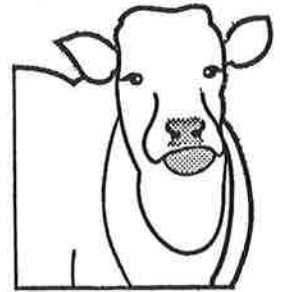


Social History Curators Group

SHCG NEWS

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Winter
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Editor: Ian Lawley, City Museum and Art Gallery,
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Annual Study Weekend 1990

The emphasis of this year's ASW, in Hull from 20-23 September, will be on how people can become more involved in museums. The emphasis will not be on how the museum can benefit from the contributions of volunteers or oral history interviews or support groups. Instead it will focus on how the museum can serve people better, by finding out more about them and by providing better opportunities for participation in exhibitions, events and activities.

There will be two keynote speakers. On the principle that we can only serve people if we know who is out there and what their lives are like, we have asked Professor A.H.Halsey (author of *Change in British Society*) to outline the main characteristics of the people of Britain and how they are likely to change in the next ten years. Kenneth Hudson (author of *Museums of Influence*) will draw on his wide international experience to talk about the Museum's Human Currency.

The rest of the weekend will be made up of practical workshops and case studies of techniques for involving people: video, photography, theatre and banner making will be covered, and practical ways of devising exhibitions with local people, working with the young and unemployed, and improving cultural, physical and intellectual access will be explored. We hope this will be an inspirational conference which enables curators to make people feel more at home in museums and to provide them with new opportunities for self-expression and creativity.

JUST FANCY THAT !

■ We must recuperate yet another Victorian value: that of child labour. Many a 14-year-old, set to work as a builder's apprentice, an electrician's mate or a stable hand, will learn far more than he could ever learn at school, while acquiring independence, responsibility, and self-respect. If the pay were sufficiently low — and children are willing to work for quite paltry sums — there would be no lack of employers ready to offer it.

Roger Scruton, professor of philosophy, Birkbeck College



Professor Scruton is currently touting his ideological wares around the finance ministries of Eastern Europe.

REVIEW: LABOUR HISTORY IN MUSEUMS

HISTORY WORKSHOP 23

3-5 November 1989, Salford University:

This twenty-third History Workshop was well attended, with a rich and varied range of papers on offer over the week-end. The theme this year was: "Class, Community And Conflict", one that echoes closely a sub-theme of recent SHCG Annual Study week-ends. Clearly the New History has come of age and the Workshop showed it to be in a most healthy and robust state. Strands this year included: Black Communities in Britain, Women's History, The Irish Community In Britain And Ireland, Working-Class Leisure, Trade Union History, Developing Countries, Peterloo, and Oral History And The Community, Individual papers ranged from 'Black Immigration And Employment' to 'The Victorian Bottom In Health', and 'Reading The Imagery Of Peterloo' to 'The Stand-Up Comedian And Working Class Culture'. The inclusion this year of a strand on labour history in museums is to be welcomed as as both academic historian and social history curator can only benefit from closer relations and fuller appreciation of the others work and resources. Each have something complementary to offer.

Seven museums, from the North, were invited to talk on the subject. This report covers two of the presentations and gives the programme synopses of two others.

Merseyside Museum Of Labour History, Liverpool:

Lorraine Knowles' paper examined why it is that 'people's history' has been ignored by many museum authorities. The benevolent individualism of Victorian collectors saw in their founding collections of classical antiquities and colonial trophies means of public self-improvement and celebration of Empire. What was local and commonplace was of little relevance. When in the 1970s Liverpool's museum service established a department of Social & Industrial History the emphasis (as elsewhere) was on collecting land transport and domestic technology. When Merseyside Museum Of Labour History was set up (within six months) in 1986 the bias towards technology interpretation within S.I.H. had continued, with most of that department's energies being spent on creating a hands-on science centre entitled 'Technology Testbed'.

As a result there are "huge gaps in the collections of Liverpool history, with nothing on football, popular music or local firms like Meccano". Add to this of course the different social value placed on much working class material. Having little commercial and investment value, unprized by the wearer/user, often symbols of poverty devalued through pawning, this material culture has proved highly perishable.

Recent departmental reforms within Merseyside Museums would seem to hold out the possibility of redressing the balance of the collections so that they are more representative of Liverpool's history as a whole. The merging of MMLH and S.I.H. into the Regional History department is at present underway, and is welcomed by the speaker. However in some areas, it was said, it may already be too late. The People's Palace museum in Glasgow represents perhaps the one exception to the late start by municipal authorities in 'people's history' collecting.

The issue of interpretation figured large in the paper. Referring to Rosemary Allen's research work on Beamish building reconstructions and displays, it was posed whether the paucity of material need necessarily be a problem. Allen is quoted: "...the mere collection of material objects is only a starting point in the study and research of social history. The student must be prepared to seek the social organization, the economy and the culture associated with the artefact... A museum of social history must encourage the visitor to think not so much about the facts but about the meanings, relationships and concepts that derive from these facts." (This of course assumes a minimum availability of material).

Problems of interpretation as seen through the current 'Heritage Industry' debate were discussed. Taking up the Hewison, Wright and West critiques it was recognized that some parent local authorities and independent museum trusts have been keen to develop the perceived potential that 'Heritage' and 'nostalgia' possess as a means of aiding and developing the local economy and employment. The emphasis is on crowd-pulling attractions and numbers, with putative 'experience' of the past achieved through the use of costumed actors/workers and reconstructed industrial and domestic environments. This has been called bogus history, a sanitized history, avoiding uncomfortable and challenging view of the past. Furthermore 'heritage' is seen as devaluing the concept of history as both a means to providing an important perspective on the past and disclosing alternative values marginalised by consensual, national histories. However does that mean we are looking for 'authenticity' in this sphere? And even if we could present shocking features of the past in a realistic way what would that do for the visitor and the comfort of the costumed interpreter? (Alternatively, how far should our interpretation range beyond the more immediate associations of the object? There is surely a limit to conceptualising upon the object and display)

The speaker recognized that all this must appear pessimistic. However a positive note was struck by referring to recent developments in social history museums, and to the unique advantages that museums have over Heritage presentation. The museum communicates through objects, the tangible, half-familiar, yet meaningful link to our past. The local museum is (or should be) involved with the local community, providing resources and facilities for local people enthusiastic to record and celebrate aspects of their past and culture. Springburn Museum, Glasgow, and the recently opened People's Story museum, in Edinburgh, were referred to as examples in this context, where community involvement is fundamental to museum documentation, displays, collecting and research. Oral history projects in both museums were of key importance in these developments. The speaker sees oral history therefore as having a dual role: "...in helping communities to come to terms with change and in helping museums to portray people's history more effectively".

