

**SOCIAL HISTORY
CURATORS GROUP**

news

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP • ISSUE NUMBER 30 • WINTER 1992



Stepping Out in Willesden : see "Roll Over Beethoven", p.11

PRIVATE LIVES : PUBLIC ACCESS

SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP ANNUAL STUDY WEEKEND 8-11th JULY 1993

This years SHCG Annual Study Weekend will be on the theme of "Private Lives : Public Access". The weekend will look at how curators tackle sensitive issues around personal experiences and how these areas are recorded, communicated and interpreted effectively. Topics to be discussed will include religion, childbirth and the role of oral history.

DATES : THURSDAY 8th JULY - SUNDAY 11th 1993

VENUE : NEWCASTLE.

FURTHER DETAILS IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

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GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

I would like to extend warm greetings to you all from all of us on the new committee and to tell you about some of the things we hope to do in 1993. In some respects it should be a year of consolidating and building on last year's exciting initiatives, the new Journal, Social History in Museums, and SHCG's first ever membership survey. We intend to use the new style journal to reach new audiences and increase our membership and at the same time boost the profile of SHCG and of social history in museums generally. We will also draw on the results of the survey to ensure that we provide the type of services you, the members, require. This will include an attempt at evaluating what SHCG does, and can do, for those members who live and work in areas where our membership is less concentrated. And throughout the year, following the fine examples of previous years, we will of course be continuing to campaign for social history in museums and lobby on behalf of museums and collections.

The acts of past committees are hard ones to follow but we will do our best. Our success in this respect depends a great deal on the feedback we get from you, the membership. Your views, comments and suggestions are of paramount importance; without them SHCG cannot function effectively. So please do let us know your thoughts and we will be delighted to hear from you.

Bill Jones
Chair, SHCG

LIFTING THE LID

SHCG's Annual Study Weekend. Kirklees. 10-13 September 1992

1992's annual study weekend explored a number of issues surrounding social history collecting in museums. As a summary of eighteen papers and a plenary session this article can only be a brief flavour of what was a lively and stimulating conference. The delegates were based at Bretton Hall College in the beautiful surroundings of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park but there was little time to appreciate the rural ambience as mobility was a key element of the weekend. First stop was the Holmfirth Postcard Museum in the heart of Last of the Summer Wine country with barely enough time to be photographed outside Sid's cafe before crossing over into Calderdale to visit Shibden Hall.

Another short journey to Oakwell Hall where Peter Brears, Leeds City Museum, opened the proceedings with an overview of the development of Yorkshire museums collections from the seventeenth century cabinets of curiosities to modern attempts to reflect local life.

Gaynor Kavanagh, Leicester University, gave a very thought provoking paper which began by putting trends in social history collecting this century into their historical context. Having reached a stage of working more closely with people to create integrated records, how can social history collecting progress? She stressed that active collecting needs to be issue or topic based and attempt to break with conventional ideas of what museums ought to contain. Research should be an essential component in order to recognise cycles of redundancy before they occur. One alternative to collecting she suggested was a detailed record of objects in private ownership with possible agreements to display important pieces of material. She also advocated expanding the potential of existing collections by finding new meanings and innovative interpretations for old objects. She concluded with a warning that the ability to collect and record in the future will depend on the reputation of museums and the quality of curatorship available.

Su Davies, Kettering Museum Service, examined collecting from a different perspective - from the point of view of private individuals. Contributors to the People's Shows held mostly in the Midlands during the summer, were asked their reasons for collecting. Their answers included as souvenirs, as status symbols, for their attractiveness, historical interest, sentimental value and for sheer enjoyment. Their motives were not therefore so far removed from those of curators. Some collectors became involved in the exhibitions in order to generate interest in their hobby and possibly have

the opportunity to add to their collections. However, they also took the risk of opening themselves and their obsessions to ridicule - the man with the airline sick bags from around the world for example. Another form of behaviour that may be considered slightly odd was looked at by Brian Durrans, Museum of Mankind - the phenomenon of time capsules and the motivations for burying sometimes highly irrational objects for future generations to unearth.

The Friday reception was held at the Tolls Museum, Huddersfield where tantalising aromas drifting through the galleries materialised into a magnificent Indian banquet. There was another prompt start on Saturday morning. Members were whisked off to Dewsbury Museum to view the galleries and hear the morning papers given by members of the Kirklees Museums Service staff.

Katherine Towsey and Katrina Ward introduced delegates to the work of the Kirklees sound and photographic archives, which were both founded as part of the M.S.C. scheme. Its potential as an educational resource is not fully exploited as 600 interviews remain to be catalogued. The photographic archive contains 200,000 negatives of commercial and amateur photographers but again public access is restricted as only one contact print exists per photograph. To encourage teachers to use the archives they have produced a joint national curriculum pack on transport.

Catherine Hall considered site specific collecting in Kirklees with reference to the transformation of Oakwell Hall and Red House museums into reconstructions of family homes. A re-evaluation of the display philosophy resulted in the removal of material inappropriate to the buildings. This made it necessary to use reproduction furniture to make the interpretation more complete. The reproductions are clearly labelled to avoid confusion and they have the advantage of being easily replaced if more accurate information is later discovered. The use of reproduction also increases the educational potential of the museums for school groups, workshops and re-enactments.

Delegates were given the opportunity to see these museums first hand in the afternoon and interact with the re-enactment group at Oakwell Hall before returning to the barn for the rest of the papers. Three of the speakers looked at the problems and issues associated with collecting in order to reflect cultural diversity.

Marij van Helmond, National Museums on Merseyside, focused on the attempts made to collect the material culture of Liverpool's black population.

The first problem in inviting black co-operation in collecting was that the black community is not homogenous but made up of a wide racial mix. Black community groups have a strong interest in preserving their cultural identity but are sceptical about the work of museums. This lack of credibility inhibits passive collecting and disables the staff as blanket appeals for donations risk appearing opportunistic - an attempt to hijack their culture. She said this highlighted the necessity of establishing individual contacts and ensuring the museum is seen to be putting something back into the community. Harriet Dover told us about the collecting carried out for an exhibition on Chinese homes at the Geffrye Museum with the active involvement of the Hackney Chinese Community Centre. A group of elderly people contributed oral history material and came into the museum to decorate a reconstructed family room for the Chinese New Year celebrations. To demonstrate the impact of Chinese culture on English domestic interiors certain objects in the permanent displays were highlighted with red dragon symbols with background information given in both English and Cantonese. All the text was approved by the Community Liaison leader and anything the Chinese would find offensive omitted. In conclusion she stressed the importance of putting decorative art items within a wider cultural context by changing the emphasis in interpretation from consumer to producer and the multicultural influences on domestic material.

