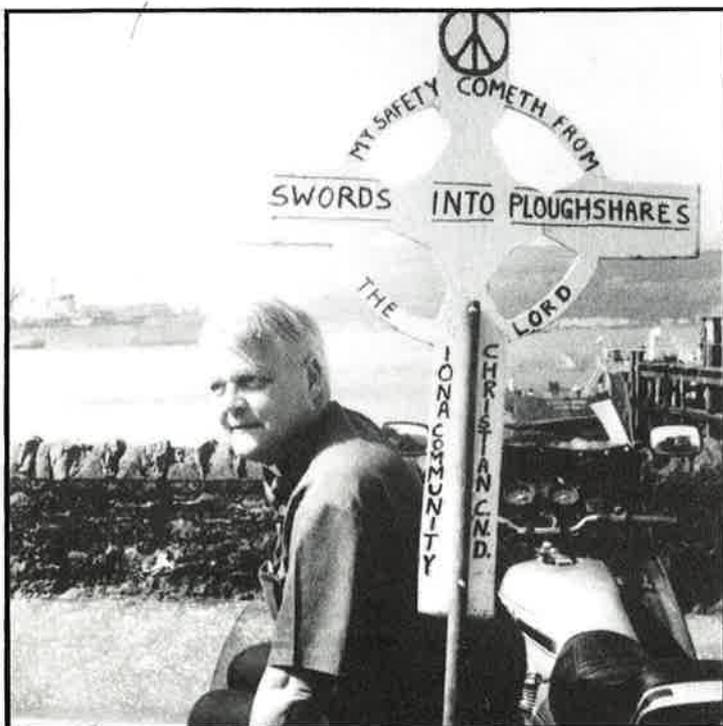


## MAKING CONNECTIONS



Bruce Kent (see "A Peace of Advice" page 7)  
Photo © George Outram & Co.

### *The Chair Scribbles*

Why do museums fail to attract certain groups of people? This is the central question addressed in Nick Merriman's stimulating new book, **"Beyond The Glass Case"**. Using information gathered in a nationwide survey of people's attitudes towards the past, museums and archaeology, the book demonstrates that there is a high level of popular interest in 'history'. Suggesting that cultural deterrents are more significant than structural ones, Nick Merriman argues that museums need to develop new approaches in order to engage that interest. As one of the principal means by which people gain access to their history, museums must become more community-focused. Above all, he suggests, we should accept that the days of the monolithic museum are over. Visitors will not necessarily interpret displays in the ways intended by the curator and we should recognise the existence of plural histories.

An awareness of the need to empower and involve individuals and groups within the community is a key motivation for many social history curators currently working in museums.

Nick Merriman acknowledges this, citing Springburn Museum, Edinburgh's People's Story and community-led exhibitions such as The Miles Tae Dundee and The People's Show as examples of good practice.

The commitment of social historians to fostering greater community involvement was also emphasised by Val Bott during the recent M.A. seminar on Building New Relationships and Audiences. Social history museums, she suggested, had succeeded more than most in connecting with a wider audience. Even allowing hyperbole, I think this is true. Recent study weekends have revealed a remarkable degree of open-mindedness, enthusiasm and genuine commitment to serving a wider public among SHCG members. Although there is still more work to be done, I believe that our members are making a positive contribution towards the opening up and democratisation of museums.

Annual study weekends provide a welcome opportunity to focus on theory and practice in museums and to meet and share experiences with colleagues working in a wide variety of situations. Recent study weekends have been very well attended. This year's should prove no exception. A new series of training seminars has also been organised. For one reason or another, however, some members are unable to take part in these activities. This issue of SHCG News contains a questionnaire which we hope all members will be able to complete. It is designed to provide a demographic profile of the group's membership and to help us assess and improve the quality of services offered by SHCG. An analysis of the results will appear in the next issue. By filling in this questionnaire you will help share the future direction of SHCG.

### ANNUAL STUDY WEEKEND

By popular demand, this year's Annual Study Weekend looks at collecting. Is it a vital museum activity? Or a form of anal retentive behaviour? Is trying to "fill gaps" a pointless exercise? Or a way of opening up to new audiences? And is it okay to get rid of things? Tentatively entitled 'Lifting the Lid', the weekend will be held in Kirklees from Thursday, 10 to Sunday, 13 September. More details and booking forms will be available in April, but put the dates in your diary now.

10th - 13th SEPTEMBER '92

# FOR I KEN MYSEL . .

## "FOR I KEN MYSEL' BY THE QUEER-LIKE SMELL THE NEXT STOP'S KIRKCALDY"

Kirkcaldy is synonymous with the linoleum industry. Floorcovering made in Kirkcaldy were, and still are, used in homes and buildings throughout the world. Indeed, the town became famous as one of the smelliest in the country, because of the manufacture, much to the chagrin of its citizens.

Last year Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery decided that the importance of the industry both past and present merited a large-scale exhibition. It will run from 22nd August to 11th October 1992 and sections will be available for touring.

The history of the museum itself has been inextricably linked to linoleum. Built as part of the burgh's war memorial in 1925, the museum building was funded by the Nairn family, the most famous of the linoleum manufacturers. The museum used to be dwarfed by the massive factories of Barry, Ostlere and Shepherd, the other major firm, that surrounded it. Sadly, the latter were demolished in the 1960's, victims partly of the increased domestic use of carpets. Nairn, however, survived and are still in production. As linoleum is made from natural products Nairns claim it is "environmentally-friendly" in their marketing and the last few years have seen a revival in its use. The opportunity has therefore been provided to record life in a present-day linoleum works and compare this with working life and techniques of the past.

