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Post-Lawson Issue

PEOPLE AS THE DRIVING FORCE
Chairperson's Thoughts for 1990

I am convinced that one of the reasons SHCG members return year after year to the Annual Study Weekend (funds permitting) is that each year they hope to discover the real meaning of social history in museums. Suddenly, all will be revealed! The problems of what to do with objects, 'How?' and 'Why?' will disappear and one can start to be a 'real' social history curator at last. Ever-optimistic and never wishing to miss an opportunity, the social history curator keeps returning.

One conclusion to be drawn from this might be that there is no real definition of social history curatorship, and that the diversity of opinion and range of museums encompassed within the group means that definition is neither possible nor even desirable.

Speaking from my own experience I find quite the contrary to be the case. Whether discussing interpretation, practical realities, the use of objects or other media, the same strengthening consensus seems to be emerging. I say emerging because there are always tempting cul-de-sacs and blind alleys for social history curatorship. Ever innovative and imaginative, social history has co-habited with object-fetishism, labour history, and design history, among others. All are legitimate subjects and are essential to the ever-expanding parameters of our understanding of the past. Unlike these definitive terms, however, social history embraces these areas and many others. Social history is a term which is constantly changing. It is an expansive term, and above all else, it is dynamic. It is as lively and complicated as the people who created the past.

The diversity in our midst is not an argument against the strong assertion of common ground upon which social history curatorship has been built and from which it gains such strength.

The emerging consensus I mentioned seems to be that social history curatorship has maybe three components: 1) **curatorship** - the collection, care and interpretation of objects and relevant information. 2) the **academic** study of social history - which provides insights and information that cannot be deduced from objects alone, and 3) most important, **people** at a grass roots level. Somehow the job of the social history curator is to bind together these various forces and communicate to others more about the history of people's lives, whether 10, 100 or 1000 years ago.

Way back in the 1930s, before most of us were born or dreamt of (Heaven forbid), French historians, bored presumably with politics and famous men, set out to examine the whole of society: its social groups, social institutions and social structures studied through a socio-historical perspective.

Ordinary life - work, child-rearing, schooling, marriage, etc. - became important; i.e. "Processes affecting the great majority of people alive at any given time" (E.P. Thompson, of course!). Concerned primarily with written sources, 'academic' historians have a more limited field than ours. The great potential of social history curatorship is that it draws on evidence from the material, three-dimensional 'real' world. It is also closely involved with a particular community or locality. Oral history, despite the limitations of memory, has helped enormously to reach people excluded from written sources. The key to it all is people. No people, no history. Above all else, the social history curator should be concerned with people - their work, their leisure, their thoughts and their personal experiences. Social history collections, often inadequate in themselves as historical sources, provide tremendous resources for understanding more about the past. Objects can lead the curators to people and people can lead the curator via objects to more people. It is a sad fact, however, that the curator may well be alone in researching and communicating the social history of a locality, which adds a touch of gravity to our routine work.

Enough said. If I have a 'role' as Chair of SHCG it is to help promote ever-increasing standards of social history work in our museums. At the risk of being sexist, I am concerned also, for this group in particular, that women continue to play an important part in its organisation. The role of the committee is hopefully to co-ordinate and focus the strengths of its members that means you!

Elizabeth Frostick
Chairperson, SHCG



SHCG Committee

READING THE ILLEGIBLE

SHCG Annual Study Weekend
Glasgow 6 - 9 July 1989

The weekend began in holiday atmosphere in the 'tropical' surroundings of the Winter Gardens at The People's Palace. Julian Spalding, Director of Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, welcomed the Social History Curators Group to the city, which is preparing to become European City of Culture in 1990.

A guided tour of Glasgow gave some fascinating glimpses of the City's architecture before the first opportunity for the delegates to study the popular (sub)culture of Glasgow.

In his introduction to the weekend's programme the next morning, Mark (Filo, 201s, shades) Suggitt (is it a coincidence that the writer has the same accessories - perhaps it's working at the Castle Museum that does it?) gave a revealing illustrated introduction to the question 'What is popular culture?'. The title for the weekend, Reading the Illegible, is from an article by Stephen Marcus about Manchester in the 1840s, looking at, and de-coding, the 'mythology' of everyday life. But is popular culture, or everyday life mythology, something which can be preserved and studied in museums, or is popular culture for participation, something we can do but not collect?

David Russell tackled the problem of definition in his key note lecture. He aptly described the problem as 'the historian's version of splitting the atom'. David skilfully led the delegates through different approaches and covered such areas as cultural appropriation - for example opera was popular culture, is it now high culture? David also issued challenging points on interpretation and the use of sources. There has been a recent shift towards looking at popular culture more in context and acknowledging that there are many interpretations possible in any one area, although, as David pointed out, subjects of research in the field of popular culture have been to a great extent male dominated. An empathetic response came from the delegates when David finished by describing many a ruined evening 'de-coding' **The Archers**!

Tessa Jackson, Visual Arts Officer, Glasgow 1990, gave the next paper on Glasgow - European City of Culture. Glasgow follows the cities of Berlin in 1987 and Paris in 1989 with a festival of cultural activities whose aims Tessa laid out as: 'To reflect the city's culture - the identity of the city - and juxtapose that culture with that of other cultures'. The festival will not have a specific theme as that was decided to be 'artificial' and restricting the aims of strengthening cultural activities which already exist and introducing new products to the cultural life of the city'. The effects of long term investment are seen as of utmost importance so that Glasgow should have long term benefit from 1990. Tessa Jackson gave a list of events including 'The Bolshoi', 'The Sculpture Symposium', 'The Q.E. II' etc. The events will cover the whole year, during which there will be grants available for activities and projects, but never more than a 50% grant. The bulk of the funding has come from the Glasgow and Strathclyde Councils (£40 million) with the addition of a princely £500,000 from the Government!!

James Ayres, Director of the John Judkin Memorial, Bath, followed with a look at folk art as **The Art of the People**? A study of the products of the vernacular artist must be seen in the context of the client economy; as James Ayres pointed out, it was a productive partnership. Another approach rather than a production based analysis would be a reception based analysis. Ayres' discussion of

The Art of the People was superbly illustrated by slides, some from an exhibition of folk art held in Bath. James pointed out the true vernacular artist, the sign painter, including in his illustrations some fine examples of signs and murals as well as paintings. This lecture was a delight of many fine examples from the rich source of vernacular art.

Lively discussions followed the morning's papers including the subject of: How to make the history of popular culture accessible? How can history be effectively given back to the people? One answer, possibly the key, was put forward - 'participation'. Another solution, that of interpretation, on different levels for different visitors, was also discussed.

Questions followed on the **Words and Stones** exhibition which is planned to open in May 1990 as part of the festival. Worries were expressed at the 'list' of objects included in the plan and at the fact that, until recently, there had been a lack of 'museum expertise' in the planning of the exhibition.

After lunch delegates visited The People's Palace, Springburn Museum and The Summerlee Heritage Park. The reception at Summerlee was a roaring success and the culinary highlight of the weekend.

Richard Patterson of the TV Unit BFI began Saturday's papers with **Sex, Violence and Soap: the Media - impacts and influences**. The first soap was on the radio in the 1930s as a result of an industrial marketing drive to address women at home. Soaps now achieve the highest ratings in the UK and there are a massive 6,000 hours of soap a year on US TV.