Dr Christine Johnstone spoke of the problems encountered in trying to represent the social history of African-Caribbean people over the last 300 years in the "Caribbean Kaleidoscope" project at Hackney Museum. Community groups provided material but predominantly sentimental souvenirs from the previous 30 years and museum ethnography departments could only provide artefacts from the indigenous American population. As a result the exhibition displayed mostly decorative art items with labels attempting to fill the gaps. She called for integrated collecting policies amongst museums in different boroughs to collect the social history of London's ethnic minority groups and a greater diffusion of information about collections nationally. She also suggested collecting from the countries of origin by liaising with museums overseas or by encouraging ethnography curators to carry out contemporary collecting while on field trips.

Liz Carnegie, People's Palace, looked at collecting from another under represented group for her forthcoming exhibition "From Here To Maternity", a cross culture celebration of childbirth from the woman's point of view. Although a natural process it remains a sensitive area for most women, surrounded by fears and taboos. She therefore found it important when

interviewing women to maintain an element of trust and not push them into revealing intimate information. On the spot contemporary record is being made by a photographer given permission to be "on call" at a local maternity hospital.

Siobhan Kirrane and Fiona Hayes gave a joint paper on the Open Museum project in Glasgow. Aimed at the young, elderly, disabled and those in deprived areas, it is an attempt to reach new audiences by taking the reserve collections out of the stores and into the community. Displays are set up in libraries, youth clubs, and community centres. Projects include touring table top exhibitions consisting of a "pod" that folds out into 5 cases and 4 panels; reminiscence kits which include handling objects, photographs, videos and audio cassettes to stimulate different senses and collaborative exhibitions where community groups select the objects for display.

Michael Hall, Calderdale Museums Services, addressed the contentious issue of disposal which he proposed as a means of rationalising collections. Calderdale's solution to documentation and storage problems has been a virtual ban on social history collecting until disposal has allowed the time and space to implement a targeted collecting policy. He recommended that museums carry out a full audit to compile a definitive list of all collections, their status and condition, and implement a disposal policy to improve collection care. He suggested adopting an archivist's approach to mass produced domestic items and only keep a small representative selection. In conclusion he called for a clarification of the legal status of accessioned items and that future collecting concentrate on quality rather than quantity.

Ken Arnold, Livesey Museum, looked at seventeenth century collectors, their motives for collecting and what they can teach modern curators - driven by curiosity they collected anything moveable and believed that objects were multi-vocal depending on what questions were asked of them.

Once more members boarded the luxury coach for a reception in the Victorian Gothic splendour of the Bagshaw Museum, Batley, and then back to Bretton Hall where the catering was unfortunately not quite so impressive as at the Tolson.

Sunday morning was devoted to the members' papers and a plenary session to discuss social history collecting for the 21st century.

Alison Scott, John Hastie Museum, spoke of the problems of developing a collecting policy for the East Kilbride District and linking the new town through the collections to the wider rural landscape.

Nigel Wright examined the logistics behind the digitising of 200,000 records at the Manx Museum

using the Oracle package and a camera which photographs objects, negatives and slides onto disc rather than film. When the project is completed it will create a form of open storage with public access through terminals in the galleries.

Anne Roach gave a paper on the first exhibition produced by the new improved social history department at Birmingham Museums - "Women, Mothers, Workers and Politicians 1910-20". Material from private collections and oral history recordings on the suffragette movement formed the basis of the displays. Two suffragette banners from the collections were used as the focus of a banner-making project. Despite the reservations of other departments it was a very successful exhibition and has stimulated further research into women's history.

Beverley Butler, National Museum of Labour History, considered the problem of collecting the material culture of the Peace Movement. As museums have traditionally promoted the military viewpoint thorough regimental displays people are reluctant to entrust peace ephemera to their care. Are museums the best places to collect material from a marginalised culture? Is there not the danger that they will be displayed out of context or buried in a store? Would something more flexible be more successful, something not so inherently part of the dominant culture? The NMLH is seeking to address these issues through its Peace Project which will appeal for objects and also compile a directory of peace collections. The Give Peace a Chance Trust parallel to this initiative is aiming to establish a Peace Museum.

The conference was brought to a conclusion with a report by Janet Kenyon and Mark Suggitt on the results of the Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council's regional survey of social and industrial history collections. The survey exposed a lack of intellectual application in developing collecting policies. There is a need to establish a dialogue with the community we are supposed to represent and establish formal agreements with other museums to avoid needless duplication. Museums were discovered to over-estimate the size of their collections and therefore the magnitude of their documentation backlog. A full collection audit would seem to be a priority in order to accurately gauge the problems involved and then tackle them in manageable chunks. The collection management standards used in the survey have been taken up by the M.G.C. for consideration nationally.

The open discussion which followed looked at the practical issues in social history collecting raised during the conference. It was seen as important to aim at fully documenting an elite of inter-related and fully provenanced objects and then define different levels of documentation for the rest. Museums are not always

the best place to store objects - a possible alternative is to return them to the community where they will receive better care and still remain a resource for temporary exhibitions. For future collecting we need to adopt a stronger enquiry led strategy with clearly defined limits. The message was to do more with less and look at different ways of using what we have. The session ended with a warning from Stuart Davies of things to come; although elected members tend to neglect museums due to the pressure of other considerations, as the functions of local authority government continue to be contracted out Leisure and Cultural Services may eventually become the only department directly under their control. Museums will therefore need to be well-organised and well informed in order to fight their corner.

Congratulations to the Committee for organising a varied and thought provoking conference which proved a great success, and to Kirklees, Calderdale and Wakefield museum services for their excellent hospitality.

Louise Rowley - Hull

BIZARRO

By DAN MIRARO



The phenomenon of 'Time Capsules' and the motivations for burying sometimes highly irrational objects for future generations to unearth was looked at by Brian Durrans in his paper "The Magic Box".

Illustration courtesy of Bob Barclay.

The Bucket and Spade Brigade

(Bursaries on the Isle of Man)

The piece of water which separates mainland Britain from the Isle of Man often seems an insurmountable obstacle to the exchange of ideas and information between curators from both countries. In 1990 Manx National Heritage decided to do something about this state of affairs and approached the North-West Museums Service with the aim of setting up a Bursary scheme to foster contacts between museum professionals in the north-west of England and the Isle of Man. Jointly sponsored by the two organisations a bursary was established in 1991 and three awards have so far been made.

The Bursary award facilitates a weeks study visit to the host museum, by providing for a weeks bed, breakfast and evening meal, a daily subsistence allowance and the all important travel costs - the latter has so far been provided free of charge by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, the Island's ferry operator.

Applicants are invited to apply to the Training Officer at the North West Service, outlining the benefits they envisage the visit might provide for their own work and also what they would be able to offer the host museum in return.

It is intended that the Bursary will sponsor two way traffic over the Irish Sea and is also open to curatorial staff at the Manx Museum who may wish to spend some time with a museum in the North West. All the recipients of the award to date, however, have been from the 'adjacent Ireland' and the two who have so far taken up the Bursary are both social historians - the third recipient will take up her Bursary this autumn.

The first recipient of the Bursary, during the summer of 1991, was Kevin Moore, now of the Department of Museum Studies in Leicester, formerly Museum Officer in St Helens. His primary aim during his week on the island was to study the recently opened Social History Galleries at the Manx Museum and to gain an impression of the overall management structure of Manx National Heritage, including the operation of the eight site museums. From our point of view we were interested in Kevin's evaluation of the galleries and his experience of oral history projects on Merseyside.

