

Project Brief

Effective Collections: Collections review and disposal strategy

Natural Sciences: The Entomology Collection

Project Type: Collections Management

Dates: September – October 2012

Budget: £ 4,000



1. Background

1.1 Introduction to Doncaster Museum

Doncaster Museum was first opened in 1900 in a small room in the old Guildhall. In 1909 it moved to the ground floor of Beechfield House with its 'stock' of 1006 museum objects. From 1955 the Museum ran a small zoo in the grounds of Beechfield and some of the occupants, suitably mounted, form a part of the current natural sciences collections. In 1962 the Beechfield premises were closed and in 1964 the replacement Museum & Art Gallery was opened on Chequer Road by the Borough Council - the first purpose built museum building to be entirely funded by a local authority since 1945. Doncaster Museum is home to a range of collections, including Natural Sciences, Archaeology, Horseracing, Decorative and Fine Arts.

Doncaster Museum Service is responsible for Doncaster Museum and Cusworth Hall Museum, a social history museum 3 miles from the centre of Doncaster.

1.2 Taking Stock

Doncaster Museum Service's Effective Collections project forms part of a holistic collections review called 'Taking Stock'.

The objective of 'Taking Stock' is to review all of the Doncaster Museum Service collections to ensure the collections best serve the borough, by reflecting the heritage, culture and educational needs of its communities and representing the best use of public money.

This will be achieved through a curatorial assessment of all of the Museum Service collections to determine whether or not they would be better placed with another museum or public body. It will also deal with items not of a suitable quality for collecting, unnecessary duplications and past discrepancies in collecting in line with current professional museum standards. The decision process will be supported and informed by a focus group and ultimately approved by an appointed Member of Doncaster Council's Cabinet.

1.3 Natural Sciences, Entomology collections

1.3.1 Background

The first curator, Dr H.H. Corbett, was primarily an entomologist and first developed the extensive entomological collections. His work was significantly added to by Dr E.F. Gilmour (1951-67), who was a coleopterist specialising in world Cerambycidae and Dr P. Skidmore (1965-95), who was particularly concerned with Diptera, especially world Muscidae.

Doncaster Museum holds entomological collections of local, regional, national and world-wide material acquired by gift, purchase, field collection and transfer from other museums. The collections generally have a good level of supporting documentation and there are associated field notebooks and manuscripts.

The collections have a computerised inventory record at species level, with close to 25,800 different entries comprising just over 225,500 specimens.

The collections are stored in a dedicated entomology store, although this did not prevent a major pest outbreak around 5 years ago, when the entire collection was frozen.

1.3.2 Main entomological collections

Lepidoptera

There are three main collections comprising around 55,000 specimens.

1. British microlepidoptera, including several collections e.g. G.E. Hyde, S.M. Jackson, E.W. Smith, L.G.F. Waddington.
2. British macrolepidoptera, especially the Brady-Wyer collection. Around half the material is from Yorkshire.
3. Exotic Lepidoptera, non-British butterflies from a variety of sources, totalling c.12,000 specimens.

Coleoptera

Three main collections of around 114,500 specimens.

1. World Cerambycidae. The most important single entomological collection and one of the finest and most comprehensive in existence, containing much type material including 235 Holotype specimens. A truly world-wide collection containing around 65,000 specimens amassed by E.F. Gilmour.
2. World Coleoptera. Around 5,500 specimens from several sources, but basically part of the Hincks-Dibb collection.
3. British Coleoptera. A large collection of around 44,000 specimens, noteworthy for Yorkshire, North Wales and the Scottish Highlands. Largely an amalgamation of material from G.W.R. Bartindale, H.H. Corbett, G.A. Dunlop, W.J. Fordham, E.F. Gilmour, P.Skidmore.

Diptera

A collection of around 40,000 British specimens, including much material of scientific importance. Much of this is due to P.Skidmore, for example the specimens of Muscidae include puparia of a very wide range of species and so forms a very valuable British collection for this family. As with British Coleoptera, the Diptera are mainly Yorkshire, North Wales and Scottish Highlands in scope.

There is also a small collection of exotic Diptera of around 1,000 specimens from various sources.

Hymenoptera

A collection of British species of around 20,000 specimens. There is also a collection of around 500 specimens.

Hemiptera

A modest collection of British species of around 6,000 specimens, most of which is from the H.D. Swain collection. There are also around 500 foreign specimens.

Other orders

Specimens in other orders total around 2,000 British specimens and around 400 from overseas.