The National Museum Of Labour History, Manchester:

Nick Mansfield outlined the rise of the museum and its subsequent history. The pioneer collecting of labour history memorabilia by Henry Fry and Walter Southgate provided the founding collections for the museum, opened in Limehouse town hall in 1975. At this time there were no other museums doing labour history. Prior to this, Fry and Southgate, with others, had set up the 'Trade Union, Labour, Co-operative, Democratic History Society' (TULC) in the early 1960s and through their own endeavours purchased a small terrace house in Reigate to accommodate the growing collections. The spirit of TULC continued to inform the practice of NMLH. Neither TULC members nor former museum director subsequently attended to basic documentation in respect of their collections; nor unfortunately were collections well cared for. The museum received of course a considerable amount of material from trade unions, both as donations and, problematically, as 'long term loans', with banners forming a major part of the collections. Whilst one might expect the trade unions to play a special role in this context, although concerned about their past they do not contribute greatly to the care of that past in terms of their material culture.

The museum is based on two sites: the headquarters, in the Mechanics Institute, home to the world's first Trades Union Congress in 1868; and the main public display building, which is to occupy the extensive cast iron and glass Victorian covered market, Upper Campfield Market, near to Manchester Museum of Science & Industry, in Castlefield Urban Heritage Park. The museum is recognized now as a suitable home for the collections by the TUC and Labour Party, with the museum retaining its "national role". Substantial capital and revenue funding is being made available from Manchester City Council and the Association Of Greater Manchester Authorities. The museum is independent in constitution, and "now has a future". Changes in the museum trustees are seen as important: the inclusion now of a Museum Association representative is a real boon, as is the continued presence of Jack Jones (former leader of the TGWU and the architect of ACAS), now chairman.

The museum has collections of ephemera, objects, ceramics, trade union banners and regalia, furniture, and photographs. It also has a large Archive (and Reading Room), to which will be added the labour Party's archive. Its role as a study centre is seen as important for its academic role is not to be neglected. NMLH has important collections of banners; however these can be something of a 'white elephant' as they present great conservation problems. It was decided therefore that the museum should employ its own conservator; the museum will also have its own banner conservation workshop (this is to have a public viewing gallery). It is important to get the 'style' of the museum right, for the aim is to appeal all people and create an inviting museum. The museum opens on the 7th May 1990.

Regarding collecting policy, the aim is to establish collections dealing with the social and cultural history of working people - both inside and outside the organized labour movement. But that definition is not a narrow or exclusive one. Minority communities are to figure in permanent displays. Women's history will be given due prominence too. "Work" is defined not simply as something 'paid for' but rather as something 'done'; domestic work will have its place. The museum will of course respect the collecting policies of local, regional

and national museums and archives collecting labour history material. NMLH sees its role as co-operative. Already material more appropriately placed with a regional centre (such as Warwick Modern Records Centre) is being transferred on loan.

The speaker devoted much of the presentation to a slides discussion of "objects as evidence". Trade Union material is often the only record of a particular trade union and its activities. Emblems, membership cards, and tools are indicative of artisan culture, their values and attitudes. Similarly the memorabilia and regalia of the Friendly Society, membership of which was far greater than that of trade unions. The local history museum provides useful insights for researchers and historians through its knowledge of local people, industries, and knowledge of its collections; they are repositories of a range of knowledge of value to historians. Similarly if the museum can develop relations with the historian this is mutually fruitful.

The Yorkshire Mining Museum, Caphouse Colliery:

Rosemary Preece:

"Converting a colliery to a museum has its own unique problems. There are practical problems in running a pit which still comes under the Mines and Quarries legislation, while at the same time presenting some of the life experience of those who work and still work within the coal mining industry. The museum site falls naturally into three areas: the guided underground tour, the surface buildings and machinery, and the purpose-built museum galleries.

The underground tour, by a series of displays set within the old colliery roadways, shows some aspects of working life from the 1830s to the present. Each guide is an ex-miner and brings his own unique experience to the tour. There are obvious problems of authenticity. Few visitors want to get dirty, noise levels have to be kept low or the guide is inaudible, and it is difficult to convey the sheer physical effort involved even in modern mining. In taking one pit to represent Yorkshire mining there are obvious difficulties, and Caphouse being a small, late 18th century family pit does not conform to the usual stereotype. There are no long rows of miners' terraces or council estates within view, and the area is essentially rural. But the prime function of getting coal for sale still underlies the site.

There are changes going ahead. Archive material coming in, particularly from one individual, gives immediate insight into other lives. The library is an ever growing resource for researchers. For the future there are many colliery sites to be recorded on video, and much more oral history to be done. The site has to be made more directly experiential if visitors are to feel that they have understood something of life in Yorkshire pit villages. Within obvious cash restraints and the pressure of the heritage/tourism industry there is still a lot which can be done".

Museums In Tameside:

Geoff Preece;

"Tameside Museum Service was created in 1975, following the reorganization of local government in the Greater Manchester area. Tameside was unusual in that it did not inherit any existing museum provision. But after ten years of collecting and recording, Tameside now has two important history museums in Ashton-under-Lyne.

The Museum of the Manchesters is a new type of military museum, in that the history of the Manchester Regiment is displayed in the context of the social history of the community in which it was based. This mixture of regimental and civilian history has never been achieved in a museum before, yet this makes a great contribution to the interpretation of the regiment's history. The museum is brought alive by a reconstructed First World War trench with noise, light and smell effects. 'The Museum of The Manchesters - A Social and Regimental History' opened in 1987 and has received over 45,000 visitors.

Portland Basin Industrial Heritage Centre opened this year in April. It is housed in a former fire-damaged warehouse at the junction of three canals in Ashton. The museum looks at the local society in transition over the nineteenth century; from a marginal rural economy of the mid-eighteenth century to an industrial urban society a hundred years later. The museum story includes a detailed examination of the rise of the cotton industry and factory system and the social, political and religious aspects of this rapid industrialisation. The museum story is displayed in a particularly appropriate setting and the wharf area outside the museum includes a restored 24 foot diameter waterwheel.

The development at Portland Basin serves as a good example for new directions in history museums, particularly the 'heritage centre' concept which is often linked with private commercial development".

Philip Dunn The National Museum of Labour History

SLOUGH'S STORY



Slough Museum is greeting the start of a new decade with the opening of its first permanent exhibition.

The exhibition is about the people and the town of Slough, illustrating how and why it grew from a tiny hamlet on a crossroad to the cosmopolitan town that it is today.

The exhibition features Slough's famous residents, Sir William Herschel and James Elliman, the arrival of the railway in the 19th century and of the Slough trading estate in the early 20th century and the effects of these two important events on the development of this town. A room in the exhibition is devoted to Slough in the 1920s and 1930s, years of change and growth, focusing particularly on the social life of the period. An important section on the two World Wars and their implications for the town (guess what - Betjeman's "friendly bombs" didn't come; Slough was relatively fortunate in escaping serious bombing during the Second World War. Those that did fall were comparatively isolated and most certainly not friendly) will lead into the last section of the exhibition about post war change and modern developments in Slough.

The museum's aim has been to create a lively and informative exhibition to take the visitor through from fields to factories and to the thriving multicultural community of Slough today.

A HOME OF OUR OWN

Find a typical young, married Hull couple!