This year the Manx Museum welcomed Beverley Butler, Display Officer at the National Museum of Labour History in Manchester. Given the nature of her post and the forthcoming Pump House project at the NMLH, Beverley was particularly interested in the different aspects of display work undertaken by Manx National Heritage, both in the Social History Galleries

at the Manx Museum and in the reconstructed room settings at Castle Rushen.

Beverley also showed a keen interest in the variety of 'heritage sites' on the island and particularly the manner in which all the island's archaeological, historical and natural assets are incorporated into a unified marketing strategy, under the title of 'The Story of Mann' - indeed both Kevin and Beverley have been impressed by the rich archaeological history of the island.

Both recipients have welcomed the opportunity to visit the Isle of Man and view the developments which Manx National Heritage has been fortunate enough to pursue. Without the Bursary neither would probably have found either the time or the money to spend a week on the island. Apart from any 'professional' benefits both may have gained, at a rather more mundane level, the Isle of Man in summer is really rather a nice place to visit and both Kevin and Beverley were able to enjoy a complete change of scenery and atmosphere - there is not much opportunity to walk to work along the beach in Manchester!

From the host museum's point of view it is always interesting and useful to be able to talk to people from a different museum background, with a different set of problems and solutions and it enables us on the Isle of Man to look at what we have in a different light.

For those working in museums in the North-West look out for notification of next years Bursary in the Area Service newsletter - and don't forget to bring your bucket and spade!

*Nigel Wright, Assistant Keeper
(Social History), Manx Museum*

ESP at the People's Story

The People's Story Museum Exhibition Starter Pack (ESP) is about to be launched. It was developed from the Museum's 1991 exhibition entitled 'Headlines', which told the story of hairdressing and hairstyles in Edinburgh over the past 200 years. It was to be a first initiative towards the larger objective of creating a range of Exhibition Starter Packs on different themes. The packs would include suggested guidelines for use and it is hoped that they will encourage groups to create their own displays and/or other activities of their own choosing. The intention is that the packs can be borrowed and used without curatorial assistance.



Maureen, Gertie and Susan from the young mothers group

One of the major aims of this pilot was to incorporate community opinion and participation.

The project was progressed as a collaborative exercise with community education worker Lorraine Dick, two groups of people from Craigryston Community School and two members of the museum staff, Helen Clark and myself

Our project linked into other work already carried out by a Community Education funded history project in Greater Pilton - an area of multiple deprivation which qualifies for Positive Discrimination funding. The aim of the Pilton Project is to give recognition to the history and culture of working class people living in the peripheral estates.

The two groups selected to help with our project consisted of elderly women (70+) from Craigryston Reminiscence Group and young mothers (20+) from the 'Under 5's Group'. To commence the project, pre-existing resources were used which had been produced for the exhibition 'Headlines'. These included 11 interpretation panels, the Headlines video, a selection of Boots' men and women's hair care products (donated for the exhibition courtesy of the Boots Company) a collection of photographic images used in the displays and a number of hairdressing appliances collected for handling purposes.

The two groups met on separate days once a week for five consecutive weeks. During this time they selected objects and photos from the museum's loan collection. They compiled a list of 'trigger' questions for the chosen objects to be used as an aid to borrowers and to help prompt discussion. Group members also created their own displays in the two flat top cases provided. Attractively presented the displays included the personal possessions of group members, some of which have been kindly donated to the museum.

As a public venue, the Community Lounge at Craigryston High School was a valuable asset. The displays were seen by regular users as well as groups from other parts of the city who had been invited along by Lorraine. During one such visit, members of our own groups acted as host guides to the displays. Some people asked for their own personal objects to be included and these were incorporated whenever possible. It is highly probable that this sort of response was encouraged by the fact that the displays were clearly attributed as the work of two local groups and would, therefore, have been seen as a community, rather than an 'official' exhibition.

The completed Exhibition Starter Pack will consist of a box of objects and photographs with trigger questions, 6 interpretation panels, the Headlines video, 15 mounted photographs, guidelines for ESP users and a range of oral history quotations on various issues and themes relating to the subject.

The photographs and quotations are multi-cultural. An appeal for appropriate multi-cultural handling objects to be added to the pack will be made when it goes into general circulation.

In October, community education workers throughout the city have been invited to the launch of our first ESP, which will serve to introduce and publicise the new service.

*Denise Brace
The People's Story Museum
Edinburgh*

THE PEOPLE'S STORY COMMUNITY BANNER

When we found that Needleworks Ltd had set up an Edinburgh branch we decided it was high time we had our own Community banner making project. The museum has one of the best banner collections in the country and at least fifteen of these are on display at any time. It seemed entirely appropriate that a contemporary banner should be added to the collection for display in the museum.

The aim of the project was not just to make a banner, but to create a forum where members of different groups could work and interact together. Members of The People's Story Reminiscence Group were to let other group members know how the museum came about. In this way we hoped that more people would directly be involved in the museum and feel a sense of pride from creating their own banner.

SETTING UP

We set about deciding which of our target groups we were going to draw from older people, young mums, ethnic communities, people with disabilities, unemployed men, school pupils as well as anyone else who was very interested. We wrote to a great variety of groups and invited members to come to an open day which was led by Clare Higney of Needleworks Ltd. Several men came to this session, but at the mention of sewing fought shy even though we tried to emphasise techniques like painting and drawing on to fabric would be incorporated.

From this meeting we all met on a weekly basis with a core group of around fifteen people.



People working on the "Border Squares" at the open day.

THE DESIGN

The banner was to convey something of the philosophy of the museum and incorporate representations of items which could be found in the displays. The group eventually came up with the idea of a group of contemporary people, all with specific jobs, talking to each other about their life stories using objects and photographs. The words SHARING OUR HISTORY were to appear on the banner. To get a perspective on the past the group wanted to create an illusion of the Camera Obscura which reflects views of Edinburgh onto a circular mirror. Instead of the present they wanted to portray the past and a panorama of Edinburgh houses from Leith to Wester Hailes.

The banner was designed to fit a chosen space. The figures were to be high up above a door. Details of objects and photographs were to hang on strips on either side of the door where the detailed work could be easily seen, and handled. These items, which include the fishwife, coopers' tools, miners strike T-shirt, a ration book, AIDS leaflets and the Washhouse, are all accompanied by quotations from group members. These were typed out and photocopied onto material.

THE ORGANISATION

Most of the sessions were held with core group members in the museum. One of the figures on the banner is Anjam Sheikh, a health worker with the Asian Community who came to the initial sessions. It was decided that she should appear on the banner and Anjam chose to be there with her son Shabbor. She was made by the girls in her sewing group at Drummond Community High School, and one session was held there.

