

DECEMBER 2003

ISSUE 52



Expressing Belief

**ASW Reports
St Mungo Museum
Ethics**

SHCG NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP

DECEMBER 2003

ISSUE 52

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.

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

Articles for the NEWS should be between 500 to 2000 words. Please submit a typed copy of your article along with a copy on disk, saved as a PC word file or richtext format, or you can send it as an Email. Illustrations for articles are always welcome. Original photographs can be returned.

Send all contributions to:
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Front Cover:
Princes Road Synagogue,
Liverpool, England,
Photography C.J.Moss ©2002.

Contents photo:
A visit to Hatworks, Stockport.

SHCG News design by Paul Cook
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Join SHCG?

If you're reading this and you're not a member of SHCG but would like to join please contact:

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Write an article for the SHCG News?

You can write an article for the News on any subject that you feel would be interesting to the museum's community. Project write ups, book reviews, object studies, papers given and so on. We welcome a wide variety of articles relating to social history and Museums.

DEADLINE FOR
NEXT ISSUE:
30TH APRIL 2004.



Welcome to issue 52. Firstly, I would like to thank David for all his hard work over the last two years and wish him well on his travels.

SHCG has had a busy summer with two seminars and the ASW being held within a few months of each other. If you could not attend all or any of these events then all is not lost as you can read the reviews in this issue, but you may never find out how Steph Mastoris managed to meet a dalek in Manchester!

Thank you to Kiran Singh of St Mungo Museum, for writing up the talk he gave at the Expressing Belief seminar in June. I am sure you will all be interested to read about how the St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art in Glasgow is still pushing boundaries 10 years after opening.

Ian Gentle, Curator of Office History, National Museums of Scotland is appealing for interest in setting up an Office History Study Group. Turn to the Bulletin Board for more details and to the Object Focus for an insight in to the Simplex Typewriter.

There is nothing much left for me to say apart from the usual appeal for articles. It might take a little bit of time and brainpower but think of the sense of achievement you will feel when you see your work published.

SARAH MAULTBY—EDITOR

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'The Table' The Second Course

Department of Archaeology,
University of Sheffield, UK
23rd–25th April 2004

'The Table' (Part Two) Conference will move on in time to consider the changes that occurred in dining habits in Britain and the colonial world between the seventeenth century and the end of the nineteenth century. In this period late-medieval and Renaissance social habits were transformed, as manufacturing techniques improved, and the output of mass-produced items increased, fuelling the growth of the first modern consumer society.

A major theme at this Conference will be the responses made by manufacturers to the social changes in eating, dining and food preparation, which took place, not only in the home, but in public places such as hotels, ships and railways. The period saw the widespread acceptance of the fork used in dining and an increase in peoples' material wealth, with the growth of the middle class and demand for more luxurious items at the table.

Documentary evidence shows both continuity and changes in eating habits in

Britain and the colonies. The stylistic changes in objects for 'The Table' can be traced from 17th century probate records, through to manufacturers' trade catalogues, which detail the increasing range of items, the stylistic changes and the materials used. The increasing range of public eating - from lowly-eating houses to the cruise ships, railway dining cars and hotels development - had an effect on the products offered by manufacturers.

Call for Papers!

Papers should be around 20 minutes length in duration.

Titles and abstracts of proposed papers (150 words maximum) should be sent to the conference organisers by 30th November 2003:

James Symonds,
Executive Director, ARCUS,
Graduate School of Archaeology
West Court, 2 Mappin Street,
Sheffield S1 4DT

Email: j.symonds@sheffield.ac.uk

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SHCG MATTERS

firstBASE

firstBASE the SHCG's Web based information resource continues to go from strength-to-strength. firstBase can be accessed through the SHCG web-site: www.shcg.org.uk

Please Contribute...

The editorial team is keen to hear from anyone in the profession who could contribute information to the project. If you've just completed an exhibition, catalogue, or book on a relevant theme or type of artefact, then please share your knowledge with your fellow museum workers. If you curate a collection of national importance this is a great opportunity to make its existence and importance more widely known. The team is particularly keen to include collections of film, photography and oral history.

For more information email general enquiries at: enquiries@shcg.org.uk

Caledonian aims to help develop Scotland's diverse and vibrant heritage sector

Caledonian Heritage Futures Network was launched in September 2003. It has been formed from three distinctive areas of expertise at Glasgow Caledonian University. Historians from the School of Law and Social Science will work alongside researchers from the Moffat Centre for Travel & Tourism Business Development as well as staff from the renowned Caledonian Business School.

This innovative and unique grouping of collaborators - not seen before in Scotland - will build bridges between academics, researchers, policy makers and sector stakeholders in the important Scottish cultural heritage sector - estimated to contribute between £350 and £400 million to the economy each year and employing in the region of 193,000 people.

One of Caledonian *Heritage Futures* network's main aims is to promote (and sustain) history and cultural heritage at the grass-roots level in Scotland by working with an under-valued (and under-resourced) part of the sector - local community history. The network will provide, information, support, links, seminar programmes and workshops to groups involved in this area.

The initiative will also work with a wide range of stakeholders and disciplines, from

archaeology to urban design, to promote policy development, provide advocacy and high quality research into the historical environment. In addition, it will provide various learning opportunities aimed at cultural sector professionals, volunteers, students and indeed those with an enthusiasm for heritage, and community identity.

Professor Elaine McFarland, Director of Caledonian *Heritage Futures* Network, said: "Our heritage is all around us - it is the setting for our community identity and social activity. Cultural heritage draws together issues like the built environment, local history and interpretation. When developed and supported, cultural heritage helps us all to understand our history in accessible ways and the Caledonian *Heritage Futures* network will play an important role in this."

One of the network's first projects will be the development of a new MSc in Cultural Heritage Studies at Glasgow Caledonian University, scheduled for its first intake in September 2004. The programme will address a skills gap by combining the development of management skills with a broader understanding of heritage contexts and policies.



This autumn SEMLAC will be putting the spotlight on the excellent cultural diversity work of our regions' museums, libraries and archives.

Diversity South East will celebrate our culturally diverse region and profile the role that museums, libraries and archives have in engaging everybody in decisions about their heritage and cultural services - a short term

initiative that aims to have a long term impact. For the latest details see our new webpages at: www.semlac.org.uk/cultural-diversity.