But why is the Soap so appealing to so many? Richard pointed to the importance of cultural specificity which plays a great part in the popularity of the soaps as can be seen in the patterns of audience approval. In the mass observation project **One Day in the Life of TV**, which took place on 1 November 1988, soaps featured highly in the 18,600 completed diaries. There were revealing comments on the soaps. **Neighbours** was described as 'good, clean family fun - it doesn't make you depressed'. And **Eastenders** - 'I try to watch each episode without slitting my wrists!' Richard gave the examples of **The Archers** and **Coronation Street** as soaps which have matured and still remain, after many years, a part of the everyday life of the nation.

It was obvious from reactions from the delegates that social history curators nationwide are 'taking part' in popular culture. There were few who struggled with references to the various characters in the soaps!

Penny Wilkinson, Hull Museums, gave the next paper, which described the new temporary exhibition at Hull, **That's Entertainment!** The aim of the exhibition, said Penny, was to have a broad popular appeal. It was already attracting a wide cross section of the public. Historic themes, rather than the museum's collections, were used as the starting point for setting up the exhibition. Penny stressed that the lack of objects in the collection did not exclude any theme, as such an approach can be mis-representative. Illustrative slides of the exhibition showed a mixture of colourful, adventurous graphics; objects from the collections, loaned and specifically material; oral history, photographs. The participation of the public was stressed in setting up the exhibition as well as in appreciating **That's Entertainment!**

Finbarr Whooley, Livesey Museum, continued with the next paper, **Sport: Good Clean Fun?** He proved, as did Penny, that problems in the availability of research material and artefacts are worth tackling.

The **Sporting Bodies** exhibition at Livesey appealed to the museum's clientele of children and family groups, particularly by using 'low tech' interactive features. One of the main problems that Finbarr noted was that people often do not have a sense of history in something that they still take a part in today. Slide illustrations showed the friendly and open atmosphere created by staff at the museum which must play a major part in encouraging the participation of the public in the exhibition.

Ian Lawley began his presentation, **Acid Drops to Acid House : Searching for a post-war perspective**, by reminding the delegates that popular culture is central to our lives and not just something that happens to others. Ian described popular culture as an activity not a product, although some products are achieved. Consumerism is one of today's central popular cultural activities. During the immediate post-war period when mobility, work and leisure activities were limited, pre-war activities remained fashionable. In the 1950s and 1960s there was an almost tangible sense of change ; between 1957 and 1971 disposable incomes doubled. The power of advertising began to permeate all aspects of everyday life with the myth of 'freedom of choice'. Ian effectively illustrated the major influence of America in forming the popular culture of today, particularly in soaking up the cash of that relatively new consumer group - Teenagers. Youth culture, music and fashion, were well illustrated by images showing the contradictions of, and influences on, popular culture.

Chris Waters, of Stanford University, California, dealt with the effect of America on the British consciousness in his paper **The Americanisation of the Masses : Cultural Criticism, The National Heritage and Working Class Culture in the 1930s**. Chris asserted that it was not until the 1930s that working class culture was recognised as a part of the 'National Heritage'. The change in attitude came with World War Two, for example in Orwell's writings of the 1940s stressing the importance of everyday life. Chris suggested that working class culture began to be acknowledged when it was felt that Americanisation was in danger of affecting the British identity. In the 1980s there is renewed concern for preserving the working class heritage, perhaps again because it is felt to be under threat.

Saturday afternoon was spent at Kelvingrove, The Transport Museum and The Burrell Collection. The evening's entertainment began on a boat on the Clyde and continued, after eating and sight-seeing at the same time on the river, with more participation in popular (pub) (disco) culture in the city. (What do you mean ? I got dragged away to a ceilidh. Ed.)

Sunday's invaluable session of members' papers provided some fascinating insights into the current work of SHCG members.

Mark Suggitt began by illustrating that popular culture could be effectively displayed with the example of the exhibition **How we used to live**. This exhibition, which is the result of the co-operation of the Yorkshire and Humbersidè Area Museums Council and Yorkshire Television, is currently touring the area.

Miranda Morris, from Lancelston, Tasmania, gave a fascinating illustrated description of a family home in Tasmania. **Fairlawn** was, sadly, auctioned three weeks before the study weekend, putting paid to imaginative plans which Miranda and others had proposed to interpret the house as a museum.

Christine Johnstone showed in her paper how SHIC can be extended to classify areas of popular culture. Hackney Museum use a Category 5 to work through the classification of material ; the sub-divisions are related to Hackney's Equal

Opportunities Policy. The extended classification system covers areas such as Immigration, Gay and Lesbian culture, which are not included in SHIC. As the SHIC Working Party have not responded to this extension the SHCG Committee agreed to make a follow-up approach.

Janet Kenyon described the aims and objectives of the Industrial and Social History Collections Survey which is being carried out by the Yorkshire and Humberside Area Museums Council. The survey will look in detail at 20 museums, chosen as representative of the different museums in the area, and will take a brief look at all other museums. The final results will be statistical and impressionistic, with information on all areas of collections management, storage, finance and policies.

Gordon Watson of Wakefield Museum followed with a paper on Mail Order Catalogues, proving that they are a valuable source for the social historian. A recent exhibition in Wakefield of catalogues displayed the value of the material. Although the images are often glamourised, the catalogues are an essential source as a chart of social trends, with invaluable information on dating and prices.

Steph Mastoris introduced two more sources in his paper **Images of Joy and Grief : christmas Cards and Tombstones at Harborough Museum**. Steph had collected 637 cards, received by a small cross-section of individuals, in 1987. The cards were analysed by the image and treatment. A collection of slate tombstone rubbings from the Harborough area gave an insight into the history of tombstone imagery and design.

In his summary David Stockdale raised important points which we must consider : In de-coding symbols we base our analysis on our own experiences. Why do we want to represent areas of popular culture ? And who for ? A lively discussion ensued, including the highlighting of some subjects which had not been covered during the weekend. Perhaps such subjects as Cultural Divisions, the Representation of minorities, and the involvement of the community can be included in the next ASW.

The Annual Study Weekend was a great success. Congratulations to Mark O'Neill, who took care of the domestic arrangements so admirably, and to Bill Jones, who organised such a stimulating programme.

Gillian Greaves
York Castle Museum



KEEPING THE SPONSORS SWEET ? The Design Museum Reviewed.

Margaret Thatcher felt it should have had another name. Prince Charles felt it should have had a pitched roof. I'd probably agree with both of them : it's easy to have a go at the Design Museum. But, for several reasons, it has to be worth a closer look. For one thing, it is a museum which claims (or did claim) to address areas like mass-production and popular culture. It also claims to be non-acquisitive, collecting only around specific projects and exhibitions, borrowing where it can : a clearing house rather than a warehouse. It is positive about new technology, it is provocative and it is beautiful.

Its beauty is of a cold, hygienic kind, which, while fine for the 'design in-crowd' (the current audience, according to staff), will intimidate many other people, those who get past the entrance - I saw several families with small children turn back - will find three floors of displays. On the ground floor, next to the cafe, is a changing space for graphics displays. Upstairs is the Review Gallery (a kind of *Tomorrow's World* of design) and temporary exhibition gallery. The more permanent and serious-looking Study Collection is on the second floor. It was good to see so much on open display, although it may not stay that way. As one member of staff put it, 'So many of the things are so familiar and everyday that people do want to handle them, they don't see the harm in it, we had quite a lot of trouble with that ... with the cars, people want to open the doors, which really isn't on'. Maybe this raises the question of what the visitors are paying for : the Citroen on display now has temporary barriers around it.

The Museum has no published policy, but the first exhibition, *Commerce and Culture*, was chosen to 'map out some of the territory' with which it will be concerned. In a stimulating, but none too coherent way, it raises a number of philosophical questions about museums and the future. A needlework kit version of the Mona Lisa is part of a display which looks at the nature of the real thing, the reproduction, and at their values and meanings. It asks whether the sanctity of museums and museum objects is threatened by new technology : a hologram of the Sutton Hoo helmet is labelled '7th century AD, potentially anywhere'.

