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Issue Editor: Gaby Porter, 14 Grove Gardens, Leeds LS6 4EG

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Crispin Paine is due to depart for Cairo on January 3rd, at very short notice, to undertake a six-month programme of curatorial training for Egyptian museum staff. Hence I have taken on the task of editing this issue of SHCG News, at equally short notice, and wish him every success in this venture. Where did you say the 1984 Annual Study Weekend would be held...?

Neither the New Year deadline for this issue, nor my hungry breast-fed daughter, allows the luxury of picture research or graphics and layout normally enjoyed by readers of SHCG News. However, I hope you enjoy this issue, and wish you a Happy New Year for 1984.



Programmes are enclosed with this issue for:
The History of Provincial Museums Birmingham City Museum Thurs. March 29th.
Women's Heritage and Museums Woolton Hall, Fallowfield, Manchester Sat. & Sun. April 7th and 8th.

OTHER DATES AND MEETINGS

May 12th: a joint meeting with the Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage at the Black Country Museum. See below, under SIBH Events.
June/July: Annual Study Weekend at Norwich.

Further meetings planned include:
the vernacular and neo-vernacular in Surrey (postponed); 20th century collecting; the Macclesfield Silk Project (joint meeting with Group for Costume and Textiles Staff); textile identification (ditto); museums and the MSC; an introduction to SHIC; 'Whose History Is It Anyway?' - politics and history, people's history.

The Department of Museum Studies at Leicester is holding its first course for history museum curators on May 22 - 24th, entitled History Museums and research: a consideration of purpose and methods. The programme combines lectures, group discussions and informal course work. Dr. J. Geraint Jenkins, Curator of the Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum, will give a personal view of history museums and research. The course fee is £78.00 plus accommodation. Further details and booking forms from: Gaynor Kavanagh, Dept. of Museum Studies, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG tel. (0533) 553560.

GROUP NEWS:

For the first time ever the membership of the Group stands at 230: this is largely due to the efforts of Helen Clark, the Membership Secretary. The membership stood at half this number when she took on the job. A larger membership and income allows the Group to offer a much stronger programme of publications, training, meetings, and to represent the interests of its members more fully.

PUBLICATIONS

Issue No. 11 of the Journal is due to be distributed in a month's time; the bibliographic issue 'Sources for Social Historians' is in production and will be distributed shortly.

One result of the new vigour of the Group is the quantity of material being received by the Editor, Sam Mullins, for publication: he is already snowed under with material for Issue 12, due to be published in the late summer.

The committee and Training Working Party are also considering the preparation of a 'Manual for Social History Curatorship'. Such a publication would be eligible for grant aid, and would greatly assist the training programme.

EXPORT OF SOCIAL HISTORY ITEMS

At its November meeting, the committee considered a discussion paper prepared by Graeme Cruickshank, following liaison with the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, and other research. The paper will be published in the SHCG Journal and in the Museums Journal to broaden discussion.

The Reviewing Committee has responded favourably to the Group's approach, but it is unlikely that changes will be made to major items of policy such as the stipulations on age and monetary value of items to be reviewed by the Committee, which have the effect of excluding many social history items. But the SHCG Committee agreed that a change in the Reviewing Committee's name to the Reviewing Committee for the Export of Items of Cultural Heritage would be an encouraging start. A letter has been sent to the Reviewing Committee following this discussion.

Again, members of SHCG are urged to send any information if they know of important social history collections leaving the country for export, and if they can suggest the areas of prime concern and danger, to Graeme Cruickshank or to the SHCG Secretary, Sue Kirby:

Graeme Cruickshank, Huntly House Museum, Canongate, Edinburgh.	Sue Kirby, Carlisle Museum & Art Gallery, Castle Street, Carlisle.
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TRAINING:

REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY David Fleming

Of great concern to SHCG for a number of years has been the absence of a coherent programme of specialist training for persons working with social history collections. The Group has attempted to alleviate the problem by organising or promoting meetings and seminars around the country, negotiations with both the Department of Museum Studies and the Curatorial Board of Studies having failed to provide any other satisfactory solutions.

