

**SOCIAL
HISTORY
CURATORS
GROUP**

NEWS

ISSUE NUMBER 39
Spring 1996

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL
HISTORY CURATORS GROUP**

**WHAT'S
BLACK AND WHITE
AND READ ALL OVER?**



**New homes
rise from
London's
ruins . . .**

Photo: Museum of London

**HISTORY IN YOUR
HANDS . . .**

- Annual Study Weekend - Scotland
- A Sporting Life
- London Looked Forward
- Making Connections with Outreach

Editor's Statement

The views expressed in this newsletter are wide ranging and do not necessarily express the views of the SHCG committee or SHCG, unless otherwise stated.

Mission Statement.

SHCG NEWS will encourage and publish a wide range of views from those connected with history and museums.

The NEWS aims to act as a channel for the exchange of information and opinions about current practice and theory in museums.

Articles and writings are welcome.

If you would like to write for the NEWS, any terms can be discussed, though we do not pay a fee. For example, if you wish to remain anonymous, confidentiality is assured; if you wish to express a view that may not seem SHCG correct, it can be expressed. Please type them and double space them. If you are working on a disc it may be helpful to send that in as well as hard copy, it depends on the disc and programme you are using. If you think something should be reviewed, but don't wish to do it yourself, let me know and I may be able to fix up a reviewer. If you would like to write for the NEWS on a regular or one-off basis, ring me.

What are you doing?

Yes, you. This is for you. Can you please tell SHCG what exactly you are up to? It's no good you saying nothing; it's for your own good - own up. Hundreds of SHCG members - 453 to be exact - receive the

NEWS and they want to know what you do. It's an important function of the NEWS to swap ideas, information and experiences. For this to happen, you're going to have to put pen to paper, and just say what you're working on. That's all. Please could you have a go? The call for press releases has been very successful in building up the exhibition listings. People are also sending in museum newsletters which can be an easier way for smaller museums to let the NEWS know what's going on. You can do this too...

Committee News

The committee met in February, and discussed the Annual Study Weekend, N.V.Q.'s, future seminars and the SHCG National Research project. We heard that 71 new members joined in 1995. Sally Coleman is running a promotional initiative for the group. Tim Corum is to write to the Heritage Secretary asking for the composition of the Lottery board to be a wider reflection of people in society and asking for more museum related people to be invited onto the board. The next SHCG Committee meeting is on 13 May 1996. If you would like to bring anything up, please contact the Secretary, Maggie Appleton at Stevenage Museum. If you still owe your 1995/6 membership, please pay it to Jayne Tyler in Hull, otherwise you will be struck off the mailing list.

Back copies of the SHCG journal

There are some back copies of journals available to buy, so if you don't have the full set, get in touch with Journal Editor, Jane Whittaker, Cannon Hall Museum, Cawthorne, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S75 4AT.

Harriet Purkis Editor

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The 1996 Annual Study Weekend

People's Stories

THURSDAY 27 June - SUNDAY 30 June 1996

THEME: *Marketing and Evaluation*

EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW

In 1994 we talked about objects, in 1995 we discussed communication and interpretation. In 1996 we ask, Who are these exhibitions for?How can we effectively market our museums to our visitors?Do we encourage repeat visits or target non-users?What are focus groups and why have them?.....Does evaluation work?

All these questions and more are to be debated during an action-packed weekend north of the border in Bonnie Scotland. This ASW will be the first forum to hear from the SHCG National Research Project that is now underway.

The weekend will be based in the historic, beautiful capital city of Edinburgh. This will provide a balance of theory and practice, with case studies, and practical workshops. Particular emphasis will be given to museum visits. Delegates will be able to visit The People's Story set in the heart of old Edinburgh, and see the new displays at The People's Palace, on historic Glasgow Green in the East End of Glasgow.

Accommodation will be in Pollock Halls of Residence which nestles under Arthur's Seat - the volcanic rock which dominates the view of Edinburgh. After a welcome supper in Edinburgh, papers and workshops will be held on Friday in the City Art Centre, Edinburgh. On Saturday, we make the hour trip to Glasgow to experience another side of Scottish culture. Papers and the AGM will be held in the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art. Delegates will have the opportunity to visit other museums in the city.

Booking forms and final details are being sent to all members. Non members are welcome.

Additional forms can be obtained from Liz Carnegie, The People's Palace, Glasgow Green, Glasgow G40 1AT. tel.: 0141 554 0223.



Image: Glasgow Museums

MEMBERS PAPERS: Anyone interested in giving a 15 minute members paper about anything - not necessarily related to the theme, please contact Helen Sykes, Tudor House Museum, Friar Street, Worcester, WR1 2NA, Tel.: 01905 20904. Priority is given to members who have not given a paper before - it could be you.