Similarly bold, and sometimes unreadable, statements appear in the sections on design. One label says, 'the designer cult, with its essential superficiality, is another symptom of the post-modern malaise which reduces buildings to packages'. This is probably true, but the 'post-modern malaise' has in fact hit the museum rather hard. Immediately following this display is a section celebrating 'design greats' - Raymond Loewy, Charles Eames - and a justification of the designer cult : 'It was the division of labour which first made the designer identifiable. When he was identifiable, his work could be quantified, it could be valued' (my emphasis).

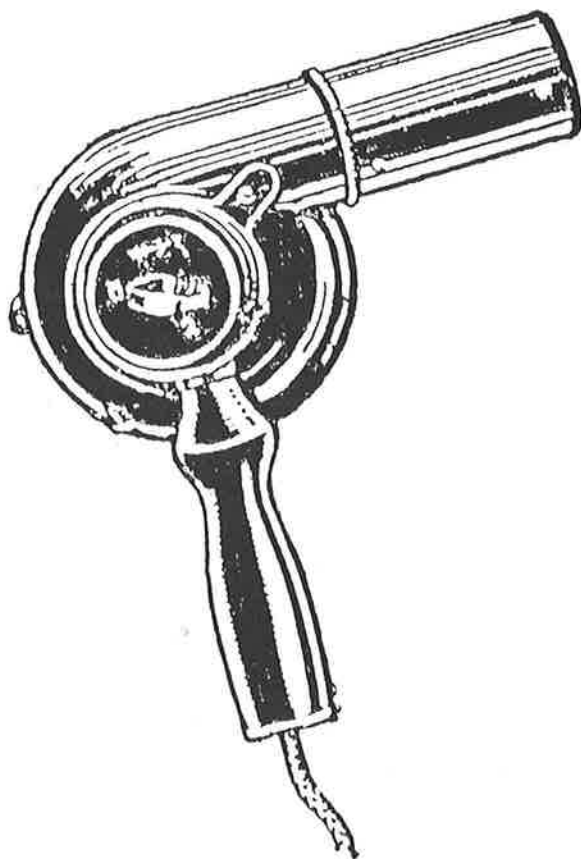
This traditional, *Boys' Own* view of design history is evident in all the displays : almost everything has a designer's name attached to it (the only unattributed items I noticed were a Pentel pen and a boxing poster). The anonymous designer is missing from the Design Museum, as is the consumer, who adds a range of meanings to any object, and this is sad. The politics and economics of design are likewise absent. These omissions are particularly noticeable in the study collection, which displays (for example) office furnishings and advertising media, yet manages to avoid comment on the political implications of office hierarchies and sexist imagery (my desk's bigger than yours).

It's not really fair to criticise the Design Museum for doing what all museums do : avoiding difficult subjects like money and politics. But it is striking that Sir Terence Conran's name doesn't come up more often, or at least in a more explicit way. The Conran

Foundation provides about a third of the money for the museum ; Conran owns and is building on most of the land around it and has more than a passing interest in its success. Pump priming from the DTI will only last three years and the museum is destined to rely increasingly on sponsorship to supplement its own income from admissions. It's very important to keep the sponsors sweet, and there are several examples within the museum of how tricky this can be.

Up in the Study Collection is an impressively user-friendly collections database giving public access to several levels of information. The system, Mackintosh Hypercard, was sponsored by Apple Mackintosh, who put in £80,000. Try keying-in **Apple** on the manufacturers' index ; you find that 'Apple effectively founded the PC industry. The consistency of its interface offers significant advantages by reducing training costs and increasing productivity'. Advantages for whom ? Back downstairs for the Graphics Exhibition (sponsored by Perrier), a number of designers have been asked to identify what they love and hate. One of those asked was Sir Terence Conran (who likes the wholesome designs for **Marmite**), another his son Sebastian. He chose designs for **Blueprint**, a magazine financially supported by his father, for which he occasionally writes. Nearby, Steve Taylor criticises the Labour Party's Rose : fine, except that Deyan Sudjic's criticism of British Rail's swallow was censored (BR being sponsors of the Museum). Commerce meets Culture. Perhaps *Storehouse* would have been a better name !

Sally MacDonald



Social History Curators Group

PRINTED EPHEMERA

VENUE: Hackney Museum, Central Hall, Mare Street, Hackney, London, E8

DATE: Tuesday 5th December 1989

PROGRAMME:

- 10.00 Assemble at Hackney Museum -COFFEE-
- 10.25 Welcome and introduction by Christine Johnstone, (Curator of Hackney Museum)
- 10.30 FROM LETTER BOX TO MUSEUM STORE: COLLECTING CONTEMPORARY ADVERTISING EPHEMERA
Steph Mastoris (Keeper of Harborough Museum, Leicestershire)
- 11.15 THE CONSERVATION OF PRINTED EPHEMERA
Ray Wright (Lecturer at Camberwell College of Art)
- 12.00 -LUNCH- (Please make your own arrangements. There are plenty of eating places nearby)
- 1.30 STORAGE OF PRINTED EPHEMERA AT HACKNEY MUSEUM: AN INTRODUCTION AND GUIDED TOUR
Christine Johnstone
- 2.30 "HAND IT OVER -IT'S MINE !": WHICH INSTITUTIONS SHOULD COLLECT PRINTED EPHEMERA ?
Chris Makepeace (Author of Ephemera...its collection, curation and use, Gower, 1985)
- 3.15 PEOPLE ON PAPER: THE PRINTED EPHEMERA COLLECTION AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON
Nichola Johnson (Senior Assistant Keeper in charge of printed ephemera, Museum of London)
- 4.00 -TEA- and concluding discussion

FEE: £4 for members of SHCG (£6 for non-members)
(Please make cheques payable to 'Social History Curators Group')

TO APPLY:

Please complete the form below and send it, with fee, to Christine Johnstone, Curator, Hackney Museum, Mare Street, Hackney, London E8 1HE (01-986 6914)

Please enrol me/us for the SHCG seminar in printed ephemera on Tuesday 5th December 1989.

I/we requireplaces and enclose £ as a registration fee.

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

.....Tel:

Signed.....Date:.....

SPRINGBURN MOTHERS - A SPRINGBURN MUSEUM EXHIBITION

"The Midwife said I was built like a single end outside and a tenement inside".

A Glasgow woman's memory of childbirth is quoted in Springburn Museum's exhibition "Springburn Mothers". Having dealt with largely male dominated heavy industry the museum decided to do an exhibition about women. Mark O'Neill, the curator, approached the local Community Education Department, who directed him to a Springburn Parent Teacher Association. The exhibition is based on the lives of four women from this group, who are aged from early 20s to over 50. They regard themselves principally as mothers "Our lives revolve around our weans. You might go out to work if you wanted fancy cars or holidays, but we never wanted they things".

Mark O'Neill wanted the women to have control over the content of the exhibition. The final version evolved from the group discussions, the women identifying key areas of their lives and exercising editorial authority throughout. Museum staff's involvement was supportive rather than dictatorial.

The exhibition consists of three sections - photographic panels, a domestic open set and "My Family" panels bearing stories and pictures created by children in a local primary. The panels are professionally produced by the Museum's designer and as such are a recognition by the Museum of the value of the women's experience.