The present Training Working Party, the third formed by the Group since 1978, was set up by Committee at Market Harborough on 6 August 1983. This followed the AGM of 24 June 1983 where it was reported that the previous WP's efforts in organising training seminars in England had not been wholly successful. This contrasts markedly with the success of the seminar programme in Scotland held jointly by SHCG and NMAS. A review of the Group's role in training was therefore seen to be necessary, and the new WP was formed for this purpose. At the same time Jenny Mattingly was appointed Seminar Organiser with a view to acting upon the WP's recommendations.

The WP feels that the Group has a continuing responsibility to promote specialist training, not only for Diploma students, but for all museum staff who work with social history collections. Consequently, we are launching a training programme in England consisting of three series of seminars. Two of these series (one entitled 'Materials and Methods' and the other being practical sessions) are to be organised regionally and will reflect regional needs. A questionnaire has been sent out to discover the potential of these series in each area.

The third series is entitled 'Social History in Museums'. The philosophy behind this series is that of providing a forum for the discussion of new and interesting ideas and approaches in the treatment of social history in museums, and we hope that the seminars are seminal in the true sense. Arrangements for the first two in this series are currently being finalised. They are:

- (1) Urban History in Museums at Manchester Studies Unit, Manchester Polytechnic in early May. Speakers will include Patrick Greene of the Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, Audrey Linkman of Manchester Studies Unit, and someone from the Manchester Jewish Museum (of which the local Jewish newspaper said the Jewish community needed "like it needs a ham sandwich").
- (2) Documenting and Classifying Collections at Leicestershire Museums in early August. Speakers will include Tony Fletcher of Leicestershire Museums and Peter Brears of Leeds Museums.

Group Members are urged to support these seminars, the proceedings of which the Group hopes to publish.

Further seminars in the training series will be held in Scotland in coming months, including: Archival Sources; Vernacular Building; mock practicals. Further details will be circulated in SHCG News and the Museums Bulletin.

TOOLS AND TRADES HISTORY SOCIETY

The society was established in 1983 to further knowledge and understanding of hand tools, of their use and of the trades and craftsmen (sic) that use them. The subscription is £10.00 per annum. Members receive a regular Newsletter and a Journal. The Society's first meeting was held at Stowmarket, the Museum of East Anglian Life, in September 1983 and included speakers and demonstrators of a wide range of trades and crafts, encompassing the prehistoric flint tool industry, recording contemporary crafts, and many topics in between. For membership write to: TATHS, Winston Grange, Debenham, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 6LE.

PHOTOGRAPHIC CONSERVATION SEMINAR, BRADFORD
report by David Fleming

"To use a photograph is to use it up" - the message from the speakers at the two-day Photographic Conservation seminar held in Bradford on 29/30 September, was loud and clear. The seminar, hosted by the new National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, was organised by the Institute of Paper Conservation, which is to be commended for its initiative. An interesting event, insofar as photographic conservation does not exactly head the list of priorities of many museum Directors.

The two speakers, James Reilly of the Rochester Institute of Technology, and Grant Romer of the International Museum of Photography (also in Rochester) are wholly dedicated to the collection, identification and conservation of photographic materials - in itself this makes them somewhat unusual. Both men spoke with great authority on the subject, and the fact that both had been shipped in from the USA accentuates the rather pitiful level of knowledge in this country. A useful opportunity, perhaps, for social history curators to acquire some expertise in the techniques of identification, storage and conservation, but, alas, the curatorial presence was woefully thin, and was significantly weaker than that of the conservators. Indeed, there seemed to be more photographers present than curators. This lent great power to the words of Grant Romer, a fiery photographic conservator, who castigated the curatorial profession for its long-standing and continuing neglect and misuse of photographic collections. When the Education Officer at the National Photographic Museum spoke briefly about the value in allowing schoolchildren physical access to photographic collections, Mr Romer's invective soared to frightening, Olympian heights.