Surprisingly, little serious research into the local companies has been made. A Nairns' company history was produced in the 1950's but, like many company histories, it emphasised the owners and business history with less emphasis on workers' experiences and social life. Research undertaken by the museum into all aspects of the industry will be incorporated in the displays and accompanying booklet. The topics currently being researched are the two main strikes in 1872 (about hours of work) and 1939 (over union recognition) and the lives of the owners. One of the bosses, John Barry, also an MP in County Wexford, was a rarity: a leading businessman in Scotland and also a supporter of Sinn Fein.

One of the most exciting aspects of the research is speaking to, and interviewing, people who worked in the factories. Again, very little oral history has been done in the past among the very large number of linoleum workers in the area so we now have a chance to rectify this.

The exhibition will cover many themes from the 1820's, when Michael Nairn first set up a canvas factory, to the present. Subjects will range from working and social lives to the design and uses of linoleum. The museum has many samples of products, tools, pattern blocks and printing benches. Some of these will be hands-on exhibits. Photographs from the past, including interesting images of WW1 women workers, will be displayed with photographs of modern practices.

One of the most impressive artefacts we have is a large model made out of cork depicting a Portuguese cork plantation. Cork was one of linoleum's main ingredients and was exported



*Women unloading cork, one of linoleums ingredients,  
Barry, Ostlere & Sheperd's. First World War.*

from Portugal to Kirkcaldy harbour. Also, we have a number of floorcloths (a forerunner of linoleum) banners made by the workers. These are unusual in that instead of expressing workers' solidarity or demands, they offer good wishes and support to the Nairn family. The banners were paraded on annual excursions in the 1900's. We hope that more information about their manufacture can be found. One explanation is that they formed part of the paternalist strategy of Nairns. The fact that it was a family-run firm enabled the Nairns to attempt to make the employees identify with the family and hence the company. Indeed, in parading banners celebrating a Nairn family marriage the workers were allowed to some extent to participate in the rites of passage of the owners' family, but only at a distance. It has been argued that this is an example of the "theatre of paternalism" with workers participating but not playing leading roles.

The exhibition will be sponsored by Forbo-Nairn who are to lay a specially-designed linoleum floor in one of the display rooms. Tours around their works, and talks on the subject, will take place when the exhibition is on.

The touring section will consist mainly of photographs and display panels that will show the great scale of the industry and the incredible range of designs produced.

*Gavin Grant, Asst Curator, Kirkcaldy Museum*

For further information please contact the museum  
Tel : (0592 260732).

# NEWS FROM THE NORTH EAST

For most of the competitors at the Winter Olympics, it was downhill all the way. This is hardly the case for the region's museums, which face an uphill struggle as they strive for perfection against the perversity of reduced revenue and capital budgets. Nevertheless, there's still plenty going on. "**A Portrait of Ashington's Past**" was the title of an exhibition held in the Woodhorn Church Museum in Wansbeck District early in the new year. A large collection of posters was found in the attic of a building in Ashington, once the home of Edward Davison's printing works which produced the Ashington Advertiser. These posters, dating from the 1940's and providing a valuable insight into life in Ashington, were donated to the Museums Service. Subjects such as political meetings, dahlia shows, football matches and leek shows are covered in the collection. Alongside the posters were black and white images taken by local photographer Mike Critchlow, which chronicle life in a changing community during the decline of the Ashington mining industry from 1977-87. Interestingly, these photographs were purchased by the Museum with the aid of a 50% grant (£800) from the V & A Purchase Grant Fund. The Fund will support social history applications providing a good case is made, as I can confirm having attempted to purchase a 1902 League Championship Football Medal won by Sunderland Athletic Football Club.

(In the event, I was unsuccessful at auction but that, as they say, is another story.)

Moving on from the contentious issue of the mining industry to that of the Health Service, the subject of an exhibition at the Dorman Museum in Middlesbrough which continues until 25 April. "**Good Health**" looks at the history of health care in the town from the 1840's workhouse provision to the current debate on the future of the NHS. Working in consultation with a local GP, Richard Devaney found that he had to reconcile a medical bias with a social historical interpretation. The exhibition is thematic, allowing the sharp contrasts in medical practice over the years to be starkly highlighted. Videos, lectures and debates on health issues have been planned with the exhibition. South Tees Health Authority is working closely with the museum regarding health awareness campaigns and leaflet drops etc. A series of talks was arranged for the museum staff on health matters - the one on stress was particularly well attended!

A glut of publications has emanated from Langbaugh on Tees in recent months. "**The Lifeboat Trail**" takes the reader on a voyage to discover the history of the North East coast's lifeboat stations from Tees Bay to Whitby, starting at Kirkleatham Old Hall Museum. The Museum Service has under its care, 'Zetland', the oldest surviving lifeboat in the world, built in 1802 and now housed in the Lifeboat Museum in Redcar, and the 'Sir James Knott' - Redcar's last regular offshore lifeboat in service from 1972-1985. Author David Phillipson (*an ex-member of the Redcar lifeboat crew and founder member of the Lifeboat Enthusiasts Society*), happens to be the museum's photographic technician.

This 24-page illustrated volume is available from Kirkleatham Old Hall Museum, £2.49 plus postage and packing.

"**Heartbreak Hill - A Response to Unemployment in East Cleveland in the 1930's**" was published in line with an exhibition of the same name produced jointly by the Museum Service and South Cleveland Heritage Centre.

The exhibition and publication relate a number of schemes devised to alleviate unemployment in the 1930's which, at worst, affected 91% of the male population in 1933. These include the establishment of an experimental farm, Heartbreak Hill, which provided cheap produce and an opportunity for work. The book (48pp) is illustrated and costs £2.50 plus postage and packing. The exhibition is available for hire and costs £150 plus transport and insurance.

"**Kirkleatham - A History of the Village Estate and Old Hall Museum**" (24pp), written by Phil Philo, is littered with black and white and colour illustrations and costs £2.50 plus postage and packing. It accompanies a new permanent display of the same name recently opened at the Museum. Last September, when we all thought that care of collections had been put on hold for the foreseeable future, a strange thing happened - a new purpose-built store was opened at Kirkleatham Old Hall Museum by Peter Longman, Secretary of the Museums and Galleries Commission, which had supported its construction with a capital grant. Despite the many problems encountered, the store provides a splendid opportunity to re-group the Service's reserve collections under one (complete) roof on-site as opposed to the three District-wide dilapidated ones before.

