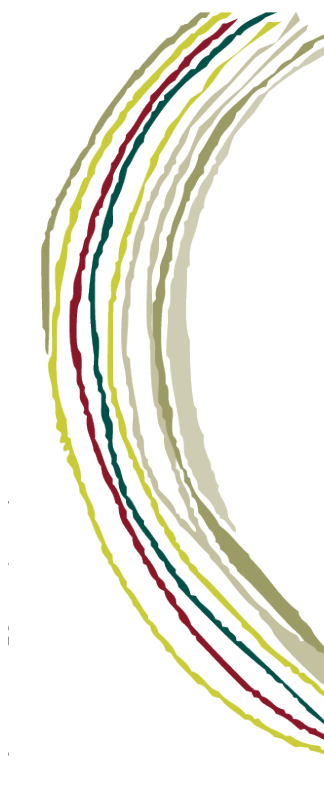


# **BLYTH STREET MUSEUM, CLYDE:**

# **COLLECTION CONDITION ISSUES & FUTURE OPTIONS**



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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this appraisal is to ascertain the condition of the collections held at the Blyth Street Museum, highlight any issues, and make recommendations of options for future improvements. This information will feed into the feasibility study to help form an understanding of the needs and priorities the museum requires when considering its future direction.

Appraising the status of the collections held in the Blyth Street Museum is reflected in Clyde Historical Museums Inc collection policy as follows:

- 1) *“The museum will borrow objects germane to the collections policy provided that there are written and accepted terms and conditions of the loan including condition reports at the beginning and end of the loan and providing that the museum can safely house the items, including providing for the necessary environmental/conservation conditions as specified by the donor institution”.*<sup>1</sup>
- 2) *“Central to the operation of the museum is the establishment and active maintenance of a record of all items within the collection.”*<sup>2</sup>
- 3) *“All items, objects or collections should be appropriately stored or displayed so that such items do not deteriorate through preventable environmental conditions. Any items requiring conservation will follow appropriate and adequate conservation procedures in accordance with contemporary best practice”.*

CHM Inc<sup>3</sup> have a duty to care to protect and maintain the objects held on display in the buildings they are housed in. Primarily, this is effected through keeping well-maintained displays in well-maintained buildings.

## SUMMARY OVERVIEW

Collections on display need the same care and handling as collections in storage. Conditions and issues relating to the collections currently in storage at Blyth St have been covered in the *Blyth Street Museum Storage Appraisal* document. This appraisal focusses on the collection objects currently on display in the main building.

The key factors in preserving museum collections while on display are: proper environmental conditions, adequate security, and the use of appropriate materials to support objects while being exhibited.

The most damaging environmental effect to collections on display are fluctuating temperatures and humidity<sup>4</sup>. This is because these fluctuations can cause mould and

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<sup>1</sup> - Garbutt: *Collection Policy, Clyde Historic Museums Inc, 2017. p 3*

<sup>2</sup> - Garbutt: *Collection Policy, Clyde Historic Museums Inc, 2017. p 5*

<sup>3</sup> Clyde Historical Museums Inc

<sup>4</sup>The relative humidity set point for most collections lies between 45 – 55 %. Ideally, fluctuations should not exceed  $\pm 5\%$  from the set point. Do not allow the RH to go as high as 65% as mould might develop. Below 35%, certain material may become brittle, crack, and spall.

corrosion at one end of the scale, and irreversible desiccation and cracking at the other end of the scale.

Display areas should be kept clean and well ventilated. Temperature and humidity levels should be monitored at regular intervals. The building they are housed in should have any maintenance issues addressed immediately, have appropriate fire protection, and be well secured. When these conditions are in place and maintained, the museum collections have the best chance to be preserved and kept in good condition.

## COLLECTION CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND REQUIREMENTS

When approaching the museum entrance there is a sign defining the museum as portraying ‘ A town and its people”, which sets up the theming as focussing on the region’s social history.