2 FREE PLACES are available to those who have never attended a weekend before. A free place means everything is free - that's accommodation, food and talks and workshops. You will probably have to find your travel costs to and from Edinburgh - though let us know if this may be a problem and we may be able to help. You'll need to write down a bit about yourself, and your reasons for wanting to go on the weekend. If you are interested please write to SHCG Chair, Tim Corum, Oldham Museum & Art Gallery, Greaves Street, Oldham, OL1 1DN.

Letters must reach him by 30 May 1995. He will let you know if you have been successful.



Photo: Edinburgh City Museums



THE 1995 ASW

FEEDBACK FROM THE 1995 ANNUAL STUDY WEEKEND

Committee member Helen Sykes ensured those people who attended the 1995 ASW in Carlisle, on the theme of Communication and Interpretation, had their say about the weekend on evaluation forms. The comments and feedback from the 1995 weekend will be considered in the 1996 weekend. Here are the results.

Asked why they had attended the weekend, most people said that it provided an opportunity to meet colleagues and make links, as well as keep in touch with 'what's going on'. Half said they came primarily because of the theme. Other comments included: "An opportunity to re-charge", "To become involved in SHCG", "Good melting pot of current opinion", "Habit?".

The papers were judged as being good or excellent by everyone, except for one person who considered them to be fair. A number of people mentioned the variety of papers as a positive point. Comments included, "Nice mix of academic and practical", "Not enough question time", "Integrated programme on a well defined theme", "Maybe too many science things".

On the workshops, most rated them good or fair. 3 people felt some of the abstracts were misleading, and 3 felt that an hour wasn't long enough. Here's what was said: "Great Hands-on opportunities", "Feedback session not necessary", "No ideas, suggestions, comparison of effective methods or evaluation of tested methods offered", "Little element of participation".

Museum visits were considered to be good by most, but a sizable number rated them only as fair. One person "liked the informality of the visits".

The accommodation was seen as excellent, because it was very close to the venue of the conference, as well as being of a high standard, "clean and comfortable", with "quiet breakfasts - good way to make contact with people".

People liked the food too.

When asked for suggestions for themes and venues for the next ASW, the most frequently mentioned themes were targeting, marketing and evaluation. Others included: contemporary collecting/ recording, learning the language of the non-user, National Lottery Funding, social history in the Nationals, rural industries, and working with other museum professionals. Venues listed included Stoke-on-Trent, Liverpool, Worcester, a Scottish Museum, Northern Ireland and "somewhere where the interpretation of rural life has been tackled".

General comments on the weekend included: "A big thank you for this totally excellent weekend - both interesting and useful", "15 minutes was too short for discussions. Half an hour would also allow for slippage by the speakers", "How much support is there for a rural theme? Do the same people always suggest it?", "Social cohesion is really important for the success of the ASW - newcomers will take part more readily if they are having fun. This was a big success here - please repeat".

Helen Sykes, Worcester Museums



AND NEXT YEAR'S ?

The idea of holding the 1997 SHCG Annual Study Weekend in Northern Ireland was raised at last year's AGM when Vivienne Pollock, Curator in the History Department at the Ulster Museum in Belfast, was co-opted onto the SHCG Committee to examine the matter in greater detail.

Ceasefire or no ceasefire, Northern Ireland remains one of the most welcoming and attractive regions of the British Isles. Despite their 'Troubles', the two major cities of Belfast and Derry, though very different in character and situation, still extend the kind of good humour and friendly intimacy that is now only a memory in many mainland cities. The countryside is largely unspoilt, and the scenery, especially at the coast, is often breathtaking. The Province can be reached surprisingly cheaply - at the time of writing, return air-fares to Belfast

from Britain start from as little as £55, based on a round trip which includes a Saturday night stop-over. Accommodation is generally comfortable and keenly priced, and the night-life rarely disappoints, whatever your pleasure, purpose or pocket-size.

There is, however, a serious reason for taking the Annual Study Weekend to Ireland. The power of past events in shaping ideas of place, personality and community; in reinforcing levels of belonging and exclusion; and in defining notions of fault and justification is felt keenly throughout Irish society. History is dangerously alive there, and those who work with it are deeply aware of its ability to divide and disempower as well as to unite and enable. The ways in which Irish museums, with their multiplicities of audience and historical material has implications for all who live and work in divided societies. A working visit to Ireland offers an opportunity to examine at grassroots level the wider issues that these local problems and solutions can reveal. And, of course, the 'crack' (as the Irish call having a good time) will be mighty!

This is the first time that SHCG has considered holding a summer session in Ireland and the Committee would like to hear your opinions. It would be particularly helpful at this stage if those

interested in attending a Belfast-based ASW would indicate on the tear-off slip below whether they would prefer a slightly more expensive but more broadly-based four-day visit, or a slightly cheaper and narrower three-day one, and to give some idea of how much (excluding travel) that such a trip should cost. Any other comments or ideas about the nature and content of an Irish ASW would, of course, be very welcome.

Vivienne Pollock, Ulster Museum

Please photocopy or cut out this slip and delete where you like.