Talking of nostalgia, 8 November saw the opening of "**Monkwearmouth at War**" - an exhibition which looks at the effects of war on a local community initiated and developed in co-operation with the Monkwearmouth Local History Group. Never before in Tyne and Wear Museums had there been such formal links with the community - a relationship which certainly produced its thrills and spills but one which came good in the end. Back in 1990 a weakness had been identified in that local history exhibitions were produced without local consultation. At the same time there was a very worrying decline in the number of people visiting Monkwearmouth Station Museum which was primarily a pure railway/transport museum. It was thought that a local history exhibition would be popular. I approached the Monkwearmouth Local History Group to see if it would assist with an exhibition for the museum instead of producing its own in the local branch library. The Group agreed. Meetings were held and we decided that the Wartime subject was suitable because it affected everyone either directly or indirectly. It was emphasised that photographic material and oral information would be expected to come from the Group and supported by additional material from the museum collections. As time went by it became clear that the Group's idea of an exhibition was different from mine. However, with a little give and take and perseverance we came closer together. A small sub-committee was set up to assist with the exhibition. The Group provided the personal touches (memories, photographs and objects); one of the members had the bright idea of building a reconstruction of a brick air-raid shelter which I enthusiastically took on board, wishing I had thought of it myself! In the end the venture worked, despite the fact that I had

to make a lot more key decisions about the exhibition than I had anticipated. The Group was obviously pleased and proud to be associated with the finished product. Generally, the exhibition has proved popular. Visitor figures for November were up by 800 on the previous year and it does seem to be achieving its primary goal of passing on the memories of War and the impact it has on everyone's lives. For the duration, volunteers from the Group will be talking about their wartime experiences to school parties and will be involved in other activities to promote the exhibition. "**Monkwearmouth at War**" closes in August 1992.

*Martin Routledge, Assistant Keeper,  
Social History, Tyne and Wear Museums*

## A BIT TACKY

As for the rest of Tyne and Wear, despite the Dallas-like machinations within the Service, progress continues apace. Christmas shoppers in Sunderland were enlightened by the illuminations adjoining the Museum and Art Gallery. None other than the great J M W Turner, subject of the Tate's touring exhibition, 'From Turner's Studio', was portrayed in neon lights, holding his own amongst the reindeers, holly leaves and other Christmas decorations. Talk about taking art out to the people - an inspired move by my art colleagues. In similar vein, the Good Samaritan's slot in the BBC TV's 'Hearts of Gold' programme last December came from the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. An unsuspecting visitor helped to reconstruct a piece of contemporary sculpture which had suffered at the hands of a cleaner prior to a private viewing by a Baroness in the form of Esther Rantzen. A bit tacky, perhaps, but it didn't stop the Laing exhibiting the same BBC-created sculptures for a week, alongside a drawing by Ms. Rantzen of the design for the self-collapsing work of art! Popular - or what?! Meanwhile, back across the city at Blandford House, we are hoping that our bid within Newcastle's City Challenge package will by now be secure. This will allow the first of several phases to begin, launching the redevelopment of Blandford House - soon to be called the '**Newcastle Discovery**'. The first phase, "**City and People (Newcastle and the story of its people from 1914 to the present day)**" will open in April 1993. By then, two new permanent galleries will have opened elsewhere! "**Going Places - The People's Transport 1900-1990**", at Monkwearmouth Station Museum (April 1992) and "**Land, River and Sea**" (phase 1) - an exciting audio visual introduction to the history of South Tyneside (May 1992) at South Shields Museum. On the temporary side, "**Time Tunnel**" - the first potted Newcastle history exhibition, a profile raiser to show that Newcastle does have a history worth telling after all, opens in June 1992, and "**A Day at the Seaside - sun, sea and sand at South Shields**" in August 1992.

If anyone has any seaside-related effects which they are prepared to lend, please let me know. And if you didn't manage to get to Albertville this year, why not try a 'Spender Weekend', or search for the Fat Slags around canny Newcastle, courtesy of Viz. Popular culture? - it's all gone raving mad!

*Alisdair Wilson  
Tyne and Wear Museums*

## MOTHERS, BANNERS & HAIRCARE

Edinburgh City Museums are starting a pilot outreach project in April which will run into May. Two groups from Craigoyston Community Group, one of young mothers and one a group of older people, will be helping to compile a reminiscence box on the subject of hairdressing and hair care. They will also be creating their own display on the subject. The box which will go into the Museum's permanent loan collection will incorporate both material already in the museums' collections and new material gathered by the participants. The project will be based at Craigoyston Community Centre. In conjunction with Needleworks (famed for 'Keeping Glasgow In Stitches') the People's Story Museum is producing a People's Story Banner for display in the museum. It will cover the lives of the people of Edinburgh along the lines of the themes in the Museum. Several people drawn from Artlink, ethnic groups, adult training centres, reminiscence groups, primary schools and mother and toddler groups are forming a core group which will meet once a week to design and make the banner. The project runs from now until Easter when there will be an all comers session. A particular aspect of the design brief is that blank areas will be left in the banner to be filled in later on by anyone feeling they are not yet represented on it.

