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**Collection Management Policy**

**Museum/Archive: The Paddle Steamer Preservation Society Archive.**

**Governing Body: The Council of Management of the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society.**

**Date approved by governing body: 26 November 2016**

**Date at which policy due for review:**

The Paddle Steamer Preservation Society (PSPS) is Britain's longest established, largest and most successful steamship preservation group. Founded in 1959 and a registered charity since 1987, we have over 2,600 members and majority shareholdings in two charitable companies (created by PSPS ) which own, operate or arrange the operation of the only two working paddle steamers in Great Britain: [PS *Waverley*](http://www.paddlesteamers.org/ships/waverley/) and [PS *Kingswear Castle*](http://www.paddlesteamers.org/ships/kingswear-castle/).

The Society also supports other paddle steamer projects including [PS *Maid of the Loch*](http://www.maidoftheloch.com/) and [PS *Medway Queen*](http://www.medwayqueen.co.uk/).

Our charitable aims are, for the public benefit:

* To acquire, preserve and exhibit in sailing condition or otherwise one or more examples of paddle steamers or paddle-propelled vessels.
* To acquire, preserve and exhibit a collection of marine equipment, other appurtenances and material associated with them, with a view to educating the public in the historical significance of paddle steamers in the nation's maritime and industrial heritage.

Our archive, which is located within the Chatham Historic Dockyard, is currently looked after by part-time volunteers and is already the largest collection of paddle steamer items in the UK. Our vision for the archive is that it should:

* Be the chief and best-known repository for paddle-steamer related material in the UK.
* Provide an accessible and sustainable research facility for PSPS members, maritime historians, museums, broadcasters, the media and the general public.
* Be staffed on a regular basis.
* Be and be perceived to be a safe and professionally-managed archive in which people are confident to deposit precious collections of books, photos, ephemera, artefacts, etc. in the knowledge that they will be promptly catalogued, safely conserved and stored, and made available for study.

**1. Existing collections, including the subjects or themes for collecting**

The existing collection, amounting to some 50,000 objects has been amassed since the formation of the Society in 1959. Much early material was inherited from the former Paddle & Pleasure Steamer Historical Trust and Ladywell Collection, and since then the collection has been increased many fold by donations, bequests and purchases.

The collections consists of:

* **Ships' fittings.** These include bells, builder's plates, paddle box crests, wheels, sirens, deck chairs, fire buckets, chairs, etc.
* **Photographs.**  These form a major part of the collection and include glass and celluloid negatives, prints, colour slides, framed photographs and albums.
* **Sailing bills.** Handbills and advertisements for paddle steamer sailings around the UK from the 1880s onwards.
* **Printed ephemera.** Tickets, leaflets, press-cuttings, etc.
* **Postcards.** Original postcards, often issued by the steamer companies themselves, form an important and valuable part of the photographic collection.
* **Uniforms & Textiles.** Cap badges, uniforms, name pennants and house flags.
* **Books & Magazines.** A collection of printed material relating to steamer history.
* **Film & Video.** A collection of original film and video of paddle steamers in service, much of which has already been digitised.
* **Models.**  A collection of models varying in quality and scale.
* **Ceramics & Silverware.**  Crested cutlery, tableware, silverware and souvenir items from a range of steamer companies and individual ships.
* **Posters.** A number of large posters advertising steamer sailings.
* **Plans.**  A substantial number of original ships' plans from a variety of companies.
* **Souvenirs.** A mixture of items from various sources including shops and defunct companies as well as a representative collection of items sold on board the Society's own steamers since their preservation.
* **PSPS Archives.** Documents relating to the administration of the Society since its formation in 1959.

**2. Criteria governing future collecting policy, including the subjects or**

**themes for collecting**

As a small but mature archive, currently staffed solely by part-time volunteers and supported by the limited funds of the charitable PSPS, our approach to acquisitions is necessarily modest.

Our largest acquisitions are likely to be through the donation of collections by existing members or the estates of deceased members, in which case we can exercise little active choice in what is acquired (although retention decisions will be made in accordance with the Disposals Policy set out below).

However, where we actively seek to make purchases or seek donations to add to the collection , we will select material which will:

* Fill geographical, topical or ship/company-specific gaps in the existing collection. Our ultimate aim is to have photographic and/or documentary evidence of as many British paddle steamers and operating companies as possible, from all areas of the UK.
* Be rare or unique.
* Represent the human stories and social history associated with paddle steamers, and thus allow us to fulfil our aim of educating the public into the significance of paddle steamers in the nation's maritime and industrial heritage. This might include oral recordings which are not currently represented in the collection.
* Continue to record the story of our own preserved steamers.
* Allow us to build up a comprehensive reference library of books relating to steamers.
* Replace existing items which are in poor condition with better examples.
* Enable us to reach and educate the widest possible audience through exhibition, broadcast, talks, websites, public events, published scholarship, loans to other museums, etc.
* N.B.. Items relating to foreign paddle steamers will not be a priority for acquisition. However, items may be acquired if they are either donated or can be obtained cheaply, especially if they relate to vessels which have some association with the UK, e.g. by builder, operator or previous history.

