

# Dorset Museum & Art Gallery

**Press Statement: 24 May 2024**

In April 2024 Dorset Museum & Art Gallery was approached by the Hardyens Club that represents its members, who are some of the former pupils of Thomas Hardy School in Dorchester, with a formal request to consider the acquisition of an Elizabethan screen into the collection.

The screen had been part of Thomas Hardy School in Dorchester since the 17th Century. It was sold in 2023 when the Hardyens Club bought it. As an artefact, it clearly holds some significance as a maritime object and although its precise historic provenance cannot currently be proven, work is underway to better understand its importance.

This request was formally reviewed at our Collections Development meeting in May, when it was acknowledged that the object holds historic and cultural value and is of significant interest and relevance to Dorset with the potential to appeal more widely. It was however refused for acquisition, mainly due to significant issues relating to its prohibitive size (6m x 4m) that prevents it from being curated within our current galleries and the insistence of the current owners that the object be on permanent display, which we cannot commit to for any acquisitions due to the need for creative control over the curation and interpretation of our galleries and collections. Other reasons for our refusal to acquire the object were the lack of any suitable environmentally controlled store (should storage be an acceptable solution rather than display), as well as a lack of conclusive evidence to support some assumptions relating to the importance and history of the object.

Claire Dixon, Executive Director said “we were really pleased to be approached to consider this object for acquisition but are often faced with difficult decisions and sadly cannot acquire everything that we are offered. The team worked within the parameters of our acquisition policy to review this request and whilst we will not be taking this artefact into our collection, staff are working closely with the Hardyens Club to explore alternative options, both within Dorset and further afield. Together, we are approaching relevant cultural institutions to secure an appropriate cultural home for this screen.”

To find out more about this artefact and follow the project to re-home it, visit:  
<https://hardyensclub.com/>

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