

Disposal Report for - BORG:2007.96 a sailing model of the P.S. Bournemouth Queen

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:

BORG:2007.96 - A scale working model of the P.S. Bournemouth Queen made by Alfred Thomas Williamson and completed by his son George (the donor - of Petersfield Road, Bournemouth³) in a period stretching from 1932 to 2003. The model has a case.

The model is in very good condition.

The P.S. Bournemouth Queen was built in 1908 in Scotland. She was purpose-built for excursions from Bournemouth Pier to Swanage and beyond. Like most other paddle steamers, she was requisitioned by the Royal Navy during both World Wars. In the First World War the Bournemouth Queen served as a minesweeper and in the Second World War she was initially used as an anti-aircraft vessel and later as accommodation. After each war she was returned to Bournemouth and continued working from the Pier. She made her last voyage across the bay in 1957 and was broken up in 1958.

This model was given in 2006 but not actually accessioned until 2007 as it was placed immediately on display as part of the 'Celebrating the Sea' exhibition⁴.

The model was taken off display when 'Celebrating the Sea' came to an end in 2007. It was then used again in the 2010 exhibition 'Views of Bournemouth' which marked the town's Bicentenary.

As part of its Collection Development Strategy the RCAGM invited Simon Stephens, the Curator of Models at Royal Museums Greenwich⁵, along with his assistant, Nick Ball, to survey the ship model collection in 2017. As part of this process items in

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

² See Appendix for images of the item

³ Mr George Williamson is not listed in the 2019 Electoral Roll at the address given when the model was donated and did not give a forwarding address when he moved.

⁴ It should be noted that at this point the RCAGM technically did collect local history

⁵ Formerly known as the National Maritime Museum

the collection were given a merit/quality rating of 'excellent', 'good', 'acceptable' or 'none'. This model was rated 'good'.

Dimensions: H575 mm x W1320 mm x D405 mm

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 Case for Disposal

Meeting the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM

This model does not meet the 'Core Offer' of the RCAGM. The vessel is 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 now that it focuses on its Founders in terms of local history. Additionally, there is no dedicated maritime display space in 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 possibly make a useful addition to the collection of the Scottish Maritime Museum as the ship was built there.

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 now that the focus is now exclusively on our Founders and their activities in Bournemouth rather than the town's history. Future maritime exhibitions held by the RCAGM would be focused on art rather than models such as this. The disposal of this item would also free up much needed storage space.

An examination of the Electoral Rolls reveals that the donor is no longer at the address given in the museum's records. Therefore, this report recommends that this model is disposed of via transfer to a relevant public collection as the donor has subsequently moved from the contact details we have for them and did not give a forwarding address.

Because of the local connection, the vessel was moored in Poole, the model should be offered to Poole Museum in the first instance. If Poole Museum is un-interested then it should be offered to the Scottish Maritime Museum as the vessel was built there or the Royal Museums Greenwich who did express some interest in having the model if it was offered.

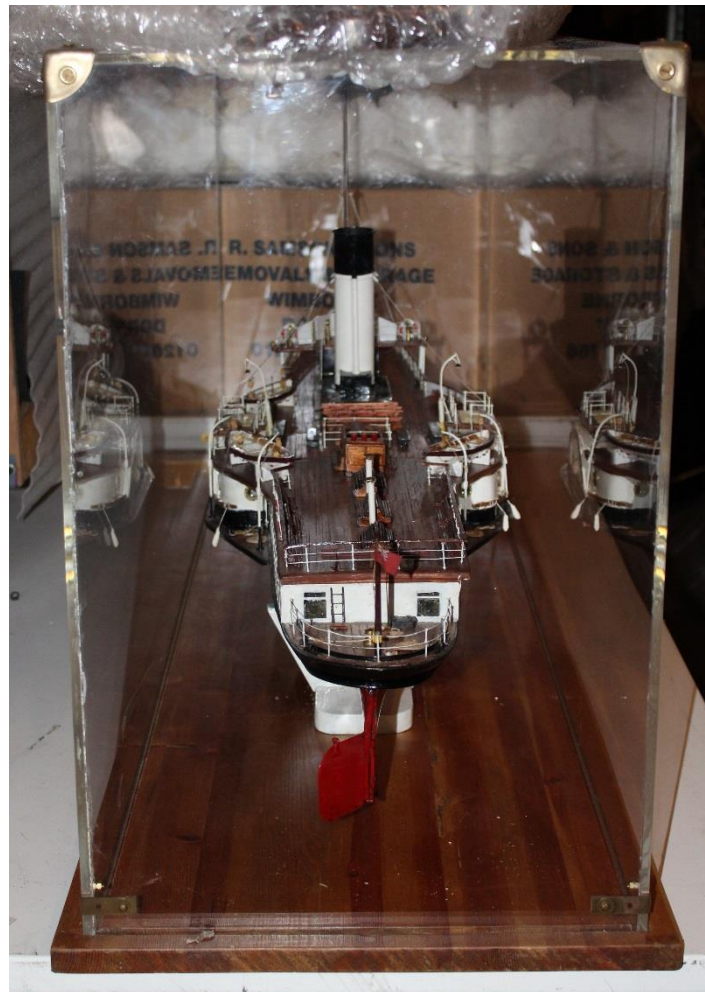
If no museums are interested, then sector best practice and the RCAGM's own procedures mandate that all disposals should be advertised to the wider museum community via the Museums Association's website and the Museums Journal. This will allow any museum or public collection to express an interest.

Transfer to another collection holding institution would mean that the item remains in the public domain.

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.