The building itself is intrinsic to the heritage of the street’s **precinct**, and should be considered as part of the collection. The block that the museum is sited on was always a government block with council, law and hospital functions. **A new museum built here will never reflect that historical value.**

The collection objects, all with social history focus, are generally in well worn but good condition. It is estimated that 80% of the collection is currently out on display. Of this, 35% are predominantly objects made of wood and metals, 25% of glass and porcelain, 10% of textiles, 30% paper-based and organic material.

Many of the smaller and fragile objects are housed in display cases, which assists in retaining a stable environment.

There was no evidence of mould or insect infestation, but the building needs to be maintained and monitored to ensure that the environment remains stable and insect free.

One of the main concerns regarding the collections on display at the Blyth Street Museum site relates to the security of the objects. In the scenario of the museum being open, each display area has a number of unsecured objects that can easily be uplifted or damaged by the public, or become a danger in the event of an earthquake.

There were several rooms that have large north and west facing windows that throw a high level of UV light into each room and across the collections that are on display. The blinds installed appear to be opened during visiting hours, and shut when the museum is closed. There was no evidence of fire or security alarms installed on site.

Image following: Light raking across display case, as surveyed.



## GENERAL COMMENTS

The following are comments and recommendations regarding conditions for specific collections:

### COLLECTION RECORDS

Donations made after 2009 do have receipt forms, but are not catalogued. Donor and provenance recorded on notes are currently kept with objects, and/or in receipt books. Items are put into the vault with notes attached.

### RESEARCHERS

Not easy for volunteers to access information for enquirers. Photograph files are available for viewing and ordering, but this area not clearly signposted. Reference books are in the cupboard behind the front desk but also not 'advertised' as being available for use. If the genealogy files are in the vault, volunteers can't access these either.

### LOCK-UP

This building should be regarded as part of the collection. It needs to be retained in the current precinct due to its historical provenance, but moved on to the museum reserve, to the west of the main museum building. This relocation would **strengthen the heritage street value of the area**, presenting in a line, the police station, courthouse, government building, and lock-up -across the road from the original town post office.

## SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

As outlined on page 4, the main issues facing the collection housed on this site are:

- Ensuring the environments have steady temperature and humidity
- Ensuring the objects are secure by use of mounting or encased displays
- Ensuring the collection is free from pollutants (such as dust and dirt), insect and pest damage
- Ensuring the collection records are updated, new donations are processed correctly, and any inward and outward loan objects are fully documented and signed by both parties.

It is recommended that the following measures be initiated:

A regular cleaning and monitoring schedule needs to be maintained to ensure the collection is maintained in good condition. Monitor other objects such as wood and metal for corrosion, decay, and desiccation - remove, treat, and store if the objects are deteriorating.

Invest in *Hobo*<sup>5</sup> data loggers and regular monitor the environment of each area.

Consult a museum technician for an object mounting plan and invest in securing the collection.

Work on updating all records and adding the information into Past Perfect/ Ehive system, as well as in hard copy using existing records books. Use loan template forms and update loan items known to be on (both) site(s), or off site.

Consider establishing a dedicated research area where reference material, genealogy files and photographs can be accessed. Researchers can add value to the museum both financially and socially, through sharing and publications of findings. In addition, having a strategy in place to orchestrate fund raising from collections is vital for the museum to in turn add value to its display and collections.

Invest in improving the building's environmental conditions, as recommended:

### MAINTAIN THE BUILDING ENVELOPE

Minimising the impact of fluctuating environmental conditions should be achieved through either non-mechanical measures, or the **reinstatement of the radiator systems to a degree**, rather than the introduction of an HVAC system.

Non-mechanical methods will greatly contribute to stabilising the collections climate. A well sealed and maintained building envelope excludes and/or minimises the impact of climate events and temperature and RH extremes. Invest in a maintenance programme

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<sup>5</sup> [www.instrumentchoice.com.au](http://www.instrumentchoice.com.au)

that examines the structure and the spaces housing collections to identify possible sources of moisture and air seepage, and work to correct these problems.

