

Study Name: How do ethics influence the development of policies for accessing public collections which are essentially restricted by law: A case study of the Royal Armouries.

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**Interview Transcript: Jen Kaines – Head of Collections Services (Royal Armouries),  
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SB: Thank you again for speaking to me, Jen. Just to start off with I was hoping if you could share your thoughts about what ethics means in relation to weapons management at the Armouries, really.

JK: Yeah, so I was thinking about this. I guess ethics for me underpins everything and all aspects of our work within museums. For me, they're very much the rules or the code of conduct that we all determine what our action is acceptable or not. They are the moral principles that govern communities and dictate as museum professionals and as organisations how we carry out and conduct activities. It's not saying that our personal ethics may indeed contradict or be slightly different to the ethics that govern us as a sector, as a museum, or as an organisation. But I'd say all UK accredited museums will manage their collections in very much an ethical manner. Now in terms of our weapons collections, those can always can often be seen as a bit more contentious, given their nature and their primary purpose. The reason why they were created is not actually an ethical or moral one in many respects, and they can, those collections specifically, very much create strong feelings and ethical responses. Some people are very anti-weapons collections, and some people are very pro-, and then most people I think are somewhere in the middle. So us managing those collections in an ethical and moral way, it absolutely is core to what we are as Royal Armouries. But we are the national museum of arms and armour, our vision is very much around inspiring people and understanding those collections, and what stories they tell around human endeavour, experiences, and how all of this is shaped by arms and armour. So it's a real mixture. Then in terms of UK legislation, it's much tighter, or can be much tighter, than other legislative authorities, and that partly has been dictated by the ethical frameworks of the past, in terms of the ethics of the past dictate the law of today and where law is going, and what's acceptable to society at large. Yeah, so I guess that's the overarching thing. Then in terms of the ethics that absolutely underpin what we do, are things like the *ICOM* [International Council of Museums] *Code of Ethics* and all of their associated guidelines, and then the UK Museums Association *Code of Ethics*. But also I think it's worth mentioning that as a public body, we would also adhere to things like the Nolan principles, the ethics that govern

public life, as well. Those are the big ones, and then underneath those, in more detail, are those things that we would use to create our standards and guidelines and best practice. Accreditation, Spectrum, and Museum Accreditation, but also archives and library staff through CILIP [Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals], place of deposit codes, and what else, due diligence frameworks as well on illicit trade and that kind of thing. So that's where I see that it would all sit in terms of that broad ethical framework of how we manage stuff.

SB: Yeah, thank you. That's really detailed, and it's great to have that overview of how it all interacts. Just speaking a bit more about that, how do these various frameworks interact in practice? Because you've spoken about more professionally oriented ones, so your accreditation, but also the more ethically focused ones, more specifically, like the codes of ethics. How do they interact in the formulation of policy and procedure at the Armouries, or at least probably more policy, I suppose?

JK: Yeah, the way that we look at policy and how we develop it is we're not referring to these codes of practice on a day-to-day basis often. It is more to create policy and the framework that we work on, we would review all of those ethical codes, the best practice guidelines, any standards that were available. So I'm thinking specifically in terms of firearms, we would look at things like the Firearm Security Manual, which was produced by the police authority in the Firearms Licensing Working Group. So we mash all of that together, in a way, and look at other people's examples of policy. I think it's fair to say that now we're not writing policy in isolation, most of the time you're not developing a new policy, because we've been working in this way for a long time. It's more updating, it's more improvements, tweaking. I'm not coming around and thinking suddenly, oh we've got a firearms collection we ought to be managing. The Royal Armouries has been doing this for a long time, so it's around developing those practices and making improvements to those policies and those procedures and the frameworks that we work in, rather than going actually we need a policy, because we've already got one. So it's that, and ICOM are in the midst of discussing changes to those ethical codes, as the Museum Association is also reviewing and updating. Again, it's very unlikely that any of those ethical frameworks are going to be completely torn up, and we're going to start again. It's around improvement, tweaking, moving things in a slightly different way, but it is a gradual process. It's not suddenly that we're going to wake up tomorrow and everyone goes well, you shouldn't have firearms, at

least that's what I hope. That isn't going to happen overnight. We might move towards that, but we've still got this historical material culture that we want to look after. So I think even though you may not be generating the same kind of material in the future, that material culture exists, so what are we going to do with it? So it is around tweaking and developing and improving rather than starting from scratch every time. Does that make sense?