The banner has a border which consists of the different symbols which were made during an open day attended by about 60 people, including some men who actually did some sewing if not designing. The symbols vary from symbols of peace and good luck to those of the many religions and ethnic groups which can be found in the city. MILAN means the Friendly Meeting Place in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Gujerathi and Bengali. MILAN is also a day centre for older people from the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Mauritian communities.

THE GROUP

The project went on for a longer time than planned. The design really took over and members became keen to take their piece home in between sessions. None of the group members had made a banner before and were probably a little mystified for

the first few weeks as to how it would take shape. Once the first buildings appeared the fog began to clear and they really took off. Now the banner is up they want to carry on with the next one!

The project was a success in almost all its aims. I shall leave the last words with members of the group.

"I enjoyed coming here each week, seeing the banner taking shape. I enjoyed being here and being part of it"

"What's on the banner is Edinburgh as we can remember it and as it is today. I think it's wonderful".

Joan Williamson

"It was something you had never tackled before, something you couldn't possibly do 'til you came. After you started coming and you saw how it was progressing it made you feel really good and important. You went and said to the family 'I am making a banner now'. And the company, it was such a good group, everyone helped each other. If you forgot something that you should have done, you went to someone else and said 'How did you do that?' and one of us knew what to do, everyone pulled together, I got a great deal of pleasure from it".

Betty Hepburn

"It was a lot of work, making new friends. At first I was a bit nervous an'that. We got a lot of people to help us"

Jean Mackay,

who is from an Adult Training Centre

"Meeting a diverse group of people, I wouldn't normally have met. Walking into the museum with a purpose, I felt quite important when I came in here every morning. I really enjoyed the sewing, I also did a lot at home and enjoyed it all".

Catherine Pitches

We have devised a banner trail around the museum which links up the items on display with the images on the banner.

Helen Clark, The People's Story, Edinburgh

REPRODUCTION COSTUMES REVISITED

I would like to make a few comments following Sue Sargent's article entitled "Give Reproduction Costume A Chance" in the summer issue of the news.

Nine museums in the West London area, mostly with education officers, some without, are currently involved in building up reproduction costumes for use in education sessions. The initial grant of one thousand pounds received from AMSSEE was matched by the participating museums each contributing one hundred pounds. The main aim of the project was to increase an understanding and appreciation of history and other subjects through trying on and close examination of costume by older children and teachers, perhaps in combination with original clothes. This would contribute to a serious study of costume and its historical and sociological relevance and would not be viewed as just "dressing up". We insisted that the costumes be well researched, made to a very high standard, of good quality natural materials as close to the originals as possible. The costumes were to be based on adult clothes, accurately copied from originals, scaled down to fit children ranging from seven to eleven. Cleaning, laundering, storage and transport were all to be taken into account.

We commissioned Sharon Manitta and Valerie Button, both who had extensive experience in dress design, theatre and reproduction costume, to make up the clothes. They produced a stunning collection, so beautifully made that we treat the costumes with the kind of care that we would give to originals. A lady's blue silk afternoon dress of 1855-60 and a maid's working striped blue and white dress of the same period were copied from originals in the Gunnersbury Park Museum collection. Chemises, drawers, petticoats, corsets and crinoline were copied from originals at Platt Hall, Manchester and from the Museum of London. The gentleman's outfit was inspired by an 1860 photograph of a conservative MP. Pleated shirt, trousers, waistcoat and frock coat were all taken from contemporary tailors' pattern books. Our splendid footman's uniform in red and gold was copied from one at Brighton Museum, once worn by a footman to the Gauge family in Lewes.

Since its initial launch at Gunnersbury Park Museum in May 1991, the collection has been a great success. It has turned out to be an immensely valuable and enjoyable teaching resource, which is shared across many boroughs, in different museum contexts and available to hundreds of schools. In teaching with the collection we have found that we can encompass history, design, technology, drama, literature and

geography. We can touch on technological developments such as the sewing machine, new aniline dyes, the care and cleaning of clothes, where fibres came from, the roles of Victorian seamstress, the comparison of rich and poor, employers and servants, women in society and social attitudes.

We have used the costumes in combination with paintings and drawings, contemporary photographs, Punch cartoons and with accessories such as fans, canes, bags and purses and with objects such as a housemaid's box, coal scuttle, glove stretchers, button hooks etc. Examples of materials such as whalebone, ivory, mother of pearl, silk, fur, feathers are passed round. Improvisations, role playing, interactions between the four 'characters', problems of movement and sitting in restrictive clothing can be part of a session. Those not used as models can be 'official' photographers, reporters and interviewers. Each model needs a helper especially for lacing up corsets and doing buttons and hooks.

Following the high standard of the collection we plan to build on it. We are now looking at the period 1930-1950 so that we can contrast pre-war fashions, with utility clothes and army uniforms and the 'new look' of the fifties. Along with gravy browning and Brylcreme handling material and reminiscence this could be equally popular.

Assuming we will continue to raise funds we have further plans for costumes of the 16th and 17th centuries and for ethnic clothes. We feel that we have proved that good reproduction costumes are highly beneficial to museums and that they should certainly receive serious consideration. We have also had the fun of watching nine year old schoolchildren transformed into personalities of a different era.

*Sue McAlpine
Education Officer
Gunnersbury Park Museum*

THE PURPLE, WHITE & GREEN

Suffragettes in London 1906-1914

I had been given a ticket for the preview of this exhibition and I had been looking forward to for some time. In the past, for my own research purposes, I had enjoyed access to the archival material of the Women's Social and Political Union in the collections of the Museum of London. This access has been restricted, of necessity, but restricted nevertheless, because of reorganisation and conservation of much of that material. For anybody really interested in the women's suffrage movement, microfilms are a poor second best. For a temporary exhibition I did for the Merseyside Museum of Labour History I had also been given access to the Museum of London's reserve collection, to select some loan items to supplement our own, very scant material and I remember thinking what a pity it was that all this wonderful material could not be on show. True, the Museum's permanent galleries contained a small corner on the movement, but this did not really do justice to the subject.

If only for the large number of ephemera, photographs, and objects now on display for the duration of a year, this exhibition is a very welcome one.

It has become a tasteful and probably expensive exhibition, and that is good. To underline its title, the colours purple, white and green have been made an important design device reoccurring on the display panels and in the cases which it works well. It is obvious that the designers have tried very hard to deal with the problem of displaying largely two dimensional material (after all even banners are that) and have looked for ways to add a three dimensional touch. There is a tradesman's cart of the period adorned with replica posters and banners, a ditto lady's bicycle and a reconstruction of a WSPU shop. In its window a display of a mixture of historic and modern replica material all clearly labelled. The shop shelves inside do perhaps look a bit empty but overall it does evoke some of the campaign atmosphere of the time.

For me, however, it is the authentic photographic material which is the most evocative, reminding us of the large numbers of women involved and; their "realness" instead of the mystical aura which has come to surround them after so many decades of history writing. A number of small objects add poignancy, from items used on window smashing raids to more 'feminine' embroidered handkerchiefs, sashes and brooches.