## NEW MUSEUM FOR SOUTH WALES

The Queen wore purple. Everybody else wore expressions varying from extreme panic to exquisite relief. The weeks prior to the royal visitation in October last year, were nothing if not eventful. Last minute headaches included two bomb scares, Pat, the police sniffer dog cocking his leg over the harvest exhibition, and the appearance of ubiquitous slogans declaring "Twill din i'r Cwin". As Welsh readers will know, this is not a particularly welcoming greeting to the monarch and has to do with bottoms. Things were all right on the night. After over a decade of deliberation by Anglesey Borough Council as to whether the island should have a museum/art gallery at all, the new £150 million purpose-built centre was finally declared open. The original *raison d'être* for Oriol Ynys Mon was the purchase by the Council in 1981, of a collection of the work of Charles Tunnicliffe, an internationally renowned wildlife artist who lived and painted on Anglesey. It was later decided to expand upon the original idea of a purely Tunnicliffe gallery and a permanent exhibition which introduces various themes of Anglesey's history. Among the displays featured are Celts and Druids, Medieval life and the Court of Welsh Princes, Copper Mining, Ships and Seafarers, and the Growth of Nonconformity. The permanent gallery is intended only as an introduction to these subjects. It is hoped that more comprehensive interpretive exhibitions of social/agricultural/industrial history will be mounted in the large temporary exhibition gallery. What did HRH make of it all? One simply couldn't tell. Non-royal visitor figures since October have been encouraging - over

12,000 to date. The gallery has also been well attended by school parties. No sign of little "Wills" yet I'm afraid, but Oriel Ynys Mon is situated next to a golf course, so who knows?

## **BANGOR MUSEUM**

Pat Benneyworth has been appointed as full-time curator - a newly created post. Bangor has also been awarded a grant of £30,000 from the Museums and Galleries Commission Improvement Fund. The money will be spent on upgrading the fabric of the building, improving security provisions, and enhancing exhibition facilities.

## **A NEW MUSEUMS OFFICER?**

Plans are underway to create an important new post in North Wales. Gwynedd County Council and Aberconway Borough Council are currently looking into the possibility of funding a Museum Development Officer. Based at Llandudno Museum (which has been without a curator for over a year), the officer would be responsible for developing a service in Aberconway as a whole.

*Kath Davis*

## **MUSEUM BOOKS** (for kids *and* curators)

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In the world of children's books, museums just do not have the same appeal as treasure islands or haunted houses. However, there are a few books on the market involving museums, and happily, most of these are excellent.

### **COLLECT IT**

'Collect It' (A & C Black, £3.99), by Elizabeth Newbery, is so good it should be on the Leicester reading list. It is a comprehensive, up-to-date and practical guide to collecting, for 9 year olds and upwards. The up-beat text is complemented by Richard Geary's humorous illustrations, and lots of good photographs. Over twenty museums are mentioned, ranging from Mr Law's one-man-show: The Swaledale Folk Museums, to the Xperiment Gallery in Manchester. A book that tells you how to make a cabinet of curiosities: you will need a dozen matchboxes, paint and paper-fasteners, and also show you how not to write letters to busy curators, i.e. 'Please send me all the information you have on....', deserves to be in every museum shop. Out of 10, 10, and for only £3.99

### **A GUIDE TO COLLECTING**

For a younger age group: 6-8 year olds, there is Helen Arnold's 'A Guide to Collecting' (Macmillan, £3.65). Like 'Collect It', this is an attractive activity book, which uses both colour photographs of real objects and places, as well as lively illustrations, to good effect. Neatly divided into three sections,

part 1 is an alphabet of collectibles: 'A' is for advertisements, albums and autographs, and part 2 tells you how to sort and keep your collection. It concludes with a nice touch of women's history: the story of Mary Anning, a Victorian professional fossil collector.

## **LET'S GO TO THE MUSEUM**

For the younger still: the 5-6 year olds, there is 'Let's Go to the Museum' (Cherrytree Books, £5.50). hardback only), by Janine Amos. This is a no-nonsense, easy-to-read, colour illustrated introduction to what goes on in a museum, both in the galleries and behind the scenes. A worthy but unexciting book, a bit like some museums.

## **THE SANDAL**

Turning to fiction bookshelves, Philippe Dupasquier and Tony Bradman's 'The Sandal' (Puffin, £2.99). tells the story of a little Roman girl's lost sandal, which, a thousand years later, is in a museum, where another little girl sees it. Later, when on her way home, she too loses her sandal. The story ends in a twenty second century museum, where this sandal is now on display. This is a great book for introducing children to concepts of continuity and change over time - all good Key Stage 1 and 2 stuff. It is also a super picture book in its own right, thanks to Dupasquier's detailed and amusing illustrations.

## **LULU AND THE FLYING BABIES**

'Noah, I DON'T want to be HERE!', wails Lulu, and it is hardly surprising: her little brother is getting all the attention; it's snowing outside, and she is stuck in a boring old museum. But then, two cherubs hop down from the art-work and whisk Lulu away on a cheery romp in and out of the paintings. Guardian readers especially will enjoy Posy Simmond's 'Lulu and the Flying Babies' (Jonathan Cape, £3.50), a fun story told in her characteristic cartoon-strip style, and a good antidote to the idea that museums are boring places.

## **KATIE'S PICTURE SHOW**

James Mayhew has written and illustrated two brilliant picture books set in museums. Called 'Katie's Picture Show' and 'Katie and the Dinosaurs' (Orchard, respectively £2.99 and £7.99). hardback only), they will delight children and curators alike. 'Katie's Picture Show' is set in The National Gallery, where Katie does not just look at the paintings that she likes best, she climbs right into them. As a result she has tea and cakes with Ingre's Madame Moitessier; plays hoop with the little girl in Renoir's 'Les Parapluies', and even slides down the big blue triangle in Kasimir Malevich's abstract: 'Dynamic Suprematism'. In 'Katie and the Dinosaurs', Katie visits the Natural History Museum. Finding a door marked, 'ABSOLUTELY NO ADMITTANCE WHATSOEVER' she takes a peek the other side, and steps into a world of real, live dinosaurs. There she helps a baby Hadrosaurus find his family; rides on the back of a giant Brontosaurus, and ends up handing over her lunch box to a hungry Tyrannosaurus Rex. Mayhew's exuberant and beautifully coloured illustrations perfectly compliment these

stories. Imaginative, original and tremendous fun, Katie's adventures are also educational in the best way possible, that is, without an ounce of lead. In short, don't miss these books.

