



Elgin Museum

Collections Development Policy 2025



Elgin Museum Collections Development Policy (CDP) 2025

Produced in accordance with the template published by Arts Council England (ACE), dated 2014, reprinted 2018

History:

Amendment to clause 1 by addition of clause 1.8 ratified at Moray Society Board meeting on 12th June 2020

Elgin Museum's Collections Development Policy 2014, produced in accordance with ACE's Accreditation Standard, 2011

Elgin Museum's Acquisitions and Disposals Policy 2008, produced in accordance with Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, abolished in 2011 (MLA) Accreditation Standard, 2008

Elgin Museum's Acquisitions and Disposals Policy 2004, produced in accordance with MLA Accreditation Standard, 2004.

Name of museum: Elgin Museum

Adopted by Elgin Museum Management Committee (EMMC): 17/11/2025

Name of governing body: The Board of The Moray Society (the Board); The Moray Society is a Company incorporated under the Companies Acts (106529), and having its registered office at Elgin Museum, 1 High Street, Elgin, Moray, IV30 1EQ

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 25/11/2025

Policy review procedure: The Collections Development Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every 5 years.

Review date (not more than 5 years): 25/11/2030

Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) will be notified of any changes to the Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

Context of review of Elgin Museum CDP

Our CDP should have been reviewed in 2023. ACE has not updated their CDP template, but given the current challenges in Elgin Museum, it is thought prudent to carry out an update based on their current template.

The physical integrity of (i) the Museum Building and contiguous Side Hall (both Category A listed) and (ii) the adjacent No 3 High Street (Category C listed) has severely deteriorated over the past 5 years. Certain aspects of the internal structure require to be repaired, replaced and / or modernised for future generations. The Board, and the volunteer staff, have been working with a number of external third parties to find a cost-effective solution, including Conservation Architects LDN, HES and Moray Council. Among the factors to be taken into consideration are (a) necessary external repairs; (b) necessary internal remediation works; *inter alia*, a new fault has recently been revealed in the Mezzanine arches above the Main Gallery and access to the Tower has been condemned by our insurance company; (c) storage has been limited for years, and the inadequacy of the same has been compounded by the recent loss of storage due to the foregoing structural problems; (d) improving the access e.g. by installing a lift; and (e) meeting the Scottish Government's Net Zero targets. Unfortunately, No 3 has no monetary or architectural value which would justify the cost of extensive remediation works. It is adversely affected by a 2nd temporary roof, and suffers from spalling stonework, rotten windows, and an unsafe cellar from which historically acquired archaeology assemblages require urgent removal.

The National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF), the only public funder realistically able to contribute significantly to the cost, has not, to date, been willing to engage apart from funding two short term posts: Redevelopment Project Manager and an Inventory Project Manager.

The Collections Audit being undertaken by the Inventory Project Manager is essential as all of the buildings will need to be emptied before building works can start. As of January 2025, accessioning has been paused. Any new material entering the Museum (or stored temporarily off site) will be identified by an Object Entry number for decision on accessioning by our Collections Management Group (CMG). The CMG is actively investigating secure off-site storage and transportation options.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation

Note specifically these clauses:

1.5 Elgin Museum Documentation Procedural Manual 2018: primary procedures for collections management to be updated to SPECTRUM 5.1

1.7, 5., 16. Elgin Museum Deaccessioning and Disposal Policy 2025

15.1 Elgin Museum Repatriation and Restitution Policy and Procedure 2019

3.3.13, 4.13, 15.2 Elgin Museum Human Remains Policy and Procedure 2025

16.2 Moray Society Articles of Association 2025

4., 9.1 Collections Management Group (CMG) of the Elgin Museum Management Committee (EMMC) 2025

3.3.11, 4.11 MGS Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums Steering Group (ESSM)

3.3.11 MGS Repatriation and Restitution Working Group

1.1 The Museum's statement of purpose is: The Moray Society, a membership organisation, owns and manages Elgin Museum. The purpose of Elgin Museum is to conserve and display the objects and archive in its care, to act as a focus for learning and enjoyment for all and to support the appreciation of the natural history, culture and heritage of Moray and to maintain the buildings in its ownership.

1.2 The Board will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, the Museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The Board and EMMC therefore accept the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the Museum's collection.

1.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5 The Museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6 The Museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the Board or EMMC is satisfied that the Museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7 In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the Board will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
- the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
- the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
- extensive prior consultation with sector bodies will have been undertaken
- the item under consideration lies outside the Museum's established core collection

1.8 Dispersal in the case of the insolvency of the Museum's parent body, The Moray Society and/or closure of all or part of the Museum.

Notwithstanding any other statements anent the general principles and ethics of disposal from the Museum's collections in this Collections Disposal Policy, in the case of last resort, while also ensuring compliance with Clause 20 Dissolution, of the Constitution of The Moray Society 2025:

The collections would be transferred to the ownership of a museum or institution with the status and capacity to safeguard the collection, preferably in its entirety. The recipient or recipients could only be confirmed at the time and would be agreed by The Moray Society in consultation with Museums Galleries Scotland, OSCR, and National Museums Scotland (NMS) or their successors.