This was my task during four weeks research for Hull Museums' new permanent displays at the Old Grammar School (due to open Aug/Sept 1990) to be called The Story of Hull and its people.

One section of the exhibition, which looks at peoples homes and housing is based around a period room setting. Not a period room from the past, but of a modern living room of a young married couple living in Hull in 1990. There will also be a documentary video on 'Housing in Hull' which will run from the TV set in the room and other visual information and text for people to look at on the coffee table and walls. The setting will also act as a resting place in the exhibition and so, therefore, has to be functional.

Of course, it would be easy to simply recreate our own idea of what the space should look like or what design and commercial advertising would like a home of 1990 to look like but we wanted this to be as realistic as possible which meant finding young couples who would let us into their homes. We wanted to find out where people live, the type of home and cost, how people decorate their homes, where they buy their furniture, wallpaper, carpets and the costs involved. This will provide the basis for our living room setting. More general information about their lives will give us a valuable archive for the future on what life is like living in Hull for a young couple in the 1990s.

So where does one start?

Research - written sources

I started by looking for statistical information on modern Hull and on modern life generally. When do people marry? when do they have children? divorce? etc. Acquiring this information proved quite difficult. The general census was obviously ten years out of date and the HMSO publications on Regional Trends only provided me with information on Yorkshire and Humberside, not on Hull itself. The only statistics on the city were produced by Humberside Economic Development Unit and tended to concentrate on business-related information.

More helpful were Hull City Council's Housing Department. We were interested in finding out information that would help us locate the areas our 'typical' couples might live in. Much of Hull's 272,000 population live in council houses. Of the total number of dwellings in the city (106,356) 42,481 of them were council houses (though 15% had bought their own homes) so it was obviously important to include this part of the population in our research.

Another useful source of information proved to be local estate agents who were able to tell us the most popular areas in the city for first-time buyers, the sort of prices they were willing to spend and even the sorts of jobs they had.

Locating a 'couple' proved to be more problematic.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire in the city centre, which we thought might not only provide us with information but also help find volunteers, did not really help. There were various problems with this approach:

(1) We were looking for a very specific part of the population - young married couples. Finding appropriate candidates just took too long.

(2) The people in question were less likely to answer questionnaires.

(3) To reach that part of the population (who presumably worked) it was necessary to carry out the questionnaire during a lunch period (11.30 - 2.30). People seemed less willing to stop and answer questions.

Research - press appeal

One of the ways we felt we could reach 'our couples' was to create a press story and appeal to young couples to come forward and help us with our research.

One post-war feature of Hull which still exists (as in many other cities in Britain) are the pre-fabricated bungalows, erected as emergency accommodation for families whose own homes had been destroyed during the war. Thousands were built in Hull and, although they only had an original life-span of 10 years, 383 of them still exist in the city, almost fifty years after they were first built. Within the next four to five years there will be no 'prefabs' and no record of this way of life left in the city. Many of them are now in the process of demolition.

In November last year Hull Museums were approached by the city council's housing department who, in the process of visiting tenants in 'prefabs' ear-marked for demolition had come across a 'prefab' complete with all its original fittings, the only one to survive in the city. They offered the museum the opportunity of eventually acquiring the 'prefab' (there are no plans to re-house the occupant). We discovered that the occupier was the original tenant, having moved there with her husband in September 1946 after their house had been bombed in another part of the town. We were told that the lady, now in her 80's, knew of the eventual plans for the house and was quite pleased at the idea. If she was willing to let us use the press it seemed an ideal opportunity to incorporate the search for our young married couple with this, rather interesting story.

After a preliminary visit it became obvious that she was going to provide us with some very interesting information and the 'prefab' itself was rather more interesting than we'd first anticipated.

The lady was now the only occupier in her block. Her neighbours had agreed to be re-housed in the new, purpose-built flats across the road. Where their houses once stood only slabs of concrete remained. She had not wanted to move. She had been there 44 years and was quite comfortable. Little had changed in the house since she'd moved in. The kitchen was exactly as it had been complete with its fitted units and pantry and the old gas refrigerator and cooker. All the furniture in the house dated back to the 1930s and 40s, the majority acquired after her marriage in 1936 and the oak bedroom suite, a present from her father, dated back to 1929 and had cost £27. The only note of modernity in the house seemed to be the rented REDIFUSION TV set, a late 60s model and still working. Even the wallpaper dated back to 1948.

Although she wished to remain anonymous she was, in fact prepared, to let the press photograph her house and do a press story.

It was difficult to tell just how much press interest this sort of story would generate but, in fact, all the local media became involved, from TV to radio and all of the local newspapers, carrying quite substantial features.

We had only one response to the radio appeals, although the story is still running. The real response came with the story appearing in the local evening newspaper and we now have a number of couples who have agreed to help with the research. With the three remaining features appearing this week in the newspapers we expect a further response and we are positive that we will gather together enough information on which to base our research.

Contemporary documentation

We recorded details of life in a 'prefab' (using this lady's home, acquiring a visual and oral record) but we have also looked at the history of prefabricated housing in the city. We felt it was especially important to record these details now as it is very much a disappearing part of Hull's history of housing. We feel we have been extremely fortunate in being able to record this lady's memories, as the original tenant of the property, and as the 'prefab' will eventually come into the museum collections. Further documentation will take place using the couples who have responded to our appeal. We shall be photographing their homes and recording details about their jobs, income etc.

Research - department stores and salesrooms!

Through research to establish the most popular ranges of living room furniture in department stores and showrooms, a major retail company (who have seen the publicity involved) have expressed an interest in coming in as sponsors, donating some, if not all, of the required furniture and fittings.

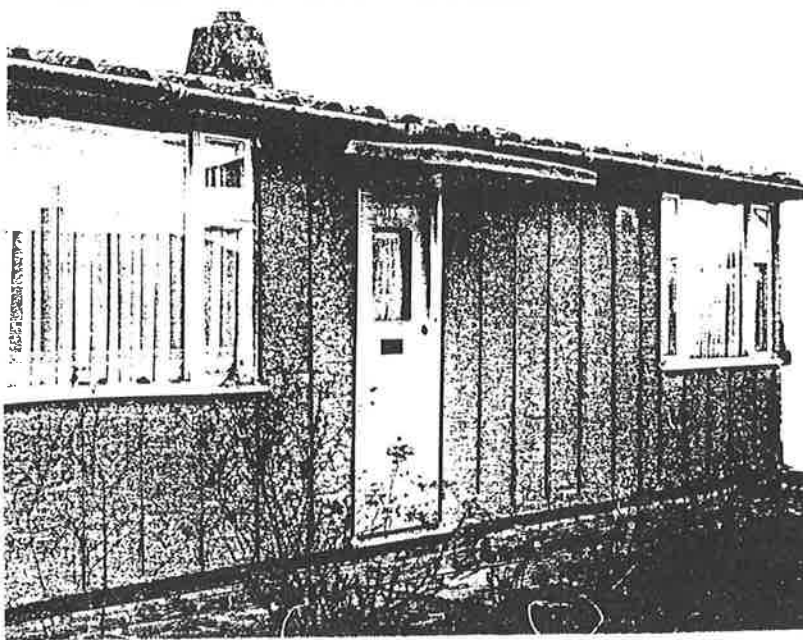
Conclusion

It is hoped that by the end of the four week period we will have an accurate profile of both a typical young married Hull couple and the interior of the home in which they live. It is from here that visitors will be able to view Hull's history of homes and housing "from the comfort of their very own home!"