Photographs used are mainly family snaps and pictures taken by the women for the exhibition, combined with a text of quotes deriving from the women's discussions. The introductory panel puts the women into the context of Springburn with the pictures of local landmarks, shops, streets and people. A photo montage of magazine clippings portraying slinky ladies reeking with perfume and caked in make-up represents "Dream Women". These images which society expects us to emulate contrast sharply with "Real Women". Real women are unpaid housekeepers, drivers, nurses, psychologists, painters and decorators. In employment agency terms a women's weekly work is worth £370.25 a week. Other panels cover families, kids and marriage. Cartoons have been used at the women's suggestion to illustrate their black humour. In contrast to the wealth of information and images elsewhere in the exhibition the "Leisure" panel is pointedly minimalist - a blue moon and one picture to say it all.

The tableau which is central to the exhibition humorously caricatures domestic life in Springburn in the 1980s. The three figures were sculptured by an artist and the women. Dad lies draped across the couch surrounded by empty beer cans and fag ash, watching Kylie Minogue on the telly. A frantic Mum is hemmed in by her sink, washing machine, clothes horse and child. These exaggerated representations are far more effective than a traditional "straight" museum set could be and are a vivid expression of how the women see their role in society.

The exhibition is important because it extends the philosophy behind oral history further than the curator fishing into an oral history archive for a few quotes. It presents topics considered important by the women themselves. It deals with a gender, woman, which is widely unrepresented in museum displays.

Though not a wide survey, the age range is great enough to illustrate varying attitudes. More detailed biographical information could have been usefully included. However, it was the women's decision not to provide this and not to attribute quotes to individuals. They are, after all, getting some very public exposure of personal views. The exhibition is impressionistic, but in no way trivialises the experience of women. Springburn Mothers are amused, cynical, annoyed, pragmatic but above all thought provoking and well worth going to see!

"Springburn Mothers" continues until November. Thereafter the 13 panels and 3 figures can be hired as a travelling exhibition for £50 plus travelling expenses. Contact Mark O'Neill, Curator, Springburn Museum Trust, Ayr Street, Glasgow.

Susan Jeffrey
Museum of Childhood, Edinburgh



EXTENDING SHIC TO POPULAR CULTURE

In many ways, SHIC has been an outstanding success. Even in the field of popular culture, it can classify the lambretta, the cinema, the disco and the credit card. But SHIC has at least one major failure - it assumes that the culture being documented comes from a homogenous community. This assumption is normally false.

The East London Borough that I work in, Hackney, has always been a demographic corridor between the City, its attendant slums and the wealthier suburbs. Less than a quarter of the total adult population are third-generation Hackney residents. In addition 25% of the population is Afro-Caribbean, and another 25% from at least ten other ethnic minority communities. We are also keenly aware of other disadvantaged groups in Hackney, none of whom share the white/able-bodied/heterosexual/male culture which seems to dominate SHIC and other analyses within the museum profession.

Hackney Museum has always used SHIC to catalogue and store its collections, but the implications of the omissions outlined above could not be ignored. Obviously, SHIC should not be unilaterally altered by one user, but it does have a lot of spare capacity outside the 1.-4. categories. I therefore devised a coherent extension, based on those associations which SHIC ignores. This extension, provisionally called **Positive Action**, uses the previously unused 5. category, the 'fifth column'.

Although designed for use in Hackney, the 5. category could (I believe) be worked up into something of more national relevance. It is designed to be internally consistent, but also flexible and open-ended enough to cope with growth and change in Hackney. Thus many numbers remain unallocated and each second, third and fourth-level group starts with 'general' and ends with 'other'. The basic layout is as follows.

5.0 deals with our three main areas of concern within equal opportunities - policies, employment and service delivery. 5.1 - 5.5 deal with ethnic minority communities - Afro-Caribbean, European, Jewish, Indian sub-continent and other Asian. 'Jewish' is perceived here as a cultural group - religious matters come under SHIC's classification of 1.112. There is provision for countries to be separately considered before and after any partition, and all languages are classified as 5. x 8. In most areas there is also ample capacity for allocating new numbers as and when our collections include material from other regions and other communities. 5.21 is, of course, slightly unconventional within the system, but it allows us to cross-reference our small non-local archaeological collection.

5.6 and 5.7 are small but extremely important cross-references. They could be extended, but at present a simple classification seems sufficient. Thus suffragette material is 5.60, 1.23 ; gay bars 5.72, 4.862.

In 5.8 the main local concerns relate to access and activities. These are seen as separate from health and welfare and cannot therefore be catalogued under 1.4. Under this system a poster for a community play by people with learning difficulties is 5.824, 1.66; a sign indicating wheelchair access 5.811. 5.9 relates to attitudes and is particularly important for printed material, badges and some photographs.

Although not perfect, positive action cataloguing has already proved invaluable in Hackney. It allows the museum to analyse collections by associations which are of great importance locally, but which do not appear in SHIC. By creating a 'Fifth column' I have been able to treat these associations with the seriousness they deserve, without interfering with SHIC as it is currently used.

I must stress that this has been designed for Hackney. I have made no attempt to include non-Hackney interests in it. However, it is designed to accommodate expansion, and I believe it could be used as a prototype in the development of a more generally useful Positive Action classification. It is, I believe, flexible enough to be useful for curators of colonial and ethnographic collections, as well as all the social history curators involved in twentieth century popular culture.

I would live to work with other colleagues to develop this prototype into something which could be used anywhere in the UK. I even have a few ideas as to how this could be achieved! The SHIC Working Party are not interested in the idea, but the Positive Action classification can stand alone, so if anyone wants to develop it further, please contact me at Hackney Museum.

Christine Johnstone

POSITIVE ACTION

5.0 Equal Opportunities

- 5.00 General
- 5.01 Policies
- 5.02 Employment
- 5.03 Service Delivery
- 5.09 Other

5.1 Black (Afro Caribbean)

- 5.10 General
- 5.11 Africa
- 5.12 Caribbean
 - 5.120 General
 - 5.121 Jamaica
 - 5.122 Trinidad & Tobago
 - 5.123 Guyana
 - 5.124 Haiti
 - 5.129 Other
- 5.17 Other regions
- 5.18 Language
 - 5.180 General
 - 5.181 African
 - 5.182 Caribbean
 - 5.189 Other
- 5.19 Other

5.2 European

- 5.20 General
- 5.21 Immigrants pre-1600
- 5.22 Ireland
 - 5.220 General
 - 5.221 Republic of Ireland
 - 5.222 Northern Ireland
 - 5.229 Other
- 5.23 Hugenot
- 5.24 Turkey/Cyprus/Greece
 - 5.240 General
 - 5.241 Greece
 - 5.242 Turkey
 - 5.243 Cyprus
 - 5.2430 General
 - 5.2431 Greek
 - 5.2432 Turkish
 - 5.2439 Other
 - 5.249 Other
- 5.27 Other countries
- 5.28 Language
 - 5.280 General
 - 5.281 Irish
 - 5.282 Greek
 - 5.283 Turkish
 - 5.289 Other
- 5.29 Other

5.3 Jewish

- 5.30 General
- 5.31 Place of recent origin
 - 5.310 General
 - 5.311 Ashkenazi
 - 5.312 Sephardic
 - 5.313 Israeli
 - 5.319 Other
- 5.38 Language
 - 5.380 General
 - 5.381 Hebrew
 - 5.382 Yiddish
 - 5.389 Other
- 5.39 Other

5.4 Indian Sub-Continent

- 5.40 General
- 5.41 Pakistan
- 5.42 Bangladesh
- 5.43 India
- 5.44 Nepal
- 5.47 Other countries
- 5.48 Language
 - 5.480 General
 - 5.481 Urdu
 - 5.482 Hindi
 - 5.483 Gujerati
 - 5.484 Punjabi
 - 5.485 Bengali
 - 5.486 Sylheti
 - 5.489 Other
- 5.49 Other