If you're not already involved it's not too late. There are even SEMLAC grants to help you take part. For details see: www.semlac.org.uk/funding.

For more information contact:

Sonia Rasbery,
Diversity South East Coordinator,
Email: sonia.rasbery@ntlworld.com.

Glynis Dear,
SEMLAC Access & Learning
Team Coordinator,
Tel: 01932 858838



Office History Study Group

My name is Ian Gentle and I am curator of Office History at the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh. Motivated by the fact that many museums have collections of office equipment (telegraph instruments, telephones, typewriters, duplicators, and computers, for example), I would like to propose the formation of an **Office History Study Group**, with a specific remit to discuss, collect, and communicate the fruits of museum-led curation and research based on the material culture and social history of offices, with the focus initially on Britain. This is an ideal time to start such a project because of the rapid evolution of office technology, and the resultant changes in the quantity and quality of work performed in offices. The concept of the office itself is changing, partly due to communication- and computing-power becoming simultaneously greater and more mobile, allowing for increased teleworking and home-based working in the service sector.

I would be most grateful if any interested individuals or organisations could let me know what they think they could contribute to the formation of O.H.S.G.
Telephone: 0131 247 4204.
Email: i.gentle@nms.ac.uk

Research project into hidden histories of disabled people attracts Innovation Award

The University of Leicester's Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) has launched a research project to bring to light the historical evidence of disabled people's lives that has often been hidden from public view.

The project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board's Innovation Awards scheme (www.ahrb.ac.uk), is entitled 'Buried in the Footnotes: The representation of disabled people in museum and gallery collections' and aims to identify the evidence that exists within museums' and galleries' collections that can attest to the historical lives of disabled people. It also aims to explore the factors that might influence the way in which this material is recorded and presented within museums.

Issues around disability within the museum and gallery sector have, to date, focused largely on the physical and sensory barriers that prevent disabled people from accessing cultural institutions. Whilst imperatives associated with funding, legislation and social inclusion have led museums to explore these barriers, there has been very little research into issues around representation of disabled people within collections. (In contrast there has been greater interest and attention given to the

representation of, for example, women or ethnic minorities within collections and displays). The project will involve gathering data through two main approaches. Firstly a questionnaire has been sent to over 200 curators across different kinds of museum (for example, national, local authority, independent etc) and with responsibility for different kinds of collections (e.g. fine and decorative art, social and industrial history etc). Secondly 5-10 museums will be selected as case studies in which more detailed investigation will take place.

The project also seeks to democratise and enrich the research process through the employment of disabled people as part of the project team. Working alongside Project Managers, Jocelyn Dodd and Richard Sandell of RCMG, are Annie Delin, Senior Research Associate (a journalist and disability consultant with longstanding experience of disability issues in arts, media and heritage contexts) and Jackie Gay, Research Assistant, (a writer with experience of researching cultural references to disability within literature).

This project is currently funded until June 2004. It is hoped that further funding will be sought for a major multi-institutional project with international partners to run over a further three years.

For further information please contact:

Richard Sandell and Jocelyn Dodd,
Research Centre for Museums and
Galleries (RCMG),
Department of Museum Studies,
University of Leicester,
105 Princess Road East,
Leicester LE1 7LG
Tel: 0116 252 3965 or 0116 252 3995.

(200 questionnaires have already been sent out. If you feel your museum has something to add to this project and you haven't received a questionnaire then contact: Anne Delin, Senior Research Associate. Email: ad119@leicester.ac.uk)

Next MEG Meeting: Hertford Museum

'Object Identification and Centenary Exhibition'

Monday 15th December 2003, 2-5 p.m.

Did you know that Hertford Museum is home to over 1000 ethnographic artefacts? Some of these, including household and decorative items from Africa, New Zealand and North America are now on display in the Museum's brand new Centenary Exhibition. Hertford Museum is an independent local history museum based in the centre of the historic town of Hertford.

The Museum would very much appreciate the assistance of MEG members in helping to identify some of the objects in their collections. This meeting will provide the opportunity to see the scope and variety

of the ethnographic collections both on display and in the museum stores.

The afternoon will include an introduction to the displays, highlighting issues involved in displaying ethnography in a non-specialist museum. MEG members will have full handling access to the collection on display (about 35 objects) as well as an opportunity to visit the museum stores and see the complete collection.

Mince pies and tea/coffee provided!

To register and for further details:

Helen Gurney. Tel: 01992 585721
Email: helen@hertfordmuseum.org

Braids and Beyond

A Broad Look at Narrow Wares

From military braids to mouse traps, antique to modern and handmade to industrial: how centuries of skill have turned a piece of string into a work of art. A Braid Society Exhibition:

20-23rd November 2003

Knitting and stitching Show, Harrogate

29th November 2003-27th March 2004

Newarke Houses Museum, Leicester

3rd April 2004-27th June 2004

The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle

3rd July 2004-4th September 2004

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter

A Curator's Study Day for 'Braids and Beyond' is being held on Monday 8th March 2004 at Newarke Houses Museum, Leicester.

For more information contact:

Jan Rawdon Smith

Tel: 01733 312649

Email: jrawdonsmith@totalise.co.uk



COMMON GROWING

ASW 2003: Delegates' Reports

Towns and the countryside and their inhabitants comprise the focus of collecting and study for many social history museums with a local or regional focus, so the topic was an appropriate choice for the 2003 SHCG Annual Study Weekend in Manchester.

Jack Kirby—Curator

Ragged School Museum,
46–50 Copperfield Road,
London E3 4RR

Urban and rural issues are frequently contentious. Towns and cities are suffering from tensions between and within communities, while agriculture and rural tourism were hit badly by the foot and mouth crisis. Issues such as airport expansion, housing developments and hunting remain controversial everywhere.

Social history museums have a role to play by addressing contemporary issues, and also more generally by giving visitors a chance to explore local historical contexts and identities. Museums are also watching the broader regional picture. The regional agenda that the government has developed in England together with limited devolution in Scotland and Wales is now having a real

impact on museums in the form of changed funding streams, new cross-sector agencies and Renaissance in the Regions and the development of museum hubs.