I would like a Belfast-based ASW to last four / three days

I would / would not be prepared to spend proportionally more than £160 (the overall cost of the 1995 ASW) on such a trip

Other comments:

Please return it to the Membership Secretary in the same envelope as your membership renewal

SHCG Research Project

There has been lots of response from many different people and academic institutions to the research proposal developed by an SHCG sub-committee on behalf of all members. We invited academics to become partners in our research proposal looking at interpretation and evaluation of social history in museums.

After due consideration of nearly 20 enquiries, the sub committee decided to work with Tim Caulton and Stuart Davies who put forward a tailored research project with finite limits. Many of the others we considered, put forward the idea that we put the money we had into a PhD research project. We decided on the short term project undertaken by those with a track record in museum research and evaluation.

Following the detailed project proposal which appeared in the last NEWS, the sub-committee has narrowed down the research project and set up general principles to guide the project.

Here we update you on the work and show the proposed timetable for the research, in order to be fully accountable to members, but also to invite your participation in this exciting and pioneering venture for SHCG. A questionnaire will shortly be arriving for you from the research team to ask you in some detail all about interpretation. It's vital that you send in your answers as together they will represent a fair selection of views across the country. Please do not hesitate to contact Tim Corum in writing about the project, should you wish to comment at any stage.



The name and management of the project

The name of the project will now always be referred to as the SHCG Interpretation Project. The project is managed by a sub committee of SHCG members, consisting of Jayne Tyler, Tim Corum, Harriet Purkis, Jane Whittaker, Alisdair Wilson, Steph Mastoris. The project will be devised and implemented by Tim Caulton and Stuart Davies. The project will be steered by the SHCG sub committee which will provide advice and support and ensure accountability to all SHCG members. The chair of SHCG executive committee will also be on the steering committee. The sub committee will report to the SHCG committee. Responsibility for devising and managing the SHCG Interpretation Project will be held by Tim Caulton and Stuart Davies. They will be expected to fulfil the basic requirements within the time schedule.

Financing the project

SHCG will support the project to the sum of £6,000. This will go towards covering the costs of research, the origination of information to a publishable state, and the preparation and delivery of three seminars to follow up the

research and encourage feedback. Tim Caulton and Stuart Davies will make a presentation on work in progress at ASW 1996 and a final presentation on the project at SHCG ASW 1997 and whenever possible at other national conferences. Three seminars will be organised with SHCG on the themes of evaluative techniques; the results of the project; and advocacy of social history in museums.

The seed funding from SHCG will be matched by the academic institutions. Details of this will be provided by the participating institutions. The treasurer of SHCG will compile a financial report at the end of each financial year (ending on 31 March), and at the end of the project. This report will form a part of the general report the treasurer gives to the AGM.

£3000 will be given to the researchers on the commencement of work and the balance on completion.

Publishing the study

SHCG will take responsibility for ensuring the research is published. The copyright of the research and the publication will belong to SHCG. The research and any publication in which it is used will acknowledge SHCG as the originator of the project.

Timetable

- April 1996: SD and TC to have conducted a literature search and review and produced a draft questionnaire.
- April : Sub-committee meet to discuss questionnaire and to point to areas of study. SD and TC to report on work progress.
- April : Questionnaire to be distributed to SHCG members
- May : Closing date for receipt of questionnaires
- June: SD and TC draft report on results of questionnaires
- June: Sub- committee meet to discuss:
 - draft report
 - ASW presentation
 - Methodology of case studies to be undertaken
- June: Presentation at ASW in Edinburgh
- July - Sept.: Conduct case studies
- Sept.: Sub-committee meet to discuss seminar programme and publication
- Oct. - Dec. Seminars
- 1997: Presentation and publication of final report.

Outreach: Making Connections

1. Strategic Approaches to Outreach

Introduction

The SHCG session at the Museum Association's Annual Conference in 1995 was attended by just over 100 delegates. Three speakers contributed contrasting case studies of how social history and outreach programmes can extend and enhance the place of museums in society.

A Heritage Web

David Mealing, on a work exchange curator scheme, described the work of the Petone Settlers Museum, New Zealand, of which he has been Director/Curator since 1984. The museum has developed a community access programme, based on its theme of Migration and Settlement. This programme was first initiated by the museum in 1991 to develop the principle of community based exhibitions. The result of this principle being successfully established in the wider community has been a number of approaches from other community groups to tell their stories of Migration and Settlement.

Mealing examined the processes by which the community connects with, and contributes to, a multi-media resource on 19th century immigration to Wellington, New Zealand. The Museum has a very strong archival content (original and copied material) and Mealing illustrated the 'Heritage Web' in action, albeit focused on a specific aspect of local history. The Museum developed its outreach programme through exhibition and publication projects undertaken with different multi-ethnic communities of Hutt and Wellington regions. Mealing specifically described work conducted with the Polish community which had led to an exhibition focusing on the contrasting generational outlooks of members of the community.

