Vision
Our vision is for Didcot Railway Centre to be recognised for the international importance of its collection and the value of bringing to life the golden age of steam as a dynamic Living Museum.

Mission
Our mission is to fulfil our potential as a heritage venue at the centre of its community. Accessible to all, striving to engage and inspire the widest possible audiences in the history and heritage of the Great Western Railway – the pioneering transport infrastructure that laid the foundations for contemporary transport innovation.

Values
Authentic | Welcoming | Engaging | Innovative | Great Quality | Sustainable.

Background

The purpose of this policy is to set out overarching guiding principles for documenting the Great Western Society Ltd (GWS), Great Western Preservations Ltd (GWP) and Great Western Trust (GWT) collections.

The policy

GWS, GWP and GWT will meet the Spectrum minimum standard, within the constraints of Didcot Railway Centre, for each of the following primary Spectrum documentation procedures[1]:

Spectrum Procedure: Object entry
GWS, GWP and GWT must maintain a unique written record of any item which enters their respective collections, whether for identification, loan or as potential acquisition.

Spectrum Procedure: Acquisition and accessioning
(a) Acquisition: The Collections Development Policy defines the scope of the collections and how we accept objects into our care.

(b) Accession: GWS, GWP and GWT must each maintain an Accession Register which records the formal acceptance of items into their permanent collection, allocates a unique identity number, and provides sufficient information for collections management purposes. A second, back-up copy of the GWS, GWP and GWT Accession Registers must be created and maintained. Both registers must be held securely, with one available to authorised staff for reference and the other stored off-site. Updates must be made to the stored copy at regular intervals so that the two copies remain consistent. Under their endorsed V9 Accession Control & Cataloguing Policy document, GWT have ceased using Hard Copy Accession Registers wef 1/1/2018, using Excel Files only thereafter. The Accession Registers from 1984-2016 have been digitally scanned and multiple back-ups obtained and kept off site. Likewise back-ups of all Excel Files are maintained. The Hard Copy Accession Register for 2017 will undergo the same scanning & back up.

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[1]   Accreditation Standard, November 2018

(c) Marking and Labelling : Each accessioned item, or group of items, must be marked and/or labelled with its/their unique identity number in a way that is as permanent as possible without damaging the item.

Spectrum Procedure: Location and movement control
The location and movement of items within the museum must be recorded. Movements within the GWT Museum shall be approved by the GWT Collection Manager. Locations of objects in the GWS and GWP collections will be reviewed annually.

Spectrum procedure: Inventory

GWS, GWP and GWT will maintain electronic inventories as defined in the appropriate documentation procedures.

Spectrum Procedure: Cataloguing
GWS, GWP and GWT must maintain appropriate indexes or equivalent information retrieval facilities. The accessions register provides a method of retrieving information about items in the collection by their identity number. There must be at least one other method of retrieving information, such as by location, donor or subject classification, according to the needs of museum users.

Spectrum Procedure: Object exit
There must be a unique written record of any permanent collection item which leaves the museum premises. In the case of an object returning to its owner, (e.g. an unwanted offer of a gift) it will not be necessary to create separate exit documentation as the object did not enter the permanent collection and its removal will be logged on the appropriate entry form. In other cases a separate exit record will need to be created.

Spectrum Procedures: Loans in (borrowing objects)
GWS, GWP and GWT must maintain records of all loans in. Loans should be for fixed terms and for a stated purpose; there may be an option for renewal at the end of the term. GWS, GWP and GWT must operate an effective collection management regime which includes auditing loans on a regular basis and reviewing periodically the terms and conditions relating to all loans.

Spectrum Procedures: Loans out (lending objects)
GWS, GWP and GWT must maintain records of all loans out. Loans should be for fixed terms and for a stated purpose; there may be an option for renewal at the end of the term. GWS, GWP and GWT must operate an effective collection management regime which includes auditing loans on a regular basis and reviewing periodically the terms and conditions relating to all loans. GWP has a hire policy for locomotives.

Spectrum Procedures: Documentation planning
The Documentation Policy is supported by GWS, GWP and GWT documentation procedures. GWS and GWP documentation records are up to date. GWT's target for completion of documentation is December 2021

Supporting procedures
This overarching policy is supported by:

- GWS Documentation Procedure – Version 4

- GWP Documentation Procedure – Version 3

- GWS/GWP Rolling Stock Hire Procedure, Version 1

- GWT Accession Control and Cataloguing, Issue 9

- GWT Collection Management, Issue 1

- GWT Use of the Collection, Issue 2

Monitoring and audit

The Accreditation Mentor shall be given the opportunity to audit the documentation.

All matters arising from this policy are to be determined at any GWS Board meeting at which GWS, GWP and GWT are all represented.

Approval and review

This policy was approved by GWS Board on 27 March 2021, by GWP on 18 January 2021 (by email) and by GWT on 24 February 2021.

The policy shall be monitored and reviewed every five years.

Ann Middleton
Version 3.1
February 2021