### **OTTOLINE AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**

Also set in the NHM (BM) is another picture book called, 'Ottoline at the Natural History Museum' (Simon and Schuster, £2.99), by Sally Craddock and Corinne Pearlman. Ottoline is a cat who visits the museum with her friend, the Orange Hisser. They get to see a lot before they are chased out. Craddock makes good use of actual exhibits like the 'Crawley House' and the funny mirrors in the 'Hall of Human Biology', making this a good book to follow-up a visit.

*(Incidentally, the curator leading the hue and cry is an unattractive character, nothing like the real thing!)*

### **THE SCHOOL TRIP**

'The School Trip' (Hodder & Stoughton, £3.99), by Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen, takes a gently humorous look at the mayhem of a school visit to a museum.

A lovely picture book for children, that is bound to raise a smile amongst school teachers still suffering such outings, and adults who can remember them.

### **SMUDGE**

Lastly there is 'Smudge' (Hodder & Stoughton £2.99), a picture book by Mike Dickinson. Smudge is a bored and fidgety little boy who lives in the corner of an impressionist painting. When he fidgets too much he falls right out of the canvas and then has to search for a new home amongst the museum's other exhibits. Ingenious, boisterous and jokey, 'Smudge' is also an entertaining invitation for children to look at art closely. A bonus is the eccentrically dressed conservator: hapless Smudge's saviour.

*Javier Pes*

## **MOTHERS, WORKERS AND POLITICIANS**

'Women: Mothers, Workers and Politicians, 1910-1920' is an exhibition about the lives and experiences of women between 1910 and 1920. The exhibition and associated activities form part of the Towards the Millennium Festival and the Birmingham International Women's Festival. In particular, it will look at the Women's Suffrage Movement and the part Birmingham suffragettes played in the 'Votes for Women' campaign. The years 1910-20 marked a turning point in women's struggle for equality with men. On display will be three splendid Birmingham suffrage banners, costume, photographs and souvenirs from Birmingham's Votes for Women campaigns, as well as information about women's work and wartime experiences, and a room setting of 1916. Many of the objects and experiences have been provided by local people.



As part of the exhibition, an exciting series of special events and activities will take place in the galleries including historical drama, the making of a new banner for Birmingham and a talk by Clare Short MP about women's experiences of politics today. Visitors themselves are invited to take part in the design and creation of the banners. Groups and individuals are invited to contribute ideas for the banner's design and to participate in the banner-making sessions. Groups must be booked in advance. No experience or skills needed. Banner making sessions to take place on the following days:- March 5,7,10,12,14\* (\*At the International Convention Centre), 16,18 and 20. Drama performances will also take place at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. There will be two storylines - one concentrating on the Women's Suffrage Movement, and the other on women's experiences during the First World War. Each storyline will last approximately half an hour. There will be three performances on each of the following weekdays, and two on Sundays:- March 3,4,8,11 and 15. Clare Short MP will deliver a talk - Women in Politics - 6 March, Lunchtime

For further information please contact:-

**Liz Frostick/Anne Roach,**  
**Social History Department,**  
**Birmingham**  
**021-235-1675/2**

# A PEACE OF ADVICE

FROM BRUCE KENT

In preparation for the redisplay of a military gallery at Hull's Wilberforce House Museum, research was carried out into one aspect which had been previously neglected - that of the peace movement. Contacts were made with local Hull-based CND, Poppies for Peace and Quaker Groups, while oral interviews were conducted with individuals who had been involved as conscientious objectors and/or Peace Pledge Union Members. To bring a national perspective to events and to comment upon his own role in the peace movement, Bruce Kent, Vice President of CND and elected President of the International Peace Bureau, was interviewed. Not only was this of great value in terms of research, but the sentiments expressed during the course of the interview have relevance to the way in which museums have been, and continue to collect, display and interpret the objects and ephemera of the movement. "There's a whole culture of peace which people don't know about, and you have to read Edward Thompson, or someone, to really find out what happened to our predecessors in the peace movement... Peace activists may be in a minority, but the majority are apathetic rather than pro-war. Yet war is presented as dominant culture with the peace culture being underplayed". Bringing this peace culture to museum collections and displays is itself problematic and this is not helped by the fact that SHIC does not cater for this by making available any specific entry for 'PEACE' with the alternatives of 'POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS' (1.23) and 'EVENTS' (1.23.8) proving at times limiting or even inaccurate. Unfortunately the recent *Museum Journal* ("Soldiering-on", November 1991) which looked specifically at the interpretation of military displays, made only the briefest reference to peace traditions and associated material culture. It is in fact in this very area of material culture that problems increase. Most museums will have a couple of CND badges, but nothing much to interpret a movement which has a religious tradition dating back to the Bible and of local peace societies following the Napoleonic wars. It is a movement which has also been effected by a fusion of other forces, all of which reflect various societal concerns, be they political (socialism or liberalism), religious, or moral; the most recent force has been that of ecology and "Green issues". Bruce Kent took one such aspect, that of feminism, and explained how significant the links have been: "The peace movement gave women a new sense of themselves in society - it helped them feel empowered". All of which begs the question of just what objects and ephemera museums do have to interpret such forces, above and beyond the CND badges. I found interesting a reference Bruce Kent made to plans in the 1970's to establish an Imperial Peace Museum in a block of flats opposite the Imperial War Museum. When I asked what type of artefacts they had planned to exhibit the reply came "Ghandi's pen and the like". While this may seem like a return to the old cliches of a celebratory museum aimed at the veneration of the heroes of a particular movement, there was also an awareness of the good, the bad and the complicated which make up the history of the movement. "We have experienced all the usual problems of social change which organisations face over the years. There have been tensions between the radicals, and the not so radicals,