The second speaker was Nat Edwards, the Senior Curator of the Open Museum (part of Glasgow Museums Service), leading a small team of curators and technicians, to provide exhibitions and access to Glasgow Museums' collections, and other resources, to the community.

He described the corporate work of the Open Museum within Glasgow Museums and its strategic input into City Programmes, including the Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Youth Strategy and Area Management. The Open Museum (established in 1991) takes reserve collections and works in partnership with a wide range of groups (inside and outside the local authority) to both make the collections more accessible and to contribute to the local authority's vision for the City.

The Open Museum therefore follows a 'corporate' agenda rather than just a museum agenda. One basic question raised by the programme is that of whether outreach is a way of increasing community participation in the museum or a way of increasing the participation of the museum in the community? But Edwards suggested that there were other concerns involved with outreach. The Open Museum is genuinely providing a resource for communities in a pro-active way that museums rarely manage. This approach to social history may also be a model for empowerment involving the community in a creating process and allowing Glasgow Museums to develop as a learning organisation.

The work of the Open Museum is project-based. Edwards described, for example, a project on school meals where personalities and celebrities were sent cassettes and invited to recall their experiences. This has produced such gems as Joanna Lumley talking about blancmange. Another project is seeking to document the lives of 2000 Glaswegians, surely one of the most ambitious social history projects to be found in any museum in this country.

There have of course been problems. The Open Museum's practice often conflicts with the organisational culture (both physical and intellectual) of Glasgow Museums. Curators' own expectations of what the community want are often challenged. Creative projects also uncover individual prejudices as well as revealing a wealth of richness, including the potential to enrich our own organisations.



The philosophy of the Open Museum is that of wanting to see the community making more demands upon museums, and expecting a higher degree of service quality. It also sees the job of the museum communicators being to develop a genuine partnership between the museum and the community. Edwards hopes, "to see a day when a shared understanding of our product defines all that we do in museums, rather than the so-called professional categories that we have created for ourselves".

Facing 'political interfaces'

Gary Morris concluded the session. He has been an Outreach Worker, based at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, since November 1993. His work is focused on the Transatlantic Slavery Gallery, the controversies surrounding which were described by Gary as being about 'political interfaces'. Morris sees the gallery not as a museum issue but actually as part of the infrastructure of the City of Liverpool and part of (and subject to) forces driving the city. He sees the strong hand of political economy at work and it is this which should drive outreach work not any (primarily) museum forces.

He argues that the museum should be taken out of its insularity and brought into the mainstream of much broader cultural concerns within the city, notably the development of black history and a range of cultural industries. Most importantly of all, Morris showed that we should not be afraid to make politics centre stage when discussing museum issues.

Conclusion

What emerged from the session was some case study evidence of a possible re-definition not only of current outreach work, but also perhaps of what will be the main preoccupations of museums in the next century. Professional development over the last thirty years has given us the established values of guardianship, access and education. But museums require social purpose as well and that means they need to emerge from the defensiveness of professionalism and engage meaningfully with

the world around them. It may be that our future concerns will focus on Purpose, People, Power and Politics. One unexpected consequence of outreach may be to allow museums to establish themselves (legitimately) in political systems rather than to withdraw into 'safe' professionalism. In so doing they may not only establish a true social purpose but also shift the justification of museums away from being predominantly about collections and more to one based on the duality of guardianship and political significance. We shall see.

Stuart Davies, University of Leeds.



2. Outreach South

Southampton has an established programme of outreach initiatives that have developed over a number of years. The Southampton City Council's Arts and Heritage Roadshow, now in its third year, is currently working in the Freemantle and Shirley areas of the city. "Localities are targeted and we work within these areas of the city for a six month period. We do not do venue-based museum work." says Donald Hyslop. The Roadshow project is the vehicle for a community history strategy designed to give people increased access to the museum collections and resources, which the heritage department controls on their behalf. The approach has emerged from ten years of Oral History work in Southampton and the democratic elements within the practice of oral history. Those values have now been extended to other areas of the Heritage and Arts Services' work, and hopefully into the wider culture of the city council itself.

Practical examples of this are: groups choosing and interpreting their own exhibitions; community plays centred on oral histories; community archaeology excavations; public arts projects; community publishing, and partnerships with other council departments and outside bodies.

Donald Hyslop, Southampton City Heritage

S/NVQ, MTI, CPD, AMA - Training

If successful training is largely based upon good communication, why does it tend to suffer from so much impenetrable jargon? As a graduate of the University of Esoteric Abbreviations (UEA Norwich), I will attempt to explain, in a simplified manner, what all the above abbreviations mean and why they matter to us all.

MTI and S/NVQs

The much maligned Museums Training Institute (MTI) - apparently the recipient of over £2m of government money so far - has put together a series of qualifications for museum workers which will take their place alongside a much wider range of Scottish/ National Vocational Qualifications offered by other organisations ('lead bodies', such as City and Guilds) other than the MTI. Each S/NVQ has a core syllabus of 'units' which everyone has to take and other optional 'units' which can be tailored to suit an individual's specific needs and experiences. MTIs S/NVQs (have you noticed how familiar you are becoming now with the jargon?) each have a Level, ranging from 2 to 5.