P.S. As I write more and more couples are responding to our appeal, a very interesting cross-section too!, and there have been many offers of sponsorship. With 10 days still to go a lot could happen yet. Watch this space for further details!

Alison Darnbrough

Hull City Museums and Art Galleries



SOMETHING BREWING

Something is brewing at the Staffordshire County Museum on the Shugborough estate. As part of the development at the estate, museum staff are restoring many of the original interiors to their former uses. The kitchens and laundry have already been completed. Now, after three years research, work has begun on the brewhouse. The intention is to show another facet of estate life; the brewing process on a large domestic scale, in as authentic a manner as possible.

Initially, museum staff had hoped to serve small samples of the beer to visitors. This intention has had to change due to Customs and Excise regulations - As the museum charges an entry fee, it is liable for duty even if free samples are provided. The museum now plans to brew beer commercially. It is planned to open the brewhouse in April, and the first public brew is scheduled for Michaelmas (September 29 1990).

There is nothing unusual in the fact that Shugborough had its own brewhouse. Ale has been an important part of domestic life since well before the Roman conquest of Britain. Many estates had their own brewhouses, though fewer have survived.

Virtually every householder in Britain brewed some kind of ale, often flavoured with herbs (it was not until the introduction of the hop by the Dutch in the 13th century that the beverage we call beer got its name).

Brewing on a small domestic scale was nearly always carried out by women (hence the name "Brewster"), often using the laundry copper for heating the water. Larger scale domestic brewing was carried out in purpose built brewhouses, in the monasteries and on large estates this was usually carried out by men. The Housekeeping records at Shugborough show that the Housekeeper of the 1990s never set foot inside the Brewhouse throughout her entire period of service. Brewing here was the responsibility of the Butler and an odd job man he employed on brewdays.

For many, beer was the only available beverage, water being unsafe to drink. Even in the 19th century tea and coffee were still too expensive to be drunk widely. Beer played an important roll in the economy of many large estates, it formed part of both servants' wages and payment for casual workers.

At Shugborough as on many other estates brewing took place weekly. The capacity of the vessels used gave a brew length of approximately 600 gallons. If each member of staff took full advantage of their allowance they could consume a gallon a day. It is unlikely that all staff did take advantage of the situation; indeed the records show that many servants received payment in lieu of beer. If however a servant did consume such a large amount in one day it is possible that he still remained fully sober. It is most likely that the beer served up was not fully fermented. With yeast and sugar remaining intact it would have been sweet and nourishing, very much part of the daily diet.

In any case the beer was brewed in large quantities during the cool Autumn and winter months and stored in the cellars for consumption during the Summer. It is worth remembering that without a sophisticated cooling system brewing in the Summer months could be a very hit and miss affair.

Beer was not solely for the refreshment of servants. It was consumed by the family.

It is possible that they drank a different brew to that of their servants. Records show that in the cellars beneath the house there were two casks stamped Lord Anson and Lady Anson. It is probable that this beer was higher in quality, clarity and alcoholic content than that brewed for the servants. It is also likely that the beer contained in each of the casks was of differing strengths, with a stronger beer for the men. It was common practice to make two brews from the raw materials required for one brew. Once the wort was drawn from the copper more hot liquor was run over the remaining ingredients to extract every last drop of goodness. It was probably this brew that was contained in Lady Anson's cask.

Domestic brewing declined in the 19th century for a variety of reasons. Availability of other beverages and a more reliable water supply lead to a decrease in the popularity of beer. The rise of large commercial breweries with tied public houses turned beer drinking into a pastime rather than a necessity. Bottled beer became available for home consumption. Yet another reason for the decline in domestic brewing may have been the decrease of people going into domestic service due to the attraction of working in the growing industrial towns.

The brewhouse at Shugborough closed sometime around the 1870s, during the time of the 2nd Earl of Lichfield who was a keen supporter of the Temperance movement. He compiled several pamphlets about the evils associated with drink and chaired a number of Parliamentary Commissions on the subject. After the brewhouse closed, the servants were paid "beer money" in lieu of the beer allowance.

Adrienne Whitehouse
Staffordshire County Museum



**CURATORIAL CARBOLIC?
IS HISTORY NICE? THE DANGER OF THE DEFERENTIAL MUSEUM
Science Museum, London, 6 November 1989**

Railways, according to Michael Day, are at the "orgasmic end of industrial history". From his description it seemed reasonable to conclude that history is indeed quite nice - that is until he raised the awkward question of where the meat-packing industry slotted into his sliding scale of historical titillation.

The nature of the meat-packers' work presents some rather messy problems. It would be difficult to perceive and present them in an appealing and attractive way, and to include them within one of the two traditional museum approaches of triumphalism or nostalgia. So too would it be difficult to depict them as heroic (though suitably bloodied) representatives of the workforce striving for progressive achievements. Meat packing is a dirty business and as Day pointed out, "Things are not heroic when they are dirty".

Such an antiseptic antipathy may be accounted for by the deferential attitude adopted by the majority of museums. To a certain extent, deference is an inherent and unavoidable characteristic of an objective representation of history. Artefacts have to be deferred to and the institutions responsible for museums must also be afforded

co-operation and respect. However, the question of deference becomes a great deal more complex when considered in a broader context - a context which includes market forces, political trends and public taste. Whilst he acknowledged that museums are themselves historical reflections of the present, Day questioned the degree to which their presentation of the past had been sanitised and thus distorted, in order to retain their appeal. He concluded that deference would cease to exist only when the "clean" and the "dirty" aspects of industrial history were treated with equanimity.

In addressing the question of whether "true history" can be made available to the museum-goer, Brian Jamsett adopted an impressionistic and, at times, dishearteningly sceptical stance. He presented a primarily historiographical argument, pointing out that the "presentation of the past is only a reflection of our current activities" and that apart from "our history today", there is no such thing as "true history".

These observations are both familiar and valid but unfortunately preoccupation with this particular train of thought can lead only to an historical siding. Jamsett could offer little practical guidance apart from encouraging curators to strive to present as true a picture of the past as possible, to be honest and to admit doubt where necessary. He then proceeded to admit his own doubt in the outcome of such efforts.

Rob Shorland Ball readily admitted that there are certain difficulties involved in trying to make nebulous history compatible with the relative order of museums but noted that, ultimately, "we are concerned with objects not history itself". This necessary deference to artefacts does not, however, detract from the possibilities for broadening and exploring methods of interpretation and presentation. Ball's description of the various changes which have been executed during the recent reorganisation of the collections at the National Railway Museum provided ample testimony to such developments. Although the objects and academic work remains largely unaltered the emphasis on presentation has shifted from the composition of long, encyclopaedic labels to the stimulation of visitors' imagination with the aid of third person interpreters.