In addition, specifically for the Recognised collection of fossils and associated archive, it would be transferred to be accessioned in its entirety as 'Elgin Museum Recognised Fossil Collection' by a single recipient body. Candidates would include National Museums Scotland, British Museum (Natural History), the British Geological Survey or the geological department of another institution of similar standing. If it is impossible for one institution to receive the entire collection, any part of the collection should still retain the acknowledgement of its source as this specific Recognised collection.

2. History of the collections

Members of the forerunner to The Moray Society, the Elgin and Morayshire Literary and Scientific Association, were collecting objects that would form the nucleus of Elgin Museum from at least 1836. Key players from the early days were Rev. Dr George Gordon (Minister of Birnie and eclectic recorder and correspondent), John Martin (land surveyor turned teacher and first Curator), Isaac Forsyth (bookseller, librarian and first Secretary), and John Lawson (Banker and first President).

Originally, objects were stored in the Tolbooth (Town Jail) and various High Street shops until the purpose-built Museum was built in 1842, by public subscription. The designer was local architect, Thomas Mackenzie. During the last 150 years the Museum has benefited from various additions, resulting in increased storage, better

displays and internal office space, suitable for the time period. A Side Hall was added in 1890 for lectures and meetings. These past alterations are now, themselves, antiquated. The buildings are no longer fit for purpose. Storage space is never adequate and building maintenance an ongoing challenge. The Museum buildings are Category A listed (Listed Building no. 30714).

One of the interests of the founders was the palaeontology of the district. Significant discoveries were made by them, and their collaboration with the wider geological and palaeontological world put Elgin Museum at the centre of study and of the controversies in understanding Scotland's geology in the 19th Century. Contacts included Roderick Impey Murchison, Archibald Geikie, T.H. Huxley, Hugh Miller, Dr John Malcolmson, Professor Louis Agassiz, Friedrich von Huene, E.T. Newton. The Museum's fossil collection and associated archive were Recognised in 2008 and international interest continues.

Significant contributions were made to the ethnographic collections by Moray people who travelled the world through commerce, public office, engagement with the East India Company and for pleasure. Our current policy is to collect only Moray cultural material although the earlier collections also tell the social history of Moray through the objects brought home by local travellers in the 19th Century.

Archaeology has been another major collecting interest from the outset, including an outstanding display of Pictish and Early Medieval Carved Stones, representing the interest of the ministers of Drainie Parish in 1855 and the 1930s. One shining example of our collection is the Dandaleith Stone which was allocated by the Treasure Trove Unit (TTU)/KLTR in 2014. In the past 20 years, the collections have seen an acceleration in acquisitions through TTU, largely as a result of metal detecting and the Museum's strategy to engage with detectorists.

The changing pattern of industry and commerce locally has led to the donation of archives from a number of organisations including Watson's sawmills and the Incorporated Trades. These have been catalogued by archivists. We continue to welcome local ephemera with provenance, brought in by individuals, thus both reinforcing a sense of engagement for the community, and providing a safe repository.

Disposals in the past 10 years: Some large statues of Hindu gods (which we could neither display nor store effectively), all of our rhino material (for security reasons) and some exotic butterflies (which did not fit our current policy focusing on local natural history) were donated to National Museums Scotland (NMS). Also, on the advice of NMS specialists, a number of birds and butterflies, unprovenanced, unaccessioned, or unfit for display or transfer, were disposed of for curatorial reasons. Mainly unaccessioned carved stone, after specialist research identified as from Elgin Cathedral, was donated to HES. Inevitably, every item in the early Accession Books cannot be accounted for, not least given the number of natural history specimens – a category we no longer collect.

3. An overview of current collections

3.1. General outline of the collections

3.1.1 Donations

By far the majority of the items in the collections have been donated to The Moray Society (and its forerunners) and thus Elgin Museum, from 1836 to the present day. Examples of all categories are on display. There are approximately 36,660 items in total, spanning the following categories:

Archaeology	1666 approx.
Foreign ethnography	866 approx.
Geology	1642 approx.
Natural History	11926 approx.*
Social History	20560 approx.

** This number includes multiples of butterflies and moths. These figures are now under review because the collection is being remounted. See Section 5.5.*
(Data from National Audit 2002. These, and any other figures cited will be updated after the 2025/6 Collections Audit is completed.)

3.1.2 Purchases

Principal purchases have been for allocated Treasure Trove: some 90 cases in the past 10 years, as finders' rewards, paid via KLTR where applicable, with 50% funding from the National Fund for Acquisitions (NFA) and 50% from Elgin Museum's Acquisition and Conservation Fund. Also Minute Books of the Incorporated Trade of Tailors of Elgin (20.08.1798 -17.9.1947), purchased from a book dealer, to complement our existing archive of Trades papers. (ELGNM 2023.23)

3.1.3 Loans

A minority of accessions (less than 0.1%) have been loaned to Elgin Museum. Current policy is that loans will be accepted only:

- a) For the purposes of:
 - temporary display
 - research
 - photography
 - in exceptional circumstances, such as to ensure the object's availability for study or immediate preservation.

