

HISTORY'S LIFE SENTENCE

OPENING THE MET'S 150 YEAR
OLD SECRET CRIME MUSEUM
COLLECTION TO THE PUBLIC



ROGER EVANS
GLA CONSERVATIVES
GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Background	1
Recommendations going forward	2
The benefits	5
Conclusion	6
Feedback	7

INTRODUCTION

The London Metropolitan Police Crime Museum is the most unique collections of crime related historical artefacts in the world. Currently housed in New Scotland Yard, the Museum's collection spans from the Jack the Ripper Murders to the Great Train Robbery, as well as an assortment of some of the Capital's most notorious serial killers. The exhibits showcase the fascinating evolution of forensic investigation and are still used to this day to train the Met's budding detectives. This Museum is accessible only by invitation, with a select few ever having the privilege of viewing its intriguing collection.

As the Met prepares for its imminent departure from New Scotland Yard, the future of this important collection remains uncertain, providing both an opportunity and necessity for change. Before this important part of London's heritage is once again hidden away from the public who fund it or - in the context of shrinking budgets - left to fade into disrepair, this report calls for it to be opened up and transformed into a profitable attraction for all Londoners and visitors alike.

BACKGROUND

Started in 1875, the Crime Museum's first inception was as a training facility for the London Metropolitan Police, offering them a more visual and tangible appreciation of crime detection and prevention.¹ The collection has also played host to a number of non-Met guests including royalty, politicians, dignitaries, and other famous VIPs. The collection has become considerably larger throughout the years as new pieces have been added through retention of evidence from historically significant crimes.²

The collection

The collection is not entirely a matter of public record, but visitors³ and the Met⁴ have given some insight into the items that can be found in the Crime Museum.

- "From Hell" letter allegedly from Jack the Ripper
- The ricin-filled pellet used to assassinate Georgi Markov
- Hangman's nooses and death masks from a number of capital punishment executions (including the last woman executed)
- Evidence used to convict the Stratton Brothers (the first murder case to convict based on fingerprint evidence)
- The Flannelfoot burglars lock pick set
- Evidence that led to the prosecution of the Great Train Robbers
- A large collection of unique weaponry
- A wealth of evidence from famous London serial killers such as Neville Heath, Dennis Nilsen, Dr. Crippen etc.

Many of the exhibits showcase the impressive work undertaken by the Met in some of the Capital's most high profile investigations, whilst others detail London's history of crime and punishment. The Crime Museum only houses a small, but compelling, part of the Met's complete historical collection which is split across a handful of sites.

-
1. http://www.met.police.uk/history/crime_museum.htm
 2. http://www.met.police.uk/history/crime_museum.htm
 3. <http://www.timeout.com/london/attractions/the-black-museum>
 4. http://www.met.police.uk/history/crime_museum.htm

Other collections

1. *The Metropolitan Police Historic Collections* is located in South West London and holds numerous historical uniforms, badges, awards, documents and imagery,⁵ some of which is currently on display.⁶
2. *The Metropolitan Historic Vehicle Collection* is located in Teddington and has a collection of 13 classic and rare vehicles used by the Met.⁷
3. *The Thames River Police Museum* is located in Wapping Police Station. It has a collection based around Marine policing and can be seen via appointment.⁸

The current situation

With the sale of New Scotland Yard the Met will be moving to a new headquarters,⁹ forcing a relocation of the Crime Museum. Other parts of the police collection are either in storage or hard to reach locations, such as suburban sections South West London or Teddington.

RECOMMENDATIONS GOING FORWARD

For the Met to open this collection to the public there are two options going forward; build a static collection within a dedicated Crime Museum, or open the collection as a temporary exhibition.

Museum: A vast investment in the Met's heritage

The creation of a stand-alone Crime Museum or the combination of the Met's collection with those of the Fire and Ambulance Services to establish a 'Blue Light' museum has long been pursued without any progress ever having been made. One of the primary reasons for this is the substantial cost of establishing and running museums in London.

Venue

The location for a public Crime Museum will be of paramount importance as a central position. High footfall and established transport links will all contribute significantly to its potential success. Although cheaper options should exist amongst the 200 Met properties recently put up for sale,¹⁰ and the new owners of Bow Street station have reportedly offered the old cells to the Met on a 99 year lease, there is no doubt that setting up the museum will necessitate a sizeable initial investment.