5.5 Other Asian

- 5.50 General
- 5.51 China
 - 5.510 General
 - 5.511 Hong Kong
 - 5.512 People's Republic
 - 5.513 Taiwan
 - 5.519 Other
- 5.52 Vietnam
- 5.53 The Phillipines
- 5.54 Afghanistan
- 5.57 Other countries
- 5.58 Language
 - 5.580 General
 - 5.581 Chinese
 - 5.589 Other
- 5.59 Other

5.6 Women

- 5.60 General
- 5.69 Other

5.7 Lesbians and Gay Men

- 5.70 General
- 5.71 Lesbians
- 5.72 Gay Men
- 5.79 Other

5.8 People with disabilities

- 5.80 General
- 5.81 Access
 - 5.810 General
 - 5.811 Mobility Disabilities
 - 5.812 Sight Disabilities
 - 5.813 Hearing Disabilities
 - 5.814 Learning Disabilities & Difficulties
 - 5.819 Other
- 5.82 Activities
 - 5.820 General
 - 5.821 Mobility Disabilities
 - 5.822 Sight Disabilities

- 5.823 Hearing Disabilities
- 5.824 Learning Difficulties & Disabilities
- 5.829 Other Disabilities

5.89 Other

5.9 Attitudes

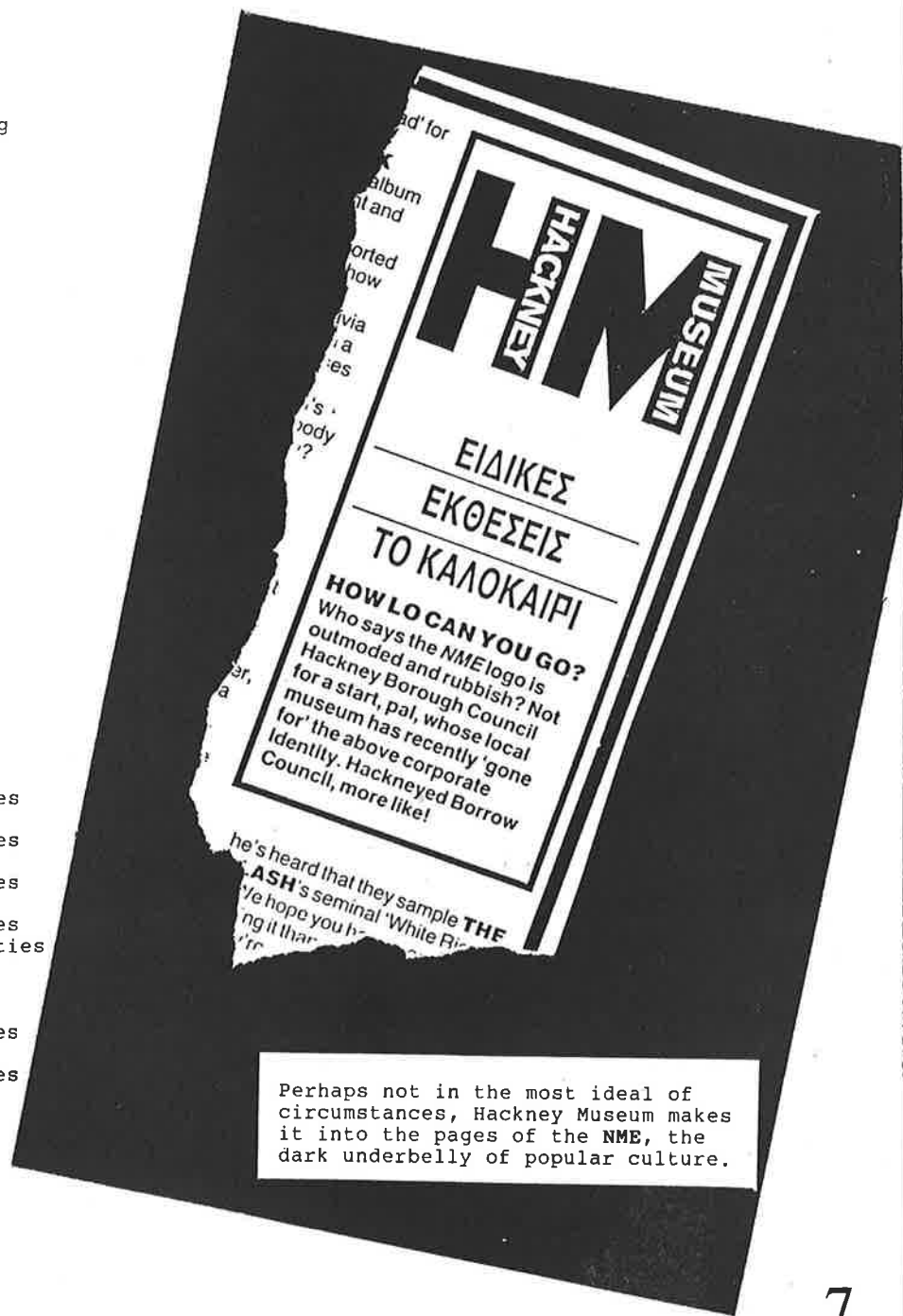
- 5.90 General
- 5.91 Positive

- 5.910 General
- 5.911 Anti-fascist
- 5.912 Anti-racist
- 5.913 Anti-sexist
- 5.914 Anti-homophobe
- 5.915 Pro-immigration
- 5.919 Other
- 5.920 General
- 5.921 Fascist
- 5.922 Racist
- 5.923 Sexist
- 5.924 Homophobic
- 5.925 Anti-immigration
- 5.929 Other

5.92 Negative

5.99 Other

Christine Johnstone
Hackney Museum 1987/1988



TV O.D.

Theme Park Britain comes to the small screen

By one of those odd coincidences of programme scheduling two documentaries covering much the same ground appeared one after the other on 11 October. Past for Sale (Chronicle, BBC 2) and Theme Park Britons (Signals, Channel 4) both examined Britain's largest growth industry, 'Heritage'. The two programmes visited many of the same sites (Jorvik, Wigan Pier, etc.) and came to much the same conclusions (the past is increasingly being packaged like fast food) yet were very different in style.

Chronicle relied heavily on heritage commentators such as Patrick Wright and Robert Hewison (who seemed throughout to be trying to out-grin Kenneth Baker). As Hewison propounded his familiar thesis that heritage equals bogus history, we were shown footage of a mock Viking battle in York. Vikings, it seemed, were proto-lager louts. As an appalling 'minstrel' put it, 'We like to drink lager/And tell dirty sagas'. Still, Jennifer Page of English Heritage denied there was any real conflict between preservation and this sort of marketing. 'There's nothing wrong with people enjoying themselves when they're at a site'.

Bob West, clearly nursing a grudge against the estate agent who had sold him a house within spitting distance of Blists Hill Open Air Museum, questioned the extent to which history runs into fantasy at Ironbridge. Blists Hill, he complained, had become a series of retail outlets from the past recycled for retailing in the present. There was no attempt to locate the museum's shops and workshops within the context of labour relations. Stuart Smith replied that he couldn't expect his staff to recreate Victorian working conditions - 'They'd all leave tomorrow'. No museum could show real history, he suggested, but a museum could and should stimulate the visitor's imagination.