- b) In accordance with Elgin Museum's Documentation Policies and Procedures for Loans-in, which specify fixed term agreements, no longer than 5 years.

Historical loans have been researched and renewed, converted to donations, or where the lender is untraceable, converted to donations with record made of the circumstances.

Current loans (2025):

i) Archive, and some other possessions, of the Rev. Dr. George Gordon of Birnie, one of the founders of Elgin Museum and a leading scholar in his day, and spanning the years 1832-1893. His correspondents included many of the geologists, natural historians and antiquarians of the day: Thomas Huxley, Charles Darwin, Roderick Murchison, Archibald Geikie. This collection is of direct relevance to much of the Museum's collection and history, and to the history of the area. Its location is documented and the collection is therefore accessible to researchers and published as 'George Gordon: An annotated catalogue of his scientific correspondence' by Susan Bennett and Michael Collie (ISBN 1 85928 070 6). The family wish to retain ownership but will consider a donation in the future.

L.1987.5, L.2003.36 (Gordon Family, Edinburgh) (FCR 5) Loan renewed for 5 years in 2025.

ii) L1988.16 Mounted male Capercaillie specimen (Aberdeen University Museums (AbU 25.326) (FCR 37) incorporated into the Natural History diorama. Loan renewed for 5 years in 2025.

iii) Collection of Neolithic pottery sherds, some of which are in the archaeology display in the Rear Gallery. The Museum has the best examples on display and it has been agreed that all the items from this excavation should remain for the time being under one roof. When the display is dismantled and the sherds are no longer required the complete collection will be returned to Moray Council Museums. (FCR 27) L.1989.13 (Moray Council Museums)

iv) Some items in the Victoriana display are believed to be historical loans – to be addressed during the Collections Audit 2025/6 process.

3.2 Unaccessioned material

The Museum has a collection of resource boxes for which the objects may have been found in store or donated without provenance or are purchased replicas. These boxes are a continuing works in progress as schools and outreach groups ask for new topics to be covered. Most have associated Teachers' Workbooks.

3.3 The Major Collections

We are grateful for continuing support and advice for our collections particularly from National Museums Scotland and from a wide range of specialists and researchers from other institutions with interest in our collections and history.

3.3.1 Geology

This is a mixed collection of palaeontology, mineralogy and rock specimens, mainly from Moray.

The palaeontology collection and its history are described in detail in the application in February 2008 for its "Recognition" by Scottish Government as a collection of National Significance, the status granted in 2008. Original papers and

correspondence are held in archival conditions. The collection comprises fossil fish from the Middle and Upper Old Red Sandstones, and fossil reptiles and trackways from the Permian sandstone, and reptiles from the Triassic sandstone, all from the local area. Two small but significant finds were made by a member of Elgin Museum's Geology Group (EMGG) in 2018 and were added to the collection following academic study at the University of Bristol.

A significant area in the Museum is dedicated to their permanent display, enhanced by models and a Recognition Fund funded MRI/CT derived 3D dicynodont skull model. The fossils are of importance, not only as specimens (including type and unique specimens) but also for the part they played in the history of understanding of geology, locally and world-wide. An exhibition highlighting the evolutionary importance of an early tetrapod from the area was held in 2021. With support from the Weston Loan Programme, fossils were loaned by National Museums Scotland (NMS), the British Geological Survey and the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. Fossils from the find locality and models of the animals represented were also borrowed from a local palaeontologist who has now donated these to the Museum.

Research using the collections continues, stimulated by modern methods of study on fossils that have often received little attention for 100 years. Researchers from Edinburgh, South America, Germany and Poland have been recent visitors and multinational PhD students from Bristol University. Collaboration with the University of Edinburgh continues, with two recent MSc students focussing on our fossils. New work at NMS (2018-2021) has resulted in significant new discoveries about the Elgin reptiles, with this research generating both academic and public interest when published in 2022. The EMGG also collaborates with NatureScot and contributed to the 2024 Scottish Fossil Code. A member of the group carries out regular checks in two local Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) fossiliferous quarries which still yield trace fossils and footprints. Renewed quarrying activity at one of the sites has led to the discovery of numerous new trackways. Wherever possible, these are photographed before the blocks leave the quarry and discussion with NMS as to how to make these images more widely available is ongoing.

A small part of the geology collection is used solely for educational purposes and has not been accessioned. The mainly un-accessioned mineralogy and rock specimens are being assessed by the Museum's Geology Group.

With funding from the Recognition Fund for 2014/5, a post-doctoral palaeontologist was employed and a review of the Geology Store was carried out and its contents were catalogued and the storage rationalised. The work culminated in a well-attended conference focusing on the collection, and the Proceedings have been published.

Significant items:

- *Rhynchodipterus elginensis* (ELGNM 1898.2.1) - fossil fish, Type and unique from Rosebrae Quarry.
- *Gordonia traquairi* Newton (ELGNM 1890.3.1) - Permian reptile from Cutties Hillock, originally the Type specimen for *Gordonia juddiana*.