Running costs

Operating museums in London also requires substantial donations from charities, heritage funding and even the organisation it represents. In 2012 the London Transport Museum received £9.8 million in grants, funding and donations: with £5.7 million coming directly from Transport for London.¹¹ Although some of this cost could be offset through sponsorship - with which the Met already has experience, bringing in £22.7m

5. <http://www.met.police.uk/history/archives.htm>

6. http://www.met.police.uk/history/metropolitan_historical_collection.html

7. 'Blue Light Museum' Feasibility Study, 2009

8. <http://www.thamespolicemuseum.org.uk/>

9. <http://content.met.police.uk/News/Competition-launched-to-design-new-Met-HQ/1400017376724/1257246741786>

10. http://www.homesandproperty.co.uk/property_news/news/metpolicesellingoffproperty.html

11. As is the case with TfL funding the Transport Museum http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/assets/downloads/pdfs/Yearbook%202012_low_res.pdf

over a five year period¹² - it is still highly unlikely that the museum could operate at anything but a loss.

Income

The income generated from museum admissions and trading would need to cover the costs not offset by investment, but this is another area which publicly run museums typically do not excel. To use the example of the London Transport Museum once more: in 2012 admissions brought in £1.3 million and trading £2.9 million which failed to cover the £13.9 million in expenses the museum accrued.¹³ These organisations are by no means designed to cover their own operating costs and are subsidised so as to provide cultural and educational experiences. Given the current state of the public finances and the mounting pressure on the Met's budget, creating a drain on police resources would not be responsible and therefore this report cannot recommend the stand-alone Crime Museum option as a viable way forward.

Temporary exhibitions: Limiting complexity and risk

Many of the obstacles that clutter the long and expensive road to setting up a stand-alone Crime Museum can be avoided should the Met instead choose to exhibit its collection on a temporary basis at an established museum, either independently or through a private partner.

Going it alone

Building on the success the Met has recently enjoyed with a temporary exhibit of counterfeit artworks and antiquities at the V&A entitled '*Fakes and Forgeries*'¹⁴, it is wholly conceivable that the Crime Museum collection could be developed and installed in a pre-existing London Museum.

Developing the collection

The collection currently housed in the Crime Museum includes an array of exhibits that cover a number of London's most notorious crimes and criminals. Many depict dark and intriguing events in the Capital's past that will likely prove enormously popular with residents and visitors to the City who already demonstrate a fascination with the more macabre chapters of London's history. The popularity of attraction such as the Tower of London and Clink Museum, as well as the evolution of London's 'Ghost Walks' and 'Jack the Ripper Tours' suggest that demand to view the Crime Museum's collection would be considerable.

Curating the collection with sensitivity

There are exhibits currently housed within the museum that would not be suitable for display and any decisions regarding the collection should take due consideration of both appropriateness and potential sensitivities surrounding the families of the victims. Diligence should also be demonstrated in the selection of suitable exhibits, with any legal and security implications surrounding their display duly addressed. By applying a limitation on the age of the crime to which the exhibits relate - of 50 years for instance - the Met could more easily navigate some of these issues. This is not to say that younger exhibits should be automatically disqualified but that a sensible approach is adopted in establishing suitability.

Presentation

Moving forward, it is important that the collection's appeal rests not solely on its more titillating exhibits but broadens out to detail the impressive work of the Met in the handling of historic crimes. Emphasising the

12. http://www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/who_we_are_and_what_we_do/corporate/dor_info_pack_2012_13.pdf, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20156574>

13. http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/assets/downloads/pdfs/Yearbook%202012_low_res.pdf

14. <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/history/fakes-and-forgeries-go-on-display-at-the-vampa-museum-1872710.html>

use of pathology and forensic science in the context of these investigations will provide a fascinating insight into the evolution of the Met's work and a more tangible appreciation of police work.

The collection could also be supplemented by including a selection of exhibits from the Metropolitan Historic Vehicle and Police collections. These old police cars, uniforms, weaponry and photographs would bolster the Museum's focus on the historical while further broadening its appeal.

Currently, private tours of the Museum rely heavily on the impressive knowledge of its sole curator to bring the displays to life. Although this provides an engrossing and personal interaction with the collection, the limited capacity of this lone guide is also one of the primary barriers to broader access. Whilst guided tours should absolutely be an option in any future incarnation of the collection, it is important to capture and display this unique familiarity in both print and audio to allow for many more visitors to properly understand and appreciate the exhibits.

Costs

Although a temporary exhibition would remove the substantial costs associated with purchasing or leasing a suitable central London property for a stand-alone museum, the Met would still need to front up significant investment into developing the collection and other start-up costs such as insurance, security and personnel that could easily run into the hundreds of thousands.

Income

Given the potential popularity of the exhibits, charging for entry could in theory raise significant sums. Although this report can only speculate as to the interest an exhibition based on the Crime Museum would generate, it is wholly conceivable that the income from ticket sales could not only offset the cost of developing the collection, but also generate a profit for the Met that could be invested into front line policing. Other high profile exhibitions in London have attracted large numbers,¹⁵ and exhibitions make up tens of millions of pounds in admissions and trade for London's top museums.¹⁶

Private partnership

Although the Met has experience with the development of temporary exhibits, if they were minded to dodge the extensive start-up costs they could alternatively choose to open the exhibition rights to a private operator.