Past for Sale also highlighted the ineffectiveness of conservation legislation. Some 5000 listed buildings were demolished during the 1960s. During the past 15 years 344 archaeological sites have been destroyed in London alone. It is estimated that around 75% of the city's underground history has been lost for good. Ronald Denny of the British Property Federation was unperturbed. 'Archaeologists look to the past, developers look to the future', he opined.

In Chester, one particular developer was managing to do both. A Georgian house close to the city walls ('No particular merit') is to be replaced by the Deva Roman Heritage Centre. Described as a 'Roman Eastenders', this £12 million development will incorporate a reconstructed amphitheatre together with a 'retail support centre' of some 14,000 square feet. Retailing, of course, is the key to the heritage boom. As Jennifer Page admitted, 'It's very difficult to make money out of real history'. That is why 'hamburger heritage' is being pushed so hard, why so many entrepreneurs are seeking to elbow museums aside to take possession of the past.

Signals took us to Clegg Hall, near Rochdale, where the local council has issued compulsory purchase orders on an entire village so that Multiscreen Developments can create a theme park. Their spokesman was nothing if not imaginative. He listed some of the seminal 'off-site events' which would be incorporated into the scenario - the Civil War, the Great Plague, the French Revolution. A local spoil-sport pointed out ungratefully that, not only did the French Revolution have very little to do with Clegg Hall, but that people visited the hamlet to soak up its natural beauty and to escape from theme parks.

The positive side of heritage was represented by the Bit Pit Museum at Blaenavon, 'a monument not to nostalgia but to survival'. Big Pit received no public subsidy, but attracts around 125,000 visitors each year and makes a small profit. The best compliment that the local people who created and staff the museum have received is this: 'We're glad you haven't changed it too much'.

Across the valley, at Lewis Merthyr, Heritage Projects are at work creating what most certainly is a monument to nostalgia. The Rhondda Heritage Park, which is being developed in association with the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board, promises a 'total experience' (always an ominous sign), complete with a fake coal face and tableaux stuffed full of singing, smiling dummies. Significantly, this £2 million mockery of the area's past was opened by Welsh Secretary Peter Walker. With that support it is unlikely to go the same way as the nearby Cowboy Heritage Town, a ludicrous, subsidy-chasing incongruity which lasted less than a year. As a bemused shepherd put it, 'There's got to be something better than this'.

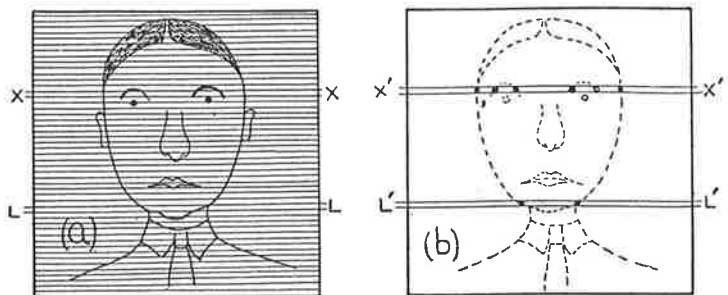
Heritage parks do tend to whitewash the past with buckets full of uncomplicated nostalgia. They do make their visitors more vulnerable to a simplified and sentimentalised version of history. But there were signs that the public is not as gullible as both the heritage consultants and their critics seem to think. As one old lady said, 'There's no such thing as the good old days. I wouldn't go back for anything'.

Both programmes stated the problems of the heritage boom clearly enough, although Chronicle seemed curiously staid and dated. Signals was more imaginatively constructed and took the bother to elicit the opinions of local people affected by heritage developments rather than merely those of pundits and professionals. Neither programme, however, took the opportunity of examining the work of those who are attempting something more honest and less superficial in their interpretation of the past. A closer examination of the function of nostalgia and the perceptions of visitors to heritage sites would also have been welcome.

As Signals came to an end, an eerie spectacle unfolded.

Various talking simulacra appeared on the screen - Queen Victoria, Disraeli and... Frank Finlay !?! There had been hints during both programmes. Talk of costume dramas, soaps, Eastenders. But now it suddenly became clear. TV and Heritage share the same obsession with surfaces, with the trivial. They play the same tricks on the emotions. Both deal in easily digestible, snack-sized chunks of life. They both create a world which is both less and more real than the real world. They were made for each other.

Ian Lawley



A SHOP WINDOW FOR SOCIAL HISTORY

This year's Museums Association Conference offered slots for professional groups to do presentations about the range of their work. SHCG jumped at this chance to display our wares. The brief for the speakers (by Liz Frostick) was as follows :
'People as the Driving Force ! - The role of Social History in Museums. Despite its late arrival, social history had dynamic and wide-ranging effects upon museums. Not only has social history changed the subjects covered by museum displays, it has inspired the way in developing new techniques of interpreting the past. The inspiration behind social history museums ? The people who live in our towns, cities and villages, and who visit our museums.'

Peter Jenkinson of Walsall gave a theoretical overview of the role of social history in expressing and creating a sense of identity and belonging. This was followed by three speakers who gave practical examples of how their work is centred on people. Liz Frostick showed slides of a series of temporary exhibitions on schooldays and leisure, which were comprehensive and innovative. She also gave tantalizing hints about the proposed permanent exhibition, due to be ready in time for for next year's Annual Study Weekend, which will take place in Hull. Denise Brace spoke about the recently opened *People's Story* in Edinburgh, where tableaux with mannequins based on real individuals, some of them still living, are used. Mark O'Neill talked about Springburn Museum in Glasgow, and the variety of ways in which people are represented in exhibitions and take part in history-based arts and crafts activities. Though the three exhibitions used a great variety of media, they all shared fundamental things in common. All three showed a solid research base, not the impressionism so often characteristic of the nostalgia industry. Oral history played a crucial part, in labels, in sound recordings available to the public, as a form of consultation about the artefacts on display and their meaning, or as taped commentary on tableaux.

The response from the audience of about 120 was very positive, and it was especially gratifying that a number of elected members seemed impressed with both the ideals and practice illustrated. We hope that the Museums Association will continue to provide this shop window for specialist groups, so that recent examples of good practice can be shared with the profession as a whole.

NUTS AND BOLTS

As most members will know, the *Museums Journal* has adopted a 'new look', where the trend seems to be a move away from didactic papers in favour of shorter, more impressionistic articles. This means that *SHCG Journal* (along with the publications of other specialist groups) has an even greater role to play in disseminating reports, papers and reviews by the rank and file of the profession.

There is still time to submit a piece for the next issue of *SHCG Journal* (17). Articles should be between 500 and 3,000 words in length, referenced where necessary, and, if possible, appended with a short bibliography for background reading. There is no need for all contributions to contain earth-shattering research or breath-taking critiques. Over the past year most of us have worked on something that is worth recording for the benefit and information of other members of the group. The subject matter could range from a 'nuts and bolts' piece on how a display or collection took place, through to a philosophical discussion of a 'pet' subject.

Reviews of recent publications should be between 200 and 1,000 words long. Please include information about the publisher, price and I S B N.

Send your contributions to the Journal Editor, **Steph Mastoris**, at Harborough Museum, Council Offices, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 7LT.