SB: Yeah, completely. It's that process of refinement and it's the nuances that are going to change rather than any wholesale thing. The other thing as well is the fact that the collections, obviously, they're legally mandated to continue existing. So there's always that underlying thing, regardless of how attitudes change towards firearms and it's only with the changing of that law that the Armouries would ever change dramatically. That's again, really interesting. But what role do you perceive you play within this framework of mediating these ethical codes and implementing in them in the Armouries' situation?

JK: The difficulty and challenges in the Royal Armouries is that we are pretty unique, in terms of what we do and how we are operating. So in terms of our ethics, we're almost leading the way in other museums, especially in UK museums. What we do I suppose, especially with the National Firearms Centre and the role that we have and how we utilise the material there, is quite different and probably unique in the world. So I guess our role is almost that we lead that ethical practice. Some of it is determined by those agreements that we have with the Ministry of Defence in terms of that Service Level Agreement with the National Firearm Centre about what we should do, and how we operate. We're there to lobby Government as well, in terms of what we in museums, in the broader sense, should be doing, what we are doing in terms of how we look after that historical material culture. So that we're not completely destroying a whole set of items just because they've been used in criminal activity, we're there to protect, display, interpret and educate as to why they shouldn't be in wider circulation as well. Yeah, so we have a different role because we are the national museum, I guess, and also because of the National Firearms Centre and that remit of we're still using, we're still actively operating and teaching Ministry of Defence, Border Force, police. Does that make sense in terms of that ethics? I think we're leading the way in many respects and following in others, especially in that firearms aspect. Less so probably on the edged weapons, but firearms definitely.

SB: Yes, that makes complete sense. Just as you said, in some respects you're following. Who would you say that you're following in ideas of management and practice in that respect, specifically ideas of ethical management and practice? What sort of groups? What sort of examples, if there are any?

JK: So we're following practice, whether it's ethical or not, I'm not quite sure always. But we're following in practice in terms of what the Ministry of Defence are definitely doing. So in terms of our weapons handling, how we manage those and maintain the weapons, that's where we're following. Yeah, the ethics behind some of that, I mean the Ministry of Defence are there for specific reason, in active arenas. But in terms of that collections management, I guess it's a collective, so I'll work with the other regimental museums and with colleagues at National Army Museum and Imperial War Museum. We're the collective force around the ethics of how we work through firearms management. Yeah, it's all tied up. I don't think it's as simple quite as I said in the way in terms of following and leading, it's very much collaborative ways of looking at things. I guess we're not prescriptive and we wouldn't prescriptively follow anyone else.

SB: So there's more of a dialogue in that sense.

JK: I think so, yeah. As I say, most of the stuff we do hasn't and isn't dramatically changing over time, in many ways. But we still are developing in a collaborative way across the sector, and talking more and more with colleagues in the regimentals [museums] and other collections who are holding this kind of material majoritively.

SB: Yeah, that's useful. Thank you. Just speaking to that, are there any specific examples of practice that you would seek to emulate, or, conversely, seek to avoid? Or is it much more of an incremental change based on practices already going on?

JK: Yeah, I think it's incremental. We can learn from others in terms of very practical storage elements. Storage of small arms, I think we are probably better than most other organisations on, whereas storage of artillery pieces, especially in terms of barrels and large munitions we probably could learn from others on. So, it is very much a mixture of some bits we are definitely leading the pack and then other bits we have areas of improvement that we need to make.

SB: Do you think forums like the Museum Weapons Group and things like ICOMAM [International Committee for Museums and Collections of Arms and Military History], do you

think they're useful places to discuss these concerns, and maybe not formulate anything as rigid as a framework, but talk through these issues?

JK: Yeah, I think absolutely. It's always good to learn from others and share those experiences and talk those things through. So Museums Weapons Group is more interesting because that's us leading on that in a way, but that's leading in terms of organisation. So we're there to drive and make sure the meetings happen, and for it to actually take place, whereas actually the discussion needs to be and is much more a collaborative one, so that we're all learning from each other. Then ICOMAM, absolutely. It's always useful to learn internationally. In some respects, the UK, England-Wales definitely, are leading in terms of some of the legislation. Obviously, our legislation is quite different across the whole of ICOMAM. But in terms of some of the material culture, it's very similar, we obviously have quite a lot of material that was made outside the UK. So learning and sharing practice across those organisations is really useful, and will continue to be so I think.

SB: Yeah, of course. The other potential source of key examples of ethical practice is the Armouries itself and its activities in the past. Are there any examples there of, again, conduct that you wish to emulate or avoid? Or is it, again, more this process of gradual refinement?