- *Leptopleuron lacertinum* (renamed) (ELGNM 1978.718.1) - Triassic reptile, from Lossiemouth Quarry.
- *Hyperodapedon gordonii* (ELGNM 1886.3) - Triassic reptile, from Lossiemouth Quarry, and one of the specimens key to Huxley's assessment of the reptile beds being Triassic.
- *Stagonolepis robertsoni* (ELGNM 1858.10) - Triassic reptile and Type, from Lossiemouth Quarry. Named and identified first as a fish by Agassiz in 1844 and re-assigned as a reptile by T.H. Huxley - note his red numbering on the specimen, R27. Probably the first photographed fossil vertebrate (see S.M. Andrews, 1983, p. 32, Fig. 18).
- *Dasygnathoides longidens* (ELGNM 1978.570) - Triassic reptile and Type, from Findrassie Quarry. Huxley's red numbering (R1). Formerly *Ornithosuchus longidens*.
- *Gordonia traquairi* (ELGNM 1999.5.1) - Permian reptile from Clashach Quarry. Formerly *Dicynodon Gordonia*.
- Sandstone slab with single large Permian reptile footprint (ELGNM 1978.883.4) - from Masonhaugh Quarry.

3.3.2 Natural History

The Moray Society is supporting integration and digital access to natural history collections through the Distributed System of Scientific Collections (DiSSCo) UK programme, which aims to provide a one-stop, dynamic, openly available and easy-to-use e-science infrastructure. We will work with both National Museums Scotland and the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh to ensure that our specimens are accessible through this initiative.

Birds and eggs: These collections have been rationalised and restored to make them more accessible and useful.

Moths and butterflies: The collections were strong in numerical terms and visually attractive but had suffered over time from insect and mould damage, and with little accompanying data they were of little scientific value. A volunteer has made great progress re-pinning and cataloguing a local selection in the best of the old cabinets. Herbaria: There are herbaria of local plants from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Molluscs: An interesting historical collection of Molluscs from the Moray Firth has been identified as made by George Gordon. It has been documented and can be associated with the letters in the Gordon Archive and Gordon's list in the 'Zoologist' (1854).

Miscellaneous: there are a few exotic natural history items, and items of skeletal material. All rhino material was donated to NMS in 2013.

Display: The principle permanent display is a woodland diorama from 1989; some of the birds are on display in the Victorian study as exemplars of the early collections.

Significant items:

- ELGNM 2013.2 formerly L1987.24 Black Moray (Kellas) cat

3.3.3 Social History

This is a large collection of some 20,000 pieces, mainly drawn from the Moray area. The displays in the Front Gallery in the "People and Place" exhibition (2003), and the

Rear Hall "Victoriana" display (2008), draw particularly from this group. There are examples in the categories: domestic and laundry, kitchenware, tableware, ornamental, lighting, handicraft, recreation, society and law, education, religion, working life, transport, agriculture.

Significant items:

- ELGNM 1889.3 Man trap
- ELGNM 1978.696 Old Scots Plough
- ELGNM 1978.1516 Spey Currach
- ELGNM 1994.25 Weavers Deacon's box 1658
- ELGNM 1972.42 Souter diesel engine

3.3.4 Costume and Textiles

The costume collection consists of approximately 200 pieces of male, female and children's clothing and personal accessories from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The pieces are generally in good condition and there are some interesting local items. There is a textile collection consisting of approximately 30 items, including linen made in Elgin and several dated samplers made mainly by local girls in the 19th century. Of note are a Tibetan ceremonial cloak (ELGNM 1886.16), items of Samurai costume and armour (ELGNM 1872.9), and a silk dressing gown that belonged to Queen Victoria (ELGNM 1938.8).

3.3.5 Arms and Armour

There are some 100 items in this group including swords including a Samurai sword, targes, powder horns and flasks, pistols and Scottish weaponry. A few items have links with Culloden.

3.3.6 Documents and Ephemera

This collection consists of approximately 800 miscellaneous items relating to the people and towns of Elgin and Moray including maps. A very valuable archive of some 1300 letters associated with one of the Museum's founders, Rev. Dr George Gordon (L1987.5 and L2003.36) is of international significance. (See Current loans 3.1.3 a).

The history of the Museum is well documented with accession registers, minutes, letters, visitor books and other ephemera dating from around 1836 to the present day.

The Watson Papers, a collection of approximately 6,000 bills and letters, relate to Watson's Sawmills in Elgin and date from the late nineteenth century. The letters refer to a wide range of topics of social interest such as shipbuilding, railways, and domestic buildings. We also hold the important papers of the Grants of Wester Elchies (1788-1922) - subjects include life in India, including the Indian Mutiny, and letters from the Front in World War I. Both collections have been catalogued and stored in archival conditions, as have the papers of the Incorporated Trades of Elgin and those of the Morayshire Farmers Club.

More recent family papers include those of Mrs Levack, complementing her donations (Lossiemouth author and traveller) (ELGNM 2022.13) and John (Jock) Edward Fraser (World War II pilot and New Elgin Dux) (ELGNM 2021.19).