**3. Criteria for acquisitions**

Potential acquisitions must meet four basic criteria of relevance, use, condition and

provenance:

Relevance:

We are concerned with building a complete record of the UK's paddle steamers, safeguarding appropriate material relating to relevant overseas vessels, and with enthusing the widest possible audience about the social, cultural, economic and technological aspects of their development and operation. We are also seeking to engage people in considering the present and the future. New acquisitions will be therefore be assessed in terms of their capacity to act as a focus for interpretation, discussion, debate or research, as well as their value as objects in their own right.

Use:

The object's value to the collection will be much greater if it has the capacity now or in the future to tell a story through one of the media describe above. To facilitate this, as much associated information as possible should be collected at the same time as the object, with particular emphasis being placed on the collection of the associated human stories.

Condition:

The object must be in a reasonable state of completeness and in good condition. It must

not require significant resources for conservation and/or storage, nor must it present any

unacceptable hazards, either in storage or on display. Items in poor condition will be

considered only if they are unique and are of sufficient significance to warrant their

acquisition.

Provenance:

The object must come with good title, and be properly documented regarding its

provenance and authenticity. It should be free from any onerous restrictions or special conditions, and ideally come with its intellectual property rights (for example copyright).

**4. Period of time and/or geographical area to which collecting relates**

Collecting dates from the earliest known paddle steamers to the present.

Geographically, the main focus of the collections is based on the steamers of Britain. However, while items relating to foreign paddle steamers will not normally be actively sought, donations of such material will not be rejected and items of particular interest or relevance in a UK context, may be acquired.

Since many British coastal passenger ship companies operated propeller-driven ships alongside their paddle steamers, material on these vessels will also be included in the collection.

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**5. Limitations on collecting**

The PSPS Archive recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care, documentation arrangements and use of collections meets the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account any limitations on collecting imposed by factors such as staffing and storage.

**6. Acquisitions not covered by this policy**

Acquisitions outside the current policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances and then only after proper consideration by the PSPS Council of Management.

**7. Collecting policies of other museums and organisations.**

The Archive will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and

organisations (e.g. The Medway Queen Preservation Society, MV Balmoral Fund Ltd., Loch Lomond Steamship Co., Clyde River Steamer Club) 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 or waste of resources.

**8. Disposal Procedures**

By definition a museum or archive has a long-term purpose and must possess permanent collections which relates to its stated aims and objectives. The Council of Management accepts this principle, has a strong presumption against disposal and accepts that disposal of any items from the archive should be for sound curatorial reasons. Therefore:

* A decision to dispose of any item will be made by the P.S.P.S. Council of Management acting with the benefit of advice from its Archive Committee and taking account of sections 2,3,4,6 and 7 of this management policy.
* The PSPS will, on acquisition or subsequently, use reasonable endeavours to establish that it is legally free to dispose of any item. Freedom to dispose of items will normally be a condition of acceptance and this will be made clear to any donor at the time an item is deposited, and a signed agreement made. Wherever possible the donor will be informed of any disposal decision and their agreement sought before the disposal takes place. Lack of agreement does not, however, prevent disposal in accordance with a Council decision.
* Items are most likely to be recommended for disposal if:

 a. They are duplicated within the collection

 b. They have been acquired as part of a collection, but do not meet the criteria listed above (e.g. items relating to liners or warships within a broad shipping collection)

* Decisions to dispose of items will never be made with the principal aim of generating funds.
* Any money received from the disposal of items will be used for the benefit of the archive. normally through the purchase of further items.
* Items identified for disposal may be offered to other more appropriate archives or museums.

**9. Documentation & Procedures**

All acquisitions, disposals or loans will be recorded on the appropriate pro-forma and following the procedures described in the appendices.

Cataloguing will be carried out to the relevant standards outlined in "Spectrum: UK Museum Documentation Standard" (Museum Association), and Catalist software will be used to record and retrieve information. Object description and the marking of individual objects will carried out to Museum Association standards as described in the appendix "Documentation Procedural Manual".