Other changes in approach are also evident in the abandonment of triumphalism in favour of a more comprehensive survey of the railway industry as a whole. Ball emphasised that the exhibition 'Record Breakers and Workhorses' due to open in March, will present both the underoic and the illustrious. With regard to the question of deference as defined by Michael Day, it seems that we cannot look forward to its eradication at York. The new hall will not be reflective of the original engine shed. The locomotives are still shiny and if we remember the Victorian equation of cleanliness with godliness, then the costumed third person interpreters are truly beatific!

Gordon Rintoul (who was at that time involved in an exhibition on soap) presented a lively and thought-provoking paper which highlighted the problems of deference to funding bodies. He maintained that the objective of "Catalyst" was to show the public what the chemical industry actually does and to "get beyond this facade of pollution".

In order to do this Rintoul has enlisted the aid of an ingenious smelling machine through which the visitor may savour a whole range of chemically created odours, one of which he proudly informed us was the smell of a flower shop. He neglected to mention whether eau de effluence was also available but went on to show a video of Roger McGough standing in a field, waxing lyrical on the joys of the chemical industry.

Admittedly, Rintoul has a difficult task in making the chemical industry intelligible and attractive to the public but in concentrating upon the sweet smells of its success is he deliberately presenting the kind of half-truth referred to by Jamsett?. Considering that one million pounds of Catalyst's budget is provided by the chemical industry perhaps there is little alternative to presenting a "nice history", which raises important questions with regard to the appeasement of sponsors in general. When, for example, does deference not only distort history but turn history itself into little more than a P.R. exercise?. Can financial backers turn a clean-up into a whitewash job?

The final paper discussed the issues involved in the honest interpretation of warfare. In presenting an exhibition on the 'Blitz Experience' at the Imperial War Museum, Penny Ritchie Calder sought to strike a balance between horror and glorification and in so doing, she too exercised a certain degree of self-censorship. However, the ethos which lay behind her "cleaning up" of the war, was markedly different from Rintoul's sanitisation of the chemical industry. Calder omitted the most horrific photographs of the war simply because she did not want to "pander to goulish instincts".

Nevertheless, the terror occasioned by the Blitz itself was not to be ignored. Visitors could sit in an air raid shelter and experience recreated episodes from November 1940. Calder stressed that the aims of this empathetic approach were; to be as historically authentic as possible, to provide an "educational rather than Alton Towers experience" and to complement conventional displays.

Widespread praise of the exhibition and the over-subscription of visiting parties to the Imperial War Museum proves that the presentation of "nasty" history is possible and can be extremely successful. Calder has conveyed to the public the general consensus of the conference, that history is not nice. But the question remains: can all curators afford to do likewise?.

Kath Davies,
Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum.



PRINTED EPHEMERA

SHCG Seminar, Hackney
Tuesday 5th December 1989

Hackney Museum, north east London, was the meeting place for the Printed Ephemera Seminar. The Museum stands out in the main street with its large new signing. Pressure on space and resources in the poorest of London boroughs led to this new museum opening in rapid time, but what appears to be developing is a lively display (despite minimum staffing) with a local following and an ordered store which includes a growing ephemera collection.

Steph Mastoris (Keeper, Harborough Museum, Leicester) started the seminar by presenting a project which transferred the 'junk mail' from his letter box to Nottingham Museum store, and illustrated some problems and purposes of contemporary ephemera collecting (see Social History Curators Group Journal 13). Eventually collecting points in three Nottingham houses were used which gave three different ranges of ephemera reflecting the social status of each area. The resulting ephemera collection after sorting revealed information about these three localities including current innovations like cable T.V., community events including local campaign literature, the 'hidden economy' like door-to-door delivery, and social trends such as the revival in pawnbroking. Some of this

information could not be obtained from other surviving sources.

Ray Wright (Lecturer, Camberwell College of Art), then described the scope of conservation courses at Camberwell. He discussed alternative methods of treating ephemera and their limitations, using examples of work that showed techniques of repair or support. Seminar members were invited to visit and see the College at work.

After lunch Christine Johnstone (Curator, Hackney Museum) gave a tour of the Museum. The ephemera collection is stored in ex-Science Museum wooden boxes and plan chests, items being placed in 'Secol' polyester sleeves and stored using the Social History and Industrial Classification, all within a stable environment.

Chris Makepeace (Author, 'Ephemera ... its collection, curation and use', Gower, 1985) then presented an enthusiastic discussion about which institution, library, archive or museum should house ephemera. He stressed the importance of making material available, suggesting a researcher's ideal of having all three institutions under one roof. Failing this he emphasised the importance of co-operation and communication between museums, archives and libraries particularly discussing collecting policies and targets when building collections of historic and current ephemera. He welcomed the accessibility of museums which could extend collections through people bringing material which they saw displayed and recognised.

The final session by Nichola Johnson (Senior Assistant Keeper in charge of printed ephemera, Museum of London) gave an illustration of the problems of collecting and making available a large ephemera collection (which includes the well-used suffragette collection). Internal researchers, academic students, education workers and commercial researchers (often searching to make reproductions) all use the collection. Shouldn't the last group pay for their profits it was asked? Storage methods were discussed, the scheme considered being to group material of the same kind together in the same storage bay with cross indexing (by name, date, keyword and place) to assist retrieval. Finally a publication about the Ephemera Collection was in preparation, aiming eventually to increase access to the material.

After tea members dispersed to their distant museums.

The seminar had been a valuable review of the problems and potential of collecting and using printed ephemera, and was a welcome opportunity to see a new local museum succeeding despite difficulties.

Simon Kitchin
Chichester District Museum



THATS ENTERTAINMENT!

The Old Grammar School, Hull

Hull was one of the last stops on J B Priestley's English Journey of 1933. He noted that the city had a struggling repertory theatre, battling against the Americanization of "English" culture, a process which he detested. He also felt rather paradoxically, that if this "sound and sensible" city should have to have a soundtrack, it should be blasting in from the North Sea courtesy of Sibelius. Clearly, Finnish culture was not a threat.

Since then the good people of Hull have yet to experience such a symphonic attack, but they have witnessed the decline of their fishing fleet and the accompanying unemployment. Things appear to be getting better, but, good times, bad times, people still need to be entertained. Lets go out and have some fun. Lets go to the museum.

"Thats Entertainment" is the second exhibition at the Old Grammar School Museum. It charts the history of popular entertainments in Hull, from travelling shows to pop music. It follows the successful opening show, "Schooldays" and tests the museums ability to produce diverse design solutions on a limited budget.

Lets go inside. Entering the rather cluttered foyer I was greeted by a colourful cut out clown holding a board with the introductory label, explaining what the exhibition is about. This was well done but could be overlooked by visitors as they made their way into the museum, enticed by the sounds from within.