There are most certainly very major obstacles which help prevent the proper care of photographic collections in this country - the sheer numbers of items involved, their fragility and fugitive nature, the cost of environmental control. Most depressing of all, however, is the fact that there may not even be the collective will in the curatorial profession to try to ensure that photographic materials are regarded as worth rescuing and conserving.

It would be encouraging to think that the National Photographic Museum - the concept of which is thrilling, and whose displays are marvellous - will become a genuine centre of excellence in the field of photographic curatorship, and that it will set standards for the rest of us to follow. If this turns out to be so, then the fear that there will be no more than faded remnants of current museum holdings of photographs still surviving by 2064, will be that much more distant.

DISABLED VISITORS TO MUSEUMS: a report

Shropshire County Museums Service have produced the Report on the Facilities for Wheelchair-Bound Visitors to the Acton Scott Working Farm Museum. It is the result of survey work by a wheelchair-bound visitor to the site, and deals only with this disability. It comments on mobility around the site; visitor facilities; displays, with findings and recommendations for each section.

The report makes many useful observations, not only practical (e.g. towel dispenser should be lowered), but also visual (e.g. "this display appears a little too 'flat' when viewed from a wheelchair").

The Museums Service would welcome comments and suggestions from readers. Copies available from: Wenlock Edge, Acton Scott, Church Stretton, Shropshire SY6 6QN. (No price given).

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HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

THE SOCIETY FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

EVENTS IN SPRING 1984**1984 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING****ROCHESTER, KENT****13th - 15th APRIL**

Various aspects of British Heritage will be promoted in 1984, and it is our intention to reflect these in our annual meeting. Unlike previous meetings in which there has been one theme, the Rochester weekend will focus on three issues - countryside interpretation, architectural heritage and 'Waters Edge' heritage. Members can choose the theme which interests them and devote the day to examining the practice and potential of that aspect of interpretation in the Rochester area.

Provisionally arranged visits within each theme include: interpretation on the North Downs Way and the Pilgrims Way; Dolphin Yard Barge Museum, Milton Creek Festival, Chatham Dockyard; Fleur de Lys Heritage Centre, Dicken's Centre.

Details and a booking form for: Dr. David Uzzell, Department of Psychology, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 5XH. Tel: Guildford (0483) 571281 ext 894

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Lake District National Park staff have organised a one-day meeting on the subject of 'Information Technology', with a corresponding display of hardware and software put on by Saville's Audio-Visual, suppliers of electrosonic equipment. This meeting, partly sponsored by Savilles, will not only provide members with an opportunity to see at first hand computerised exhibits, but also give members an opportunity to view the new (1983) Brockhole exhibition 'Living Lakeland'.

DATE: Friday 2nd March
CONTACT: Bob Matthews, Assistant Director, National Park Centre, Brockhole, Windermere, Cumbria, LA23 1LJ
Tel: 096 62 2231

INTERPRETATION: WHAT VOLUNTEERS CAN DO

After the success of the joint meeting with the British Association of the Friends of Museums on this subject in Liverpool in 1983, a number of members suggested that the theme be taken up again in another joint meeting with the BAFM. Topics to be discussed include the interpreters view of volunteers; the role of volunteers in the Mary Rose project and the Portsmouth City and Royal Naval Museums; training, organising and managing volunteers. The day will also include a tour of the Mary Rose.

DATE: Saturday 24th March
CONTACT: Richard Harrison, Mary Rose Trust, Old Bond Store, Warblington Street, Portsmouth, PO1 2ET
Tel: 0705 750521

RECENT PUBLICATIONS:

Oak-Swill Basket-Making in the Lake District by Mary Barratt (£1.95) Gives background history of the swiller's craft, uses and variations of the baskets, and a step-by-step manual on how to make them. 32pp., including 34 photographs and 14 line drawings. £1.95 + p & p from: Mary Barratt, 2 Scarfoot Cottages, Mealbank, Kendal, Cumbria.