Many of the objects in the collection have related papers filed in Object History Files (OHFs).

3.3.7 Photographs

The collection includes a variety of photographs, negatives and postcards of local people and places. There are some 200-glass negatives donated by a local photographic studio. A few of these have prints to correspond. The collection has been recorded and sorted into acid free boxes. These photographs can be scanned.

There is a small collection of aerial photographs of Moray from different sources, and several thousand negatives from a local photographer, Tony Spring (Studio Tyrell).

3.3.8 Numismatics

This comprises a miscellaneous collection of British, Scottish and foreign coins. There is also a representative collection of British trade tokens, Scottish communion tokens and commemorative and military medals, some of which relate to people of the area.

Roman silver coins from Birnie, near Elgin were allocated to Elgin Museum by TTU if found before formal excavation at Birnie. Similar coins have been found by metal detectorists in other areas of Moray including Clarkly Hill and allocated by TTU.

3.3.9 Fine Art

There is a small collection of drawings, engravings, lithographs, oil and watercolour paintings and a few pieces of sculpture. A set of John Henning Parthenon miniatures is on permanent display with two John Henning original drawings, the latter gifted by Lord Elgin.

The Etta Sharp Collection, donated in 1947, is a small but fine collection of 49 paintings representative of the development of the English watercolour tradition from the late 18th century until the early 20th century. They form an important part of the Museum art collection, and include works by significant artists such as Turner, Constable, Varley, Cox, Brabazon, Flint, Grimm, and Rowlandson.

Significant items:

- ELGNM 1978.229 Ramsay MacDonald bust by Jacob Epstein

3.3.10 Archaeology

The archaeology collection consists of Scottish, British and foreign material, although the majority is Scottish and from Moray. This collection is the other main strength of the Museum in addition to the Palaeontology. We maintain active contact with leaders in the field of Scottish Archaeology, in particular with NMS and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland's Covesea Caves project, and commercial archaeologists working in development archaeology.

There are some very good artefacts representing Moray's past, many of which are on display. They span the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Viking periods. There is also an excellent collection of Pictish and Early Medieval carved stones from Kinneddar (Drainie) and Burghead. A catalogue was published in 2009. In 2014 a new and significant Pictish stone, the Dandaleith Stone, was allocated

through Treasure Trove. The carved stone display was reimagined, mainly with HLF funding, and a 2nd edition of the catalogue was published.

Over the past 50 years, we have been allocated various assemblages from local excavations. Some of these have been fully documented, or published by the excavators, but a rolling programme is in place to complete accessioning.

Foreign archaeology consists of some Greek and Roman pieces collected in the Mediterranean and in Britain and a collection of pre-Spanish pottery excavated by Dr James Cooper Clark, from Moray, when on British Government expeditions to Central America, Peru and Belize in 1913 and 1928.

The Museum continues to enjoy good relations with local metal detectorists, and local activity has increased exponentially. We liaise with TTU to host 'Finders' Days. An interesting collection of Treasure Trove items has been claimed from their finds. The Museum bids for these items where appropriate. Recently allocated items are displayed in the Museum.

Significant items:

- ELGNM 1871.4 Burghead bull Pictish stone
- ELGNM 1994.61 Class II Pictish stone from Kinneddar
- ELGNM 1939.6 Fragments from a Pictish cist from Kinneddar
- ELGNM 1855.1.14 David and the lion - carved stone from Kinneddar
- ELGNM 1914.1 Bronze Age jet necklace from Burgie
- ELGNM 1888.3 Bronze age spear from Roseisle
- ELGNM 1888.10 Gold torc from Law Farm, Urquhart
- ELGNM 1986.4 Mediaeval jug from Flanders (Elgin High Street)

3.3.11 World Cultures

This collection consists of an interesting collection of foreign artefacts brought home by travellers from Moray. There are some 800 items, representing the human history of many countries, including India, China, Japan, Pacific Islands, South-East Asia and North and South America.

3.3.12 Books, offprints, museum catalogues

The Museum has a non-lending Library. There is a small collection of books and pamphlets which were acquired and/or written by members of the Elgin and Morayshire Literary Association (the forerunner of The Moray Society). There are offprints of many articles referring to research, especially on the palaeontological specimens (see 3.3.1) and miscellaneous modern reference books and maps. There is also a good collection of 19th and early 20th century reference books such as the complete Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (PSAS), local history books, George Gordon's bound copies of 'The Zoologist' and Ray Society Monographs, early geology books and Spalding Club Volumes. There are also some novels with Moray connections.

3.3.13 Human remains

The principal human remains in the collection are of considerable interest to the public – the Peruvian momía displayed respectfully behind a removable curtain with a folder explaining both how she came to the Museum, the scientific work carried out

at Dundee University and our current plans for her return to Peru. Also on display are three Iron Age cervical vertebrae showing evidence of beheading, from the Sculptor's Cave, Covesea and a Bronze Age skeleton in a cist. The tsantsa is no longer on display and we await an update from Pitt-Rivers Museum following their interaction with representatives of the Shuar people. It was also subject to research at Dundee University. All these cited examples of human remains have been published in 21st century university dating and research programmes, and the results are available in the Museum.