JK: Yeah, we need to learn from what's happened in the past, and some of that has been really good practice and some of it maybe not such good practice. I mean the world changes and the world develops, and I think it is a case of gradual improvement, as much as there aren't things that I can massively point to and think well we would never do that again or we should be doing that again. We've developed for lots of different things. So, as our understanding of hazards and conservation practice, material science, as all of that develops, we have a better understanding of how we should be looking after things. Practice that went on in the past is not something we would never necessarily continue with, for all sorts of reasons. But, as I say, it is more of a general improvement rather than we're going to completely ignore what we did in the past.

SB: Yeah. So it's more building on it rather than strongly either reacting for or against it.

JK: Yeah, I would say so.

SB: It's the idea that whilst practice is changing, there's also the fact that ideas of ethical conduct are evolving alongside that really. It's that idea of ethical contingency and practice evolving in line with one another, really.

JK: Yeah. It's even things like terminology that we would have used in the past has changed dramatically, as we feel that those terms are unacceptable or less acceptable in the way that we look at things. I know that we've discussed at length some of the terms we use just in terms of descriptive terms. So in the past we've used things like 'naïve' decoration, that kind of context where on a firearm that might have been decorated and used in Africa or in East Asia, and now we would refer to it in a different way. So you wouldn't say that it's necessarily that whole idea of the folk, the naïve, the simplistic, the native, in a derogatory way. We are looking at changing those descriptors, not deleting them from the records as such, because that was the way that obviously in the nineteenth century, that's how they were referred to, and that's part of its historical context. But making it in the terms of more descriptive for a current audience and be more mindful of actually what do we mean by that. Is it a very simple decoration rather than naïve or native, or whatever we like to call it. It's just changing our language and reviewing some of that. I think that part of the issue with arms and armour is it's also tied up with ideas of colonialism and imperialism, and so we're trying to move towards that in terms of our practice. A lot of the current improvements in our collections management practice is less about the physicality and more about the intellectual accessibility in terms of the language that we're using, and that kind of thing.

SB: So more inclusivity rather than accessibility.

JK: Absolutely. If we're more inclusive, then we will be more accessible. But at the moment we're still working on some of those. I mean just thinking about the galleries at Leeds and one of our galleries is called the Oriental Gallery and it just all feels a bit wrong that we should be referring to something in that way when that's not what we really mean. I mean 'oriental' was used in very much in classification terms in the Armouries as anything that was not European basically, that was it. It's not necessarily all oriental in the East Asian aspect of things.

SB: Yes, it's quite a fraught term and quite a loaded term these days. It's interesting that the debates are going on about that. It speaks to debates in the wider sector, so decolonising the database, all of that sort of thing. So it's really interesting to see that perspective and the changes

that are going on, and I suppose with something like that is that it's such a lot of work in practice to go through, do all of that, that it's going to be a slow process.

JK: Yeah, we wouldn't want it to be a search and replace on the database, it's not as simple as that. Whilst you might lose historical context, it's also more nuanced than that. You wouldn't want to then just change it for the wrong term or a less nuanced term than we would like. It needs to be right, and we need to work out how we do all that in a quick manner because we don't want to have it for years and years if we haven't dealt with it. It's just we need to make sure that it's done sensitively and thoughtfully rather than, as I say, just a simple find and replace because I don't think it is that simple.

SB: Yeah, it's not just the objects and the information you're preserving, you're also preserving the history of those objects and information.

JK: Yeah, and it's not saying that that's right, and it's not saying that we should continue with that. It's about acknowledging the past and the past was a different knowledge system than we've got now, and with a difficult ethical framework underneath it. We're second guessing what our ancestors thought, but it's not saying that some of those people did not think less of anybody else, it was just they thought differently. I think we need to acknowledge that and take into account everybody's views and make it more inclusive now. But I don't think we should whitewash what's come before, because that's also really useful, and in another 100 years, people will look back and think about how we thought about things and they may think that how we thought about things as completely wrong too. So it's that, it's our role as the national museum and we are the caretakers of this information as much as caretakers of the material culture itself, I think, and both are equally as valid.

SB: Yeah, that's really interesting. Thank you for that insight. Just going back to something we spoke about earlier, codes of ethics. What role do code of ethics specifically play in the Armouries' management of, well, collections in general, but weapons collections specifically? Are there any examples of where their provisions impact on management procedures more directly or is it much more of a this is just an underlying set of guidance that influences everything that's done at the Armouries?

