

Collections Access Team: Museums Disposal Panel Report

Author: Alan Popper

Date: July 2012

Ref. No.: DPR 070912 0002

SECTION 1

(to be completed by Collections Access Officer)

1.1 Description of Object/Objects

LCNLL : 1995/544, Fowler Steam Ploughing Harrow or Hoe; date of manufacture circa mid to late 1920's.



There is no formal museum receipt document in the history files, although one is referred to, R06080, in a receipt thank you letter sent from the Museum to the donor on 8 Feb 1988, when it was requested that he sign it. Sadly, there does not appear to be a reply to this letter on file.

This is a very large, heavy weight agricultural object, which measures 5.3 metres x 3 metres and currently stored outside with no protection at Butterworth's. It forms part of a 3 piece Fowler Steam ploughing set, consisting of a Balanced plough (currently located at Church Farm), and a Cultivator (also located outside at Butterworth's), which augment and would have been used by John and Michael the two Fowler Ploughing engines in the collection.

The three pieces were all collected separately and at different times. The Harrow was acquired in 1988.

The object is entered in the accession register and on MODES. Attempts have not been made to contact the original owners at this moment in time, as we have appropriate ownership rights, it is more than 20 years since we took receipt of the object, and we are intending to transfer the item to another accredited institution.

1.2 Reason For Disposal

The Harrow, like many agricultural objects of this nature, has at some point in its working life been modified, cut and shunted in effect, so that it can be hitched to a tractor. Indeed the owner of Harrow states in his donation letter that the Harrow was last used in 1973, towed behind a Caterpillar D6 Tractor in the West Pinchbeck area of the county.

There is no space or current, suitable means to ever display the Harrow at the Museum of Lincolnshire Life or elsewhere in the Service, or make internal storage space available.

In line with the *Working Collections Strategy*, the Service has been exploring a potential loan or transfer to the Museum of East Anglian Life (MEAL) to allow the Harrow to be used between two working engines at the Museum, thereby giving the opportunity to see the object in action, increasing access, improving display context and also supporting MEAL in their mission (in line with *Effective Collections*).

1.3 Suggested Means of Disposal & Reason

The Museum Service was approached by the Museum of East Anglian Life (MEAL) in late 2011 about the possible loan of the Cultivator to use between their two ploughing engines to demonstrate and preserve steam ploughing techniques.

Contact has been ongoing and in light of the *Working Collections Strategy* and the emerging Butterworth's project, was stepped up in June 12 when it was explained to MEAL that all three objects, although collected separately, had their real significance in being a 3 piece set that would have been used in conjunction with our ploughing engines and ideally we would wish to keep all 3 items together if possible.

MEAL, having had an opportunity to investigate further realised that the Cultivator was too heavy a piece of machinery for their lower powered ploughing engines and wanted to propose just the transfer the Harrow, which was light enough for them to use, but required major engineering work to return it to a winched system rather than a tractor towed system. Because major engineering work would have to be completed a formal transfer of ownership was felt the only appropriate way forward.

While they were sympathetic to our argument for keeping all three pieces together for significance purposes, MEAL advised that they did not have the space to store or display the other pieces but wished to take on the Harrow because it:

- Allowed them to illustrate the use of the ploughing engines.
- Would provide a more interesting and complete visitor experience.
- Would offer an engineering training opportunity for their volunteers to complete the re-institution work.
- Would enable them to provide a training opportunity in a heritage skill - steam ploughing, which they believe is almost extinct.

While probably the best outcome would have been to be able to transfer all three items to MEAL, this is not an option. However, it is still believed that the transfer would, from our perspective:

- Relieve pressure on storage space

- Enhance the interpretation and visitor experience of the object at another accredited museum site, in line with the Museum Association’s Effective Collections strategy / Re-visiting Collections guidelines.

1.4 Impact Statement

Potential Risks:

- Possible local disappointment that ‘working’ is not happening in Lincolnshire.
- ‘Significance’ impact - we will no longer have a complete 3 piece steam ploughing set in our collection, but Collections Access team believe this is outweighed by potential benefits of a collection piece being used and set in its appropriate environment at another site.

Potential Benefits:

- Have a piece of our collections that is currently unused brought back to working order and put into use to enhance access and improve visitor experience at another Accredited Institution.
- Relieve pressure on space in the area around Butterworth’s to better display/store other large pieces of equipment.

1.5 Other Considerations

Transport costs to be met by MEAL and publicity management/credits when equipment goes into use.

If the Disposal Panel wish, the original donor to be contacted prior to transfer we have the original address, but there is no guarantee that after this period of time any response will be received.

1.6 Recommendation

It is recommended that, in line with the spirit of the Museum Association’s Effective Collections strategy / Re-visiting Collections Guidelines, the Service grants permission for transfer of ownership of the Steam Ploughing Harrow, accession number LCNLL 1995/544 to MEAL so that they may return it to working condition for viewing by the general public and ensuring that the heritage skills of steam ploughing may be preserved and handed on to another generation.

SECTION 2

(to be completed by Disposal Panel)

2.1 Panel Decision

Fully agree with Disposal Report Section 1 recommendation

Agree with Disposal Report Section 1 recommendation, with additional requirements/ comment (section 2.2)

Disagree with Disposal Report recommendation for reasons given below (section 2.2)

2.2 Additional Comments

Caveats/questions regarding disposal; reasons for disagreeing with recommendation; raise points requiring further clarification, for inclusion in Exec. Cllr. Report or resolution prior to submitting this report.

Signed: Jonathan Platt (Chair of Disposal Panel)

Date: 7/9/12

SECTION 3

(to be completed by Collections Access Officer)

3.1 Exec Report No _____

3.2 Exec Decision No _____

3.3 Action / Date Completed _____

Ensure a copy of the Authority de-accession/disposal form is attached to this sheet

3.4 Name, Contact Details & Status of Recipient

Accredited museum, private museum etc.

3.5 New Location and Number of Object

For future access, should enquiries come in.

3.6 Benefits Achieved for the Service/Object:

Short summary tying back to section 1.4