

Disposal Report for - BORGM:1973.191 a sailing model of a coasting ketch

Introduction

The RCAGM (Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum) is considering the disposal of the above in-line with sections 4.1 and 4.2 of its Collection Development Strategy which has identified that some areas of its collection, including maritime history, are surplus to requirements and constitute a drain on limited resources.

Section 2.15 of the Collection Development Strategy identifies much of the non-fine art material within the RCAGM's Maritime Collection as incompatible with the 'Core Offer'¹ of the RCAGM. Section 2.15.4 specifically recommends the disposal of such material.

Object Description and Provenance

The specific details of the item under consideration in this report are as follows²:

BORGM:1973.191 - A sailing (i.e. working) model of a coasting ketch with a fully planked hull which is red and black in colour with white detailing. The model has two masts which share five sails, two of these are closed with the others being fully open. At the stern of the ship is a large rudder that has become detached (this is stored along-side the model). Dated to 1950-1973.

The model is in fair condition overall but it does not have a stand and it has sustained significant damage to the hull and rudder. The object would benefit from a through clean and would need significant repair.

Models such as this were made to be sailed on ponds and other such watercourses by hobbyists. It may have sustained the damage to the hull because of being used in such a way prior to donation. Equally, the lack of a stand could also suggest that the model was damaged post-donation but there is no record on file to indicate either way.

A ketch is a small fore-and-aft rigged sailing ship with two masts, the forward mast taller than the other, with fore-and-aft rigs rather than square sails for convenience and simple handling. Such vessels were used for coastal trading and fishing. While the ketch style sail rig is still in use today on pleasure vessels, ketches themselves were replaced by schooners.

This model was given as a donation by a Mr A. Fancy of Alder Road, Parkstone, Poole in 9.1973. There has been no contact with Mr Fancy or any of his family members (presuming he had any) since. A search of the Electoral Roll shows that he is not resident at the address given above.

The display history of this object is obscure. It was acquired while the Rothesay Museum, where there was a maritime display titled 'The Age of Sale', was operational. However, it is not mentioned at all in the catalogue associated with that display. It is possible that because of its condition or the lack of a stand the

¹ See Appendix for the full text of the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM

² See Appendix for images of the item

model was not shown. When the Rothesay Museum was shut down in 1985 its collections were stored at the RCAGM. The records are unclear but it is very likely that the model has been in store since then.

As part of its Collection Development Strategy the RCAGM invited Simon Stephens, the Curator of Models at Royal Museums Greenwich³, along with his assistant, Nick Ball, to survey the ship model collection in 2017. As part of this process items in the collection were given a merit/quality rating of 'excellent', 'good', 'acceptable' or 'none'. This model was rated 'good'.

Dimensions: H1570 mm x W1960 mm x D395 mm

³ Formerly known as the National Maritime Museum

The Case for Retention

Meeting the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM

This object does not fit within the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM (see below).

Relevance to the RCAGM Interpretation Strategy

This object is completely irrelevant to the RCAGM Interpretation Strategy (see below).

Public Benefit

The retention of this model by the RCAGM would not benefit the public in any way.

Effect of Disposal on Remaining Collections

The disposal of this model by the RCAGM would have no detrimental effect on the rest of its collections.

Implications for Public Collections Holding Similar Material

No other public collections in the UK would suffer from the RCAGM disposing of this model.

The Costs of Retention (Including Conservation)

The model is in fair/poor condition but secure (i.e. not actively degrading). Currently this model does not place an excessive cost the RCAGM other than storage and insurance (although that cost is small as it is a low value item). The cost of repairing the damage to the model is would probably be in the region of £1,000.

The Case for Disposal

Meeting the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM

This model does not meet the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM. The vessel it depicts is generic and not connected to the Founders.

Relevance to the RCAGM Interpretation Strategy

This model is not relevant to the RCAGM Interpretation Strategy as it does not meet the 'Core Offer' around which the strategy is based. It is very hard to see any reason why the RCAGM would use this model in its public programme as there is no dedicated maritime display space in the RCAGM and Bournemouth is a coastal resort community and not a maritime one.