- To prevent fluctuating RH<sup>6</sup> levels maintain the building's infrastructure to ensure that it is weather tight and there are no water sources seeping into the building's core.
- Cover the windows permanently by using a frosted vinyl film, and light each room with LED fittings (instead of relying on UV daylight).
- Install triple glazed windows, or window enclosures, to buffer against temperature and RH extremes and fluctuations, which will also aid to minimise / block UV levels.
- Create micro-environments within displays to house sensitive objects (such as some metals, textiles, paper, pyritic minerals, and fossil specimens) that require a specialised RH level.

#### RE-INSTATING THE FORMER RADIATOR SYSTEM

**Some consideration** should be given around re-instating the former radiator system into the building, with the intention of focussing on heating the workspaces - **However** the radiators in the exhibition areas would need to be kept to an ambient and constant low heat in order to protect the objects. This would also mean insuring that no objects are placed near the radiators, which could impinge on viable display space.

#### TO HVAC OR NOT TO HVAC?

It is **not recommended** to install an HVAC system into the main buildings. These units would have to be continuously monitored to prevent any malfunction that can damage collections and the infrastructure itself would draw exorbitant costs<sup>7</sup> to run and maintain, given the size and number of rooms in the building, when compared with volume of visitor numbers, limited funding and site management and seasonal operation hours.

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<sup>6</sup> Relative humidity

<sup>7</sup> To control climate using air conditioning across a single 400 sq.m building has an annual cost of around \$5-7,000. according to recent museum client's advice.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: COMMENTS ON SIGNIFICANCE AND KEY OBJECTS

In the CHM Inc's collection policy<sup>8</sup>, several themes have been identified to guide what is collected for both the Blyth Street site and the Briar Herb Factory Museum site. These are;

- Natural History
- Cultural History
- Social History
- Industry

The type of collections held and displayed at the Blyth Street Museum site mostly focus on the social history of the region.