So, if the display material cannot be faulted and the design is pleasant and tasteful, what about the 'message'? The exhibition is devoted entirely to the Women's Social and Political Union in London and excludes, as stated on the first panel, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and any activities in the provinces. The catalogue or list of exhibits (by Diane Atkinson who was also the exhibition's project leader) combines with an essay aiming "to describe and evaluate an unstudied aspect of the WSPU's campaign - the designing and selling, latterly called merchandising and marketing, of the Union's political message. This is not to say that the provinces were uninvolved in or unaffected by the suffragettes' imaginative and innovative selling of the cause".

Although it is perfectly legitimate to restrict the parameters of an exhibition, especially when it is collection-led, in my view this is a pity. Whatever the openings statement, the exhibition reinforces very forcefully the idea that the Women's Suffrage Movement = Woman's Social and Political Union and hinged on the London activities, i.e. the popular understanding of the movement. Unless visitors are well versed in women's suffrage history, and perhaps many are, this is the impression given. The excellent video, for example, a clever edit of Path newsreel combined with an archive film of an 'anti-suffrage' playlet, ends with a statement which seems to imply that the first "Votes for Women" victory in 1918 was entirely thanks to the WSPU activities. Perhaps this was unavoidable.

Finally I should mention the 'skilful merchandising and marketing' which accompanies this exhibition. A small 'real' shop selling a range of purple, white and green merchandise is integral part of the exhibition, although all goods are also sold in the museum shop. Replica silver prison brooches, enamelled badges, paper badges, scarves, leather jewellery cases, dress jewellery in the colours, postcards, T-shirts, posters....you name it, they sell it and I guess it will sell well, especially near to Christmas. Hopefully it's not going to cause any problems for future curators, trying to distinguish between first and second 'wave' WSPU wares.

I did enjoy the exhibition.....

Marij Van Helmond
Merseyside Maritime Museum
Liverpool



ROLL OVER BEETHOVEN

Two musical exhibitions in London

STEPPING OUT was an enviably stylish exhibition of photographs, memorabilia and music, held at the Willesden Gallery and Library Centre from 7 September until 3 October 1992. The Grange Museum & Brent Council's Visual Unit, in creative collaboration, put together a celebration of the dance era in Brent, 1956-63. Those were the days when Brent's youth rock'n'rolled at places like the Pond Lane Drill Hall, and once, in the streets of Kilburn after Bill Haley and his Comets had raised the roof of the Gaumont State. The photographs were a selection from the Willesden Chronicle's photo library, recently acquired by The Grange, and the memorabilia, such as the wonderful 'Select-o-Matic 100' jukebox, were lent by a local collector.

An introductory text put the era into the context of West London's expanding economy, and the coming of age of an Americanised postwar generation. The decision not to individually caption the photographs was perhaps regrettable, however, minimal information was listed in the exhibition leaflet. But the imagination, fun & attention to detail of STEPPING OUT outweigh such criticism. With the hit music of the period playing in the gallery, I couldn't stop my toes tapping.

Meanwhile, at the Museum of the Moving Image, the IRN BRU POP VIDEO EXHIBITION runs until January 1993. On view are over 100 pop videos, their ancestors, and MTV interviews with pop video makers. MOMI have also gathered together artefacts such as the giant boots used in 'Tommy', and even one of Elvis's guitars, an acoustic from his Sun label days. And besides the videos there are working exhibits, with wonderful names, like a 1940's 'Pan-o-Ram' and a sixties 'Scopitone'. Surprisingly the exhibition is not a Video Hell, although half a dozen monitors and a 10 x 10 screen wall compete in a confined space. The conflict of music is tolerable thanks to earphones, ingeniously made of rubber tubing, attached to the seating. MOMI are to be congratulated for providing so much seating, so often inadequate for exhibits. Graphic panels tell the history of song-on-film, in clear, succinct and unpretentious language. The exhibition does not fail to mention criticisms levelled at pop videos; their frequent sexual stereotyping, soft pornography and unoriginality. But my lasting memory will be of the videos themselves: the Beatles', the Kinks', Queen's, and of course, the King's.

Javier Pes

Museum of London

GLASGOW'S GOOD NEWS

550 Years of the Archdiocese of Glasgow and its People

A temporary exhibition in Glasgow's People's Palace (on show until 17 January 1993) aims to trace, its states on the back of the leaflet, the development of Catholic life in Glasgow. As a social history curator in a city often likened to Glasgow in terms of the religious experience and once a Catholic, I went to see how a temporary exhibition might deal with such a complex subject.

The format of the exhibition is conventional - panels for text and images, objects in cases and larger objects on open display. I was impressed by the fact that the curators had been able to supply about half the objects on display from their own collections. A considerably better situation than my own where any relevant objects would come from our decorative and fine arts collections and would not go far for a social history interpretation of local church history. I noted, however, that the 'social history' type objects in the Glasgow collection are of more recent origin - the older ones having been lent by the local churches and

organisations. This made me think more generally about museums' policies on collecting from religions. As with the religions from other cultures, museums seem to have gone for the prestigious rather than commonplace. This however creates problems when attempting to represent the religious experience of the faithful rather than the institution. The Catholic Church of course is particularly strong on the latter: a monolithic world organisation with a single hierarchy, uniform rites using until recently a single language: Latin. Over the centuries the institution has sponsored artists and crafts people to produce their finest, examples of which abound in museum collections. But the Catholic Church has also been strong in shaping the day-to-day, popular religious experience with an annual calendar punctuated by church events, processions, pilgrimages, mass gatherings, retreats, rites of passage and through myriad social and welfare organisations. This has generated a massive, if fairly ephemeral, amount of material culture: devotionalia (rosaries, crucifixes, mini-shrines), memorabilia bought in places of pilgrimage, printed material (missals for children and adults, holy pictures, calendars, missionary materials), christening spoons, first communion outfits etc. Strongly prescriptive about life style (for example, the proverbial large family) it did much to support the message: Catholic schools, youth clubs, mothers organisations - all generated their own materials. But although this is the stuff ordinary Catholic religious experience is made of, I suspect it has not been collected much, certainly not on local level.

What finds its way into exhibitions such as the Glasgow one illustrates the history of the Catholic institution rather than Catholic way of life.

As such, the exhibition is well researched and well presented. Care has been taken with the text which is as accessible and the history IS of interest. The visitor is reminded that sectarian strife existed in Scotland (and elsewhere) before Irish immigrant communities sprang up. With reference to the origin of Catholic-Protestant strife the exhibition talks about the Irish 'Factor', showing how the waves of Irish immigration caused by economic and political circumstances reinforced existing religious animosities, not triggered them off. It mentions conflict between Scottish and Irish Catholics in Glasgow during the end of the 19th century, leaving the visitor to reflect on the link between ethnic and cultural differences and religious life.

If the exhibition does deliver in terms of its title, it seems a missed opportunity in terms of explaining to uninitiated visitors more about Catholicism as a way of life. I often wonder how as children we every managed to become acculturated into the system, get on top of the rites and rituals, become able to 'read' the significant objects and I realise how all pervasive it was in terms

of our day-to-day existence.