The AMA (Diploma)

What has been far from clear up to now is how the MTI and its NVQs will fit into the Museum Associations Diploma, which entitles you to describe yourself as an Associate Member of the Museums Association (AMA). Well, after years of uncertainty over what will replace the old style Diploma, the Museums Association has now started registering people for the new version. There are 3 main routes to the New Diploma:

Route A

A qualification equivalent to a post-graduate qualification or NVQ Level 4 (in subjects which may not be specifically museum related) and 3 years museum experience or a degree level qualification or NVQ Level 3 and 5 years experience.

Route B

MTI Level 4 or 5 NVQ Collection Management and Interpretation or Conservation and 3 years museum experience.

Route C

A post-graduate qualification from a Museum's Association recognised museum course (at the moment those at Leicester, Manchester, London and St. Andrews - others may follow) and a minimum of 3 years museum experience.

For all these routes, experience can be retrospective and include voluntary work and student placements.

CPD - Continuous Professional Development

A significant new element of the Diploma, and this applies to each route, is the requirement to do 2 years CPD. What is CPD? It is 'the maintenance and enhancement of knowledge, experience and competence, throughout your career'. In reality this means that you will have to show evidence that you have spent 70 hours over the last 2 years, plugging gaps in your knowledge, keeping up to date with new initiatives, learning new skills etc. Attending SHCG seminars, for example, could be part of your CPD. This CPD is not retrospective and begins when a person registers for the Diploma, so it will take a minimum of 2 years for anyone to go through the system.

CPD and existing AMAs

'None of this matters to me because I've already got my Diploma - right?'. Wrong! In 3 or 4 years time, once the MA has experience of working with CPD they plan to extend the requirement to all existing AMAs (and FMAs!). No one, least of all the MA, yet know how this will work, but in future years, if you still want to put AMA after your name, you will have to show that you are continuously developing your professionalism, which is no bad thing is it?

Nigel Wright, Chorley Museums Service

The Seminar Section

A SPORTING LIFE

A review of the SHCG seminar held at the Old Grammar School, Hull on 4 October 1995.

Sport is a relatively recent, but increasingly popular, phenomenon in museums. After my experience of helping to produce a new temporary museum for Newcastle United Football Club, I was interested to see how others had tackled the topic of sport. This seminar aimed to do exactly that. The speakers were well chosen due to their differing backgrounds and the individual experiences they brought to the subject.

Tackling the topic

First up was Professor Wray Vamplew, a sports historian at De Montfort University, Leicester. Having visited a variety of sports museums he spoke of the message that such museums should be getting across. After all, sport is a vital part of past and present popular culture. This topic can appeal to everyone whether you love or hate it, so Vamplew emphasised the need to delve behind the basic statistics. The commercial success of the industry is a significant theme, as is corruption, violence, sex, race and culture. Whatever the content of the display, it was emphasised that the excitement and drama which makes sport what it is should not be lost. Unlike a museum display case of static objects, sport itself is rarely static and should not be treated as such. Finally, perhaps unsurprisingly, Vamplew advised that sports historians should be involved in any such project.

Sport for all

Jayne Tyler of Hull Museums spoke of her experiences of producing the 'Sporting Life' exhibition - a most impressive gallery with innovative ideas for visitor involvement. As an exhibition of sport in general, a wide audience was sought with emphasis on including local sports groups. An appeal was launched to collect local memories, objects and photographs thus actively involving the community from the start. The use of questions on a panel at the entrance

was a stimulating introduction. My favourite part was the display of sport-related quotations which provoked much amusement. Planning in the juxtaposing of objects, information and images aimed to keep the visitor interested. Interactives included 'feely boxes'. Above all, the feeling of the gallery is one of community spirit and involvement; the overwhelming sense that taking part in sport, at whatever level, is about belonging.

National Fixtures

After lunch, the path of the seminar veered towards national museums of sport. Ged O'Brien, from the Scottish Football Association Museum Trust, outlined Scotland's plans to have a British Museum of Football based at Hampden Park in Glasgow. In planning the project, he spoke of the difficulty of dealing with business people who are ignorant of museums, and of the questions surrounding the establishment of such an institution. Speaking of the plan to avoid a trophy room style of display, he spoke of the need to show community spirit through the displays, capturing people's enthusiasm for the national sport. An important point was that ultimately it should not look 'male' and therefore immediately exclude. Although there are now three projects planning national museums of football, there is no reason why they should not all succeed.

The Last Hole

The final speaker was Peter Lewis, Director of the British Golf Museum at St Andrews. Having been involved in setting up the museum from scratch, it was interesting to hear how the learning process is on-going regarding continuous upgrading of the museum. Lewis explained that the social changes that have taken place in the period of the sport's development, are crucial to the displays in order to be able to understand the sport. Erratic collections have been a problem and there is an active policy to collect now for the future.