Steph Mastoris from Snibston Discovery Park opened the first day's proceedings, held at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. He gave a historical perspective on the current regional debate, summarising the emergence of the English regions due to natural, environmental, administrative and functional factors. He argued that social history curators must help to advance the regional model, and move beyond individual artefacts towards a holistic approach. Through such an approach it may be possible to build a sense of community within regions.

Mastoris concluded with a positive manifesto for the role of museums in fulfilling the regional agenda, which made a welcome change from the rather reactive discussions evident in some debates on regionalism. Identifying a need to define what is expected of social history curators, he argued for a three-pronged approach, featuring collections mapping (including through SHCG's own FirstBASE database, which is starting to include details of important subject-based collections),

contemporary collecting projects, and a return (in part) to knowledge-based curatorship.

Moving from the general to the specific, two very different practical research projects were described by Kathy Haslam and Annabelle Campbell, both of the Geffrye Museum. The museum covers domestic interiors, but while it is housed in former almshouses, until now their story has not been told in detail. The first project researched the information needed to create two room sets representing the rooms as they might have been in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when lived in by pensioners. The historical research was straightforward for the Victorian room, but proved harder for its eighteenth century counterpart, and highlighted how poorly recorded are the lives of the elderly in this period.

By contrast, the second Geffrye project involved contemporary collecting and documentation. A recent extension to the museum provided a chance to re-engage with contemporary design through a room representing 1990s loft aesthetic. A new methodology was developed for study of both contemporary furniture and interiors, and the people who designed and inhabited

the rooms. Primary research included photography of objects in context and residents within their living spaces, and oral history, while questionnaires provided comparative data. These two projects are a reminder of the benefits of making time to carry out thorough research.

If town and country sometimes seem polarised, parts of the Annual Study Weekend suggested that there are often grey areas. Robert Lancaster of the First Garden City Heritage Museum spoke about the 'third alternative', a phrase used by Ebenezer Howard, the founder of the Garden City movement. Howard argued that while 'town' and 'country' each had their own attendant advantages and disadvantages, a new concept of 'town-country', could provide the best of both worlds.

2003 marks the centenary of Letchworth Garden City, the first attempt at achieving Howard's ideals. The first phase of Letchworth had houses set in open spaces, but also integrated educational facilities, and these attracted benevolent employers. Subsequent applications of the concept were never as pure as at Letchworth, but the model influenced much twentieth-century planning and design, and so this paper had lessons for curators involved with the histories of other places.

Thursday's final paper came from a local Manchester perspective but described an international collaboration. Catherine Rew of the People's History Museum described its partnership with six other European museums of labour history. A three year project entitled 'Migration, work and identity' received European funding to contribute to the debate on cultural diversity through exhibitions, research and workshops. Each partner focussed on the subject in a different way. For example, the Arbejdermuseet (Worker's Museum) in Copenhagen looked at the lives of migrant workers from Yugoslavia, Turkey and Pakistan. By contrast, part of Manchester's project involved outreach with Caribbean communities to develop a new 'living history' character, a woman who moved to Manchester in the 1950s. Other facets of the project included a touring exhibition and three conferences.

Rew outlined the advantages of collaboration, which included a range of staff learning about other European countries, communities and museums. Several spin-off benefits have emerged and the People's History Museum is determined to continue collaboration with some of the partners. I felt that the project demonstrates

that if the will is there international collaboration is feasible and can attract funding from previously untapped sources: more UK museums could investigate such partnerships.

Friday's sessions on a general theme of Country were held in the rural setting of Quarry Bank Mill, Styal, just outside Manchester. Roy Brigden from the Museum of English Rural Life gave a well-structured overview of the development of rural museums. He outlined how these museums had suffered a crisis in identity in a global age, but were overcoming this problem by increasing their relevance to rural populations through projects such as public participation and contemporary collecting.

Elaine Edwards from the new Museum of Scottish Country Life provided a welcome perspective from outside England. She outlined how the Museum had been set up as a pioneering partnership between the National Trust for Scotland and the National Museums of Scotland, and described the exhibitions and public programmes, including the running of a traditional farm.

Two papers from the Midlands looked at representing contemporary rural issues. Robin Johnson from Coventry described a hard-hitting temporary exhibition on the relationship between humans and animals. While producing the exhibition the museum managed to lose the support of both the Countryside Alliance and the RSPCA, suggesting that they may have come as close to an unbiased view as is possible. Chris Copp from Staffordshire explained the challenge of recording the views of sometimes reticent rural communities for an oral history project.

Sue Clifford from the environmental organisation Common Ground closed the session with an inspiring paper about how local distinctiveness can be recognised, celebrated and therefore preserved. I have for years been an admirer of Common Ground's Parish Maps project, where local people get together to make a map showing what they value in their community, leading to an increased sense of ownership and perhaps further action. Museums are ideally placed to instigate this kind of locally based project.

After a plenary session where local and regional distinctiveness was discussed further, delegates travelled to Stockport for a tour of Hatworks, a museum that records the processes and products of the traditional local hat-making industry. I enjoyed seeing this example of industrial distinctiveness presented in an entertaining way.

On Saturday the delegates travelled to



Above: Enjoying the 'Celebrity' exhibition at the People's History Museum. Opposite: A 'Common Ground' logo from their inspiring literature.

Imperial War Museum North at Salford. Debbie Walker from the Museum explained how an innovative local volunteer programme had been developed. The project offers training leading to National Vocational Qualifications and reaches non-traditional volunteer profiles such as young people, single parents and people returning to work. While the project is not cheap (it is funded by the European Social Fund) the highly positive benefits suggest to me that it should be a model for other large museums.

Many curators will be aware of the large 'Moving Here' project to create a website looking at migration to England using museum and archive collections. So it was interesting to get the inside story from a partner museum, presented by Linda Rosen from Leeds. It proved possible to build on the material in the Leeds collections by liaising with local communities, who helped with research and highlighted the significance of particular objects. For Leeds, this was an interpretation as well as a documentation project.

The final paper described Rotherham's local heritage project, recently shortlisted for the Gulbenkian Prize. Ceryl Evans explained how a series of small-scale and relatively informal partnerships had been developed with communities and local history groups. Local people were trained in producing exhibitions and events such as a local history fair were held. The result was like a blooming of local history flowers across the borough as people researched and produced their own exhibitions with the help of the museum.