This way of life must have developed facts specific to Glasgow, the same way as it did in Liverpool, such as living in particular parts of the city and having access to or being barred from certain employs.

In terms of material culture - for non-Catholic visitors it cannot be easy to get under the skin of and appreciate more fully some of the objects on display which must appear to them in turn gaudy, naive, perhaps bigoted and even funny (a doll in nun's habit). More oral history might have helped. And so might, I think, a bit more church music and the odd whiff of incense, but perhaps that is merely being sentimental.

Marij Van Helmond
Mersyaside Maritime Museum,
Liverpool

"Sublime" The Sol Mix - Manchester Music and Design

Cornerhouse, Manchester, 5 SEPT - 18 OCT 1992

The pages of SHCG publications have always been concerned with issues surrounding popular and contemporary culture. This recent exhibition at Cornerhouse is worthy of our interest as it is another example of the blurring of boundaries between art, design and social history. It tells the story of the explosion of graphic talent which grew alongside the Manchester music scene from 1976 to today.

"Sublime" is a neat title, a verbal thank you to the sponsors, Sol beer (always better with a twist of lime). It could also be the title of a night at the Hacienda, the club which was at the centre of Mancunian culture throughout the 1980's. This is certainly appropriate as many of the designers here came out of Manchester's music and club culture.

The show is large, covering three floors. The bulk of the material is two-dimensional. It takes a chronological view, starting in the summer of 1976 with the early work of Malcolm Garrett and Linder Mulvey for the Buzzcocks and moving through to Peter Saville's work for Factory Records and New Order in particular. The seminal influence of the Sex Pistols and Punk are duly acknowledged. Anarchy and art school always being pretty close companions. Following on are the more recent crop of 8vo and Central Station Design, Johnson/Panas, Mark Farrow, plus Morrissey's photographic heroes which adorned the covers of all the Smiths records. There are also examples of original artwork and models made for photographic work. Central Station's work is typically displayed in a paint splattered booth. The only things missing are fag-ends and empty cans of Bud. These are also missing from the models and photographs of

architect Ben Kelley's key Factory projects, the Hacienda and Dry Bar.

It must be said that there is something rather satisfying about having so much of your record collection on the wall of a gallery. The gallery space invites you to look at them in a slightly different way, it's part of the 'museum mystery' to take things out of one context and place them in another, to construct a different dialogue.

The interpretation is minimal but uses snatches of "oral history" from the designers involved. This is good as far as it goes. It would have been interesting to have a video compilation of some of the people at work, plus a few examples of unpublished work. For those with a spare fiver compensation is at hand in the form of an excellent publication containing a series of commissioned essays which amplify the main themes.

"Sublime" is an interesting show which clearly illustrates the explosion of talent in 80's Manchester owed much to the courses at Manchester Polytechnic and the patronage of Factory Records under the leadership of Anthony Wilson. It shows that such potentially banal forms such as record sleeves and club flyers can become witty, artful statements in their own right. Like the Central Station Design's "Hello Playmates" show at the City Art Gallery before it, this show is to be welcomed. It acknowledges local creativity and involves museums and galleries in current debates on style, taste and consumption. It may even influence the next wave of designers.

Mark Suggitt
Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council

Footnote:

Johnson / Panas recently re-designed the logo for the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. Good to see a museum being aware of what's going on down the road.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

People In The Landscape

SHCG at the MA Conference
Plymouth September 1992

The theme of 1992's Museums Association Conference had a familiar ring to it - 'Museums in the Landscape'. Much of our work as social history curators is inevitably concerned with the relationship between people and place, and last year's SHCG Annual Study Weekend had explored the meanings that people find in their surroundings, however 'ordinary' they may appear. Invited to organise a session at the MA Conference, SHCG asked three very different speakers to discuss their own approaches towards interpreting the 'peopled' landscape.

Colin Ward has written a series of excellent books exploring popular and unofficial uses of the environment. These include *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape*, and *The Allotment: Its Language and Culture*. He also writes a regular column, *Fringe Benefits*, for the *New Statesman*, which is always worth reading. His talk looked beyond the self-important 'upstairs-downstairs' culture of country houses and landed estates, celebrated by the National Trust and others, to the apparently 'marginal' landscape inhabited by cottars and squatters. His wide-ranging exploration took in the development of the plotlands of South East England, allotments, the distinction between 'open' and 'closed' villages and the folklore surrounding 'squatters rights' for cottages built between sunset and sunrise, citing some museum interpretations of these subjects. He ended with two questions. Does anyone know of any county in England and Wales, which does not contain squatter houses? Secondly, has anyone made a systematic geographical study of the folklore surrounding squatters rights? If any reader can help, Colin Ward can be contacted via SHCG News.

Suggesting that some curators preferred the company of the Sacred Objects in their stores to that of their fellow human beings, Mark O'Neill saw hope in the way in which many museums were beginning to work more closely with the communities they serve. His entertaining and rapid-fire survey of recent developments included museums such as Edinburgh's *People's Story*, Hull's *Old Grammar School*, Springburn and Glasgow's forthcoming *Museum of Religion*, exhibitions such as *The Miles Tae Dundee* and *Stoke's Food of Love*, oral history projects, educational activities and outreach schemes, including the *Open Museum*.



Frogs - Edna & Jack Bailey & Pepe the Budgie. © Mo Wilson 1992

Andrew Dobraszczyk talked about ways of understanding the urban environment, drawing on his experience of organising social history walks for the WEA and his work on the Stoke-on-Trent Historic Buildings Survey. Stressing the need to record more than the physical features of a particular building, he suggested that we should learn to 'read' that building, to gain some understanding of the ways in which it affected the lives of the people who lived or worked inside it. The physical organisation of a workhouse building, for instance, emphasises its purpose as a means of social control. While the surviving buildings of a 19th century industrial community may be of architectural interest, they also embody the dominant ideology of the age. The social history walks had proved very popular indeed and had led to the formation of several research groups which are examining aspects of access to and ownership of land. The initiative for this had come from within the community itself, but Andrew Dobraszczyk hoped it would eventually lead to closer links with the museum service.

Although the SHCG session took place in the intimidatingly cavernous Plymouth Pavilions Arena, it was very well attended. Providing a valuable opportunity to share ideas and present the innovative work of SHCG members to a wider audience, it also generated a gratifying animated response.

Ian Lawley

Stoke on Trent City Museum and Art Gallery

WALSALL'S THISTHEN?

Conferences come and go. The world turns round. Memories blur. Walsall's The Politics of Collecting (June 10 and 11) is still talked about. Why?

Issues which send shivers down the spine were driven home - democratisation, the blurring of 'High' and 'low' culture distinctions, professional demystification, overturning old canons of taste and of collecting, projecting new cultural paradigmsgreen frogs and toilets!

A loaded debate between museum professionals and those from other (international) cultural institutions and disciplines. Not only did it have all this going for it, but the positing of theory was explored in terms of a practical manifestation - that fun and popular exhibition, the People's Show.