Blyth Street Museum  
Collection links

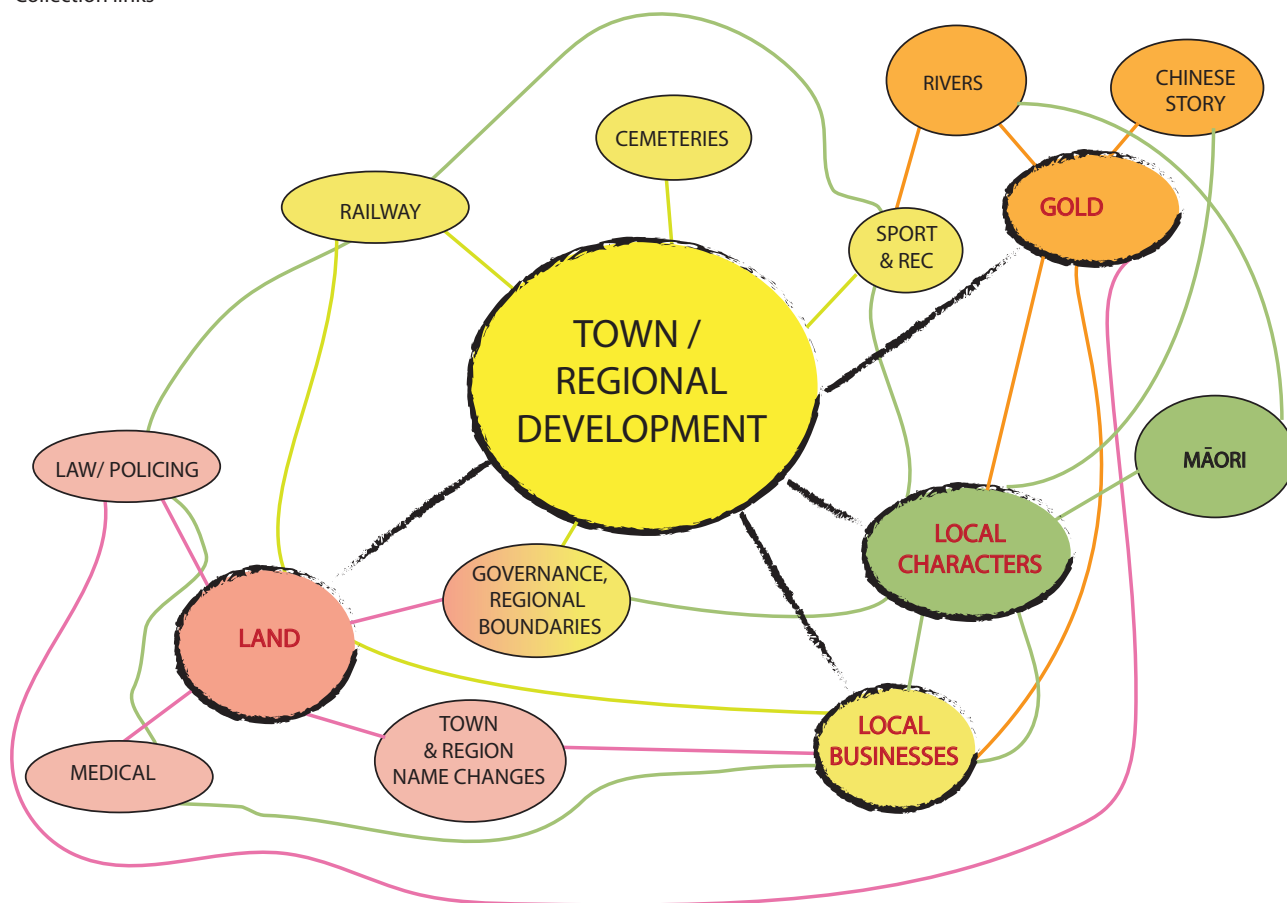


Image: Blyth Street Museum Collection themes and links

In the generic family rooms there are several objects with local family names identified. These can be linked up to objects and stories in other parts of the museum, through use of

<sup>8</sup> Collection Policy, Clyde Historical Museums Inc. Garbutt, April 2017, section 2



local anecdotes, as has been developed most proficiently in other areas of display in the museum.

The list of comments below that focus on some specific areas of the site are listed as 'SIG:' and 'Curiosity':<sup>9</sup> They are to be read and considered in conjunction with the significance statements produced by CHM Inc.

## **WW1 / TEMPORARY DISPLAY AREA**

Retaining a temporary display space is critical for cycling the collection, attracting new and returning visitors, involving members of the local community through inward object loans and anecdotal contributions, group and school visits, and adding value to the collection via research conducted during the forming of the displays.

*SIG:* Rugs / war therapy

## **STONES BONES ROOM**

*SIG:* Geology story - focus on local geological specimens and remove non-local or irrelevant items. Some of the Geology collection is on loan from a lender who has stated that his collection would be wanted at a Marlborough area museum if not wanted in Clyde. To bolster the display, it is suggested that local material is found for display, (including schist) and incorporated with the mud brick storyline at the BHFM<sup>10</sup> site (linking land and river). Consider some specimens for a hands on / education collection.

*SIG:* Pre-historic highway panel / storyline may be more sensible to shift this storyline to the Briar Herb Factory Museum site and connect with Dam and River stories.

*SIG:* Pyke's original museum collection.

*SIG:* Moa bones storyline and collection (additional bones perhaps for education / hands on are in storage )

*SIG:* Delicate framed feather arrangement, although the original should now be rotated with a digital reproduction to protect it from fading further.

## **CLYDE DAM**

Suggest in the long term repatriation of these objects with the collection at BHFM site, to connect to larger items such as concrete hopper, control panels, models etc; river storyline, dredge bellows and boat.

*SIG:* Cable section

*SIG:* Hard hats and overalls

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<sup>9</sup>[SIGNIFICANT object, and an object being a Curiosity [significant, as in, an item that might engage visitors, but without local provenance].

<sup>10</sup> Briar Herb Factory Museum site

## **GOLD ROOM**

*SIG*. Oil painting

*SIG*: The Chinese story line and artefacts. (local focus) Connect Sarah (and son) Asquith's story here, as her husband was a warden and interpreter for the Chinese miners.

