.

4.7 Natural History

We will not collect biological or geological material as we do not have the inhouse expertise to make meaningful decisions relating to these materials. We will signpost any offers of items to Amgueddfa Cymru. We are aware that this means a potential gap in collecting for South East Wales.

4.8 Definition of terms relating to the collection:

- 4.8.1** The basic principle for accepting artefacts is that they should relate to the town and local area surrounding each museum i.e. they should contribute to the story of Monmouthshire.
- 4.8.2** Local area is considered to be any area that sits within the county of Monmouthshire as it stands in January 2024. However the county border of Monmouthshire has changed over time and we hold in our collections items that may currently sit outside the county. There are also items, which due to the historical landscape may form part of a town's story even though they lie outside the town, and in some cases in a different county or even country. It is presumed that we will continue to collect such items if they relate to an existing collection, but any such acquisitions should be discussed with the appropriate museum. Section 7 already deals with this.
- 4.8.3** An object is considered to relate to the town and local area if:
- It was produced/made in the area
 - It was used in the area by a named person or at a named place.
 - It originated from the area – i.e. was part of a local business, organisation or the built heritage e.g. a cornflake packet from Basil Jones or a fireplace from a local building. NB: This is not a reason on its own to collect it. There should be other evidence of local association alongside.
 - Ownership – a named person with an association to the area owned it. NB: This is not a reason on its own to collect it. There should be other evidence of

local association alongside eg the item illustrates the owners life connected to Monmouthshire.

- Its subject matter represents the locality e.g. a painting, poem or piece of music relating to Chepstow Castle. It should either be a work of artistic merit in its own right, or by an artist of note, or it could be a work more important for its content and topographical detail than its artistic worth or authorship.

4.8.4 There are other items that do not fit into the above categories but may be considered for inclusion:

- It illustrates the way people lived in the area. NB: This is not a sufficient reason to collect new items. Whilst in the past it was deemed sufficient, now it is important for museums to collect the stories surrounding the object about the people who owned, used or made it, and what makes it part of (in our case) Monmouthshire's story. However, it may be enough to justify retention depending on certain factors, e.g. condition, context in the collection and suitability for display.

4.9 Consideration should also be given to whether there is an existing representation of it in the collection. For example it would be appropriate in most cases for only one example of an item to be collected and only replaced if a better example, for example a paper item in better condition.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

Responsible, curatorially-motivated disposal takes place as part of a museum's long-term collections policy, in order to increase public benefit derived from museum collections. Our approach to rationalisation and disposal is that it will be motivated by curatorial reasons only and we will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons. Our full disposal procedures are listed in section 16.

- 5.1** The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.
- 5.2** The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.
- 5.3** Having had strong Collecting Policies in place for some time, the collections contain, in the main, items which are relevant to our collecting areas. However, there are some items from the early days of the museum that now sit outside our collecting policy.

Our themes and priorities for rationalisation disposal are those objects that are not considered to have relevance to Monmouthshire and its history.

The 2022-2022 review of our collections funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund largely focused on Abergavenny's collections due to its more complete cataloguing systems. Future disposal will prioritise Chepstow and Monmouth's collections. We are also in the process of reviewing our bulk archaeological collections which is another priority area of focus.

- 5.4** Any items in our collections which are part of a covenant or bequest need to be considered separately. For example, items that were part of the original Chepstow Society collection.

6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

- 6.1** The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7 Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1** The museum 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 specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

- 7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):**

Abertillery Museum
Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales.
Brynmawr Museum
Dean Heritage Museum
Gloucester City Museum & Art Gallery
Gwent archive
Herefordshire Museums
National Library of Wales,
Newport City Museum & Art Gallery
The Usk Rural Life Museum
The Castle & Regimental Museum, Monmouth
Torfaen Museums Trust
Tredegar Museum
Y Gaer, Brecon

MonLife Heritage also recognise the role of a distributed national collection in Wales and will make decisions surrounding the acceptance of items into our collections taking this into account.

8 Archival holdings

All of the museums hold and acquire material that is archival in nature, for example documents and photographs – in paper-based and digital format. In many cases these are associated with artefacts. There are cases where it is the archive only that we hold, these are usually historic collections.

In the case of current and future offers of archival material we will consult Gwent archives Collections Policy (2021), which defines “*archives as any media in any format which are generated by an organisation or individual during the course of their business activity.*” Gwent Archives accepts documents in the following formats:

- *Manuscript documents*
- *Typescript documents*
- *Digital records*
- *Photographic*
- *Maps and plans*

The archives which Gwent Archives collects falls into the following areas:

- *Records of past and present local authorities and statutory bodies*
- *Public records offered to the archives under the terms of the public records act 1958*
- *Records of organisations, businesses, individuals, societies, public and private institutions, and other activities relevant to the history and life of the Gwent area.*

Consideration will be given to the appropriateness of MonLife’s museums holding the items or them being offered to Gwent Archive. We will also consult with Gwent Archive to review some of the historical archives we hold to determine the most appropriate organisation to continue to provide access to and care of these materials. This will be outlined in our Collection’s documentation plan.

9 Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

Decisions for agreeing acquisitions are made by our Collections team and the Museums and Arts Manager at quarterly Collection acquisition meetings. In exceptional circumstances decisions will be made surrounding the acquisition of an item outside of this timeframe by the Collections Management Officer and/or the Community Museums Curator and/or the Museums and Arts Manager. The basic principle for accepting artefacts is that they should relate to the town and local area surrounding each museum. Further decisions are made based on the care, storage and documentation needs of each item. If an item is available to purchase discussion would occur between the professional collections staff as to the appropriateness of purchasing via the Museums Acquisition Fund with the final decision resting with the Museums and Arts Manager.

9.2 The museum 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).

- 9.3** 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, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body 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.

10 Human remains

- 10.1** As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

11 Biological and geological material

- 11.1** So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum 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.

12 Archaeological material

- 12.1** The museum will not acquire archaeological material (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.
- 12.2** In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

13 Exceptions

13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

14 Spoliation

14.1 The museum 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.

15 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

15.1 The museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum 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 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

16 Disposal procedures

16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.

16.2 The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

- 16.3** When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum 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.
- 16.4** When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, or as a last resort - destruction.
- 16.5** A process will be in place for ensuring decisions are taken at an appropriate level and identifying a system of delegated authority for deaccessioning decisions based on the value, significance, condition or hazards of an item. No decision to deaccession should ever be taken by one person acting alone but some decisions can be managed entirely by staff with a final approval by governing body. The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including 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. Expert advice may be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum may also be sought.
- 16.6** A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, 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 governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7** Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the wider public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, to an organisation within the public domain or providing regular public access. If possible, identify suitable organisations within the public domain or providing regular public access and approach directly.
- 16.8** If no organisation within the wider public domain is identified directly, inform the museum sector and other relevant groups of availability of items through the Museums Association's "Find an Object" listing service or other channels.
- 16.9** 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 organisation. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from organisation within the public domain or providing regular public access. If no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations.
- 16.10** Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the longterm benefit of the museum and its collections. This might include care of, access to and engagement with the

collections but is not likely to include short-term funding of existing posts or activities. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Welsh Government Culture Division and the Museums Association can provide further support on ethical decision making.

- 16.11** The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.12** 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.

Disposal by exchange

- 16.13** The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

Disposal by destruction

- 16.14** If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 16.15** It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- 16.16** Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.17** Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- 16.18** The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.