between those who think power is at the top, and those who think that power is at the bottom. We have had our share of personality problems and we have sometimes missed the boat where new concerns have arisen. Our pedigree is not one clear straight line, but rather a series of waves". Capturing the spirit of these 'series of waves' must be the challenge for museums, both at the level of collecting and of interpretation. Kent's interview itself highlighted the power of oral history to supplement and encourage the communicative scope of peace-related artefacts. The following description of the 1980 CND rally in Trafalgar Square could usefully be used to interpret objects such as banners. "There were banners like galleons, like great ships, they were just breathtaking. I nearly wept. I kept shouting, 'Lift up your banners higher!' Those were the emotional high points of the movement." Moving to a new job at the National Museum of Labour History brought with it the opportunity to consolidate some of those thoughts, with the focus this time being more specifically upon collections and collecting. Myna Trustram, the Museum's Keeper of Collections, had already posed some pertinent questions in this area: "Seminal movements like Greenham Common cannot adequately be represented through badges and banners. Objects need to be collected to show that this was a radically different form of protest. Who has collected the benders, saucepans, sleeping bags, bits of fence?" I would like to echo this last question of "Who has collected..." and also broaden this to include all peace related objects and ephemera held by museums and peace organisations. The aim is to compile a directory which could then be utilised by curators, who would be able to draw upon the collections and archives held by other museums and peace organisations. This appeal has already been made in the *Museum Journal* and via the National Peace Council. It is an appeal which also goes to any persons wishing to donate such objects/ephemera, of national relevance, to the National Museum of Labour History itself.

Please contact:

Beverley Butler,  
Display Officer,  
National Museum of Labour History,  
Manchester M1 6DD, telephone 061 228 7212

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## Notes

1. *B Kent Speech of International Peace Bureau President, Bruce Kent. IPB Centenary reception, Bevne, 29 November 1991 (unpublished)*
2. *Trustram, M "Which History? Whose Story?" in Journal of the North West Labour History Group No 15 1990/91*

# ASKING QUESTIONS

## PRESTON SCHOOLS ORAL HISTORY RECORDING PROJECT

### BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The Schools Oral History Recording Project at the Harris Museum, Preston, involves staff and children at five local schools and started in January, 1991. The pupils taking part in the project, "Children's Lives in 1991" have been interviewing other children and the result will form a resource that will be incorporated into the Museum's archives. A second project will create a record of life in Preston in Guild Year. The Harris Museum will work to increase awareness among teaching staff throughout the County of the value of Oral History across the curriculum and to encourage the use of the Oral History archive.

This unique educational venture will make an important contribution to the Museum's collections and encourage local children to study their own history. The in-school aspect of the project will last at least two years and both the children's archive and Guild '92 archive will become a central part of the Museum's educational resources.

The Project evolved from the exhibition 'Old Yarns Respun' which documents Preston's cotton industry and its impact on the lives of those who have lived and worked under its shadow.

The success of the project relies heavily on the production of good quality recordings which can be used as archive material and also produce edited copies for use as teaching material in schools. The tape recorder which was recommended by the North West Sound Archive as being the most suitable for our purposes is the Sony WM-D6C together with AC adapter, Rechargeable Battery Pack and Tieclip Microphone.

Editing and transcribing of the recorded interviews is very time consuming and could negate some of the enthusiasm generated by the project and so the transcribing of the recorded interviews is being carried out by students at the Information Technology Centre, Preston, who are using them as 'live' oral dictation exercises.

### THE PROJECT

Sponsorship for the project for 1991/92 was eventually received from Marks & Spencer. After consultation with the North West Sound Archive the Museum purchased the necessary equipment which, after numerous delays by Sony, was distributed to the five participating schools. The first project, "Documenting Children's Lives in 1991" started in May and was due to end in July, 1991.

### THE PROJECT AIMS:

- 1: to involve children in a project which directly covers areas of the National Curriculum, particularly English and History.
- 2: to offer interaction between schools and other types of community institutions.
- 3: to record, transcribe and preserve the views, attitudes and practices of children in the five areas mentioned below for future use by others in schools, or as a source of social history in the wider context.

The areas covered include:

- school life
- leisure activities - games, pastimes, play songs
- current affairs
- trends - TV, fashion/crazes, music
- work - part-time/weekend/after school

In recording children's daily life, the Museum is documenting an aspect of contemporary history that is often neglected. A second project, beginning in January 1992, will involve a number of children from each school and will take place during Preston's Guild Year. It will require the children to use the recording techniques acquired through the first project to interview members of the public. This project is due to finish towards the end of 1992 and it is hoped will lead to the production of teacher's resource packs using edited recordings from both projects.

### PEOPLE INVOLVED

Teachers were introduced to the project initially at a Teacher's Preview for the exhibition 'Old Yarns Respun' and also through a schools information poster which is sent out three times a year.

Two secondary schools and three primary schools were selected and a series of Teacher's Workshops at the Harris Museum and Art Gallery and the Curriculum Development Centre, Savick, Preston, were organised. Ken Howarth from the North West Sound Archive contributed information regarding oral history recording techniques and trialled the project at one of the schools. Also involved were Sally Coleman and Carl Frankliln, of the Harris Museum, and Alison Ewin, Preston Teacher Training College, forming the link for possible future involvement of trainee teachers in similar projects.

## TEACHERS' WORKSHOPS

The aim of the first workshop was to identify individual problems that the teachers might encounter. Prior to the meeting each of the five teachers received an outline of the project and were asked to make comments and explain how they envisaged using it.

One problem aired by all teachers was the necessity for anonymity. Children would reveal information which could be controversial or cause problems when read out in class. It was agreed that the name of the interviewee was not important, but that the age and geographic area should be recorded.