JK: I think it's more of an underlying set of principles. You would probably suggest that, in a way, it's an ethical rule rather than a written rule anywhere, well though it's written for us, is that, for example, you wouldn't ever point a gun at somebody unless you meant to use it. That's a fundamental thing that we always teach in terms of that's the first thing when you handle any firearm is don't point guns at people unless you're prepared to use them, for lots of good reasons. Some of that is around you don't know whether it's live, you don't know whether it's loaded. All of those things, very practical reasons. But in terms of its ethics of just don't point weapons at other people, it is written down in our handling guidelines. It is an ethical rule or ethical construct, it's not written in legislation that's not what you do. I guess that's the one that I feel is the fundamental where ethics is underpinning what we do on a day-to-day basis, whereas other things are a bit more nuanced. It underpins everything we do, but isn't in a very explicit manner. I think that's the thing, it's around how we approach the collection in general rather than very specifically this is that ethical thing that relates to that management tool.

SB: Yeah, that's understandable. There's a lot of overlap between the ethical frameworks and then the more collections management focused frameworks as well, there's quite a lot of cross-pollination, at least from what I've seen, between those. Just speaking to the example you gave about firearms, do you think there is room for a code of ethics for weapons collections specifically, or do you think that the existing frameworks are adequate in that respect?

JK: I mean they are, they're much broader than just about management of a specific collection type, I think those ethical codes. I think it would be useful to probably see some of those broader ethical questions. Again, it's something I would hope that ICOMAM are the best placed organisation in a way to do that, so off the back of the *ICOM Code of Ethics* but then looking in more in detail about, is there anything specific in terms of arms collections that you would then want to highlight? I think the difficulties and challenges of modern collecting, and interacting with those agencies, organisations, companies that are still producing weapons, which regimes they're dealing with or selling to, it's things like that that is the kind of thing where we are often very careful about. But we are actively collecting, and we are actually trying to collect modern firearms which we know are being sold to all sorts of different people, governments, and different regimes across the world. So I guess we're quite careful about who we deal with. But it would be useful to have a more sector-wide ethical framework to work within, in terms of some



of that acquisition. Then disposal is fairly straightforward for us, if we want to get rid of firearms especially. It's not a question of giving them to other people, it's a question of then they'd be destroyed. That's usually because legislatively we cannot give them to anybody else.

SB: Right. Yeah, that's an interesting one because generally museums are supposed to try and give them to other institutions first and it's only if that doesn't succeed that destruction takes place. So that's quite interesting, having that clarification.

JK: I mean sometimes we could, depending on what it is. But if it's a Section 5 [prohibited firearm under Section 5 of the *Firearms Act 1968*], you can only dispose of it to another Section 5 authority, of which there aren't that many. So it's that, some of it absolutely we can do and some of it we can't. But it is interesting thinking, well actually, if we wanted to get rid of some of these things the only way we could do it is by handing it back to the police and getting it destroyed, which is interesting in itself.

SB: Yeah, there's all sorts of issues with that. But no, what you're saying about ICOMAM as a potential source of ethics, from my reading of what I found to be the most recent Royal Armouries Ethics Policy there is a mention of an ICOMAM Code of Ethics in there. Have you seen that, come across it?

JK: I think you're right, because I think that Royal Armouries Ethics Policy, I think the latest version is 2016. You're right, there is mention of an ICOMAM Code of Ethics and I've never found one. I don't know whether I should be more investigative on that one, but there isn't one that's obvious that I've found. I don't know whether there were discussions around it and whether the upgrade or the development of the *ICOM Code of Ethics* has meant that actually they've put a halt on that, I don't know. But we probably need to think about that one a bit more.

SB: Yes. Well, I've done quite a thorough search so far, at least on the Internet. I've spoken to Laura [Bell, Director of Collections] and Katie [Robson, Registrar] about this as well, and they've got [nothing].

JK: Good, it's not just me.

SB: Yeah. Laura suggested maybe talking to Mark Murray-Flutter [Senior Curator of Firearms] about it, as the ICOMAM representative, so that might be my next port of call.

JK: Yeah, that was going to be my next port of call, ask Mark. But you usually need quite considerable amount of time before you ask Mark on things like that.

SB: I see. But it's been an interesting one because obviously that'll be a really interesting document to look at, if it does exist, to see how the museum aspect and then the firearms aspect intermesh, because there's very few other documents where those two issues are considered alongside one another. The idea of codes of ethics brings me on to the values and principles that underpin those things, both the sector at large and the Royal Armouries specifically. What do you think are the fundamental values and principles that inform the Armouries' actions, and specifically in relation to its weapons collections?