The exhibition has no obvious route, and is arranged by theme. I entered to be confronted by "The Haunted House" penny in slot machine and the sound of seagulls. I naturally turned left and took it from there, working my round.

"Sun, Sea and Sand" looks at the development of the seaside holiday due to the increasing availability of money, transport and time off. It concentrates on the local resorts of Filey, Hornsea and Bridlington. The displays illustrate their atmosphere with Pierrot costumes, bathing suits, cameras and other beach accoutrements such as the "Mermaid Water Wings". I turned back to the "Haunted House" as another visitor had put in their 10p. and saw ghostly things appear from walls. Eek!

The lure of a Palais globe led me to the section on pop music. This section looked at the rise of jazz and dance bands through rock n' roll to the trends of today. Unfortunately, this general survey fails to mention that the invention and inspiration for virtually all popular 20th century music came from Black Americans. Nevertheless, a strength is the inclusion of local groups in what is now a multi-national business. Hull has produced "The Housemartins" but whatever happened the "The Aces" of 1959 and "Tomorrows Topic" of 1968?

Such a display needs more than objects and photographs to give it life, and this section is rich in sound. A tape of raves from the grave belts out on from juke box.

Next up came "The Silver Screen" which again puts Hull in context with international changes in popular entertainment. There are excellent photographs of Hull cinemas and the text rightfully explains their appeal, cheap luxury. Virtually everyone could afford a night at the pictures. Central to this section is a cinema booth where clips from old screen gems appear on video. A selection of British films are shown from the 1940's onwards. Thrill! to lots of cigarettes being smoked, gasp! at British stiff upper lips, be amazed! at Harry Palmers cooking, wonder! if the Romans ever did anything for us! The collection and negotiation of such diverse clips must have been damn hard work and the results are certainly worth it.

Cinema is then followed by theatre. The Theatre section is (neat this) on the stage of the old school hall. Hull's excellent collection of bills and posters has been put to good use to line the walls as you climb on stage.

The stage has a splendid re-created proscenium arch which surrounds life size cut outs of Dan Leno, Edmund Kean, Jenny Hull and Sarah Bernhardt. Presumably all these people played Hull, which had its first theatre in the mid 18C, either way they make effective use of a difficult space. Theatre continues to thrive in Hull thanks to the earnestly proletarian but highly popular plays of John Godber and Hull Truck.

Offstage, and past a superb model theatre made by a local man I passed by Madame Rosa (sees into the future - no thanks!) on the way to the travelling shows. This section comes alive (almost!) through the clever use of caged specimens of tigers, leopards, bears and monkeys stepped on top of each other. Accompanied by realistic growls and grunts it really does evoke the world of the travelling menageries of the 18th and 19th century.

Again there are excellent posters from the period. I especially liked this one -

"Just Arrived - A MUSEUM
Open 11 - 9 p.m.
Glass and Wax Models"

It probably shared billing with "A Wonderful Pig with one head and two bodies"!

There is also a section on the Hull Zoo (1849-64) which was as ill fated as contemporaries in Salford and Leeds.

The final section is "The Great Museum", a museum of a museum, looking at the role of Hull Museums from their Lit & Phil beginnings, "The first public museums were not intended to be fun". Here old cases are full of snouts of walrus, parrot fish, skulls, insects and the obligatory flying alligator. There is also the wonderful photograph of Tom Sheppard (Hull's first curator) and his staff looking like failed Mexican revolutionaries.

Overall, this is an excellent exhibition. It is colourful, well designed and graced with a brisk text that is easy to read. The graphic panels and the case constructions were all done in-house to a materials budget of only £8,000. Hull is fortunate to have in-house designers who have obviously spent a great deal of time in producing professional results on so little. The exhibition feels lively and theatrical, as it should, The breakdown into themed sections works well, indeed it is the only way so much could be packed into a relatively small space. The objects have been pickled with care and illustrate the story very well, proving that the museum is still a very potent form of entertainment which provides knowledge as well.

It was also pleasing to see two of the ideas used in "Schooldays" continuing, the use of an audio booth for visitors to listen to oral history tapes used in research and their inclusion in another excellent publication which amplifies the themes taken up in the exhibition. This is an enquiry led, not an object led, exhibition and all the better for that.

Mark Suggitt

Yorkshire & Humberside Museums Council

Footnote:

Among the visitors to this exhibition has been Roland Gift, a hull man whose pop group, the Fine Young Cannibals, have achieved huge success performing soul and dance music to Americans. I wonder what Priestley would have thought of that!

ORAL HISTORY : A NATIONAL ANNOTATED
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bob Perks, Curator (Oral History) of the National Sound Archive and Secretary of the Oral History Society is currently compiling the first bibliography of oral history in the United Kingdom, due to be published by the British Library National Sound Archive during 1990. It will contain many hundreds of entries - books, pamphlets, articles, catalogues and tapes - about, based on, or using oral history. The emphasis will be on works published in English and readily available in the UK.

The bibliography aims to cover every aspect of oral history including local community oral history books; publications about the uses of reminiscence in health care and gerontology; autobiographies and biographies which have been produced using oral techniques; practical/technical considerations of oral history tape recording; the applications of oral sources; the use of life story work in education; oral archives in libraries, record offices and museums; dialect and oral traditions etc.

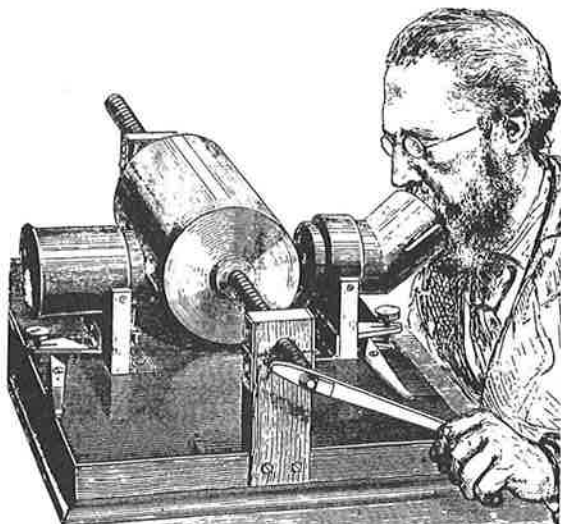
It is intended that the bibliography will be subject-indexed, easy to use, modestly priced and regularly updated, so that it will become an invaluable guide for local historians, researchers, librarians, archivists, teachers and anyone interested in recording and listening to history.

In order to make the bibliography as comprehensive as possible Dr Perks is appealing for details of any relevant publications produced by members of SHCG, or of any publications produced locally of which you are aware, for inclusion.

The information required for each entry is:

Author(s) full name(s) Title (with subtitle)
Place of publication
Publisher
Date of publication (editions)
Number of pages and whether a bibliography is included
Annotation of content in brief

Contact Dr. Robert Perks at the National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS (Tel: 01 589 6603, Fax 01 823 8970)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Ian

I am interested in tracing any trade union or reform banners, known to have been used in the Chartist Movement.

