



University of Aberdeen Museums Advice for Researchers

The University's museum collections are rich and varied and offer many research opportunities. While much information has already been published or is publicly available, the museum staff will endeavour to assist with all enquiries. We aim to respond to enquiries within three working days, though a full response may take longer. Visits to study items not on display must be arranged in advance. It may also be possible for us to provide comments on items left for identification.

Information about the collections

We strive to go beyond the Freedom of Information Act in providing access not just to information, such as existing records and images of items in the collection, but also to items themselves so that original studies can be conducted and new knowledge created. We are also committed to increasing the information that is available online about the collection. The Research Information Network report (2008) *Discovering physical objects: Meeting Researchers' Needs* highlighted that 'researchers want access to online finding aids to enable them to plan their visits to museums and collections' and that these should be provided as quickly as possible. We have therefore made available online collection-level descriptions and skeletal item records alongside full records, in advance of creating full detailed records at a slower pace. We are also working to make available online all digital images we have of items in the collection. Requests for information will be considered in terms of compliance with the Data Protection Act.

Collection information is available on the Museums website (www.abdn.ac.uk/museums/collections/search.php), which provides links to the CALM database containing text about over 200,000 items and DIGITOOL, which provides images of over 2000 items. New images are added frequently. Information is also made available alongside the collections of other museums etc. In particular, the 'Revealing the Hidden Collections' project (<http://www.revealing.umis.ac.uk/>) provides information about all the historic museum material held at Scottish Universities through c. 2000 summaries of collections and an increasing number of records of individual items. The project has also made those records available through Culture Grid (www.culturegrid.org.uk/) and Europeana (www.europeana.eu).

Photography

As well as images that are available online, it is possible to order high quality images or to commission new photography. See <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/digital-images-/> for terms and conditions and to download photography request forms, either for publication or personal research. Requests for new photographs are subject to the availability of staff time and the payment of relevant fees. We do not hold the copyright for some of our images of objects nor copyright for many artworks where the artist died less than 70 years ago. Researchers are responsible for contacting the copyright holders to gain permission. When using images provided by the University Museums, they should be credited 'Courtesy of the University of Aberdeen Museums' with '© University of Aberdeen' if the University owns the copyright.

Destructive sampling

In some cases, knowledge can be gained through research which involves destructive sampling, such as radiocarbon dating or stable isotope analysis. This requires special consideration on a case-by-case basis. To find out more about the destructive sampling procedure and obtain the relevant form, see the online Destructive Sampling Policy at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/museums/learning/research.php>.

Study visits

The University Museums team is small and we work across several locations. This may mean that we cannot accommodate research requests at certain times. Furthermore, access to some items may be restricted for health and safety reasons or legal constraints, notably the Anatomy Act (1984) as amended by the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006. Access to particularly fragile items may also be restricted. We also note that some material is culturally sensitive and we encourage researchers to consider this when making requests to study material or request photographs.

Material related to the collections, such as old catalogues, object history files, donor files and a small selection of publications relating to our items may also be suitable for study. Some are housed alongside the collections, while the University's Special Collections Centre may also have further relevant material (see <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/>).

Requests to visit material not on display should allow at least three weeks' advance notice. Unfortunately, limited staffing means that we can only offer short visits (normally no more than one or two days). Larger research projects cannot be accommodated without fuller discussion, which may require additional resources.

There is very limited parking for non-University members at the Old Aberdeen and Foresterhill campuses and it is recommended that researchers use public transport or walk to these locations. With advance notice, it may be possible to provide car parking at the University Museums Collections Centre at Marischal College. Researchers should bring all the necessary equipment for their research with them, including cameras (if required).

Contact details

Research enquiries and requests for visits should be sent to museum@abdn.ac.uk (01224 274301).