JK: I think the underwriting value is that we are here to preserve the collection for the future and allow accessibility and use. So in terms of what we're here for, and I guess those values, and the principles behind those, mean that collections care and safety, both in terms of from an object and a people point of view are those. They're the fundamental ones that we need to adhere to really, and that's what we try and do and reflect at a very basic level to make sure that the collections are here for the future.

SB: Yes. It's interesting to hear your perspective on it, because when I've been looking through everything my perception of it is that there's very much the tension between access on one side and preservation on the other, which is, I'd say, common to all museums. Then in the Armouries' case, its weapons collections mean that it needs to ensure the safety of its audiences, of the staff, and that complicates the relationship between access and preservation. That's my overview, I don't know how you'd respond to that.

JK: No, I agree. I think you're entirely correct in that it's a different level of risk management that we operate, and that's partly because of the material that we hold. But it's not to say that other collection types, in a way, wouldn't or shouldn't be as mindful of these things as we are. I mean, if you've got collections that are inherently hazardous for whatever reason, then absolutely you need to be mindful of that. The difficulty with ours is that it's not just hazards, it's also legislatively and philosophically. The fact that our collection is entirely or was entirely designed and utilised for injuring, causing harm, and killing, and all the rest of it. I think that's where we are always quite mindful that safety needs to be that key aspect. Whereas other collection types that's not their original reason for being, that hazardous, harmful nature.

SB: Yeah, I get that completely. Where these values come into conflict with one another, how does the Armouries go about prioritising which ones take precedence?

JK: Yes, the fundamental is that we would always make sure that people are safe, that has to be the key one, and then underneath that is whether the collection is therefore safe as well. So it's that safety and security. But people have to come first, over everything.

SB: Yeah, that makes perfect sense. How do you think these values are implemented in practice? How do they feed into everyday management of these collections?

JK: It is the case of trying to work through the framework, so the design of policy and procedure means that, in the way that we manage everything, means that people are safe as a fundamental, that the collection is safe. I guess the simplest way is looking at it as a hierarchy in a way. I don't know if you've ever seen, so Nick Poole, who used to be the CEO of Collections Trust, produced these triangles of how much trouble you would be in if you didn't meet them. So at the top bit of the triangle would be the law and statutes, and then underneath that your professional code, so your ethics and your professional standards, and then underneath that is your governance and your culture and your policies and procedures and behaviours and values. If you break Royal Armouries' values, that's an internal disciplinary matter. But the further you go up that triangle is the more trouble you're in not only just within organisation disciplinaries, but then outside in terms of those ethical and professional standards, that's about reputational loss. Then the legal and statutes, that's being put in prison, that's potential criminal activity. We always say therefore, if you're working in backwards, that if you follow our policies and procedures, and our habits, values, and behaviours, you're not going to get in trouble. As those people who are writing that policy and creating those procedures, it's ensuring that we've got all of that stuff sat within it so that we are protecting everybody. Again, a lot of that is around developing and improving what we've already got. As I said before, it's not usually about writing things from scratch, because usually there's something there. There isn't something completely new all the time that's coming in that's going to change all our working practice. It's around developing those working practices and building on what we've had before. So that's really how I see it working, and what and how the ethics really underpins what we're doing. Because if you're meeting your legal requirements and your ethical requirements, you are going to be managing your collection in an effective and better way.

SB: Yeah, that's really useful, that conceptualisation of the pyramids. I'll have to look that up.

JK: If you haven't got them, if you can't find them, I've definitely got them and, as I say, they're useful and I used them in training stuff that I've done before and I think I use it in the due diligence training or at least allude to it in the due diligence training because it focuses the mind. If you know that, as a member of staff, collections member of staff, if you're managing things within the policy, you know that you're not going to get in trouble. Then you rely on the fact that actually your colleagues who have developed the policies and procedures, which is why we don't do it in isolation. We usually do it as a collective and it's signed off by different people than have written it, and it means that actually you've then made sure that you are managing things in a legal and ethical manner. So it works really well. If you can't find them, let me know and I'll bounce them over.

SB: Thank you, that'd be really useful. I suppose that really illustrates how the legal, the ethical, the professional, how they all coalesce, really, in this. Would you say that it's a) possible or b) even desirable to try and separate them out? Or is it better to look at it as a holistic framework?