Several museums including Carlisle, Bristol, People's Palace in Glasgow and Edinburgh have collections of reform banners used in the Peterloo period and during the reform crisis of 1830 to 1832. I have not come across any Chartist banners. There is evidence of a rich tradition of specifically Chartist banners; Professor Gwyn Alf Williams in his introduction to John Gorman's Banner Bright, quotes a large number used at a Chartist demonstration in 1840. These include specific representations of Fergus O'Connor and other Chartist leaders. It may be that these banners have not survived because many Chartists became respectable Liberals in the late Victorian period and wanted to conceal their support for Chartism in the 1830s and 1840s. If any members know of the whereabouts of any Chartist banners or emblems, I would be pleased to hear from them.

I am also trying to trace any trade union banners or emblems which have a union flag in one corner. The National Museum of Labour History have an early Tin Plate Workers' Society banner believed to date from circa 1822 and there are other examples in the Edinburgh collections and in that of the Museum of British Naive Art in Bath.

The union flag was probably used to demonstrate the respectability and non-seditious nature of the trades unions during a period when trade societies were sometimes illegal.

The union flag is used in a similar way to the union flag in the corner of regimental colours in the British Army.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Mansfield
Director, National Museum of Labour History



Dear Editor,

I was interested in Christine Johnstone's article on extending SHIC to popular culture (SHCG News 21 p6). I too have felt that this form of classification does not do justice to the complexities of life, even life as seen by museum curators; but on both

four or five branches will receive them. The concept of purpose is just as intractable as colour in this respect. Reading through SHIC, you enter a world of inflexibly subdivided hierarchies of definition, not corresponding very satisfactorily with real life. The activity of keeping a pig in your back yard, for instance, is separated by many pages of small print from that of keeping a pig on your farm. This is not a particular defect of SHIC : it is an ingrained fault of this whole kind of classification. If you are going to cut up the seamless unity of life into little strips, wherever you make the breaks they will be illogical.

When a system of divided headings is put into practice, the complex colours of nature have to be arbitrarily allocated to the red, green or blue branches of a rigid tree. Since there are no logical grounds for discriminating in these borderline cases, it is all done by precedents, hunches and rules-of-thumb. The published instructions for using SHIC are baroque in their complexity; and they are only a partial codification of the oral tradition in its originating museums. Hence every museum which takes over the system begins to evolve a distinct dialect if it, based on in-house precedents and habits. This occupies energy which might be better spent on devising a system free of the irremediable faults of divided headings.

As time passes, moreover, the arbitrary divisions of social reality required by such systems begin to have a dated flavour. It becomes clear in retrospect that apparently natural primary headings (Work, Home, Community Life etc) only reflect the worldview of their time. I suspect, for instance, that the Dewey system of classification for library books was devised by a man who did not regard looking after babies as a fundamental human activity; at any rate, he puts childbirth on a completely different branch of the system from infant care. It wouldn't be done that way today. Associations which seem natural to us now will in turn be absurd to future generations : after all, an Elizabethan Dewey would have automatically shelved witchcraft and homosexuality under the heading of crime.

If classification by a system of divided headings has all these disadvantages, why should it have come into use at all? I suspect that it has floated into our lives on a tide of ideological prestige. There is a neatness and finality about a rigid classificatory tree which has had its devotees since the early days of science : I believe it was Sir Thomas Urquhart, the 17th-century translator of Rabelais, who published a scheme for a universal language based on his principle. No-one ever learnt to speak it, not surprisingly, since the system required the words of virtually synonymous meaning be distinguished only by their final letter.



practical and theoretical grounds I would suggest that we abandon SHIC and related systems altogether, instead of struggling to produce more acceptable variants of them.

Whatever our abstract motives may be, we classify social history with one practical aim : to remind ourselves of the likenesses and associations between different things. Whether mounting a display or answering a query, we need a formal aide-memoire which will link up hammer and tongs, needle and thread, pepperpot and salt-cellar. The technique which SHIC applies to this task is one of division and subdivision of concepts. The world of museum objects is separated into primary headings, which are, as it were, the main limbs of a tree. These subdivide into lesser headings, like branches; these again divide into more headings, like twigs. The actual objects for whose benefit all this conceptual structure is raised sit at the end of the twigs, like leaves.

To use this system - to get from some individual object to the other things associated with it - you make a tour of the neighbouring twigs on the same branch, checking all the things classified under the nearest heading of the system. Then you turn to the adjacent branches and go round all their twigs; and so on until you are satisfied.

Now this way of doing things has an inbuilt defect : to build up the system, you have to focus in on one field of observation, and describe your objects in terms of that alone. For instance you could, in a perverse moment, order all your social history objects by colour. Your classificatory tree will then have elegantly subdivided branches for green, red and blue, but no branch for square, because shape is a different conceptual field, incompatible with colour.

In fact all existing systems of divided classification for social history work within a conceptual field of use. They focus on the purpose and function of things, to the exclusion of any other consideration. Certainly 'things used by road-menders' is a more useful heading than 'light blue things', but a blinkered concentration on function has its faults. Supposing that a mystery object, shaped more or less like a pair of pliers, is brought in for identification. Plier-shaped things can have all sorts of functions, from leather stretchers to blacksmith's tongs. The existing systems of classification are powerless when a query calls for the conceptual field of shape rather than use.

Suppose, then, that we classify our objects more than once, using all the different conceptual fields that we think we shall need. We will then have four or five trees instead of one. But there will still be a problem. In terms of our classificatory tree for colour : which branch will have purple twigs, the red one or the blue? All the colours which naturally merge into each other will have to be arbitrary split up, and it is unclear which of

It took the genius of Linnaeus, creating a system for the study of plants and animals, to make something useful from this principle of divided headings. In his classificatory tree, a kingdom is divided into classes, classes into orders, orders into families, families into genera, and genera into species. The terms which he used for his headings were taken from the Latin vocabulary for military and fiscal administration: genus, familia, ordo, and classis were originally groups of Roman citizen-soldiers, not flowering plants.

What keeps the Linnaean system from becoming a superseded historical curiosity is its basis in evolutionary fact. Members of the class of mammals are grouped together, not because of the prejudices of a dead naturalist, but because they are all literally descended from one ancestral species. This contrasts with the essentially arbitrary nature of divided systems of classification when applied to any other subject. But the Linnaean system had an appeal far outside the area of its practical value and truthfulness. In the last century, it became the dominant model for any scientific analysis - a dominance which may have been rooted largely in the political and military images carried in its vocabulary.

Classification, for the Victorian naturalist-inventor, became a metaphor for government. Birds and beasts were taken out of a state of wild ambiguity and pinned down to an ordered place in a hierarchy of definition. Killing them was an important part of the process, because it narrowed the conceptual field of the naturalist to exclude things like habitat and behaviour, and focussed on anatomy and form, which is what the Linnaean system required.