Living the Fishing by Paul Thompson with Tony Wailey and Trevor Lummis (Routledge, 1983 £13.95) History of the commercial fishing industry, inshore and distant waters, which uses oral evidence along with conventional sources.

Women's Work and Leisure: a guide to the Strangers Hall and Bridewell Museums (Open University 1983, £1.95)

This guide is the first to interpret displays from the point of view of women's work in and out of the home. Each room is treated in the same way, with a list of items to look at, and brief descriptions, followed by an interpretive section which may be read at leisure. The guide forms part of the Open University course The Changing Experience of Women, and refers briefly to relevant sections in the Course Units used by O.U. students. Available @ £1.95 + 30p p&p from: Publications Dept., Castle Museum, Norwich NR1 3JU (Cheques payable to Norfolk County Council)

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INTERPRETATION IN OPEN AIR MUSEUMS

A joint meeting with the Social History Curators Group will focus on the problems of interpretation in open air museums. The meeting will be held at the Black Country Museum, Dudley.

DATE: Saturday 12th May
CONTACT: Ian Parkin, 4 Holmewood Close, Kenilworth, Warwicks, CV8 2JE
Tel: 0926 54232

INTERPRETING HISTORIC GARDENS

Historic gardens offer many opportunities for imaginative interpretive treatment, but with few exceptions these have yet to be realised. This one-day meeting will comprise visits to Claremont, a Capability Brown garden managed by the National Trust and opened to the public for many years, and Painshill Park, which is undergoing substantial restoration after many years neglect, and which has recently embarked on an ambitious interpretive programme.

DATE: Sunday 20th May
CONTACT: Teige O'Brien, Painshill Park Trust, Council Offices, High Street, Esher, KT10 9RR
Tel: Esher 62111

THE HISTORY OF PROVINCIAL MUSEUMS

A seminar to be held at Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery on Thursday, 29th March 1984.

PROGRAMME:

- 10 Assemble & Coffee
- 10.20-11 Early Philosophical Society Museums in Yorkshire
Peter Brears (Leeds City Museum)
- 11.00-11.40 History of Social History Museums
Geoff Marsh (Museum of London)
- 11.40-12 Questions and Discussion
- 12.00-1 Discussion Groups:
- Group A Early Museums (up to c. 1850)
Led by Bob Rutland (Leicester Museums) and
Steve Blake (Cheltenham Museum).
- Group B University Museums.
Led by Gillian King (University Museum, Oxford)
and Adrian Allan (Archivist, University of Liverpool)
- Group C Collections
Led by Janet Barnes (Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield)
and Valerie Reilley (Paisley Museum)
- 1.00-2.15 Lunch
- 2.15-3 Provincial Museums during the First World War
Gaynor Kavanagh (Museum Studies Department, Leicester University)
- 3.00-3.50 Open Forum on Local Authority Museums.
- 3.50-4.30 Tea. Reporting Back, Looking Forward.

FEE

The fee for the day will be £5.50. This includes coffee, a buffet lunch and tea, administrative costs and the cost of duplicating and sending out copies of bibliographies to all participants.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

We would like to compile a bibliography of museum history and feel that this seminar could be the place to start. We would be grateful if all participants could send in advance (to Gail Durbin, Castle Museum, Norwich NR1 2JU), or bring with them, a bibliography of the history of their own museum or service. We will then duplicate these and send every one a set.

Bibliographies should be typed and clearly laid out on one side only of A4 sheets of paper, leaving $\frac{3}{4}$ " margins all round. Date and place of publication should be included as well as author's name and title of publication as appropriate.

TO APPLY

Fill in the attached form and return to Stuart Davies by 1st March 1984