

Brief for the Cornish National Collection

YOUR MISSION

To collaboratively curate a collection distributed among our museums that reflects the diversity of Cornish society past and present.

HOW?

You will improve knowledge and share with a wider audience new research and improved understanding of the significance of Cornish National Minority Status by:

- Undertaking new research and sharing an understanding of existing collections that have been under-utilised or forgotten, particularly in relation to poorly-represented people
- Identify a starting group of c.70 objects from museum collections across Cornwall and by disseminating this knowledge through online platforms
- Making recommendations for items which reflect Cornishness(es) that museums should collect today
- Supporting dialogue with audiences about the project, so that audiences are encouraged to contribute to debate and content

RATIONALE

Across the ancient, military, social, natural, industrial, artistic and scientific heritage held in our collections are the hidden (and arguably the most important stories) relating to Cornwall's cultural heritage, identities and impact upon the world. The Cornish were recognised as a National Minority by the UK Government in 2014 and Cornwall's museums need to take a leading role in ensuring Cornwall's cultural heritage is understood and shared in all of its diversity, milestones and controversies.

With unprecedented access to the historical collections of seven museums, the Citizen Curators will explore which objects of local, national and international significance might create a Cornish National Collection that is distributed across the consortia of museums and the communities they serve. They will research, examine and advance ideas around Cornish identity by asking new questions, presenting previously untold or under-examined stories and sharing the collection in new ways in the museum, outside the museum, and across digital channels.

Through their learning and development Citizen Curators will develop an approach to identifying the objects of a Cornish National Collection and explore how they might be interpreted through programming, exhibitions, outreach and online. They will propose areas of need for contemporary collecting, including the collection of digital artefacts. Previous cohorts will be part of this peer-to-peer process with wider staff, volunteers and users.

ACHIEVING IMPACT

Cornish identity and distinctiveness is a real and contemporary issue for communities in Cornwall today. Increasingly in Cornwall, discussions about Cornish identity are becoming politicised and extreme; outside Cornwall, Cornishness is usually dismissed as a joke or unheard of. There is a growing need for a more nuanced, relevant and balanced exploration of multiple Cornish identities. This is a space museums in Cornwall can fill. Our museums are rooted within their communities. Re-examining the hidden, lost and forgotten objects with new eyes will enable greater recognition of Cornwall's cultural heritage and its multiple dimensions. The programme will challenge the cohort to use their creativity within curatorial practice to explore new ways to interpret, share and support an inclusive dialogue with audiences in Cornwall about what Cornish minority status means to them.

FIRST STEPS

- Take part in the Cornish National Collection First Survey (May 2019)
- Make a list of things you want to know more about in relation to Cornish identities
- Identify themes and items from your projects that might be included
- Think about under-represented people, ideas and stories that we will curate
- Identify types of artefacts outside your museum's collections that could be included.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH DEVELOPMENTS

Dr. Tehmina Goskar of the Curatorial Research Centre will be overseeing the development of the Cornish National Collection.

Contact: citizencurators@curatorialresearch.com.

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