JK: I think as a collections manager it's best to create it as a holistic framework and to work through it as a holistic framework. I think you do still need to understand the fundamentals of where each bit sits. But it's difficult, and also in England and Wales, because we work on case law, it's different to other legislative environments. So whilst you might know the law to the letter of it, the interpretation of that might be different and is different, and we know it's different, depending on which police authority, for example, that you talk to. They have different guidance depending on what you're going to do. It is looking at it holistically, but understanding those fundamental bits that you definitely, absolutely, categorically have to do because that's the law, and then the bits that is best practice and ethical guidelines and the generic standards. So you do need to know about that all, but we manage things in a holistic manner and that's the only way we can work on it.

SB: Yeah, when it's been developed organically over however many years, it becomes very difficult to separate them out. That's really interesting. Leading on from that, are there any areas where the Armouries has to implement additional procedures to meet ethical requirements above what they're required to by law?

JK: I don't think there is, actually. I think we're really careful about how we manage things in a legal way. I can't think of any examples of where we would do that actually.

SB: Just for a prompt, when I was speaking to Laura earlier, she was saying about the ratios for access, how that there isn't anything in the law to do that, but the Armouries has developed that as an additional safeguard. So any other examples like that you can think of, or if you could speak to that example further, that would be really useful.

JK: Yeah. I think of that in a slightly different way, so that's about our management of our risk rather than an ethical concern. So, we look at that in terms of those ratios, we look at it in terms of who are those, which is why we have a detailed procedure around events. We have standards of I think it's 1:4 in stores, but depending on who the group are, what they're looking to do, what they're looking at, we'll change our risk profile. It depends where they're accessing the material, if it's in a more secure situation than on gallery or in a more public area, we'll have more stringent ratios, and it's partly to protect staff but also to protect the objects as well. But I would refer to that as more risk management rather than ethical underpinning of what we're doing, and how we manage that collection in very practical terms. I guess for me, the ethics behind it is a bit more philosophical and more about the thought rather than the practicalities, which was where I was coming from.

SB: Yeah, that's fair enough. I suppose ethics is such a slippery thing. The way that I've conceptualised it is three main strands. There's the codes, and then there's examples of practice and case studies and things like that, and then there's the values and principles that underpin everything. So that's how I've conceptualised ethics in the museum sector and where it feeds into practice, I suppose it's quite difficult to draw the line there. But no, speaking of specific examples and just moving on to the case study that hopefully we can discuss a bit, the 'At the Sharp End' exhibition. Could you just say a bit more about your involvement, obviously depending on how far you were involved?

JK: Yeah, so that exhibition was a really interesting one. The idea came from the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit, as I understand it, working with our community and public engagement team. It is part of our public engagement, public information, education role is around highlighting the issues, of which there are a number, especially in West Yorkshire, of a lot of violent crime, knife-related, or sharp [weapons] because they're not always knives.

Criminal activity with violence basically, so some of it's around knife crime, some of it's around weapons that are knife-like, sharp objects, and are trying to explore and explain what that is all about. Looking at the impact of that kind of crime, and the fact that everyday objects, whether they're kitchen knives or crutches or whatever, could be used in that context, and how we might help to educate and inform and to mitigate some of those issues that the wider community are facing. So looking at real issues affecting real people in the area and how we can do that, and I think just raising that awareness of any knife can be used in that context and how we do that. It is an interesting one because we were working with a police agency to try and raise that awareness in communities, in schools, and having a huge programme of looking at that, raising awareness really. Displaying those items that had been involved in actual cases, had gone through court activity and had been signed off and then these were evidence, this is material that is associated with that kind of crime. It's going to be a really interesting exhibition actually, which is great. It's still on at the moment, and it's proved to be very successful from not only our point of view in terms of the public engaging with it, but also from the police aspect as well, that Violent Reduction Unit remit as well.

SB: Yeah, I've seen it and it's really interesting, and it's certainly a different interpretive approach to most of what the Armouries does. But were there additional ethical concerns that had to be addressed because you're using weapons with a proven history of crime in comparison to your regular weapons collections?

JK: Yeah. It's different isn't it, because whilst these collections, even if we aren't being specific, we know who used it, often against whom, in what context. Now that's not to say that we don't know or the other items that we display haven't been used in the same way. It's just that it's not now, it's not this year, last year. It's in the past and I think there's a lot of the differences around and the sensibilities around, well actually, that's happened yesterday or last month or whenever, whereas most of our collection is historical and is in the distant past. I think it's interesting, public reaction to it when it's about time, length of time rather than what they've actually been used for. So some of that is around that sensitivity of knowing that we may have victims of those crimes coming into the building and being sensitive about that, and/or perpetrators and their families. So we did talk around how and where it would be, and which is partly why it's not front and centre, the first thing you see when you come into the museum. We talked about the

location, the messaging around it, the use of names and specific cases within that or are we talking about generics. How we presented things in terms of exactly how it would happen. So we did think about it and talk about it. Just slightly nuanced this, but it's interesting that whole time thing and how you think about things in a different way because they're in the past.