Material will never normally be removed from the archive. The exceptions are likely to be for loan or exhibition, in which case the appropriate forms will be completed. Individual boxes or collections may also be taken for cataloguing by a volunteer with the agreement of a member of the Archive Committee. In this case the items will be listed and signed out, then checked and signed back in by both the volunteer and the committee member.

**10. Access and Enquiries**

As described in our vision statement on Page 1, we intend that the archive should become a highly accessible and sustainable research facility, open to all.

In the shorter term, however, physical access to the archive will be limited to the number of days on which volunteers are available to staff it. Visits will initially be by appointment only.

Enquiries are more easily dealt with. Requests for information will be forwarded to members of the Archive Committee who should be able to interrogate the catalogue and locate the illustration or item required. For historical enquiries advice will be sought from individual experts within the society before a response is given. We will endeavour to deal with all enquiries as thoroughly as possible though, given our limited resources, it is not yet possible to provide standard response times.

The archive has scanning and copying facilities, so it may be possible to supply copies of items within the collection. For PSPS members' personal research we hope that this will be at cost, while a scale of charges for commercial use, publication or broadcast will be set in due course. All items used should be credited: "Courtesy, PSPS Archives".

**11. Making the collections sustainable**

The Archive is committed to making its collections sustainable. As an archive with limited storage space and no current professional staff, it is particularly important to plan for a sustainable future. In order to do this we will:

* Be guarded and realistic in our collecting and will address any associated resource

 issues at the time of acquisition.

* Seek to incrementally improve our collections management facilities to

 ensure sustainable collecting into the future. This will include ensuring that we:

* Expand the group of volunteer staff and ensuring that they are properly trained in accessioning, cataloguing and other procedures as well as dealing with enquiries.
* Look into engaging an individual with a professional museums/archive background who could lead this training, undertake cataloguing of new acquisitions, staff the archive building, and monitor and advise on policy and procedure to ensure compliance with Museum Association standards.
* Seek funding for the above.
* Seek funding to allow us to employ a professional to work with volunteers on a time-limited project to bring cataloguing up to date, undertake some scanning and digitization, and develop a long term plan
* Explore partnership with other organizations to ensure that key items can be preserved where storage cannot be allocated on our own sites and, in the longer term, that a suitable alternative home could be found for the archive in the event of its current location becoming unavailable or too small.
* Explore the potential sharing of resources, staffing and expertise with other organisations.
* Ensure that the knowledge generated about objects and collections in the

 course of project work is electronically archived (via collections databases and web

 products) as a standard part of all projects.

* Ensure that Collections material and information that exists only in digital form will be backed up and preserved in a format that is sustainable in the long term.
* Ensure that, within our means, the collection is stored in the most appropriate and accessible conditions. Best efforts will be made to optimise security, humidity levels, storage systems, etc.

**12. Management of the Archive**

The stewardship of the PSPS archive is the responsibility of the Council of Management of the PSPS.

The Council of Management will seek to build a sustainable future for the archive through the actions listed in 10 above. It will also support the Archive Committee by:

* Receiving and discussing an Archive Report at each of its meetings.
* Arranging regular visits and inspections of the Archive by members of Council who are not also members of the Archive Committee, carrying out audits of the catalogue and collection and ensuring that all procedures are being followed properly.
* Recognising that members of the Committee may be collectors or researchers themselves and will therefore welcome an appropriate level of supportive scrutiny to ensure that no actual or perceived conflicts of interest arise.
* Ensuring that appropriate documents and procedures are in place for the guidance and safeguarding of volunteers and any paid staff who may be employed in the future.

Members of the Archive Committee will:

* Not compete with the PSPS for the acquisition of any object, or take advantage of any privileged information received. Should a conflict of interest arise, it must be declared and the interests of the Society prevail.
* Not make personal use of any archive material without following the normal, public procedures.
* Not be involved in the decision to acquire an object for the PSPS if they stand to benefit financially or personally from that transaction.
* Keep personal collections entirely separate from any material owned by the PSPS
* Abide by the Code of Ethics for Museums issued by the Museums Association.

Committee members and volunteers will be given a copy of this policy and any relevant associated procedures and asked to sign to indicate that they understand and accept the implications.

**13. The Future.**

It is our ambition that the PSPS Collection will, in due course, become an accredited museum or archive. To that end this document has been developed around the Museum Association's "Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom" template for collections development policies, (2011) and has paid due notice to the same organisation's "Code of Ethics for Museums" as well as "A Code of Practice on Archives". We shall seek professional guidance and explore partnerships to help us in moving towards that goal.

**14**. **Review of this Policy**

This policy will be formally reviewed by the Council of Management at least every five years.

*Approved by Council of Management 26 November 2016*