And so they set up the dismal series - series is another of these Roman parade-ground words - of stuffed birds and pinned butterflies to fill the early county museums. It was natural for the specimens to be set out in classified rows, since when these museums began life, cataloguing was synonymous with storage, and storage was the same thing as display. Everything in the museum was on show, and everything that could be said about it was said on the label.

We are free now to catalogue our collections irrespective of the way in which they are stored and displayed. Natural history is no longer the dominant model of museological thought that it was, for instance, at the inception of the MA. And yet we continue to use systems like SHIC, which have simply taken a pattern of thinking from biology and transposed it to the very different world of human culture. As I have suggested, classification by divided headings carries within it some rather shady images of power and domination. It has many practical disadvantages. It is worth persevering with at all?



Of course the reader may object that classification by division has one merit: it is already here. If we abandon SHIC, what shall we use instead? I am certainly not offering a blueprint for any single replacement system. Despite the long-established proselytising of the MDA, I doubt whether a single unified catalogue of everything in museums would be a good idea. It is as dull for two museums to use the same classificatory system as it would be for them to have identical gallery design. All I can offer is a few comments based on my own way of doing things.

Firstly, the totality of a museum's specimens usually has to be divided, for administrative purposes, into a number of collections. The identity of these depends on what you have, and what you are trying to say. If you have ten thousand thimbles, a Thimble Collection would be a good idea. If you have two hoovers and a dishcloth, there isn't much point in having a Homecraft Collection.

Classifying a Social History Collection is therefore a matter of choice, a middle way between competing senses of identity. If you have defined such a collection, it is simplest to open classification by describing an object as it appears in two separate fields - firstly what it does, and secondly what it does it for. A church, for instance, tells the time (immediate use) and does it for the church (ultimate purpose). That gives us one entry in each field, but there could be more. A Swiss knife has several immediate uses. A war-memorial-cum-drinking-fountain has two ultimate purposes. And so on. The best way of cross-referencing the terms in these two fields is to link them up to a more abstract level - Sport, Transport, War etc. To avoid the deadening effect of divisive classification, it helps to link a single base term to several abstract ones: thus Church will cross-refer to other terms linked to Religion and Social Services as well as Buildings. If you use a card-index system, this process will get you from one thing to something else like it - from church clock to almshouse sundial - in a few minutes, giving faster and more wide-ranging associations than SHCI. On a computer things are quicker, since once you have entered the terms for the thing you have, or the sort of thing you want, the programme will produce an instant list of the ten available entries most closely related to it.

The number and description of fields varies according to collection. If you want to index all those thimbles, immediate use and ultimate purpose are superfluous categories, and you turn to fields of material and design. A collection of tools will need an extra field for shape. The choice is yours.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Harte
Curator, Bourne Hall Museum

THE GREAT WASH

May 13 1990 sees a special event at the Staffordshire County Museum at Shugborough Hall, to be called 'The Great Wash'.

This is to take the form of an experimental spring clean. Based in the restored laundry and kitchens, and inspired by recent research into the Anson housekeeper's account books, the event will include making new straw paliasses, wool mattresses and feather beds. Other activities will be cleaning and soaping bed ticking; making lye, ash balls, soap, starches, herb rinses, insect repellents and stain removers; using a box mangle and flat irons etc.

The museum is anxious not only to provide an interesting day for the visiting public, but also to enlist the advice encouragement, criticism, experience and physical support of anyone who knows anything about the subject, whether practical or academic. At the same time the museum will publish a catalogue of its laundry collections. If you have a pet theory or process you want to try out, contact Pamela Sambrook at Shugborough (0889 881388).



EXHIBITIONS

GLOVES FOR FAVOURS, GIFTS AND CORONATIONS

9th February to 21st April
Museum of Leathercraft, Northampton

VICTORIAN CHILDHOOD

5th March to 3rd June
Cambridge and County Folk Museum

An exhibition examining the reality of childhood as experienced by different social classes within Cambridgeshire during the Victorian era.

MAKING HISTORY

14th April to 27th May
Stoke-on-Trent City Museum

An exhibition looking at ways in which local people are responding to changes affecting the life of the community and ways in which we use history.

COMING EVENTS

RECORDING THE COAL INDUSTRY

24th March 1990
The Scottish Mining Museum,
Newtongrange

Coal mining is Scotland's oldest industry. It was at one time its most important industry, employing 180,000 people at its peak. Coal has played a major role in making the mould from which the nation's cultural and economic form was cast. It has had a greater physical impact on the landscape than anything since the ice age. The significance of the industry is beyond doubt. The conference will examine the roles and experiences of a range of people who are engaged in recording the Scottish coal industry.

Further details from The Scottish Mining Museum, Lady Victoria Colliery, Newtongrange, Midlothian, EH22 4QN (031 6637519).

INTERPRETING WOMEN'S HERITAGE

5th - 8th April
WHAM, Edinburgh.

Speakers at WHAM's annual conference include Helen Coxall, who will examine the ideologies which inform museum texts, Judy Attfield, talking about Harlow New Town, Sian Jones on Medieval Women and Helen Rees, the new Director of the Design Museum. Jan MacKay and her colleagues will talk about the Springburn Mothers exhibition, which is travelling to the conference. The conference will also visit Edinburgh's People's Story and Museum of Childhood, together with the People's Palace, Glasgow.

Further details from Jane Kidd, Paisley Museum, High Street, Paisley, Renfrewshire, PA1 2BA.

LABOUR HISTORY IN MUSEUMS IN THE 1990's

26th April 1990
SHCG/Society for the Study of Labour History, Manchester.

Speakers include Lorraine Knowles on Merseyside Labour History Museum, Dai Smith on Labour History and Heritage, Glen Jordan on the Butetown Oral History Project and Myna Trustram on the National Museum of Labour History.

Further details from Nick Mansfield, Director, National Museum of Labour History, 103 Princess Street, Manchester, M1 6DD.

WOODLAND CRAFTS - PAST AND PRESENT

26th April 1990
Folk Life Society, Reading University

Details from Roy Brigden, Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, Reading, RG6 2AG. (0734 318663)

TAKING THE INITIATIVE - SOCIAL HISTORY IN MUSEUMS 1990-2001

21st May 1990
SHCG, York.

The growth of the heritage industry and tourism, and the wider changes in society which it reflects, often appear to have arrested the initiative from museums. This seminar aims to look ahead and set an agenda for the next ten years, not just in response to outside pressures, but in terms of social history and how it can contribute to people's lives. Speakers include Roy Porter, Val Bott, David Fleming, Stuart Davies, Chris Johnstone, Rosie Crook and John Williams Davies.

Further details from Mark O'Neill, Springburn Museum, Ayr Street, Glasgow, G21 4BW. (041 557 1405)

THE YOUNG ONES

9th June
Textile Society, Bethnal Green Museum

One day seminar on children's clothes, including boy's clothing and 'clothkits'!

Details from Freda Chapman, Bryony, Gasden Lane, Witley, Godalming, Surrey, GU8 5RJ. (042 8793703)