The Editorial (August 1992) of the Museums Journal referred to it as 'ground breaking'. The thing about breaking new ground is that the rest is uncharted territory - both strange and exhilarating. So were the papers....

THE STRANGE

Sarat Maharaj's comparison of 'the museum' to 'the lavatory' unsurprisingly seized the delegate's attention. Based upon James Joyce's fascination with the excremental it provided a clever analogy to, and

questioning of, the variety of 'unseen' material evidence traditionally excluded from museum collections. However, as the metaphor became more and more literal, it became more and more....strained.

Chris King's paper *ELVIS AS RELIGIOUS ICON* focused upon the bizarre in popular culture/hero worship. While of value in terms of investigating the psychology of obsessive collecting; an accompanying video, seemed to beg deeper questions. It panned from one fan mounting a vigil outside the gates of Gracelands declaring 'Elvis is my life' to another fan who had built up a museum displaying treasures such as an 'authentic' wart from the King's hand.

Do obsessive collectors really seek museological validation of their lifestyles and fantasies - or is it just a select few, such as Pitt-Rivers and Lord Elgin who get away with it? An audible whisper ran through the audience, 'These people need help!'

It perhaps provides a warning to all collectors, that in collecting - empowerment - should be resultant, rather than it becoming the sole basis of personal identity, - e.g. as is the case for the 'live for Elvis fan, the frog-woman of Walsall, and the cow-creamer collecting curator'.

The People's Show itself came under scrutiny. While the success of this innovative type of exhibition is obvious, with fourteen museums participating this year, Peter Jenkinson was careful to relate the criticism too. It has been described as, 'tacky, wacky and weird', 'vulgar, twee, curious, pointless, narcissistic', lacking in judgement, lacking in discrimination, 'an exercise in bad taste', 'a freak show' and 'a museological side show'. He added that the People's Show is, 'all of these things and none of them'.

As with any relationship there is always potential for exploitation. A comment made later by Gemma Sandoral, Executive Director of Plaza de la Raza (a cultural centre for Arts Education in Los Angeles) is pertinent here. She stated that being part of a museum collection, is, in its most fundamental form, a question of power, and who has it; and that power can only be shared amongst equals.

The egalitarian ideal of the People's Show would be to laugh with, and not at, members of the public who come off the streets to display their kipper ties and smartie top collections. It also poses questions as to how the People's Show collections of the 'popular' and sometimes 'contemporary' relate to existing collections, such as the Garman-Ryan collection at Walsall. How is it that the former has the status of a temporary exhibition with the objects returned, while the latter's Rembrants and Picasso's stay? Could the museum world be accused of condescension, or is the public always one step ahead, and far more discerning? A primary school teacher who was asked by Walsall

Museum if they could include her class plastic bag collection in the People's Show, commented, "*we thought the museum people were more mad than we were!*".

THE EXHILARATING

This was injected into the conference from beginning to end, especially in the papers presented by Stuart Hall (writer and critic) and Steven Newsome (Director, Anacostia Museum, Washington).

Exhortations were made, not simply to widen, but to overturn and replace, those old elitist canons of collecting based upon high culture, fine art and 'traditional' definitions of good taste. Awareness of cultural pluralism and of giving voice to marginalized histories was repeatedly stressed. Steven Newsome, basing his analysis on the work, carried out at the Smithsonian's satellite Afro-American museum stated, 'No-one wants to know about the history of dead-white men anymore!'

Subjective dimensions - including the emotional investment of the public in their donations and also in curatorial decision-making was continually underlined.

Stuart Hall called for desires, memories, fantasies and obsessions to be placed in the equation when constructing new canons for museum collections. Canons which must be in touch with new cultural visions and must acknowledge that in exploring questions of culture we are also exploring questions of power.

The exhilaration continued to be felt in the enthusiasm which emanated from speakers and delegates, when coming together to discuss and project some practical recommendations. With this came a tangible awareness that in addressing the politics of collecting, the whole mentality which underlies all museum action (practice and theory) inevitably comes under the microscope. Problems inherent in both organisational structures and in the mechanism of professionalism were scrutinised. Stuart Hall regarded it as part of the curator's 'professional responsibility' to promote a new democratic formula for collecting. Klingons/Clingons was the term used to describe those who would not let go of the old type of collecting strategies. "museum consciousness" was to be the touchstone for all.

Radical and positive strategies for change were championed. Attitudinal change was highlighted as a crucial step and seen to be a management issue. Maurice Davies of the Museums Journal remarked upon the absence of directors at conference - yet how it was crucial for commitment from those at 'top level' if any concrete action was to be realised. A call came for the Museums Association, Museum Directors, the

M.G.C, and Area Museum Councils to work together to embrace the democratisation movement. The reclaiming of social and cultural rights was identified as the major agenda for the museum world. Recommendations as to practical actions spanned everything from museums interacting more closely with the local community - to making sure equal opportunities policies were ingrained into the museum structure. It was suggested that equal opportunities should be given the status of a requirement of the registration scheme.

While all this was unashamedly emotive and inspiring it was also fully realised that a fundamental dichotomy runs through museums in terms of practical and the ideological. Museums are still selective, still in the business of mystification; perhaps no decision making nor exhibitions (including that of the People's Show) could come to fruition if this were not so? There are also political, strategic and functional reasons why this is so.

So why is Walsall still talked about? Certainly because it touched upon (and even explored) explosive issues of politics, social/cultural rights and empowerment.

While aligned to this was the passion and enthusiasm to keep the issues in the area of the museum world. The proceedings were captured on video and the papers given are to be published by Leicester University Press. There is still the hope that these issues will be reopened and progress monitored in a Staging of the Politics of Collecting (Part 2). A venue is still being sought.

It demonstrated that museum professionals are dedicated to constructing new and relevant theory and practice - what is needed now is the praxis. In the final analysis the politics of collecting are the politics of museums.

*Beverley Butler
NMLH
Manchester*

BOOK REVIEW

Getting Yesterday Right Interpreting the Heritage of Wales

(J Geraint Jenkins, University of Wales Press, £25.00)

A couple of months ago, I went shopping in Betws-y-Coed. Along with a Welsh lady fridge magnet and figurine of a tall-hatted spinner, I bought a tea towel depicting two old ladies (also spinning), in a kitchen complete with a Welsh dresser, love spoons, miner's lamp and coracle. (The male voice choir must have been out picking leeks that day). My prize

purchase, however, was a Welsh harpist toilet roll holder. There she was, plucking away amongst castles and folk dancers, with the words to her song written boldly below. 'New toilet roll please!' These items were intended to illustrate a talk on images of Welsh women. They are also illustrations of how Wales is getting yesterday wrong.

Geraint Jenkins' book is a close examination of the growing heritage industry in Wales. 'Is this land...rapidly becoming one vast museum,' he asks 'warranting signs at Queensferry and on the Severn Bridge proclaiming "This land is now open to the public?"'. This is the main thrust of a lively argument which is maintained throughout the book - an argument which is applicable not only to Wales but to other areas of Britain where the decline of traditional heavy industries has left a void.