Significant items:

- ELGNM 1989.29 Bronze Age skeleton in cist from Roseisle (Aberdeen University Beakers and Bones project)
- ELGNM 1846.1 Peruvian mummified young woman (momía)
- ELGNM 1916.4 Shrunken head (Tsantsa) from Ecuador

3.3.14 Scottish silver

We have 18 items of Elgin silver, including the John Shanks snuff box, and in addition, two silver makers' punches. Recent donations comprise two tea services: one Edinburgh silver, a retirement present for Donald Macleod Smith, Sheriff-Substitute of Elginshire (ELGNM 2023.7.1-3) and the other, Aberdeen silver, a wedding present to Dr Duguid, Buckie in 1896. The collection also includes items from Banff.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The general principles for collecting are:

- to preserve important material for the benefit of Moray and the wider community.
- to build on the existing strengths of the collections.
- to collect material to support teaching, research and public engagement.
- to collect material specifically pertaining to the story of Moray, with provenance and adequate supporting evidence of origin and method of collection.

The Museum has limited plans for future collecting, as detailed below by major category of the existing collections.

The priority is to ensure rather that the existing collections are used to best advantage for the public, now and for the future. To this end, improved or additional means for the display of and access to both fossil and archaeological material are current aspirations. Acquisition of individual items of Treasure Trove is seen as a positive way to encourage responsible metal detecting. Our upstairs cabinets provide opportunities for themed displays, to commemorate past events by anniversary year, using predominantly objects from store and collated by our volunteers. Temporary (geology) displays are also housed in two display cases in the Rear Gallery, acquired in 2019 through the Weston Loan Programme.

Limitations on collecting

The Museum recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements. It will also take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. (See 7). Specialist advice will be sought from NMS and our Accreditation Mentor when appropriate. The Museum's Collections Management Group, delegated by EMMC, will make initial decisions on accepting items into the Museum and subsequent accessioning of items into the collections.

4.1 Geology

Geology specimens will be passively collected if these prove to be local in origin or where they fill significant gaps in the collection as comparators and complement the existing Recognised Collection. Such specimens would also, where appropriate, be assessed by outside experts, such as those from NMS. Fossil specimen acquisition must comply with the Scottish Fossil Code (2024). As research techniques develop, purchase of 3D representations of our fossils and palaeomodels to aid interpretation, will be considered.

4.2 Natural history

The Museum will not seek to collect biological specimens as part of a systematic collection; however, if appropriate and exceptionally, some specimens may be obtained for educational purposes or for specific displays, for example to enhance the "Woodland Diorama". The Museum has no facilities for taxidermy, therefore fresh specimens will not be taken into the Museum.

4.3 Social history

Social history items will be collected if they fill gaps in the collection and relate to Moray, and in particular the Laich. Agricultural items will only be collected in exceptional circumstances; such items would in the first instance be referred to another appropriate museum.

4.4 Costume and textiles

Items of costume and textiles will be collected passively, where they have a provenance relating to Moray. Before acquisition, particular consideration will be given to the physical condition, and the potential resource needed for any repair or conservation.

4.5 Arms and armour

Items relating to people from Moray or associated with the Elginshire Volunteers will be passively collected, but otherwise, regimental items will be referred to Fort George in the first instance, and thereafter to other specialist repositories. Where appropriate, arms and armoury will be kept locked in the Gun Cupboard or transferred to Police Scotland custody.

4.6 Documents and ephemera

Collection of documents will continue if related to objects in the collection, to Moray and to the Elgin area. Consideration will be given to possible greater relevance to the

collections of other heritage groups. Consideration will be given to the need for cataloguing to archive standard to give the acquisition purpose.

4.7 Photographs

Photographic material will be collected if it relates to the history or natural history of Elgin or Moray, including the collections. Any items that may be of interest to Moray Council Local Heritage Centre will be offered for copying for their archive.

4.8 Numismatics

Coins will be collected if they are Scottish or if they are an interesting local find or advertised as Treasure Trove in our collecting area (See 3.3.10). Similarly medals and trade and communion tokens will be collected if they have a good local connection. Campaign medals may otherwise be referred to Fort George or similar institution.

Every effort will be made to maintain good relations with local metal detectorists.

4.9 Fine art

Fine art will be collected passively, but only exceptionally without a Moray connection.

4.10. Archaeology

The Museum will continue to maintain an active association with commercial and academic archaeologists excavating in Moray and with metal detectorists. The Museum will seek to collect archaeological material particularly from eastern Moray (especially from the Laich). Where appropriate such collecting will be done in collaboration with other museums within the current province of Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service. Items brought to the Museum will be notified to the Treasure Trove Panel as appropriate. It is recognised that some material may require specialist conservation treatment, and the resource required for this will be taken into account before accepting or seeking to acquire an item. In addition, archaeological assemblages may require storage space and cataloguing resource beyond our means. We will continue to collaborate with Scotland's Archaeology Strategy (*Our Vision*, 2025) in the resolution of the challenges for the museum sector.