*SIG*: Fraser River sample

Note: Remove James W Noble's drawing set and put on display with Dredge story at BHFM in a longer term plan.

*SIG*: Gold Story and how it developed the town.

If a Gold display remains at Blyth street, then reference the gold machinery garden trail (and other displays as relevant), up the road at BHFM site.

*SIG*: Gold fields map (currently in a tenuous storage position for something so rare). Great that it has been copied for display.

## **DUNSTAN TIMES / SOCIAL HISTORY ROOM**

*SIG*: Ditty box

*SIG*: Coach drivers presentation watch

*SIG*: Scotch [*sic*] earrings

*SIG*: Annan jubilee ribbon

*SIG*: Town bell

*SIG*: Turquoise box given to Mr Jeffrey by V Pyke

*SIG*: Nevis goldfields music box (!) interesting to focus on odd things brought to the gold fields - but this could go into the gold display room as an interesting foil to the tools and equipment on display.

*SIG*: Kerosene pump for town lights

*SIG*: School bag made in Clyde

*Curiosity*: Chinese headache cure - western crossover with Chinese population

*SIG*: Bouquet holder (Allan daughters all got one)

*SIG*: List of local names associated with objects in the collection is strong, (eg Annan, Bodkin etc..)

*SIG*: Dunstan Hotel sugar scuttle and salver

*Curiosity:* Glass rolling pin

*SIG:* General town plans, survey equipment, maps etc

## **HOSPITAL ROOM**

The main connection for the museum is that the Doctor's house exists and is a short walk up the road to view in situ. Could devise a kind of walking trail (although something along this line exists, make a museum production with museum images (if they exist), and storylines etc..

Objects appear minimal in terms of local connection, but of interest are:

*Curiosity:* Bone saw

*Curiosity:* Artificial arm

*SIG:* (If proved): Influenza epidemic certificate (Mrs Smart)

*SIG:* (Could also include the ww1 rag rugs, and the felted tea cosy and coaster 'made by a soldier' here.)

*SIG:* Side story / profile on Emily Siedeberg

Perhaps the hospital room could frame the remnants of the WW1 exhibition - rest and recuperation; as well as the goldfields frost bite conditions, stories of Morice / McArten's time.

## **FAMILY LIFE 1**

The room has a general educational purpose, but has potential for framing some local stories.

*SIG:* Felted tea cosy and coaster 'made by a soldier' (although could be moved to hospital display). **Must remove pin that holds them together, and replace with a cotton X stitch.**

*Curiosity:* hand painted screen (does it have any provenance?)

*SIG:* Mrs John Smart (link with Influenza cert?, plus town room items?)

*SIG / Curiosity:* Tea tin (handwritten note says 'used in Dr's kitchen' (?))

## **FAMILY LIFE 2**

*SIG:* Naylor's inlaid workbox 1843

*SIG:* Lovell sampler (check provenance though)

*SIG:* McKay / Ericson wedding dress, photo and story

*SIG:* Presentation clock

*SIG:* Rozenkratz piano

*SIG:* Portrait photographs, framed, numerous (locals)

## **HALLWAY**

*SIG:* Oil painting 1879

Below, link these objects to courthouse building next door, and police lock up outside - but the museum may end up telling this story /theme in the actual lock up(?):

*SIG:* Dock

*SIG:* Shackles

*SIG:* Jail door and associated material (link these objects to courthouse building next door, and police lock up outside...although CHM Inc may end up telling this story /theme in the actual lock up?)

*SIG:* Gold robber story

*Curiosity:* children's interpretation of the story

## **OUTDOOR STORE ROOM (CLOSEST TO MUSEUM)**

*SIG:* Stencils

*SIG:* Moa bones

## **OUTDOOR STORE ROOM (CLOSEST TO LOCK-UP)**

*SIG?:* Suitcase of items relating to the Dunstan Times (uncat.)<sup>11</sup>

*SIG:* VCC doormat.

*SIG?:* Sewing machines (provenance unclear). Suggest that at least one model should be used as part of a costume display - perhaps keep another for hands on / education purposes.

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<sup>11</sup> uncatalogued