Tourism and over-proliferation of attractions provide the starting point. There appears to be very little planning involved in the development of many heritage sites and 'museums' with the result that a large number of attractions are comprised of little more than a shed of winnowing boxes, box mangles and ploughs painted silver, a cafe and of course a craft shop. Jenkins urges for a national plan of priorities in order to prevent 'the gross duplication...when every museum of domestic bygones is exactly the same as the next.'

He also makes some positive recommendations regarding the so-called Welsh crafts. The 'made in Taiwan' sticker has long since peeled off my harpist, but even if it hadn't been there, the absence of traditional Welsh craftsmanship was pretty obvious! Although many of these crafts have disappeared, there are still potters, bowl turners, furniture makers and hand weavers and their products should naturally take precedence over cheap imported knick knacks.

Two raw materials which are especially synonymous with Wales are coal and slate. Getting Yesterday Right contains excellent though necessarily brief, descriptions of both industries. In discussing their interpretation, Jenkins argues forcefully against the tendency to sentimentalise what was often a very brutal way of life. 'The ugly as well as the beautiful, discontentment as well as prosperity have to be presented to provide a true and unbiased story of a people'. His argument is a familiar one, but it appears that many working in the heritage industry have yet to take heed. Rhondda Heritage Park in particular is singled out for criticism for providing a 'sanitised for your convenience' interpretation of the coal industry. For the organisers of "Black Gold" there is one six letter word which is particularly mucky: strike.

Geraint Jenkins also calls for a fuller interpretation of industries which are perhaps less readily associated with Wales. He draws attention in particular to the

neglect of lead, silver and copper mining which flourished in areas such as Ceredigion and Anglesey, playing a vital role in the Welsh economy during the 18th and 19th centuries. Those mines which have been developed as tourist attractions have been selected for the wrong reasons. Sygun copper mine near Beddgelert, for example, was relatively unimportant when compared with Mynydd Parys on Anglesey, but, it is situated in one of the most beautiful areas of Wales and has been developed by private entrepreneurs interested in capitalising upon the tourist honey pot, rather than presenting comprehensive exploration of mining itself. The location of industry has to be with the best raw materials rather the beauty of an area.

Surely the premise for the establishment of interpretative centres should be the same.

'The people of Wales and those who come to visit and find out about us, deserve better.' Getting Yesterday Right is an embryonic blue-print of how things can be improved. Coherent planning is needed in order to prevent flooding the tourist market with historical attractions. In those museums already established, we must avoid the assumption that sentimentalization sells, and re-evaluate the way in which collections are interpreted. Our collections should be used as pathways into the lives of real people not as excuses to market images of pristine, folksy stereotypes. After all, as Geraint Jenkins points out, 'Wales is not a country filled with flat capped Taffy's and ladies in tall hats' nor is it one of harpists and toilet rolls.

Kath Davies, Anglesey Borough Council

NEWS IN BRIEF

COLLECTING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

"Collecting for the 21st Century", a survey of Industrial and Social History Collections in Yorkshire and Humberside has just been published. This major report, commissioned by Yorkshire & Humberside Museums Council, the Museums & Galleries Commission and the Office of Arts and Libraries, is the result of two years research into collecting activities and subsequent collections management.

It is the most detailed review of its kind and gives many practical recommendations for improving collections management. Although concerned with Industrial and Social History it has lessons for all museum disciplines.

This essential report is available from: Yorkshire & Humberside Museums Council Farnley Hall, Hall Lane, Leeds LS12 5HA Price £10.00 (inc. p& p)

CONFERENCES / SEMINARS

SHCG SEMINARS

"Care & Interpretation of Glass Objects"

Thursday 25th February 10am-4:30pm

Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle

COST :

£7.50 (SHCG Members) £12.50 (Non-members)

Further Details Contact :

**A Cutforth,
Springburn Museum.
Tel 041 557 1405**

"So You Want To Do A People's Show?"

Thursday 29th April

Walsall Museum & Art Gallery

Further Details Contact :

**Marij Van Helmond
National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside
Tel : 051 207 0001**

"The Presentation of Religion in Museums"

Tuesday 27th April 10am - 4:15pm

Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London

COST

£15 (Including Lunch);

£8 (Student : Excluding Lunch;

£10 (Unwaged; Including Lunch)

Further Details Contact

**Alison Taylor
Wesley's Chapel, City Road,
London EC1Y 1AU**

WOMEN AND PROTEST

(Women & Politics: Northern Women's History Network)

Saturday 24 April 1993

10.00 am - 5.00 p.m.

**University of York,
Heslington, York**

The conference will explore the relationship between women's protest, women's politics and feminism. We welcome papers covering any geographical area or period.

If you are interested in presenting a paper please contact Helen Rogers at the address given below.

**Helen Rogers,
Department of History,
University of York**

THEATRE OF ACTION

(Radical and Socialist Culture in the North West. Journal of the North West Labour History Group, No 17)

The North West Labour Group is a regional society which had been in existence since 1973. The group is committed to the research and publication of the history of 'the left' in the region. This is very broadly interpreted and encompasses women's, working class and black history as well as 'straightforward' labour history. It tries to ensure that contributions address a wider, non-academic readership.

Its 17th issue (1992/93) is devoted for the larger part to radical and socialist culture, presented in short essays including "Shelley and the Owenites", Manchester Clarion Clubhouses 1897-1951 and the Clarion Newspaper 1891-1935. Most contributions offer lists of sources and there are twenty pages with book reviews.

This issue will be useful to anybody interested in culture and The Left, with special reference to the North West. At a modest £5, not to be missed. Copies from: North West Labour History Group, c/o Working Class Movement Library, Jubilee House, 51 The Crescent, Salford M5 4WX.

SHCG COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1992/93

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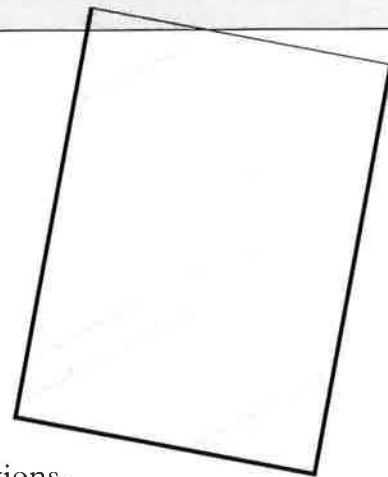
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SHCG JOURNAL VOL. 19

We should like to apologise to Christine Johnstone for two mistakes relating to her article which appeared in the Journal. On page 3 (column 2) of this journal Christine Johnson should read Christine Johnstone. Also, for those members who received their journal at the A.S.W., note that on page 28 (first column, 2nd line), the borough concerned should be Hackney, not Haringey.

Stuart Davies and Jane Whittaker

All contributions, letters, articles for consideration and correspondence should be sent to Frank Little, Summerlee Heritage Trust, West Canal Street, Coatbridge ML5 1QD
Tel: 0236 431261 Facsimile: 0236 440429

COPY DATE for the next Issue is 1st MARCH 1993