4.11. World Cultures

The collection largely reflects the collecting habits of the 19th and early 20th century, with objects from around the world brought home to Moray for example by "Lady Travellers" and members of the East India Company. It is therefore an interesting part of the history of Moray and of the Museum, and where possible will be used to raise questions of ethics in the display interpretation. The Museum will not seek actively to acquire foreign ethnographical material unless there is some strong connection with Moray. Otherwise, offers of items from World Cultures will be referred to an appropriate institution such as the University of Aberdeen or NMS.

4.12. Books, offprints, museum catalogues

Every effort will be made to acquire copies of research papers relating to the collection as they are published. The Museum continues to add to the library any publications that contribute to knowledge of the locality and of the collection. The Museum will accept as donation or acquire by purchase any publications relating to

Elgin Museum, the Moray Society or the Elgin and Morayshire Literary and Scientific Association. The cost of Museum membership of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is currently considered unjustifiable. Consideration will be given to the limitations of safe and accessible storage for any publications held in the Museum. Items in category 4.12 will only be accessioned if considered to be related to objects in the collection.

4.13 Human remains

The Museum will not seek to acquire human remains, unless in compliance with current legislation and unless of a local archaeological nature, and found in Moray.

4.14 Silver

The Museum will continue to collect passively Scottish silver. The Museum's holding of silver is adequate as a representative of the genre; it is not seen as a priority to augment this actively, given the current prices of Elgin silver and the ease with which Elgin silver has been borrowed in the past if required for a temporary display.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 The Museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

5.3 Responsible, curatorially motivated disposal takes place now as part of the Museum's Collections Development Policy, in order to increase public benefit derived from the Museum collections. It is evident that disposals or losses have taken place over the years of the Museum's existence from discrepancies in documentation. While on occasion in the more distant past this may not have been for ethical reasons, for the most part it was probably driven by the managers' constant battle between new acquisitions and display space. The Museum is now more than a repository for displayed objects and this expanding role reflects on managing the space to best effect for its users. Space is required for visitor circulation, events and activities and a more open approach to engaging with children. Office space is also required for staff and volunteers to carry out supporting duties.

5.4 Geology

For one year (2014/15) the Museum had a Recognition Fund funded palaeontologist working on the geology collection, primarily to re-catalogue and reorganise storage of the Recognised collection of fossils. While this has made the store far more accessible, there is still a backlog of mainly unaccessioned and unprovenanced rocks and minerals. We have a small Geology Group carrying on with their assessment, to retain only specimens of relevance and in good condition i.e. not

showing signs of chemical breakdown. No accessioned material is likely to be considered for disposal.

5.5 Natural history

The Museum has had difficulty with storage and conservation of much of its natural history collection. Review was carried out in 2015/16 by specialists from NMS. A large proportion of the natural history in the Museum was in store, and neither on display nor in use because the specimens were in poor condition and/or irrelevant to the collecting policy. They restricted access to the stores and impeded study of the major collections.

Stuffed birds and eggs: Working with NMS Senior Curator of Vertebrates, Bob McGowan, and the Bird Recorder for Moray and Nairn, the Museum rationalised the collection into specimens fit only for destructive disposal, those to be transferred to NMS and those to be retained, most of which are now on display.

Moths and butterflies: The collections have suffered over time from insect and mould damage, and there is poor accompanying data so they are of little scientific value. Working with an NMS entomologist, Keith Bland, some exotic specimens were donated to NMS, and a volunteer with entomological skills and ongoing specialist advice is reducing the collection to a fine and representative local collection, re-pinned and identified, with long term public benefit. Damaged specimens have received destructive disposal. Completion of this project is needed.

Vertebrates: Again, with the advice of an NMS specialist, Principal Curator of Vertebrates, Andrew Kitchener, the collection was reviewed, corrections made to some identifications, and some irrelevant and unaccessioned material disposed of. As a safety issue, all rhino material was donated to NMS in 2013.

5.6 Architectural stone and glass related to the Historic Environment Scotland collection at Elgin Cathedral. The stone was catalogued for Historic Scotland by historic stone specialist Mary Markus and donated to Historic Environment Scotland in 2016. It is now either on display or in their refurbished store which is accessible to researchers. The glass remains on long term loan to HES and is on display there. It has been subject to multidisciplinary scientific analysis. An unaccessioned dedication stone from the old Elgin Academy will be redisplayed in Moray College, once a suitable plinth has been identified by the College.

5.7 Other areas of the collection – there are no plans for rationalisation or disposals unless unexpected irreparable deterioration is found on routine inspection, or for repatriation or restitution, assessed on a case-by-case basis in line with our Repatriation and Restitution Policy and Procedure.

6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

The Museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal. Conservation work on the Museum's collections will normally be by The Institute for Conservation (ICON) registered conservators or through arrangements with NMS or appropriately supervised work in university departments.

See also clauses 9-16 in this Collections Development Policy.

7. Collecting policies of other museums

7.1 The Museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations 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 and waste of resources.

7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museums and services: National Museums Scotland, The Falconer Museum in Forres (once reopened and Accredited), Aberdeen University Museums, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Museums and Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service. We will circulate these museums and services with notice of changes to our Collections Development Policy – published on our website.