Spirit collections

800 tubes of Arthropoda include immature stages of insects and insect ectoparasites e.g. the H.E. Beaumont collection of Diptera: Hippoboscidae.

Palaeoentomological collection

Initiated by Dr Paul Buckland whilst working for the Museum Service and associated with continuing work on sub-fossil insect faunas. Several thousand specimens mainly from Yorkshire (Thorne Moors, York etc) and Lincolnshire (Brigg) having been gathered from archaeological and palaeoenvironmental sites.

Other material

Around 20,000 specimens of mounted, non-determined material.

1. Project Objectives

1.1 Overview of objectives

The project objectives can be divided into two parts:

Part 1

- A. To review the Entomological collections and create a report (which a layperson can understand) covering the three key points outlined in the 'review specifications' (section 2.2)
- B. To provide guidance and a strategy for documenting, storing and making the collection easily accessible

1.2 Review specifications

The collections review must cover the following:

- **Specialist & Curatorial Review** - provides an overview specialist curatorial opinion on the Entomological collections. It will include an indication of the significance and quality of each collection from a local, regional, national or international perspective and for research, display, learning etc, as well as looking at any potential legal or ethical issues.
- **Use** - looks at how the collections could be best used in the future, and whether each collection is best placed with Doncaster Museum Service or with another museum or other institution. E.g. If its best use is for research then where is it best placed to facilitate that research? This assessment must be based on the current and future direction of the service, to be established through consultation with museum staff and with reference to draft plans and policies currently in preparation.
If it is judged that the collection, or elements of the collection, are best accessed/used elsewhere, then to provide recommendations for appropriate venues in conjunction with the Museum Association's '*Disposal Toolkit, Guidelines for Museums*'. This should take into account ways in which transfer or repatriation could be used to ensure that the Museum Service has a collection relevant to its current and future needs, potentially through solutions such as swapping or long term loan etc.
- **Collections care** - looks at how well the objects are cared for, with suggestions for improving collections care standards on a limited budget. This should include an assessment of collection care needs.

2. Person Specifications:

- A proactive and realistic appreciation of the challenges of caring for a natural sciences collection within a medium sized local authority museum service.
- An imaginative approach to providing solutions to resolve the issues encountered.
- An ability to demonstrate reasonable/substantial knowledge and experience of curating natural history collections
- A substantial level of specialist entomological knowledge
- The ability to undertake a collections review
- Ability to assess the potential of a collection,
- Knowledge of Doncaster Museums' aims and objectives

3. Budget:

The total budget is £4,000. This must include all expenses.

We are looking for submissions up to but not beyond this amount. Doncaster Museum Service will not be held responsible for any expense or losses incurred by the applicant(s) in the preparation and presentation of the quotation.

4. Timescale

The project should be completed by 31st October 2012.

5. Submission/Application requirements:

Applicants are invited to make a submission for the work outlined in this brief (as per section 2) and to the budget outlined in section 4.

Any applicants wishing to view the collection should contact Laura Nugent, Museum Registrar on 01302 734293, email laura.nugent@doncaster.gov.uk.

Submissions must answer the following questions (the importance of which are weighted as detailed below):

Reference	Question	Weight
Q1.	Please provide your understanding of the key requirements of this contract in no more than 300 words	10
Q2.	Please provide details of your previous experience of engaging and delivering similar services or undertaking similar projects for museum organisations	25
Q3.	Please provide a detailed plan of how you will tackle the aspect of the project for which you are applying	10
Q4.	Please outline the number of days you'd expect to spend on delivery and what proportion of this would be travelling to and from the museum	25
Q5.	Please provide details of your specialist experience in the relevant area (as per 3.1 and or 3.2) relating to the part of the project (1 and/or 2) that you are applying for	30

An overall price is required which must include all expenses and details of any discounts offered (e.g. for early payment etc).

Contractors will be expected to provide their own insurance

Closing Date & time for applications: 5pm Tuesday 28th August

Applications should be delivered as a hard copy or electronic copy via e-mail. As well as a submission document answering the questions outlined in the table above, applicants are asked to include the following information:

- Covering letter with full address and contact details
- CV

Please contact either Carolyn Dalton or Peter Robinson at the Museum for further guidance if required.

A decision will be made and the successful applicant(s) will be informed no later than Friday 7th September. It may be necessary to interview candidates prior to appointment.

Submissions should be sent to:

Carolyn Dalton
Manager, Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery
Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery, Chequer Road, Doncaster, DN1 2AE,
Tel: 01302 734293 E-Mail: Carolyn.Dalton@doncaster.gov.uk