'ENGLISH LOCAL HISTORY : SOCIETIES, CULTURES AND NATION'

Leicester University's Department of English Local History pioneered the teaching of its subject at postgraduate level when W.G. Hoskins inaugurated a full-time M.A. course in 1966. Since then many hundreds of students have graduated to carry aspects of the Department's unique work into teaching (at all levels), curatorship, librarianship, archives administration and other professions. Now the course will also be available on a part-time basis, by evening study (or, by special arrangement, day-time study) over two years. Part-time students will attend seminars on *Concepts in English Local History*, two sets of practical classes on *Skills in Local History* (a choice from four periods : Anglo-Saxon, medieval, early modern and modern) and teaching which introduces, partly in the field, a case-study of a selected region; the course also entails completion of a dissertation, by individually supervised study, on a topic of the student's own choice. Part-time students will be able to make full use of the Department's new premises, recently renovated with substantial assistance from the Marc Fitch Fund: map room, computer facilities, common room, seminar series and the Marc Fitch Fund Library, containing over 12,000 volumes on topics relevant to local history. Further details may be obtained from: The Secretary, Department of English Local History, Marc Fitch House, 5 Salisbury Road, Leicester, LE1

LEARNING FROM TOUCHE ROSS ?

The Touche Ross lecture at this year's Museums Association Conference gave many curators unexpected new insights into current museological analysis. Apparently, visitors are the only users of museum services, and nationally relevant trends can be ascertained by studying visitors at just fourteen medium-to-large museum services. Even within this narrow focus, one must omit schools and all children under sixteen, as they distort the image of the 'typical' visitor.

It is also clear that, when surveying a sample of the whole population, one should only be interested in the socio-economic classes A, B and C.1, as more of them go to museums anyway. Touche Ross carry this principle to such extremes that they don't publish the (known) C 2, D and E figures, not even in their over-priced £10 spiral bound report. Apparently, more income can be generated, especially through admission charges, if you target just the A, B and C 1 population.

Seriously folks, are these consultants badly briefed, or just bad at their job ? We all know that people use museums in many more ways than simply visiting them, and that increased useage is not necessarily directly related to increased income. Why are these self-evident truths so difficult for consultants to grasp ?

If you want to market your museum to the largest potential group of users, I suggest that you look towards the group Touche Ross ignored. Their own figures, published here at no extra cost, make it clear that useage would double if manual workers visited museums as frequently as the upper and middle classes ! Time to forget the Times, perhaps, and link up with the Daily Mirror instead ?

Percentage who have visited museums during the last two years (data courtesy of Touche Ross) :

AB 68% C 1 51% C 2 38% DE 31%

Christine Johnstone
Hackney Museum

TRAINING

The co-ordination of SHCG's training programme is now in the capable hands of Sue Underwood. She would very much welcome suggestions from members respecting the future content of the programme, as well as feedback arising from past and imminent seminars and workshops.

The training programme is designed to meet your needs, so please let Sue know your feelings. Contact Sue Underwood at NEMS, House of Recovery, Bath Lane, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 5SQ.



IN PRINT

Recent Publications

Mortal Remains : The History and Present State of the Victorian and Edwardian Cemetery, by Chris Brooks, Devon Books, £14.95

Spectacles, Lorgnettes and Monocles, by Derek Davison, Shire Album 227, £1.75

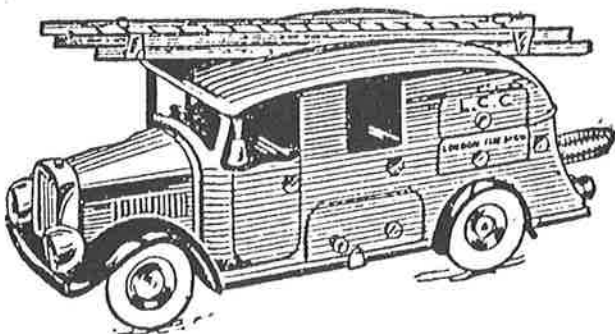
Particular Places : An introduction to English Local History, by Christopher Lewis, British Library, £8.95

The Edwardian Garden, by David Ottewill, Yale University Press, £24.95

Directory of Recorded Sound Resources in the U.K., by Lali Weerasinghe, British Library, £30.00

Limekilns and Limeburning, by Richard Williams, Shire Album 236, £1.75

Firefighting Equipment, by Brian Wright, Shire Album 232, £1.75



BOMB ATTACK ON EXHIBITION

The **Topography of Terror** exhibition on the site of the former Gestapo and SS Headquarters in Berlin (Baker 1987, 1989) was the victim of a bomb attack. The five litre petrol device was detonated at 9pm on 3 March this year. The subsequent blast shattered the windows at the east end of the building and started a fire, which did not reach the exhibition panels due to the prompt attendance of the watchman (Der Tagesspiegel 1989). No organisation or individual has claimed responsibility for the attack, although police suspect that it is the work of Neo Fascists (die tageszeitung 1989b). Frank Dingel of the **Active Museum** and supervisor of the **Topography of Terror** exhibition described the attack as a "provocation for a trial of strength" (Dingel pers. comm.). Sabine Webster, a Green member of the Senate of West Berlin, said that this attack "had to be seen in association with a series of strikes against memorials to the victims of the Nazi terror" (Der Tagesspiegel 1989). The increased activity of the extreme Right, in the form of skinheads on the streets and the Republican Party in the Senate, has led to a counter movement with anti-fascist groups "shooting out of the ground like mushrooms" (die tageszeitung 1989a).

For the **Active Museum** this has made the need for the establishment of a full scale **Active Museum of Fascism and Resistance** on this site all the more necessary, since the present exhibition is only a provisional measure. In the short term the **Active Museum** has set up in conjunction with other anti-fascist groups a telephone line for reporting racial harassment or racist graffiti (die tageszeitung 1989a). A copy of the **Topography of Terror** exhibition has also been taken to East Berlin, where it was a great success (Dingel 1989). This shows a considerable turn around since 1984 when the government of Erich Honecker (who himself had been imprisoned in the Gestapo Headquarters) jailed two architects for participating in an international competition to design a memorial on the very same site that the exhibition covers (Baker 1987, Sandrock 1987). The exhibition will now travel to the former concentration camps of Buchenwald, Brandenburg, and Sachsenhausen. International interest has been growing with the visit of the Austrian Chancellor, Fritz Vranitsky, and the institutional membership of the **Active Museum**, by the Archaeological Review from Cambridge and the World Archaeological Congress. The group working on the **Childhood under National Socialism** exhibition (Baker 1989) have now become an independent research group (Dingel pers.comm.).

Finally, while the bomb attack emphasises the great need for exhibitions to document and confront the public with the Nazi terror, so as to counter Neo Nazi propaganda in Berlin, Neo Nazi swastikas also besmirch British cities and the far-Right is becoming more vocal here too (Khanum 1989, Leeds Other Paper 1989). It is abundantly clear that anti-racist museum work (Gordon et al 1988, Hasted 1987) is as relevant in Britain as it is in Berlin.

