

Disposal Report for - :900.67.71 model of the iron clipper *Coriolanus* (1876)

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:

:900.67.71 - A 1/10th inch scale model of the iron clipper *Coriolanus*, fully rigged and with complete deck fittings. The model was built by E.V. Fry to the drawings of H.S. Underhill. It won the Top Award and Exhibition Challenge Trophy winner at the Newport Model Engineering Society. The model is slightly damaged as the front bow mast is damaged, broken and hanging loose.

The *Coriolanus* was known as the 'Queen of the Jute Clippers' and regarded as one of the most beautiful ever built. She was built in 1876 by Archibald McMillan and Son of Dumbarton for the Indian Jute trade. In 1877 she sailed from the Scilly Islands to Calcutta in just 69 days. After having several owners she was finally sold for scrap in 1936 in the U.S.A.

This model was acquired as a purchase in 1967 from Christies. The then Bournemouth Museums Service, thanks to the enthusiasm of its then Curator - Graham Teasdill, actively collected maritime material of both local and national significance for display within the Rothesay Museum (since demolished). Its provenance prior to its purchase is unknown. Once acquired it was shown in the Rothesay Museum and later featured in 'The Age of Sail' display which ran from 1972 until 1985 when the Rothesay Museum was shut down. 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 'excellent'.

Dimensions: H490 mm x W850 mm x D320 mm

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

² See Appendix for images of the item

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 very good condition. 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 it is estimated in the region of £200-£300.

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 was not connected 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.

Public Benefit

The RCAGM is not benefitting the public in any way by retaining this model. The RCAGM is not a maritime museum (despite have 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 is of high quality and provenance as well as being of an interesting vessel. It is likely to be very much desired by Royal Museums Greenwich and/or the Scottish Maritime Museum.

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. Such an object is much better in the hands of an organisation specifically interested in and dedicated to maritime history. 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 the Royal Museums Greenwich (who have already expressed verbal interest) or to the Scottish Maritime Museum.

If neither of these institutions are 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.

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.