Additionally, the RCAGM no longer collects social or local history material that does not touch on the Founders or their activities. The donor of this model was a resident of Parkstone and it is more relevant to Poole Museum than the RCAGM.

Public Benefit

The RCAGM is not benefitting the public in any way by retaining this model. The RCAGM is not a maritime museum (despite having some such material in its collections) and it is not perceived as such by the visiting public or researchers.

Effect of Disposal on Remaining Collections

The disposal of this model by the RCAGM would have no detrimental effect on the rest of its collections. Unlike some of the other maritime items in the collections it is not part of a wider donation, such as the Dixon Collection, which includes fine art and ethnography as well as items relating to the naval service of the donor. The disposal of this single model will not adversely impact the integrity of other collection items.

Implications for Public Collections Holding Similar Material

No other museums/collections in the UK would suffer from the RCAGM disposing of this model. This model could make a useful addition to the collection of Poole Museum which has a collection which reflects that area's local and maritime history.

The Costs of Disposal

The cost of disposing of this model would be minimal. There is no grant aid or funding to be repaid.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The disposal of this type of material is indicated in the Collection Development Strategy under section 2.15.4. This object lacks relevance to the RCAGM and its current activities which are based around its 'Core Offer'. While the RCAGM holds maritime related material, it is primarily art or souvenir related or embedded within and integral to wider collections of ethnographic artefacts. This model stands alone and does not relate to the 'Core Offer'.

It hard to see how it would ever been displayed in the RCAGM or as part of its public programme. Future maritime exhibitions held by the RCAGM would be focused on art rather than models such as this.

This object was donated by a Parkstone resident and perhaps should have been passed on to Poole Museum rather than taken in by the then Bournemouth Museums Service. Such an object is much better in the hands of Poole Museum. It falls more within their collecting policy than that of the RCAGM. The disposal of this item would also free up much needed storage space.

Therefore, this report recommends that this model is disposed of, ideally by transfer to Poole Museum. Parkstone, where the donor lived, is within the collecting area of Poole Museum.

If Poole Museum is not interested, then sector best practice and the RCAGM's own procedures mandate that all disposals should be advertised to the wider museum community via the Museums Association's website and the Museums Journal. This will allow any museum or public collection to express an interest.

Transfer to another collection holding institution would mean that the item remains in the public domain should any members of the donor's family ever come forward.

Duncan Walker - Curator, RCAGM

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Images





Appendix 2 - The RCAGM Statement of Purposes - Our Core Offer

Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum is an outstanding celebration of late-Victorian art collectors; their passions and achievements; how they lived and encountered the world; and how they presented their collections to enrich the lives of others.

We are entrusted to present the Russell-Cotes' personal vision and legacy in the most authentic way possible, and to enable learning, enjoyment and access to the house and collections for residents and visitors to Bournemouth.

The 'core offer' is focused on the historic building, East Cliff Hall, its stunning seafront setting, and its internationally-known collections, which attract and astound visitors. However, this is only part of the offer. In addition to the original house, we also have four art galleries added in the early 1900s. We will use this offer to:

1. Explain the story of the Russell-Cotes, the Victorian /Edwardian house and world cultures/art collections, putting it into local, national and international context
2. Encourage use of the galleries, collections, and unique energy and atmosphere of the house to inspire great art, and to stimulate creativity and curiosity
3. Explore aspects of the human condition, which were recognised by the Victorian innovators, philanthropists and social reformers, and which matter to communities today.

Finally, the spaces available at Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum are not the exclusive domain of the Victorians. We are developing a vibrant cultural programme which, while rooted in the era of our founders, will be a stage for wider participation and engagement. We will continue in the spirit of two of Bournemouth's most forward-thinking citizens by striving to make a significant contribution to the development of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum as a cultural flagship for Bournemouth. (MBTS, 2012)

We want our art gallery and museum to do what the very best galleries and museums do: to be spaces where the past, present and future come together in an irresistible mix of life, culture and heritage - a place where everyone can feel at home with a world of art.