Two strands emerged from the weekend. The first, to quote Sue Clifford, is that

"places carry meaning", and that museums have a role to play in representing local and regional distinctiveness came out of most of the Country papers. Much of what we collect from urban and rural areas is not in itself unusual or of high monetary value, but may represent a particular regional type, or have particular significance for an individual, a family, a business or an institution. The second theme to emerge is one of partnerships, be they with other museums and cultural institutions, or (most importantly) communities and groups representing them. Much of the most creative work in museums at present is marrying the expertise of curators with the unique knowledge and perspective of local people.

This was my first time at an Annual Study Weekend, and I would like to thank SHCG for giving me a free place. As well as enjoying the formal papers, I had several useful and entertaining discussions between sessions, including over a couple of very good dinners. The whole weekend was a thoroughly pleasurable experience, and I would encourage any social history curator to attend.

Being the sole member of the 'curatorial department' can be daunting at times, especially when major decisions or alterations need to be made. I joined SHCG at just such a challenging time, in the hope that I would meet others in similar positions of responsibility, with whom I could exchange ideas, fears and experiences, simultaneously building valuable support networks. A tall order maybe, but one that I was delighted to see fulfilled, over and above my expectations, at the 2003 Annual Study Weekend.

Alison Foster
Bexley Museum

I was very grateful to be offered a free place, a wonderful way in for people like myself from relatively small, local museums. The inspiring talks, discussions and tours, taking place in equally inspiring museums and heritage sites, took me back to my MA days, when I longed to get out there and make a difference. As for the people I met, everybody without exception went out of their way to listen, challenge and provide support and encouragement. I couldn't have found a more helpful or accommodating bunch of people.

'Town and Country' was the broad topic of conversation over the weekend, exploring the wide and complex issues of city and regional identity and the potential for museums to actively engage in the debate, contributing to a sense of place for diverse individuals. The four talks which took place at the National Trust's Quarry Bank Mill, Styal, entitled respectively 'Overview: Rural museums today', 'Education or Entertainment: Interpreting rural issues to a mixed audience', 'Us and Them: An urban museum perspective on rural issues' and 'Celebrating local distinctiveness', focused generally on 'rural' concepts. Delegates were introduced to a wealth of innovative, often collaborative projects, such as the recreation of a 1950's farmhouse and real working farm at the Museum of Scottish Country Life where past and present rural issues are addressed to a diverse audience, and the 'Us and Them' exhibition at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry exploring the complex and often controversial relationship between humans and animals. Each project was seen to offer unique opportunities to lay out sometimes sensitive facts whilst respecting individual views by remaining impartial.

These talks also set out to problematise the seemingly straightforward, yet theoretically constructed dichotomy of 'town' and 'country', pointing out that urban issues can never be entirely separated from rural ones, especially in the modern era of movement and displacement. People are complicated and diverse, constructing their very own personal identities over and above broader 'regional', 'national' or 'cultural' concerns which have so dominated museum theory over the last few years. Sue Clifford from Common Ground, an organisation that inspires people to explore and celebrate the richness of the everyday, to grasp its importance and meaning to individuals everywhere, was particularly eloquent and inspiring on this point. The very venue itself, a large industrial mill set in a contrasting small, village environment, shattered any lingering romantic ideals about pure, unadulterated 'countryside' and the 'country folk' that populate it. It was a very valuable experience to be able to peep over the museum wall and discover how people are striving to engage, include and inspire diverse audiences in the rest of the country.

A tour of the Hatworks in Stockport was enlightening, teaching us all a thing or two about hat-making, as well as providing interesting snippets such as the origins of Lewis Carroll's Mad Hatter and the

industrial uses of urine! One interesting, relatively new addition within the main gallery was the construction of open storage, literally amongst the glass display cases, complete with archival boxes, acid-free tissue and mda movement forms. Not sure I agreed with the blatant display of disorganisation which, dare I say it, afflicts the stores of even the most dedicated curator. However, it was a good use of unwanted display space within the gallery, providing visitors with a valuable glimpse behind the scenes. The AGM followed, which cemented a few changes in organisational responsibility. It was rather strange supporting the votes of people I had never met, but it would have been a bit off to disagree on the same grounds, so I guess I did the right thing. I am persuaded they will all do a good job.

For some reason all this stimulating museum talk made me hungrier than I have been in a very long time, and I made an impressive attempt to devour my way through the never-ending onslaught of tasty food at the 'Yang Sing' Chinese Banquet on Friday night. A few drinks later I rolled happily back to Whitworth Park Halls for a much needed sleep.

I was particularly excited about the visit to the Imperial War Museum North, having heard so much about it in museum publications and the press. Neither did it disappoint, although its architecture and content became the focus of strongly opposed reactions amongst other delegates. Meeting and listening to Debbie Walker, Head of Learning and Access at the museum, was positively awe-inspiring. She spoke of the highly innovative volunteer programme which was instigated even before the opening of the museum to the public and the employment of some of the key members of staff, illustrating the real desire to fully involve the volunteers in the day-to-day running of the museum and to value them as integral members of the organisation. The programme is aimed at people from disadvantaged areas and those excluded from the job market who wish to return to work. I was particularly impressed by the opportunity made accessible to the volunteers to work towards NVQ's, level 2 and 3. In this way the museum is giving something back to the volunteer for their dedicated hard work. Yet, as Debbie was quick to point out, NVQ's are merely a welcome by-product of the complete volunteering experience, the process of which builds confidence, a sense of identity and self-worth within many of those participating. And, more to the point, the

programme really works. Volunteers begin to take responsibility in areas of museum work they would have been unwilling to attempt before embarking on the programme. The Imperial War Museum is fast becoming a victim of its own success however, in that many volunteers go on to partake in full-time education or alternative employment. Happily some do return to the museum to continue with volunteer work in their spare time!

Linda Rosen from Leeds Museums and Galleries followed with a insight into the 'Moving Here' NOF funded project run by the Public Records Office, a digitisation project relating to the migration of Jewish, Irish, Caribbean and South Asian peoples to England through the recording of images. I was impressed by the apparent commitment of the staff at Leeds Museums and Galleries to take control of the project, undertaking much of the work in-house and directly liaising with members of these migrating communities, who have been invaluable in assisting with various elements of research. It is a good example of a successful cross-domain project also, with museums, archives and libraries working well together.