Terms and conditions

The issues and sensitivities surrounding certain items in the collection - highlighted earlier in this report - would still have to be observed and should determine which items are to be made available. Rules governing the themes of the exhibits and portrayal of the Met can be stipulated in any future contract to ensure the focus is not on the sensational but rather the work of the police. Similar arrangements between the Egyptian government and AEG Live were put forward for the world tour exhibition rights to the most recent King Tut exhibition.¹⁷

Income

15. <http://suite101.com/article/tutankhamun-a42954>

16. <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/content/ConMediaFile/19818>, http://www.hrp.org.uk/Resources/HRP_Financial_Statements_2012_Final_2.pdf, http://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/Annual_report_and_accounts_2011-12.pdf

17. <http://press.nationalgeographic.com/2004/12/01/tutankhamun-treasures-to-return-to-united-states-after-26-years/>

Although a private partnership arrangement would remove all cost and risk to the Met of establishing the exhibit, it would also limit the profits that could be generated should they choose to manage it themselves. It would however offer a useful gauge of the public's demand to view the collection, which could in turn form part of the business case used to bring back management of the exhibition in-house at the end of the partnership arrangement.

To establish the potential revenue that a Crime Museum exhibition could generate - and in turn the money the Met could expect to receive from any partnership arrangement - examples of recent paid-for London exhibits can be used to gauge potential visitor numbers.

The Leonardo da Vinci exhibit at the National Gallery in London ran for 3 months in 2012 attracting 323,897 visitors. Last Year the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts attracted 132,926 visitors whilst 140,546 people visited the Hajj exhibit at British Museum¹⁸. Given the broad appeal of both the Crime Museum's collection and the draw of viewing exhibits previously locked away from the public eye, it could realistically lead to visitor numbers around 300,000 over a three month exhibition. If entrance was charged at £15 a ticket, the exhibition could look to bring in up to £4,500,000. Even if the Met were able to receive just a fifth of this turnover, it would pay for 54,900 additional front line police hours¹⁹. It should be noted that these figures are speculative and that without market testing, it would be impossible to ascertain the level of demand. However, the appeal of this collection is evident and would suggest that in reality, far more profit could be generated and used to fund frontline policing.

THE BENEFITS

Protecting the collection

The Crime Museum, like the London Fire Brigade Museum and vehicle collection of the London Ambulance Service, is under threat from shrinking budgets. As significant operational savings have to be made across London, it will become more and more difficult for the emergency services to guarantee the continued preservation of their history. Given the level of historical importance and public interest in this entirely unique and intriguing collection, action should be taken to ensure it is not lost.

Improving the profile of the Met

The Met - as a brand - is highly visible but rarely has the opportunity to engage with the public on a wholly positive footing. Opening up this collection will not only enhance visitors' understanding of London's police but also raise the profile of the work they have undertaken to catch dangerous criminals and protect the city. With past issues of transparency this would give the Met a chance to open its doors and engender further appreciation amongst the public they serve. This increased profile could help with minority recruitment and public confidence, areas in which the Met needs improvement.

Generating income

The Crime Museum collection has the potential to become enormously popular for residents and visitors to the city. By charging for admission or tendering a contract to display the collection, there is potential to generate profit which could realistically stretch into the millions and be reinvested into frontline policing. The Met already have merchandise for sale at the small public Met Historic collection.²⁰ This could be expanded

18. <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/attfig/attfig12.pdf>

19. With the salary of a police officer, post probation, at £34,086 and working 40 hours a week, each police hour costs £16.39 (<http://www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/graduates/faqs.html>) $£4,500,000 \times 0.20 = £900,000 / £16.39 = 54,912$

20. http://www.met.police.uk/history/met_collection_merchandise.html

and articles that reflect the museum or exhibition's displays could be included.

CONCLUSION

Though a Metropolitan Police Museum would be ideal to showcase the great policing work of the Met it is not the time to make the investment required. Instead the Met should not only make public the Crime Museum collection but also profit off its exhibition and put that income into frontline policing. Making the collection public allows for greater protection of these important parts of London's history while also improving the profile of the Met. It is recommended that;

1. **The Met tenders a contract to private exhibition operators to temporarily display the suitable parts of Crime Museum collection at an established museum or events space.**
2. **The Met uses these profits to invest in frontline policing.**
3. **The Met considers an investment in the future for a well located public facing Policing Museum which includes items from the Crime Museum.**



FEEDBACK

Connect with us online and tell us what you thought about this paper.

Twitter: [@Assembly_Tories](#)

Facebook: [Facebook.com/GLAConservatives](#)

Email: Assembly.Tories@gmail.com



Roger Evans

LONDON ASSEMBLY
Greater London Authority
City Hall, The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA