

Whysall Chemist Shop Items

SECTION 1

1.1 Description of Object/Objects



The items are:

- 5 pairs of Victorian spectacles,
- 3 spectacle cases,
- 1 wicker-work spectacle case in the shape of a fish,
- 1 glass jar with ceramic lid, marked Whysalls,
- 1 straight edged folding razor from Whysalls Chemists, in box,
- 1 brass chemist's measuring scoop; and,
- 1 steel chemist's measuring scoop.

All the items are Victorian or early 20th Century in date, and come from Whysall's chemist's shop in Grantham. All are in fair condition, and currently stored in Grantham basement store, with the exception of the Whysall's glass jar which is on display in the Trades Case in Grantham Museum's permanent gallery. The rest take up a small amount of space and are stored in the roller racking drawers. Other than the Whysall's jar, none of the other items are believed to have been displayed in recent years.

1.2 Reason For Disposal

In 1972, the objects listed above were placed on long-term loan to Grantham Museum. The lender subsequently got married and moved to Buckinghamshire. As a result of this, museum staff have been unable to trace her when researching old loans. As part of the documentation work carried out in the early 1990s, these items were allocated accession numbers, although they were recorded as having been loaned.

In 2007, the MDA (Collections Trust) was contacted for advice about how to deal with old loans where the lender could not be traced. They confirmed that it was acceptable practice to accession the item until such time as the legal owner came forwards, on the understanding that at that time the objects would be de-accessioned and returned. This is confirmed in the Collections Trust Information Sheet - Disposing of objects you may not own. (p.4)

The lender has a copy of the old Museum Donor Register paperwork which has been annotated with the words 'long-term loan' and the word 'gift' has been crossed through. On looking at our copy of the DN Register the page is not annotated with the words 'long-term loan' as her copy is. However, there are 2 pieces of evidence which support her claim - one is that her copy is annotated in the same hand as the Librarian in charge at the time that filled out the rest of the form; it is very clearly the same handwriting. Secondly, the items have old museum labels stuck to them with the DN number on and the word 'LOAN'. As the DN number relates to the entire collection of items that came in on that number, all of the items must have been a loan, and the museum staff that did the labelling at the time were obviously aware that the items were a loan and not a gift. Therefore it seems clear that we can consider the items a loan and that there is no contention in the legal ownership of the objects. If this is the case, then the items do not legally belong to Lincolnshire County Council.

In accordance with Museum Association Disposal guidelines and LCC's Acquisition and Disposal Policy, it is recommended that these items should be de-accessioned and returned to their legal owner. The disposal of this item falls within section 5.1.1 of Culture and Adult Education's Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2010 'Lincolnshire County Council will not acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that it can acquire a valid title to the item in question.'

1.3 Suggested Means of Disposal & Reason

De-accession the items and return them to their legal owner, as requested.

1.4 Impact Statement

As there is a very slight anomaly in the paperwork relating to these items (our copy is not annotated as a loan) there is a slight risk that their disposal may set a precedent for returning items where ownership is unclear. However, the lender has her copy of the paperwork which is annotated, and there is other circumstantial evidence that these items were indeed a loan which makes this a special case. In addition, the bad feeling that would be caused by a failure to return the items could potentially damage the reputation of LCC Heritage Service.

The MA code of ethics recognises the need to 'Deal sensitively and promptly with requests for repatriation both within the UK and from abroad of items in the museum's collection (7.7). In addition, the items have not recently been on display (with the exception of the Whysall's jar) and are for the most part, duplicates within the Heritage Service Collection. The MLA advice recognises that where items in the Museum collection are of limited public benefit for a curatorial reason then returning them to their owners may be acceptable. Therefore, even if the issue with the paperwork is taken into account, it may be considered that returning the items would be acceptable.

If it is accepted that the items are on loan and do not legally belong to the Council, then failure to de-accession them would mean that the items could not be returned to their legal owner as has been requested. Lincolnshire County Council records would be inaccurate and items would be retained in custody which do not belong to the council.

The Benefits of de-accessioning the item and returning it to its legal owners are that the Council would be acting in-line with the policy and ethical guidelines, and the legal requirements of the Council in relation to its dealings with items that do not belong to the Council will be fulfilled, and potential conflict with the legal owner would be avoided.

1.5 Other Considerations

There are no resource or cost implications. The lender's sister lives in Grantham and the lender has passed on her sister's contact details and has given the Museum written permission to deal with her sister and to return the items to her on her behalf. Therefore, her sister can collect the items from the Museum and there are no cost or resource implications to returning the items.

The legal owner has contacted the Museum and requested the return of these items. Therefore the timeframe should be as soon as possible, as excessive delay could cause bad feeling between the Council and the lender.

1.6 Recommendation

To de-accession the items and return them to their legal owner would mean that the Council would be acting in-line with the policy and ethical guidelines, and items which do not legally belong to the Council could be returned to their legal owner, thus freeing up storage space and avoiding potential conflict with the legal owner.

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: 11/1/11

SECTION 3

(to be completed by Collections Officer)

3.1 Exec Report No _____

3.2 Exec Decision No _____

3.3 Action / Date Completed _____

Ensure a copy of the Authority deaccession/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