Claire Brown, Tyne and Wear Museums

*Coming Soon.....Future SHCG Seminars***1. Writing Exhibition Text**

Date: Monday 3 June 1996
Venue: Museum of Liverpool Life, Albert Dock, Liverpool
Fee: £12.00 members £7.00 unwaged members and £22.00 non-members

Helen Coxall, Museum Language Consultant and Alison Taubman from the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, will lead this one day seminar. They will share their experiences of writing text for the Transatlantic Slavery Gallery at Liverpool's Maritime Museum and participants will be invited to bring along text from their own museums for comment.

2. Cruise The Super Highway*(Social History and New Technology)*

Date: October 1996 (exact date details will be sent to members direct)
Venue: Croydon Clock Tower
Fee: £10.00 members, £5.00 unwaged members, £20.00 non-members.

This one day seminar will take a critical look at the potential of multi-media and the information superhighway for social history curatorship. Don't miss your chance to surf the net; experience virtual reality and view Croydon's 'Lifetimes' gallery which interprets history through touch screen computers. And if all this sounds like technical mumbo jumbo, don't be put off - the day will start with a layperson's guide to the galaxy of new technologies.

For full details about the following two seminars please contact SHCG seminar organiser Hazel Edwards at Tyne and Wear Museums, Newcastle Discovery, Blandford Square, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4JA. tel.: 0191 232 6789, Fax: 0191 230 2614.

*Exhibitions***1. LONDON LOOKS FORWARD**

Here, Javier Pes from the Department of Later London History at the Museum of London describes the aims of a recent exhibition about '1945 to the Future'.

City historical museums are no longer sleepy shrines to municipal worthiness. 'Heartlands' in Birmingham, 'Cov Kids', 'Liverpool Life', and 'Great City' in Newcastle, have put urbanity and urbanites on display in ways that involve, include and inform as never before.

'London Looks Forward: From 1945 to the Future' was a deliberately experimental exhibition influenced by this recent renaissance in museum urban history. Realising that 1995 was going to be the year of collective remembrance of the end of

the war, we decided to 'do our bit' by looking forward and back in time, comparing London in the aftermath of war and London today and inviting visitors to put forward their vision of London in the 21st century. 'This exhibition is about change' declared the exhibition's introduction panel, 'how London has changed since the war and how you (the visitor) would change London's future'.

A Different kind of show

Since the exhibition's approach was unconventional, we wanted to create an unconventional look and also an informal feel in the exhibition space. Vivid colours, an open-plan lay-out, above all, the skill and flair of Chris Hudson, the exhibition's 3D designer, meant that

the design was far more striking than we dared hoped for. In appropriate '1945' fashion we were working within the limitations of an austerity budget.

Drop the formalities

To enhance the social character of the exhibition we arranged it as 'open plan' as possible. Furthermore, to encourage people to sit down and look back, we put in two IKEA armchairs around a coffee table with a laminated 1945 copy of Picture Post and the Daily Mirror. People could also sit down and create their manifestos for a future London, or draw their vision of the city in 2045.

On three giant pinboards we put up visitors' handwritten manifestos and their drawings of London future. These crowded pinboards, and another one of late 1940's photocopied printed ephemera, counter balanced the polished formality of the display cases, photo-montages and text panels.

Words and Things

We wanted to convey ideas and to pose questions through objects and also to avoid the book on the wall syndrome. We decided to be strictly economical with words. Moreover, we divided the text between panels, conveying key themes and extended exhibit captions which carried detailed information. Sub headings were snappy, sentences short and overall word counts were kept right down to between 70 and 100 words per thematic panel.

The Museum's stored collections were fully mobilised providing a wealth of 3D exhibits from two large architectural models, to American tins of dried eggs and powdered milk, once a Londoner's post-war food hoard. From the Museum's collections of prints and paintings came a selection of fine 1940's and 1990's cityscapes. A short sharp programme of contemporary collecting and generous loans from half a dozen London museums ranging from the Science Museum to the British College of Optometrists, completed our exhibit list.

Pairing off

In two large cases, entitled 'Things Then and Now' we juxtaposed 1940's objects with their 1990's equivalents. We sought to signify a range of changes to London and Londoners' lives over the last fifty years by pairing diverse objects such as a woman's utility shoe beside a tartan Doc Martens boot, and a docker's hook beside a Heathrow controller's baton. They generated both debate over current issues and reminiscences about 'how things used to be'. The urban changes presented included: Londoner's higher standard of living, recycling materials, air pollution, fashion changes, new and old office technologies, even the rise of fast food, and Arsenal Football Club as big business.

A wall called 'Front Page News', consisted of thirty front pages of the Evening Standard in 1945, paired with the 1995 front pages from the same day. We also decided to create a '1945' austerity room set. The objective was to highlight the radical difference between the things in Londoners' homes in 1945 and in 1995.