Ceryl Evans could not have been more enthusiastic about the 'turn-around' project which took place at Clifton Park Museum, Rotherham, short-listed for the Gulbenkian Prize for Museums and Galleries. She revealed the brave steps she took to turn a rather unwanted, stagnating museum into a vibrant community museum. In a similar fashion to the volunteer programme at the IWM, Ceryl and her team built up trust amongst the local community by offering museum training projects, which not only developed the skills of these individuals but also led to a knowledge of, and interest in, the museum itself. Smart travelling display cases lent an aura of professionalism to outreach exhibitions around the borough, and were such a success that people began requesting the use of them for independent projects, a true sign that the museum had been successful in instigating, or at least making possible, individual and collective community creativity.

Unfortunately our next speaker was not able to make it to the conference. This gave us ample time to wander around the Imperial War Museum North, and catch the next screening of 'The Big Picture', a multi-screen surround-sound experience which made wonderfully moving, effective and original use of archive footage and oral history. Or at least that was my opinion! Others were little impressed by the purposely disorientating, slightly chaotic



Above, from left: Sue Clifford from Common Ground. A guided tour around Hatworks, Stockport.

layout of the galleries and the distinct lack of objects. For me it was a spine-tingling experience wandering around the large angular spaces, watching the dramatic shows flickering on the bare walls. The text and objects on display were stimulating and well exhibited, and manageable! Perhaps the architect was a little too successful in designing an unsettling space though. I had a nightmare trying to find my way out and got in a panic about missing the bus. Finally I have to mention the lunch, just in passing... This feast was served in a separate area of the smart restaurant, which reminded me of a modern theatre bar, overlooking the river and painted in dramatic colours with a sloping roof and fat columns reaching to the ceiling. Chicken, samosa's, bajhi's, breads, quiche, posh sausage rolls and an amazing array of fresh fruit were just some of the foods on offer. Thank you very much IWM for treating us so well.

Urbis was a pleasant surprise. To be honest I was not expecting to like it, as I had heard bad stories about its rather vacuous message and lack of consultation with local people. With these low expectations, however, it turned out to be quite fun. The space was very glitzy with all the latest technology, even if it was arguably over-used to convey pretty simple concepts. No expenses had been spared it seemed, and I must admit to feeling a bit jealous of the ample resources at their disposal. Quite acceptable attempts had been made to refer to real people and their lives, with film footage revealing people's experiences of the city. Unfortunately, as with all high-tech exhibitions, the screens and interactives were prone to misbehaving and I was unable to add my photograph to the wall of visitors.

I kept going back to check if the machine had by some lucky chance recovered and finally decided to print my card. It was quite a disappointing moment, until I realised how childish I was being and snapped out of it. In fact, the whole space lends itself to childish behaviour, successfully encouraging you to submerge yourself in the whole button pushing experience. It seemed a little incongruous then, and unfair, that an 18 film was being played in a gloomy space plastered with rather frightening posters, smelling eerily of cigarette smoke and obviously highly attractive to the inquisitive child. It was a great film, created in numerous cities to communicate the rather seedy, dark side to city life. I could have spent the whole afternoon just watching that, but then I wouldn't have been able to complete my report and may even have missed the bus..!

One final note, Steph Mastoris did an excellent job of briefly but eloquently summarising the weekend. I was most struck by his comment that the generalised constructs of 'region', 'town' or 'country' are all very well but what really matters the most is 'community' and 'identity', whether in the form of a village, society, group or family. It reminded me of the point I made earlier in the weekend that museums seem to be so hung up on the 'in vogue' concept of cultural identity that we are in danger of forgetting other more complex, personalised identities, which are undoubtedly the key to identification with, pride and ownership of ones cultural heritage, whatever form that may take. It took Steph a few minutes to brilliantly summarise the conference. It's taken me a few pages, but then I never did get the hang of being succinct! Thanks everyone.



St Mungo Museum

Thick-skinned but full of faith!

'According to Karl Marx Glasgow has just opened up an Opium Den.'

That was the title of a poster campaign by a marketing company that St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art in Glasgow chose *not* to use when it opened in 1993. Opening a museum of religion in a city like Glasgow was controversial enough without stoking the fire with such advertisement campaigns like this. The museum received an abundance of negative criticism when it first opened, including one particular congregation boycotting it altogether, while others decided to picket on the doorstep. The museum however, stood by its conviction that if people understood more about other people's beliefs then mutual respect would be more likely to follow.

Kiran Singh—Education & Access Curator

St Mungo Museum of Religious Life And Art

The mission statement for St Mungo Museum is to *promote mutual understanding and respect between people of different faiths and of none.*

However according to Glaswegian Harry Dunlop, one of the original curators who set up the museum and now museum manager, there are three topics of conversation, which tend to be banned from family gatherings in Glasgow: Football, Politics and Religion.

The three are inter-twined and can be seen in the public sphere by the selling of Sectarian merchandise outside football grounds and the flying of Irish, English, Basque, Palestinian and Israeli flags at matches between home teams Rangers and Celtic, or in Glasgow 'The Old Firm'. The title given to home game matches between the two home teams in which by many are regarded as the fuel that often ignites into sectarian violence in the city.

The museum is divided into five main exhibition areas: The Gallery of Religious Art, Gallery of Religious Life, The Scottish Gallery, a temporary exhibition space and an interactive education gallery. The art gallery

is an attempt to look beyond the art history of the objects and focus on their religious and cultural significance as manifestations of living faiths, a provocative space suspended by Salvador Dali's *Christ of St John of the Cross* and surrounded by statues of the Buddha, prayer rugs and ancestral screens. The Life Gallery looks at the importance of faith in the human life cycle across the world and across time. The Scottish Gallery, a difficult subject to tackle focuses on the history of religion in Scotland.

So how has this little thick - skinned museum managed to keep faith? How has it attracted over 180,000 visitors a year, and become an establish part of life in Glasgow as well as developing a significant place in the hearts of the faith communities that live in the city and further a field? How does the museum utilise the collections to attract new audiences? How does it encourage dialogue between people of different faiths and of none?

The displays include personal statements from members of the different faiths and some interpretation in Mandarin, Urdu,

Gaelic and Punjabi. A crucial and integral part of each gallery space are the visitor comments boards, offering visitors the opportunity to express their thoughts about faith and providing visitors a chance to view how others make sense of the world.