SB: I suppose there is a definite connection as well. Whereas with the others it's potential, but you're never quite sure in most cases.

JK: Yeah, seeing those things that are sealed in those evidence tubes with that's attached with a case number, that can be tallied absolutely to an individual. You're right, it's different to knowing, or potentially knowing, that that firearm was used in the Napoleonic Wars or whatever, because that information in a way has been lost over time, if we ever knew it.

SB: Yeah, it's such a striking display, just with all of the edged weapons in there and just seeing them all at once, and the fact that there's no individual interpretation on each of the weapons as well, which would be normal for a more historically focused display. I think that was something that really struck me.

JK: I think that's one of the things that design was trying to get over, is the sheer quantity, the sheer diversity of the type of material. There are some kitchen knives that you can buy in Wilkos, and I just remember the crutches and thinking, of course, you could create a staff weapon, it's a longer weapon. The sheer quantity in a case presented in that way was about that shock, that thinking, to generate that thought of this is a really shocking aspect. That whole environment that a lot of us luckily have no experience of, and hopefully we never will do, but that is a real reality for a lot of people.

SB: Yeah, I think the Wilko knife was the one that really hit home the most, I think for me.

JK: The difficulty is with those is you can't say to people you can't buy a knife, because how are you going to cut your vegetables for your dinner? But then it's around intent, and it's around utilising items for bad activity rather than good. I think that's what was quite shocking in a way, you're right, about that show.

SB: Just thinking now about the more practical challenges involved with it. Were there additional challenges or obstacles with working with the West [Yorkshire] Violence Reduction

Unit as a lender rather than, say, other police authorities, as like licensing authorities? Were there any additional hurdles you had overcome and specifically with the objects in question?

JK: I mean in very practical terms, these are all seized items that had obviously gone through a process of evidence and so, effectively, all of those items, they're owned by the Crown in terms of they're seized as part of criminal activity, so we entered into an agreement. It was just one lender so in many respects that's very straightforward. But interestingly, we did in this instance carry out our due diligence checks on those items and, of course, we know that the current owner is the Crown, and we know that it was seized material. But obviously, before that, it's not something that we would get to know or that we could find out. So in terms of our provenance, we know that these have been involved in these crimes and they've been involved with these individuals, but we don't know who those individuals are and all of that. We've taken that on because it's part of that legislation for seized material, so in that respect the risks to us in terms of that due diligence is low because it's part of criminal activity. So we signed off our due diligence, but it is not a full provenance history check as we would with other things, because it's not how it works and it's not in a way what that material is about. But the risks involved for us were quite low, in terms of nobody's going to come and ask for their knife back, or if they do, it's part of seized material. So in terms of those practicalities, it was relatively straightforward in that it came from one source, everything was detailed, came to us. We then generated a list. I mean the big problem was that they didn't have the capacity to give us a list, it was come and fill it with whatever you want, however many things you want.

SB: Oh wow.

JK: Of course, they don't follow normal museum practice in that they have a numbering system, but it's case-related, evidence-related. Whereas we would have a specific [number for] how we would manage objects and how we track those objects as we work through a loan. For them, once it's been through that court system and has been signed off and the case is done, is less auditable and governed than we would because for them, in a way, there's no value to those old items anymore. For us, we always deal with objects, any object, whether we own them or not, in the same way, which I think they found quite difficult to get their heads round in many ways. It's like I'm dealing with this object in the same way as we would a museum object, and they're like, why would you do that?



SB: Because that's what we do.

JK: That's what we do, exactly, and that's the difficulty. For them, these things are now meaningless because they've served their purpose in that they've been presented as evidence, and they're worthless and have no value. For us it's like, you're right, they may not have any monetary value, but there is value to these objects, and so we're going to keep hold of them, and be careful and mindful of them, even if you don't think that's [necessary]. So it was interesting, but there wasn't anything massively out of the ordinary that we would normally do with items. It's just a loan, so we would deal with them as we would loans.

SB: So no additional security or anything like that?

JK: No, other than we've had them in a secure case that is controlled within our security framework of the galleries and our general security levels. There wasn't anything that we needed to do in an extra way, partly because our general security and procedures are already quite tight.

SB: Yeah, that makes sense. Thank you for the clarification. Just looking forward, what do you think the impact of this exhibition will be on the Armouries and perceptions of ethics at the Armouries in relation to its own collections or in relation to loans as well?