Londoner's Go To The Polls

Opposite the 'End of the War' display featuring a striking grouping of a 500kg German bomb, with an ARP stretcher, an enlarged image of two airmen holding aloft the front page headline, 'Japan Surrenders', and a large roll of honour from a city drapery business; there was a section on the 1945 General Election. Featuring Labour, National-Conservative, Communist, Liberal and Commonwealth Party election propaganda, this



Photo: Museum of London

section told the story of the 1945 General Election, its issues, personalities, the result and its long term consequences. We wanted to do justice to the cross party consensus that the post-war priorities were improving the welfare, health care, housing, education, and job opportunities of ordinary people. However, we did not want to thereby gloss over Londoner's and the nation's political differences. Invariably city historical museums have overlooked the significance of the contestation of power, and the history of political division within a city. Therefore, a false apolitical image of 'the city and its people' has often been presented. We sought to show the range of political opinion amongst Londoners; by mapping the election results in London we showed which constituencies went left and which went right in 1945.

Peopling Urban History

What does 1945 mean to ordinary Londoners who lived through that momentous year? To show how the anniversary means different things to different people, Rory O'Connell, the Museum's curator of oral history, recorded the memories of twelve Londoners, which were presented in a tape slide audio visual. We sought to personalise the exhibition by including the personal histories behind many objects on display. Especially poignant was Robert Knott's roll of honour, in an ordinary notebook, in which he had listed his school friends who fought in the war. A small cross signified those who never came back. An

exhibition without personal voices, belongings and different view points would have been far less involving; a 'peopled' urban history is, without a doubt, just as important as an object rich one.

2. NEW DOLLS AND TOYS GALLERY IN HULL

An exciting new Dolls and Toys gallery is now open at Wilberforce House Museum in Hull. The gallery is already attracting lots of children to the museum with its children's "hands-on" activity area, special brightly painted steps to provide a child's eye view of the cases and their very own picture gallery to display drawings of the toys and dolls now permanently on show.

The new display includes a whole range of dolls from Victorian child dolls, a porcelain fisherman doll to Edwardian dolls and even a Seventies Cindy doll and furniture! The toys waiting to be discovered include a Victorian dolls house, a 1950's Bagatelle, First World War children's rag books and a brightly coloured 1940's Noah's Ark and animals, which have recently been donated. There are also a selection of child related paintings on display from the Ferens Art Gallery. Visitors are invited to come and have a look at our new gallery, remember the toys of childhood, bring along their children and leave a drawing for our children's gallery.

Jane Tyler, Hull City Museums



Photo: Hull City Museum

Exhibition Listings

LONDON ON FILM

Until 10 November 1996 at the Museum of London, this show explores the popular form of entertainment through the eyes of filmmakers using archive film and objects.

DOLLS AND TOYS

Wilberforce Museum, Hull.

A new gallery designed for tiny hands with things to do and lots to see from Hull's doll and toy collections.

NEW MUSEUM in WANDSWORTH

The Courthouse, Wandsworth is currently being converted into a museum due to open in mid-1996. New displays include a view of Wandsworth village in 1865 and a Community Gallery. Watch this space.

ROMAN LONDON GALLERY

The MUSEUM OF LONDON's newest gallery sees real Romans brought to life and nearly 2,000 original objects set out in new displays, together with the latest evidence from recent archaeological discoveries.

ART POTTERY

The legacy of William Morris
The City Museum and Art Gallery
Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.
28 July - 1 December 1996

An exhibition of pottery from the ceramics collection along with supporting Decorative Art and photographic material to set the scene. Well-known names such as William De Morgan and Bernard Moore; and leading art potteries will be represented in the show.

ART FOR A GARDEN CITY

The Mill Green Museum
Mill Green, Hatfield

Until 21 April, this exhibition shows the posters designed for Welwyn Garden City by Charles Paine.

"A TRUE STORY BASED ON FRICTION....."

The Mill Green Museum
Mill Green, Hatfield.

From 27 April 1996, this exhibition shows life in Welwyn Garden City in the 1930's and 1940's through the eyes of caricaturist, Cyril Hards. 150 caricatures will be on show with results of research carried out that try and find out the true characters.

COLOUR IN MIND

The Colour Museum
Perkin House
82 Grattan Road, Bradford
West Yorkshire BD1 2JB.

This exhibition explores the Symbolism and Psychology of Colour.

PORTSMOUTH AT PLAY

A new gallery at the Portsmouth City Museum,
Museum Road, Portsmouth PO1 2LJ

Looks at the history of the Southsea seaside resort as well as other popular pastimes in Portsmouth.

TERROR - SAURS !

The Hancock Museum, Tyne and Wear Museums Service, Newcastle hosts monstrous flying reptiles, and huge moving models.

HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Hampshire Museums Touring show which looks at fun in the home from gramophones to videos. A chance to see a collection of music machines in a social context.