As well as acting as a feedback loop for future development the visitor comments are also very interesting indeed and I would like to share some of these with you here.

"An interesting display of religious nuttury -people's ability to delude themselves knows no bounds".

"What a great idea to make a museum about religion, in this place we are all one but we believe in different ways"

We think this place is excellent for doing homework. Everything here is great! We learn a lot here about historical things. My favourite thing is the Mummy".

"Everything in the museum raises the question Why, but the museum does not seem to go deeper than What, How about explaining why a bit more".

Since the museum opened it has hosted numerous temporary exhibitions, which aim to respond to the needs of the faith communities, represent them through displays and encourage learning and dialogue within the museum and within society. These have included Buddhist Tanka painting; Roop Singh's *Milestones to Amristar*, which highlighted the photographs he took in India and Pakistan; *In the Shade of the Tree*, an exhibition highlighting photographs taken from an Islamic perspective.

A series of Discovering Islam talks and seminars were developed to support this exhibition. Due to the success of these talks, St Mungo Museum staff organised a series of adult *Discovering Faith to Faith* talks, which were led by faith representatives, and included object handling and visits to places of worship in and around Glasgow.

Within our limited budget we have been evaluating these talks and responses to them are in great demand and more have been requested. Our current visitors have been asking us for more in depth study into aspects of faith such as religion and science, religious hatred, and new religions.

We have attempted to respond to these demands by hosting workshops such as *Discovering the Rastafari faith*.

Planning for our next Faith to Faith series that explore world faiths we are learning from previous workshops and are now designing a workshop series that will be more discussion based, with debates on sexuality and faith, women in religion, religious hatred as well as a discussion of

aspects of some of the other world faiths such as Humanism, Zoroastrianism and Paganism. Through this we hope to engage with our existing audience but at the same time attract new ones and perhaps a younger adult audience and audiences that often do not feel part of the mainstream. The series will hopefully provide Glaswegians with the chance to debate, discuss and offer input into faith issues within a neutral environment.

As well as the Faith-to-Faith series, for the past four years the museum has been hosting an annual festival aimed at promoting interfaith dialogue called 'Meet Your Neighbour'. A steering group who meet every so often and are made up of a group of representatives from all the major faiths as well as other faiths such as the Brahma Kumaris, and the Baha'is carries out the process of design for this project. The museum supports the messages and concepts and acts as the group's vehicle driving them to the place they want to be. A member from the anti-sectarian organisation Sense Over Sectarianism recently joined the group. The festival is also supported by Glasgow Sharing of Faiths, and another anti-sectarian group Nil by Mouth. This year's event comprised a series of world religions workshops for schools, in which students visited the museum and met people of different faiths, and engaged in workshops that explored the meanings behind the objects on display.

As well as fulfilling the requirements for the Scottish 5-14 religious curriculum the schools programme provided an insight into the life of a Jew, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist. When a school curriculum based workshop is devised at St Mungo, most are extracted directly from the religious and moral education guidelines. We have found that by being approachable and facilitating all aspects of a visit, from providing workshop materials, to assisting and arranging transport, we have encouraged more teachers to use the Museum within school projects.

Despite these efforts, which are usually received very positively, both we at the museum, and some of our visitors, feel we could do more to respond to the needs of our existing visitors and attract new ones. The museum still has issues, which need to be addressed and tackled such as working to overcome the negative experiences some newcomers to the city suffer. Some Asylum seekers and refugees say that though they love Glasgow, they feel that Glasgow doesn't like them. As many newcomers come with various faith backgrounds, St Mungo



Above: Muslim demonstrators against war in Iraq. Finnieston, 2003. Many religious groups and individuals took part in the anti-war demonstration through the centre of Glasgow to the Labour Party Scottish Conference at the SECC.

Opposite: Lighting a candle, St Luke's Greek Orthodox cathedral, Hillhead, 2002. Greek Orthodox Christians light candles and place them in front of icons (scared paintings of Jesus, Mary and the saints). The light also symbolises Jesus as the 'Light of the World'

Museum has the opportunity to help them experience their own religions within a Scottish context, presented positively, thus helping them to discover their own place within Glasgow society.

St Mungo Museum is now working in partnership with anti-sectarian organisations, the police and the city council, to build up networks and working relationships with people, so that we can make our contribution in tackling the issues of religious hatred, discrimination and social exclusion. We are also researching the ways we have approached the subject of sectarianism, which, until fairly recently in Scotland, there has been little or no consensus to the degree of the problem.

A subject like religion sometimes has the power to stimulate deep emotional responses. Taking into account the consequences of 9/11 across the world and the sectarian violence and various forms of prejudice that exist in Scotland today, St Mungo Museum attempts to present objects of and about religion which many other museums have actively strived to avoid interpreting, often due to their complex meanings. Museum staff are actively rethinking the type of exhibitions we want to display and curate. We are beginning to

look at how we sustain the relationships we have developed with the faith communities and our audiences by re-examining our approach to temporary exhibition programming. We cannot attract one faith group and not do anything again for five years, and at the same time we cannot show bias to one group and not the other. We are thinking more carefully about our target audiences, and we have a strategic approach that includes more planned interpretation. The museum aims to put on issue-based exhibitions, which tackle subjects such as sectarianism, sin, guilt and religious hatred, which draw on a variety of opinions and emotions.

Education and access programming is integral and at the forefront of everything we do in the museum and is not a 'bolted on' phenomenon.

Our current exhibition, *Faithfully Yours*, is an attempt to do just this, and aims to start the process of documenting the lives of faith communities in the city; within the place of worship, at school, and at activities and events that many faith groups and people of faith feel strongly about. Although some of the responses to the exhibition have been very critical indeed, the museum does not want to offend, but we do want people to think and discuss and discover some of the positive as well as negative aspects of religion. The museum has also just curated an exhibition of artwork made by students of special educational needs in which the students have taken the objects on display and the objects taken to the school during a handling session, as a source of inspiration and as a starting point and have developed art work over a nine-month period which aims to have a final realisation for the students and museum through the display of the work including a launch party for all those involved. This exhibition is called *St Mungo Inspired*.