JK: We're keen to do more of that – and we have done in the past, with the self-defence gallery and other things – but working with that Violence Reduction Unit in an active way rather than more of as we have done in a way in this one. We've been reactive and they wanted to work with us on this exhibition, which is great, but we want to continue that relationship. I think us working with them and communities on that educational role is something that we'll be doing more of. Anything that we do and anything we work with another agency like them will inform our ethics and the way that we operate, as we work closer together. I think that's the other thing, as soon as you start working with outside organisations and they have a different way of approaching things. Again, it's that collaborative conversation around how they work, how we work, and what communities think and how they react to that exhibition, and the feedback that we get off that, and whether our communities want to see more of that kind of thing, and for us to be tackling those quite difficult issues, pertinent difficult issues, or whether we focus on the historical. I think we need to bring a bit of a mix and our collection type, the difficulty is we display very historical material. It's not to say that we haven't collected more modern material,

but it's more challenging to display those more modern things, which is what we've done here. I think there's been a reaction of perhaps we should do more of that. Yeah, we'll wait to see. But I think it's all positive.

SB: Yeah. Well I thought it was an excellent exhibition, so that's one supporter at least.

JK: I agree.

SB: But yes, thank you for that insight. The last area I want to speak about today is do you think the ethical frameworks as they are, do you think they're adequate for the Armouries' purposes in relation to its weapons collections?

JK: As we've discussed already, I think there are developments that we could do. I think we could strengthen our and update our ethics policy. Given that it was 2016 that we released our Ethics Policy, I think the time is right for us to review that and to develop that. I think our ethics in terms of some of the things that are slightly outwith collections management but more around looking at what's happened in the rest of the museum sector. Things around the ethics of who we take money from, all of that stuff. Our environmental sustainability ethics I think will become more and more important. But if ICOMAM have produced an ethical code, then we really need to be working to that. Again, we mention it, but we're not explicit because none of us are aware of it. So all of that we need to pick up and develop, and it's an ongoing thing that we should be constantly evolving and improving and thinking about. Then making sure that we are updating policy and procedure as to relate to that.

SB: Yeah, that all makes sense. It's this idea of dissemination as part of it, because obviously it's great to have the networks and have the policies and things, but it's trying to share it in a viable way. I know that we've discussed the possibility of there being sector guidance for weapons collections, do you think that ethical considerations should be addressed by this? Or is that something that should be addressed on a case-by-case basis?

JK: I think it's difficult. Sector-wide guidance and ethical guidance for UK collections, I think we could because some of those are fairly standard and understood. I think if we were to broaden that out to other legislative areas, that would be more difficult. I think that's often where things like ICOM have issues with, is that they're trying to encompass so much and where we are in the UK as to other legislative requirements or other parts of the world, people are at different points

in their ethical journeys. Then I think that's a bit more challenging, but I think absolutely, a bit like the Museums Weapons Group, we should be using that as a forum for discussion around ethical issues around, do you think it's alright if our Chief Executive comes in and takes this weapon off display and uses it for whatever purpose. But it has to be in a safe environment as well for them, safe and confidential environment, because a lot of that ethical discussion, I think sometimes there's no right and wrong is there. That's the difficulty, is because there isn't any right and wrong, it's hard and I wouldn't want us as a national museum to be the arbiter of the whole ethics, because it's not to say that we are always in the right. It may be that other people have different views and will, not be better than us, but have a different and more ethical view, perhaps, and in a different way to the way that we operate. That's partly because of the way that we're funded, sometimes we aren't able to say or do the things that perhaps we would want to do, and we're being forced into doing things for political with a small 'p' reasons that we have no control over.

SB: Yeah, that's really interesting. Ethical issues invariably become associated with political issues and things get very difficult. I suppose, as a national museum, you're more susceptible to such things given the nature of the governance framework.

JK: Yeah, just the way that we're funded. In many ways, we're separate from the government of the time, but in many ways, we are the representatives of the government of the time as well, and that, you're right, becomes quite difficult and it is hard to separate those political and ethical opinions, sometimes I guess.

SB: That seems like a good place to end. Unless have you got any last things you'd like to add or is that everything?

JK: No, I just think it's really interesting to unpick a lot of this Stuart, also to really think about some of this stuff because it's not something that we have time to reflect on day to day. That's why it's really useful and interesting for us, as much as I'm sure I hope it is for you.

SB: Certainly, I get so much out of these. Thank you very much. And happy to end the recording there, then?

JK: Yep, great.