To feature in this section please send your press releases to:

Nigel Wright, Astley Hall Museum and Art Gallery, Astley Park, off Hall Gate, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 1NP. Tel.: 01257 262166. Fax: 01257 232 441

Particularly welcome is exhibition information from smaller museums. Please send your newsletter, or just a brief note about forthcoming exhibitions, or a press release. It's easy.

The Pinboard

1. New History Group in North West

The North West Social History Group is a new group set up to enable everyone working in museums in the region who is interested in social history (whether or not it appears in their job title) to meet regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. Each meeting will have a main theme, requested by members, but will also allow time to share information on current and future projects to hopefully build up a useful social history network in the North West. It is hoped that meetings will not only raise general levels of awareness amongst social history curators about collections and initiatives going on in the region, but that interesting collaborative ventures will be established. The meetings programme is as follows:

May 1 - Museum of Liverpool Life
'The interpretation of social history objects'.

August 7 - Warrington Museum
'Reminiscence Therapy'.

November 12 - Wigan History Shop
'The inter-relationship of the social history museum and local history libraries/ archives'.

All meetings begin at 2pm and will finish by 4.30pm. The annual subscription is only £7. For more details please contact Sally Coleman at the Harris Museum in Preston, tel.: 01772 258248 or Nigel Wright at Astley Hall in Chorley, tel.: 01257 262166.

2. Fact Sheets

The MDA announces new fact sheets based on SPECTRUM: The UK Museum Documentation Standard. The new fact sheets are particularly aimed at museums wanting to meet the recommended standards for MGC Registration. They provide common-sense guidelines - suitable for all museums, large or small - on the following:

- Exit records
- Entry records
- Accession records
- Protecting your records

Other MDA fact sheets are still available on a whole range of subjects from labelling and marking museum objects through to computer graphics.

The factsheets are available as a pack or individually from Katherine Futers, The Museum Documentation Association, 347 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4DH. tel.: 01223 242848. Fax: 01223 213575.

3. SHCG Plastic facts

Fantastic Plastic factsheets are now available to those people who attended this seminar in 1995. Contact Hazel Edwards for your copy at Tyne and Wear Museums, Blandford Square, Newcastle NE1 4JA. tel.: 0191 232 6789; Fax: 0191 230 2614.

4. Call for papers

The Courthauld History of Dress Association is holding a conference on Working Clothes on 8 July 1996 at the Museum of London. Papers should consider different aspects of the history of working dress. Topics may include issues of class, consumption, working and 'best' dress, gender, identity and social status. Since the history of working and working class dress has tended to be neglected, papers which address the methodology and historiography of the subject - albeit within the context of a specific case study - are particularly welcome. Papers should be of thirty minutes duration. For full details contact Jaqui Lewis, 99 Durlston Road, Stoke Newington, London E5 8RP. tel.: 0181 806 8433.

5. Left-Handed ?

Please contact Nigel Sadler at the Vestry House Museum, Vestry Road, London E17 9NH. tel.: 0181 509 1917 if you have any information or objects related to left-handers in history. He requests specifically help in finding objects made by, made for, or adapted by, left-handers through history for a exhibition on the subject.

SHCG COMMITTEE 1996

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Oldham Museum and Art Gallery
Greaves Street, Oldham OL1 1DN
Tel.: 0161 911 4657

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Maggie Appleton
Stevenage Museum
St George's Way
Stevenage SG1 1XX
Tel.: 01438 354292

Treasurer

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Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
Chamberlain Square
Birmingham B3 1RZ
Tel.: 0121 235 1675

Membership Secretary

Jayne Tyler, Hull City Museums,
Ferens Art Gallery
Queen Victoria Square
Hull HU1 3RA
Tel.: 01482 593924.

Editor of the 'NEWS'

Harriet Purkis
Project Curator -
'Making Textiles' Gallery
Museum of Science & Industry in
Manchester
Liverpool Road
Castlefield
Manchester M3 4JP
Tel.: 0161 832 2244

Journal Editor

Jane Whittaker
Cannon Hall Museum
Cawthorne
Barnsley
South Yorkshire S75 4AT
Tel.: 01226 790270

Ordinary Committee members

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Photo: Writing on slates during a role play 'Victorian lesson' at The Ragged School Museum, winner of the National Heritage IBM Museum of the Year award.

YOUR EXHIBITIONS

Have you ever wondered how to keep over 430 museum curators informed of what you are doing, but never quite knew how?

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- Increased visits from professional colleagues
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- This will build into an index of past exhibitions

Press release should be addressed to:
Nigel Wright, Astley Hall Museum,
Astley Park, off Hall Gate, Chorley,
Lancashire PR7 1NP Fax: 01257 232441

Reviews, polemics, views, cartoons, photographs, book reviews, and correspondence are all very welcome. Please send to: Harriet Purkis, The Editor, SHCG News, Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester, Liverpool Road, Castlefield, Manchester M3 4JP.

Next issue includes: you tell me.....

All contributions gratefully received for possible inclusion

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS 28 JULY 1996