Frederick Baker
Active Museum of Fascism and Resistance, Berlin, and
Department of Archaeology, University of Bradford



Bibliography

- Baker, F. 1987 **History that Hurts : excavating 1933-1945**, Cambridge, Archaeological Review from Cambridge 7:1, pp 93-109)
The Active Museum of Berlin, Stoke-on-Trent, SHCG NEWS 19, p 8
- Der Tagesspiegel **Brandanschlag auf Ausstellung auf ehemaligem Gestapo-Gelaende**, West Berlin, Der Tagesspiegel, 11 March
- die tageszeitung **Der antifaschistische Widerstand Waechst**, West Berlin, die tageszeitung, 15 March
Neonazis und Skins, West Berlin, die tageszeitung, 29 March
- Dingel, F. 1989 **Vom Gropiusbau zum Marstall. Die Topographie des Terrors in Berlin** West Berlin, Mitgliederrundbrief Nr 7, Aktives Museum, pp 23-5
- Gordon et al 1988 **Anti-Racist Resources**, London, Runnymede Trust
- Hasted, R. 1987 **Whose history ? Racism and Censorship**, Market Harborough, SHCG Journal 15, pp 19-23
Suggestions towards a resource list for an anti-racist social history museum, Market Harborough, SHCG Journal 16
- Khanum, S. 1989 **Wrong culture, wrong colour**, Leeds, Leeds Other Paper, 4 August, p 7
- Leeds Other Paper **Powell preaches to converted racists** Leeds, Leeds Other Paper, 28 April
- Sandrock, M. 1987 **Haft verbuesst - Geschichte bewaelltigt ?**, West Berlin, die tageszeitung 8 August

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

Having awaited the arrival of the first edition of **Eureka !** with some interest, I feel moved to express my disappointment in writing. Quickly realising that this was not a sample copy but the finished article I was struck by several negative thoughts at once ; the price, the design and the content ! While I may not have the expertise of the Editorial Board in being able to assess its appeal to young readers, I do feel competent to express concern over **Eureka's** contents and design. In striking contrast to the newly revamped **Museums Journal**, **Eureka !** looks shoddy and uninspiring. Moreover it looks old. In fact, it reminded me above all else of **Look and Learn**, with a format guaranteed to make you pick up **The Beano** instead.

The articles on 'Starting a Collection', 'What is a museum ?', 'Living Dolls' and 'Highland Dress' are worthy enough and Archie-fact is fairly harmless. But why is Archie so predictably male ? The comic strips, however, I found to be an unbalanced selection of adventure stories for boys ; 'The Last Frontier', 'The Dream Machine', 'Mutiny on the Bounty' etc.

As a woman working in museums to help dispel some of the myths of history and to aid rather than hinder attempts to eradicate sexual stereotyping, I find little to celebrate in this children's magazine. Maybe the second edition will offer some improvement.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Frostick
Hull City Museums and Art Galleries

P.S. A copy of this letter was sent to the Museums Association but it is yet to appear in the **Journal**.

SITUATIONS VACANT

Cub Reporters Required

Do you fancy yourself in a trilby and overcoat with turned-up collar, propping up the bar of some low dive, notebook in nicotine-stained hand ? If so, you could be just the sort of person we're looking for. **SHCG News** needs regional correspondents to cajole and bully social history curators throughout the country into providing news of their activities. As we all know, **SHCG** members are involved in all manner of innovative and exciting activities. For **SHCG News** to reflect the enormous diversity of social history related events, displays, projects and activities across the country we need your help. We also want your comments on topical issues such as the interim report of the National Curriculum History Working Party.

Aspiring cub reporters, please contact the Editor. **SHCG News** depends on your contributions.



BACK TO FRONT

An article entitled **Getting started : Educational activities for Children** was published in the last edition of the **SHCG Journal**. Readers may have been puzzled by the worksheets that illustrated it. Purporting to present problem solving approaches they were simply confusing. This was because, in both cases, the back rather than the front was printed ! If you would like copies of the whole worksheets please contact **Gail Durbin, English Heritage, Room 113, 25 Savile Row, London W1X 2BT**

MUSEUM INFORMATION SERVICE GOES WORLDWIDE

The Scottish Museums Council's Information Service is set to go international. The Council has signed a co-publication agreement with international publishers Routledge, of London and New York.

The monthly publication, **Museum Abstracts**, began as a way of transmitting information from the Council's Information Centre to staff in its member museums around Scotland. Each month Wilma Alexander, the Council's Information Officer, prepares abstracts of articles from journals, the press and information sheets relating to museum developments in Britain, Europe and North America. The abstracts are then sent out to subscribers each month. Since it began in 1985, the service has been popular far beyond the boundaries of Scotland, attracting subscribers from museums throughout the UK and beyond.

Routledge have recognised the importance of this service and its potential for development. Their involvement will provide resources to extend its coverage to a comprehensive worldwide overview of the literature. In 1990 **Museum Abstracts International** will be launched as part of Routledge's publishing programme, **The Heritage : Care, Preservation, Management**. The extended service will be launched at an international museum conference at The Hague in September.

For further information contact **Wilma Alexander, Scottish Museums Council, 20-22 Torphichen Street Edinburgh EH3 8JB**.

MUSEUM EDUCATION BIBLIOGRAPHY 1978-88

To mark Museums Year, the Group for Education in Museums announce the publication of the Museum Education Bibliography 1978-88 compiled by Mary Bosdet and Gail Durbin. It provides a comprehensive survey covering a broad field from art galleries and historic collections through zoos and aquaria to the natural environment and heritage sites. The Bibliography has been published with the aid of a grant from the Office of Arts and Libraries.

Entries cover both philosophy and practical applications. The references, taken from an international range of books and journals, are arranged in eight categories: History, Principles and Developments, Serving the Community, Working in Specific Subject Areas, Using and Developing Museum Resources, Outreach, Professional Development and Evaluation.

Museums and heritage sites are increasingly recognised as an exciting educational resource. At a time when their use is rapidly expanding, this publication will prove invaluable both to museum educators and curators as well as teachers and teacher trainers.

The Bibliography is available at £3.50 (inclusive of postage, £5 to overseas addresses) from Christine Ryan, National Museums on Merseyside, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EN. ISBN 1 872164 02 1.

SEMINARS AND COURSES

FOOD

SHCG Seminar
15 November, Bristol

Food, by its very nature, is not an easy subject to present in museums. This seminar, based at Blaise Castle, will look at the history of food and at ways of interpreting food, from production to consumption, in social history museums. Contact Mark Suggitt, YHMC, Farnley Hall, Hall Lane, Leeds (tel. 0532 638909).

EPHEMERA

SHCG Seminar
5 December, Hackney Museum

Museums increasingly amass large quantities of ephemera. Should we collect ephemera? How should we conserve and store it? How can it be used in interpretation? Speakers include Chris Makepiece (author of Ephemera ... Its collection, curation and use), Christine Johnstone and Steph Mastoris. Contact Christine Johnstone, Hackney Museum, Mare Street, Hackney, London E8 1HE (tel. 01 9866914).

TABLES OF DELIGHT

English Heritage, Tower of London
2 December

A public lecture course, subtitled 'Food, Festivity and Social Status', at the Tower of London's Education Centre. Speakers include Dr Sydney Anglo on The Political Significance of Banquets at the Renaissance courts. Further details from The Education Centre, Waterloo Barracks, HM Tower of London, London EC3N 4AB (01 4806358 ex 332).

Social History Curators Group

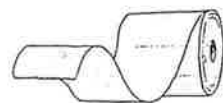
PRINTED EPHEMERA



DIRE DISPLAYS

MPG Seminar, Birmingham
20 November

Are you sick of seeing rows of Roman pots? (Yes. Ed.) Do you yearn to see a good gallery display? This seminar looks at five areas in which museums have remained in the Dark Ages of display technique. The speakers are Geoff Preece (military displays), Geoff Marsh (Archaeology), David Phillips (Fine Art), Simon Knell (Geology) and Sarah Levitt (Costume). It takes place at the Birmingham Museum of Science and Industry. Contact Helen Brown, Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery, Clarence Street, Cheltenham (tel. 0242 237431).



ENDPIECE

As this issue comes to a close, so too an era of social history comes to an end. After 100 years in the marketplace, we must now put Bronco toilet paper behind us. Future generations of civil servants, squaddies and public schoolboys will have to rely on something softer. Appropriately enough, the event was marked by a ceremonial flushing at the Science Museum.

In the meantime, the Helmsore Textile Museum in Rossendale, Lancashire, is appealing for fire gallons of human urine for use in their fulling mill. They will be relieved when their target is met.

Tuesday 5th December

Hackney Museum