The second workshop covered the use of the recording machines, the construction of a questionnaire and interviewing techniques. Common problems occurred in the devising of a list of questions for interview and the following recommendations were made:

- 1: The purpose of the interview must be clear at the start of interviewing.
- 2: The length of the interview must be established.
- 3: The number, if any, of follow-up interviews should be established at the start of the project.
- 4: Logical sequencing or grouping of questions should take place.

The practical exercise also brought to light the need to trial this project at one of the schools. Ken Howarth also produced a series of notes on oral history recording including a list of commonsense items to check before interviewing takes place.

The next workshop aimed to identify problems that individual schools were likely to encounter. Prompting by the teacher was generally agreed to be useful in preventing interview breakdown provided that teachers were aware that this could in some ways control the interview and influence the answers.

The final workshop was initiated mainly to look at the results of the trial session which was recorded on video. The North West Sound Archive noted a number of observations which would apply to similar projects involving children:

- the one-to-one situation was not altogether successful
- offering children the opportunity to talk as a group (acted as a tension breaker prior to interviewing)
- children left to their own devices are ineffective interviewers and need direction
- where natural interviewers emerge, they should be encouraged to undertake this role

- children are used to working in groups. *(This means they tend to have collective responses when interviewed by their peers)*
- the choice of an interesting subject area for children is important if they are to respond effectively, otherwise it will need the skills of a mature interviewer
- one-to-one interviews would probably work well with the right interviewer (and subject matter). For this to succeed they must be isolated from the influence of other classmates, in an informal, quiet setting. Aids such as photographs and/or artefacts could also be used to advantage.
- group discussion with a prompter/interviewer is also an effective way of capturing information
- several interview techniques were tried with the children in the group sessions. It became clear that the best way was to supply throw-back questions in order to make them think. For example, in the recorded sequence on the Gulf War, a child expressed the opinion that 'they' should 'get rid of Saddam Hussein'. On being pushed to explain who 'they' were she eventually reached the conclusion that it was the 'people'. The great temptation is to supply the answer by giving direction and this must be avoided at all costs.
- the children were somewhat apprehensive of the television camera, but expressed the group view that a cassette recorder would be acceptable.
- questionnaires did prove something of a problem for the children. They used predictable topic headings and failed to follow questions through. Practice in interviewing could rectify this to some extent.

Prior to the actual start of interviewing an information sheet explaining how to set up the tape recorders was given to teachers. It is important that feedback is generated and maintained for the production of reports. During the projects the Education Officer will visit the schools taking part and talk to the teachers and some of the pupils in order to build up a profile which illustrates the success of this project.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The completed tapes/transcriptions will be useful not only to History teachers, but as a cross-curricular resource in English, Drama, Art, Music, Geography and Information Technology. Coupled with such TV programme archive material as that found on the Rock and Roll Years, pupils' observations could provide a valuable and interesting social commentary, particularly as the content becomes more dated. It will be especially useful to illustrate the changing values of society, the subjective nature of individual observations, and the attitudes of young people taken in the context of when they were originally expressed.

## ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

The most outstanding benefit to those taking part will be the opportunity to develop constructive questioning techniques, especially those which extract the most valuable substantive responses, and to obtain, hopefully, worthwhile technical expertise in handling sound recording equipment in a meaningful manner.

Personal and social skills might also benefit as the interviewers and interviewees develop improved listening facilities and an accurate understanding of 'body language'.

The real value of the project will become more evident as it becomes a true historical resource, but it may well find itself making a meaningful contribution immediately in the other cross-curricular areas within the National Curriculum, during beyond the normal classroom time.

*Carl Franklin Harris Museum and Art Gallery*

## NETWORK SOUTH WALES?

Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery (CCM) is shortly hoping to receive a grant from the Museums and Galleries Commission under their "Networking Pilot Scheme" to Network a number of sites and museums in the South Wales area together using the Apple Mac computer system installed at CCM.

This is an exciting and important development both for the participating bodies; Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust & Tarfaen Museum Trust, as well as the remainder of the museum

community as it will hopefully see the exploration of new and more effective inter-museum working. The grant aid will hopefully fund the introduction of 2 Apple Macs in the Heritage Trust sites at Ynysfach Engine House and Joseph Parrys Cottage, provide fax/modem links between these machines and those at Cyfarthfa and at Torfaen Museum Trust. Software allowing remote access and downloading/sharing of information between sites will also be installed.

The hoped for benefits will include a common database and software standard of proven ability that can be tutored and upgraded as one package, and which will allow authorised users at any site access to database information which can be processed by the enquirer, and the data manipulated in the word processing/dtp/drawing software to provide quick and effective print outs for the end user. It should be possible to search and combine data from any number of museum databases on the network. The network will also allow for through bookings of parties etc on a communal 'Electronic Diary', use of the very cost effective "E-mail" between sites and users, and the potential for using volunteers on computer terminals to input data whilst monitoring their performance remotely.

The network is infinitely extendable and serious consideration is being given to including the Rhonda Heritage Park, Big Pit Mining Museum and Carmarthen Museum Service who already use a similar Apple system. There is no limit over distance and it will be possible to link into museums anywhere in the country, or for that matter the World! If any museum is interested in finding out more about this initiative they are welcome to contact Stephen Done at Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery.

