



ss Great Britain Trust

## CONSERVATION POLICY

This policy summarises the principles governing the conservation of objects held in the Trust's Primary Accessioned collection. Conservation is the generic term for all the processes of looking after museum objects so as to retain cultural significance identified within them.

The Primary Accessioned Collection is the primary means by which the Trust fulfils its charitable goals. Objects within it will be preserved and used for the benefit of the public, to inspire, educate, and increase the sum of public knowledge, and to demonstrate a tangible link with the past and present of maritime and industrial engineering, science, maritime archaeology and history.

### **1. Responsible Officer**

1.1. The Curator is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

### **2. Associated Documentation**

2.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the 'Conservation Plan for the Great Western Steamship Company Dockyard and the *ss Great Britain*' volumes I & II. These are the core management documents relating to the Ship and Dockyard with the aim of retention of historic significance in both. Volume 1 contains additional conservation policies

### **3. Period of Review**

3.1. This policy should be reviewed from time to time and at least once every five years.

### **4. Principles guiding the conservation of objects in the Primary Accessioned collection**

4.1. The ss Great Britain Trust will:

4.1.1. Consider the conservation of objects held in the Primary Accessioned collection as a high priority.

4.1.2. Regularly monitor the condition of objects using the most appropriate means.

- 4.1.3. Seek to slow down the process of decay and stabilise the condition of objects using passive or interventive techniques as appropriate.
- 4.1.4. Manage the improvement of the condition of objects where this is practicable and ethical using treatments and processes carried out by staff or contractors with the appropriate qualification and/or expertise, or by trainee conservators under the supervision of the Curator.
- 4.1.5. Undertake conservation of objects with reference to relevant standards and guidelines as published in appropriate literature, identified by the Curator.
- 4.1.6. Record and retain for future reference all information relating to conservation work on objects in the Primary Accessioned collection. Conservation treatments carried out on objects shall be documented as part of the object's documentation record.
- 4.1.7. Review current conservation measures from time to time and conduct research into new conservation methods where appropriate.
- 4.1.8. Not add object(s) to the collections unless the Trust is able to provide the resources, skills and facilities for their adequate long-term care.
- 4.1.9. Check all objects entering the museum for infestation and place objects found or thought to be infested within a quarantine area for treatment. The museum reserves the right to refuse the entry of an object on the grounds of infestation by any means.
- 4.1.10. Conduct an ongoing housekeeping regime where the condition of the collections are monitored and kept up by a regular series of checks of the collections by the Curatorial staff.
- 4.1.11. Maintain as a rule-of-thumb the presumption against unnecessary handling of objects.
- 4.1.12. Take appropriate measures to safeguard the object and the person(s) handling an object when it becomes necessary to handle an object.
- 4.1.13. Make fair and balanced judgements when considering conservation work on an object with respect to the object's historic significance, rarity, cultural value, relevance and other value judgements against the practical feasibility of the work proposed.
- 4.1.14. Seek grant aid or other funding for conservation work wherever possible.
- 4.1.15. Seek to create links with other institutions to share information relating to conservation and to employ conservation students as volunteers, through

work experience or through other programs wherever possible for the benefit of the students and the Trust.

- 4.1.16. Maintain a watching brief on the fabric of the ship with specific regard to the conservation capacity of the ship. The ss Great Britain is included as an object within the primary Accessioned Collection.

## **5. Display & Storage areas**

5.1. The conservation of an object cannot be disassociated from the environment in which it is held. As such the ss Great Britain Trust will:

- 5.1.1. Regularly monitor the environment in which artefacts are held (where 'environment' encompasses both display and storage facilities and 'monitor' includes measurement of ultra violet (UV) light, temperature and relative humidity).
- 5.1.2. Seek to improve environmental conditions where the need is recognised and resources have become available, to standards appropriate for different media as appropriate.
- 5.1.3. Maintain stable environmental conditions in which objects are displayed or stored, avoiding wide fluctuations of temperature, UV light or relative humidity.
- 5.1.4. Store non-collection material, so far as is possible, separately from the Primary Accessioned and Secondary Handling collections.
- 5.1.5. Restrict storage to rooms or buildings which meet the Trust's security requirements, are structurally sound, regularly maintained, and where suitable environmental conditions can be maintained for the objects in question.
- 5.1.6. Investigate the cause of any unusual change in the environmental conditions of storage or display areas and seek to modify conditions where practicable.
- 5.1.7. Employ storage systems and materials that provide appropriate protection for objects.
- 5.1.8. Where objects are stored outside in uncontrolled environments, efforts will be made to achieve the minimum of weather protection either by the erection of a weather shelter and/or by the application of surface treatments to the object as appropriate.

## **6. Exclusions**

### 6.1. Dockyard Dressing

- 6.1.1. This policy does NOT apply to objects which enter the museum for use solely as Dockyard Dressing. Dockyard Dressing is acquired on the basis of its use as a visual or interpretive aid within the bounds of the Great Western Dockyard and it is accepted that its use in this sense will lead to its ultimate destruction. Dockyard dressing objects may be added to the Secondary Handling Collection.

### 6.2. Secondary Handling collection

- 6.2.1. The Secondary Handling collection is maintained in accordance with the terms laid out in the ss Great Britain Trust Acquisitions & Disposals policy. The Secondary Handling collection is retained by the Trust for use in display, outreach, learning and other activities and the acceptance of an object into this collection implies its eventual destruction.
- 6.2.2. In managing the conservation needs of the Secondary Handling collection, the ss Great Britain Trust will:
- 6.2.3. Consider the conservation of objects held in the Secondary Handling collection as a secondary priority, and that the use of such objects may lead to their eventual destruction.
- 6.2.4. Take reasonable steps to ensure the long term conservation needs of the Secondary Handling collection are met only when measured against the practicalities of its continuing use as a resource in display, education, outreach and other activities.

### 6.3. Objects not belonging to the Trust:

- 6.3.1. The Trust will take the same care of any object which enters the museum for loan, research, safekeeping or any reason whatsoever as it would do an item in its own collection.
- 6.3.2. The Trust will not take on any new loan without assessing the conservation burden that it might incur. All such loans must be approved by the Director and reported to the Board.
- 6.3.3. The Trust will abide by written & signed loan agreements in respect of maintaining the conditions of storage or display for any objects in its care.
- 6.3.4. Should the Trust become unable to maintain the conditions of storage or display as agreed for loaned objects in its care, the Trust will alert the lender immediately.

- 6.3.5. The Trust will not research or carry out any conservation work on any object over which it does not hold legal title without first:
- 6.3.6. Obtaining confirmation from those known to the Trust as current holders of the object that they are indeed the owners or are legitimately entitled to act on behalf of the owners.
- 6.3.7. Obtaining written confirmation from the owners that they agree to the proposed conservation works, and a full understanding that they may be liable for none, some or all of the costs of any works proposed.
- 6.3.8. Obtaining written confirmation from the owners and external conservation staff to be employed of any other liabilities in relation to the proposed treatment(s).