Both current temporary exhibitions make a bold statement of value and inclusion.

Now that St Mungo Museum has reached its tenth birthday, it has a new team of staff, including a new World Religions curator, a Scottish History curator and a team of education staff, including myself. St Mungo Museum is a thick-skinned museum and it will continue to provide provocative and informative exhibitions by taking a proactive approach to exhibition planning, re-displaying and education and access programming.

This article is adapted from a paper given at the 'Expressing Belief' Seminar in June 2003.

Expressing Belief:

Museums and multi-faith Britain in the 21st Century -23rd June 2003, Museum of Liverpool Life.

I set out with great expectations but rather bleary eyes at a very early hour from Edinburgh where the sun had just risen to begin my journey to Liverpool. It was the first SHCG event I had attended and a topic in which I am very interested and I was highly pleased to have been offered a free ticket to attend. It was a great and very interesting day in Liverpool Museum of Life down on the beautiful, sunny but extremely blustery docks on the Mersey.

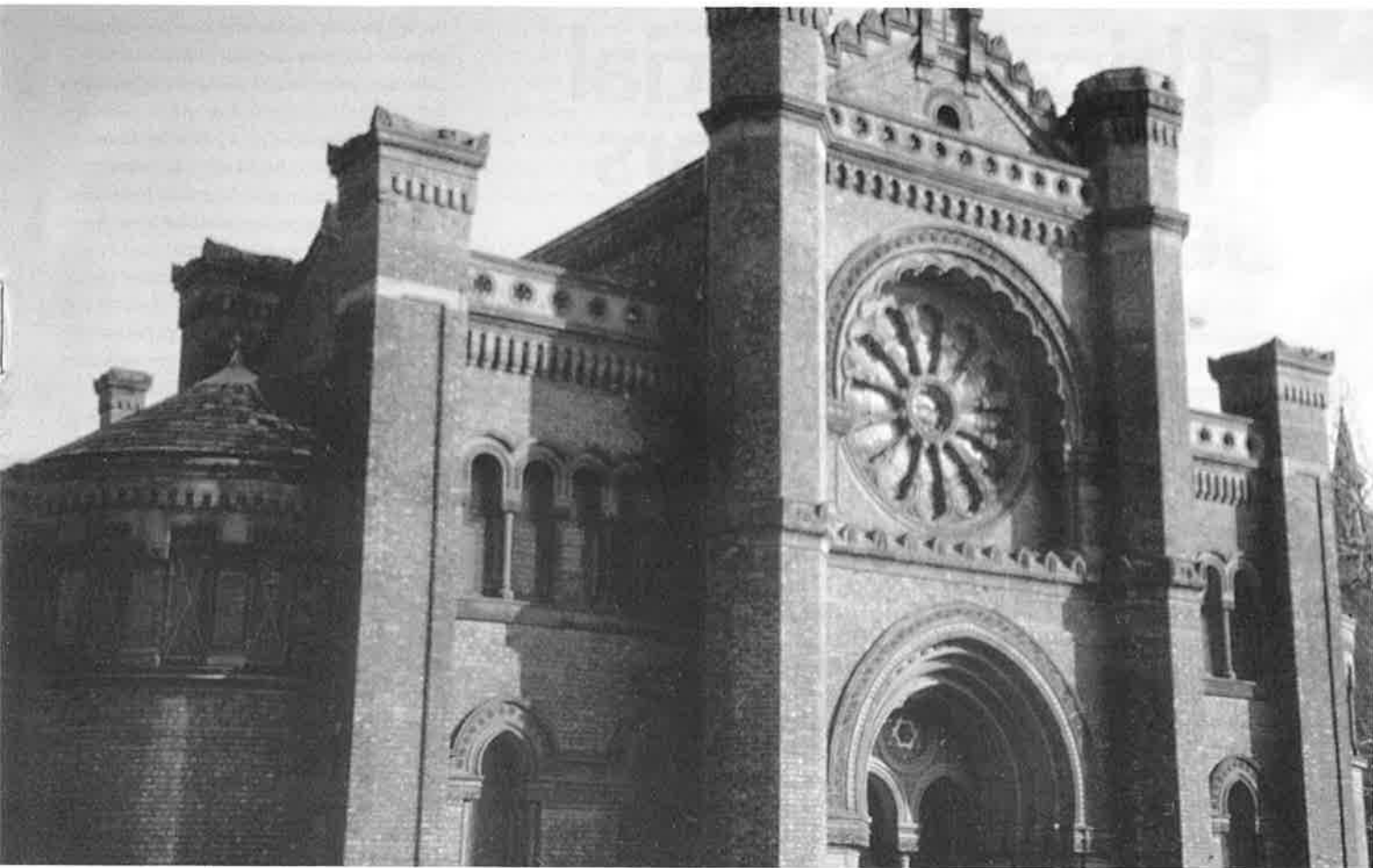
**Katy Bailey—Assistant Education Officer
Museum of Hartlepool.**

In June, Katy was a MA Museum Studies Student at Leicester University.

I rushed in late but glad to have made at least the second half of the opening speaker's paper. Crispin Paine opened the day with a paper on Presenting Religion in Museums. He started by discussing the importance of religion to human life as something from which it is almost inseparable. He observed that religion tends to involve using things, such as buildings and objects, and therefore museums can play an important role in interpreting and

recording religious practices and beliefs. To answer this role it is important museums ensure that they are telling the story of popular religion as it is actually lived by people.

The next speaker continued on from this theme of lived religion. Tim Smith from Bradford Heritage Recording Unit gave his paper on Recording Contemporary Religion and showed us some slides his work. Bradford Heritage Recording Unit collects photographs and oral histories in the Bradford area and in recent years has focused on recording cosmopolitan Bradford. Tim discussed three of his projects which had focused on weddings, the Bradford Asian communities and Polish communities. During these projects he photographed the preparation, ceremonies and celebrations of the people of Bradford and collected photographs of the past from them and uncovered universal parallels across communities. We were able to see some images from the projects that gave personal and touching insights into the preparations of brides before their wedding day or the pride at a celebration of the opening of a new purpose built place of worship. Tim also discussed some of the



Princes Road Synagogue, Liverpool. Photography C.I.Moss ©2000.

difficulties that he had experienced over the projects. He had found it hard at times to get people to explain their religious practices and beliefs as oral histories as people were reluctant to act as a mouthpiece for their religion.