7.3 North East Concordat.

Reference is made to this agreement (made historically, and coordinated by Neil Curtis, Head of Museums, Aberdeen University). While the Concordat is no longer active, should it be revived, we would expect to collaborate with its redefinition.

7.4 Elgin Museum had an agreement with the Falconer Museum (until closed by MORMS) that for objects offered for donation or advertised by the Treasure Trove panel, Moray was divided into east and west through an arbitrary dividing line through Alves. Wherever there could be possibility for conflict of interest, the curator or equivalent of each museum would come to an amicable agreement. While Elgin is the only Accredited museum in Moray, it will seek to accession for all Moray according to its CDP.

8. Archival holdings

8.1 The Museum has a few specific and accessioned archival collections of documents and photographs in addition to its own historical archive. These are currently in paper format and stored in archival conditions. The Watson's Sawmill papers and the Incorporated Trades papers have been professionally archived in the past 2 years and join the Grants of Wester Elchies papers. The loaned scientific papers of the Rev Dr George Gordon are formally catalogued and all photocopied for reference (copies property of Elgin Museum).

8.2 In future, Moray-related archival holdings would be considered for acquisition but subject to the 'Limitations on Collecting' cited in Policy 4.

9. Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is cited in the EMMC Statement of Purpose and Operation 2025: *"16. The Moray Society Board delegates authority to the EMMC to agree acquisitions, in accordance with the Collections Development Policy. Where payment is involved, this must first be authorised by the Treasurer who will refer the*

matter to the Board if considered necessary.” See also CMG remit 2025 and its Appendix One: Archaeology.

9.2 The Museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country’s laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph ‘country of origin’ includes the United Kingdom).

9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, the Museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The Board will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10. Human remains

10.1 As the Museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the guidelines in the ‘Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums’ issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2024. See also MGS Guidelines for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museum Collections, 2011 and also Elgin Museum’s Human Remains Policy 2025 and its Appendix.

11. Biological and geological material

11.1 So far as biological and geological material are concerned, the Museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12. Archaeological material

12.1 The Museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the Board or EMMC has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.2 In Scotland, under the laws of *bona vacantia* including Treasure Trove, the Crown has title to all ownerless objects including antiquities, although such material as human remains and environmental samples are not covered by the law of *bona vacantia*. Scottish material of chance finds and excavation assemblages are offered to museums through the Treasure Trove process and cannot therefore be legally acquired by means other than by allocation to the Museum by the Crown. However where the Crown has chosen to forego its title to a portable antiquity or excavation assemblage, a responsible person acting on behalf of The Moray Society, can establish that valid title to the item in question has been acquired by ensuring that a certificate of ‘No Claim’ has been issued on behalf of the Crown and is filed with the OHF for the item/s.

13. Exceptions

13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the Museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases, the Museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The Museum will document when these exceptions occur.

14. Spoliation

14.1 The Museum will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

15.1 The Board, acting on the advice of the EMMC and Accreditation Mentor, may take a decision to return human remains, objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The Museum will take such decisions on a case-by-case basis, within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures may not be appropriate. At the 2024 EGM, it was agreed in principle that repatriation and restitution of the Peruvian mummified young woman would take place, with decision making on the return of her remains delegated to The Moray Society Board under guidance from the Museum's Advisory Group.

15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in Scotland will follow the guidelines in the 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums' issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011. See also Clause 10.1 above.

16. Disposal procedures

16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal. See also Elgin Museum Deaccessioning and Disposal Policy 2025.

16.2 The Board will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Disposals must be in accordance with The Moray Society's current Constitution (Incorporated on 9th September 1987 and last amended on 21/2/2025):

- i.e. *"6.11 Voting at General Meetings – Special Resolutions*
6.11.1 At any General Meeting a resolution put to the vote of the meeting shall be voted upon by a simple majority of the Ordinary Members who are

present and voting thereon, except for decisions relating to any of the following Special Resolutions, which shall require to be decided upon by not less than 75% of the Ordinary Members present and voting thereon (no account therefore being taken of members who abstain from voting or who are absent from the meeting), namely:

(a) to dispose of any of the Museum's Objects which form part of the current Collections Development Policy (other than disposal by destruction in the case of an Object too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the Collections or for reasons of health and safety); or..."

16.3 Agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.

16.4 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the Museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

16.5 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.

16.6 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the Board only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the Museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

16.7 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the Board acting on the advice of the EMMC and Accreditation Mentor, and not of the curator or manager of the collection or other individual acting alone.

16.8 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

16.9 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the Museums Association's (MA) Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

16.10 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the Museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

16.11 Any monies received by the Museum from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from Museums Galleries Scotland.

16.12 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.

16.13 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

Disposal by exchange

16.14 The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The Board will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

16.15 In cases where the Board wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.

16.16 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

16.17 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

16.18 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

16.19 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the Board may decide to destroy it.

16.20 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

16.21 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

16.22 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

16.23 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the EMMC. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.