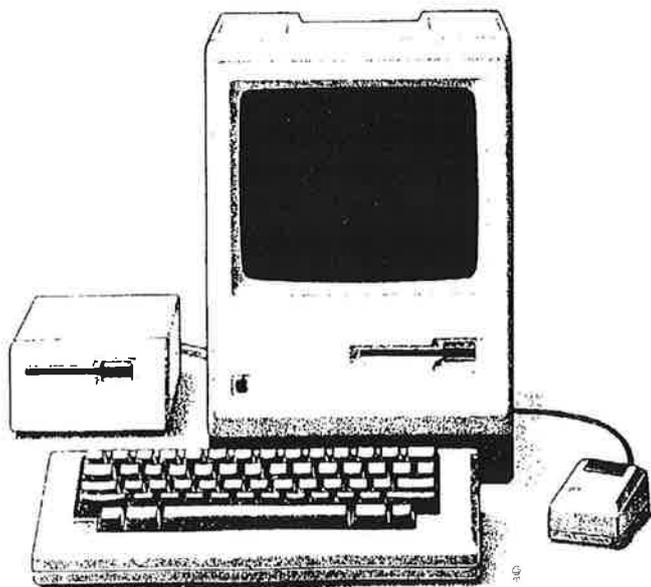
## CYFARTHFA CASTLE

### MAJOR INVESTMENT AT CYFARTHFA CASTLE MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery has just been awarded £40,000 from the Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund in addition to an initial Urban Aid Grant of £80,000

This money will be used to totally refurbish the ground floor galleries returning them to an appearance more in keeping with their 1830's period, and at the same time using this as an opportunity to redisplay the social history and fine and decorative art collections. In particular the history of the Crawshay family who lived in the castle will be explored, looking into their family life and trying to provide some kind of balance to the popular myths and half truths that are frequently quoted by visitors.

The various family members will be spotlighted, in particular the wives and daughters who have been largely ignored in previous displays. Furthermore, the grounds of the castle are to be partially returned to their appearance at the time of the last of the Crawshay Ironmasters, Robert Thompson, in a £6,000,000 scheme, that will see the replanting of woodlands and avenues, restoration of the ice house and relocation of play areas and other amenities.



## 1992 AND ALL THAT

### 1992 COMES TO MERTHYR & CARDIFF

Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery is using "1992" (whatever that is) as motivation to try and broaden the visitor information provision at the museum by translating some of its material into Welsh, French, German, and hopefully Spanish and Italian. The project started as the result of an "inset" day held by the museum at a local school in which the head of languages approached the curator to see if there was any potential for translation/research work at the museum to give to sixth form students.

The result has been the initial translation of a teaching pack on the Crawshays, and a general information leaflet into French and German, and discussions about using the pupils to study the Spanish and Italian communities in the area.

Welsh translations are also taking place following successful approaches to the Merthyr Welsh Language Centre.

In addition the museum is working closely with the Welsh Industrial & Maritime Museum on researching and exhibiting the history of the "Italian Cafe" in the South Wales Valleys. WIMM are planning an exhibition in the autumn, and Cyfarthfa are hoping to create a permanent display based around an actual cafe interior which will function both as a cafe and as a focus for interpretation.

### "MR CRAWSHAYS FAMOUS BAND..."

Plans are reaching an advanced stage, after a number of years of planning, to perform the unique collection of brass band music held by Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery. The part books were used by the band formed by Robert Thompson Crawshay and include many unusual and rare pieces as well as band settings of a wide range of composers of the mid-late 19th century period.

Although obviously written to be performed, much time and energy, as well as musical scholarship has had to be put into creating performable scores from the very fragile originals and sponsorship by Mid Glamorgan County Council of the copying of the scores was a welcome first step in 1990.

Mr Trevor Herbert of the University College Wales, Cardiff, has dedicated many hours of research on behalf of the museum into the collection and has succeeded in securing the Wallace Collection as performers of the music. Arts Council Funding is promised for what are hoped to be at least 5 concerts, one in Merthyr, one in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London and the others at venues in Wales.

The performances will not just comprise the music itself, but will include short spoken pieces setting the history of the music and the once World famous band into perspective, and giving insights into the personality of the irascible Robert Thompson Crawshay.

*Stephen Done*  
*Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery*

## SEMINAR NEWS

### "TELLING TALES: REMINISCENCE THERAPY AND MUSEUMS"

The seminar "Telling Tales: Reminiscence Therapy and Museums", to be held at the City Museum in Stoke, will now be held on Friday, 10 April.

### "HOUSING"

"Housing" is to be the subject of a forthcoming seminar and any suggestions or proposed papers are welcome. Please send your ideas to: Tim Corum City Museum and Art Gallery Bethesda Street, Hanley Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3DW

## PLASTICS CONSERVATION

Plastics Conservation Workshop for collectors and curators. On Monday 11 May, at the Museum of London, London Wall, a day-long Workshop on "The Identification, Repair, Renovation and Maintenance of Plastics Artefacts", will address the problems faced by the non-specialist conservator, curatorial staff and collectors of plastics. Sponsored jointly by the Plastics Historical Society and the Conservation Unit of the Museum and Galleries Commission, the workshop is the first formal attempt in the UK to provide curators and collectors with practical help on the maintenance and preservation of this type of collection. Plastics Historical Society Chairman, Percy Reboul, emphasises that the workshop will be essentially practical in content with ample opportunities for delegates to question the speakers, and to familiarise themselves with the techniques of identification, renovation and repair. Colin Williamson will be talking and demonstrating on "Identification of Plastics Materials" and John Morgan, author of the recent book "Conservation of Plastics", will discuss "Degradation, Storage and Cleaning". Paul Clark will be dealing with "The Repair of Plastics Artefacts".

Registration forms are available from:

Plastics Historical Society

11 Hobart Place

London SW1W 0HL

Tel 071 245 9555

Fax 071 823 1379

or from

The Conservation Unit

Museums and Galleries Commission

16 Queen Anne's Gate

London SW1H 9AA

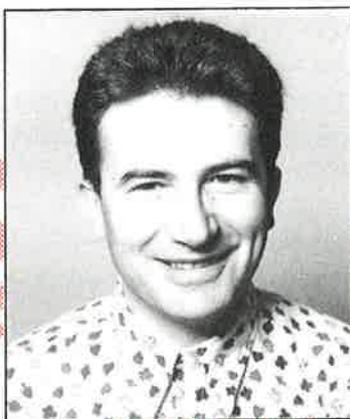
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*Ian Lawley,  
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