Kiran Singh of St Mungo's Museum of Religious Life and Art in Glasgow spoke next on the work that St Mungo's has developed in its first ten years and what the future will hold. He described the museum and their work that is aiming towards fulfilling their mission of promoting understanding and respect between people of different faiths and none. The museum has established links with different faith groups in Glasgow and works towards responding to their audience's requests and including communities which are not represented in their permanent exhibition. Kiran discussed the yearly event Meet Your Neighbour. As part of this year's event school groups visited the museum to meet people from different faiths allowing them personal contact and took part in handling sessions with objects from the museum's faith boxes. Visitors were also able to offer prayers through making prayer flags and lighting candles and there was the opportunity to

join meditation sessions in the galleries. As part of the event the visitors were also invited to leave the walls of the museum and join in a pilgrimage on coaches around some of Glasgow's places of worship. As for the future, Kiran discussed the hope of St Mungo's Museum to sustain and build on the relationships that they have made with communities and to continue positively representing groups and their place in Glasgow. The museum also hopes to research the role that the museum could play in easing Glasgow's sectarianism and to continue providing provocative exhibitions.

After a lunch break we returned for the next extremely interesting paper given by Steph Mastoris of Snibston Discovery Park on Death and Its Material Culture. Steph emphasised again how religion penetrates all aspects of life and that death as the ultimate rite of passage is an important and interesting religious practice to research although also very difficult as it is a time of highly personal feelings which requires great sensitivity. Steph discussed the issue of how to collect death in multi-cultural Britain, looking at a cross cultural sampling model considering certain aspects rather than studying different religious groups as

completely separate entities. Unfortunately rushed by the arrival of taxis we hastened on to the next event on our agenda, the visit to Princes Road Synagogue.

This was a wonderful trip to an incredible building. We were greeted by our fantastically charming and engaging guides Dr Moss and his wife in the entrance hall to the synagogue and he talked us through the history of the building and the Jewish community in Liverpool. Then stepping through the large doors into the main body of the building we were treated to the chance to wonder and admire the beautiful and ornate interior and hand painted ceiling. Dr Moss talked us further through the building and some of the features and objects used during worship and explained the educational work that he carries out. We left him reluctantly to return to the Museum of Liverpool Life for an interesting closing discussion over coffee and biscuits and a quick windswept beer on the docks before re-boarding the train.

It was a wonderful and interesting day in many ways that went so quickly and I would like to thank SHCG, Briony and all the speakers.

Ethics and social history curators Seminar

Ethics is a hot topic. The Museums Association (MA) has raised the profile of the subject during the last few years, culminating in the publication in 2002 of a new integrated Code of Ethics (hereafter 'the Code') for both those who work in museums and those who govern them. Media interest is centred on issues such as repatriation and human remains, but there are less high-profile ethical issues such as the use of oral history recordings that regularly affect social history curators. With this in mind, the Social History Curators Group recently organised a seminar in conjunction with the MA to consider ethical issues and whether there was value in having additional guidelines for social history.

Jack Kirby—Curator

**Ragged School Museum,
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The seminar was not, as Ratan Vaswani from the MA explained, intended to cover every ethical issue, but rather to reflect on certain topics. The seminar considered issues connected with working with people and their objects and stories in museums, and it is these issues that are addressed in this paper.

Contemporary collecting

A paper from Zelda Baveystock of Tyne and Wear Museums considered the implications of contemporary collecting for museum acquisition policies. In this context, contemporary collecting may be defined as acquiring material which reflects aspects of life in the present day. The term may also be applied to acquisitions arising from community projects. The Code and accompanying Ethical Guidelines on Acquisition do not specifically address contemporary collecting, although both contain relevant, if general, sections.

Zelda stressed that in the current age of globalisation, the local distinctiveness which formed the traditional focus of much social history collecting has been eroded.

Additionally, museums may now collect material other than traditional objects: notably oral history and photography. Given the mass of potentially collectable material, clear acquisition policies specifying detailed criteria are vital (and required by the Code).

Given that museums have limited resources and cannot collect every aspect of society, how should decisions about collecting policies be made? It would be possible to delay accessioning of items that have been collected for a stipulated period in order to better judge their long-term significance, but Zelda rejected this as impractical for most museums. Instead there is a case for greater co-operation between social history museums to cover a range of topics between them.

Ultimately, it is impossible to predict what value the collections we build will have for future generations of visitors and curators. There is a need to collect more systematically than simply by accepting unsolicited donations, although Zelda highlighted a risk that curators will concentrate on areas of interest to themselves. A comparison of the names of donors recorded in museum accession registers and lists of current and former staff may reveal strong correlations, and collecting in this way can skew collections towards particular areas.

Collections may also naturally have strengths, but weaknesses can be an ethical issue. Gaps in social history collections have sometimes been nowhere more evident than in collections relating to current local communities. For example, many museums in urban areas are close to significant Black and Minority Ethnic populations, but these communities have often been under-represented in collections, while museums in rural areas may be under-representing youth culture. A recognition of a need to make collections more representative has led to several community collecting projects in recent years.

Zelda also considered a potential conflict between a museum's obligations to the communities and individuals it serves and

the longer-term use of and access to donated objects. Curators carrying out community collecting projects must build confidence in individuals that objects they donate will be cared for and valued, but in the medium term objects are often likely to be removed from display and stored and their long-term usage cannot be predicted. It seems to me that good documentation is vital, and that web access may be a practical method of sustaining such projects.

Group discussions after the paper highlighted the need for communication in order to consider a nationally distributed collection. Collections mapping projects including the FirstBASE database being compiled by SHCG will provide useful evidence for further debates. Participants felt that more detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of individual collections should inform collecting policies, and some contributors believed that there should be greater honesty about the criteria that inform acquisitions, including aesthetic value judgements.

Areas were also identified which are not covered in the Code. Passive collecting, in other words receiving donations, remains the main mode of acquisition for some museums. Some participants felt that more active collecting should be encouraged, and not simply for exhibitions as is often the case. The desirability of acquiring objects complete with a good level of contextual information was emphasized. The code also omits consideration of the issues surrounding acquiring politically and legally sensitive objects, for example drugs such as ecstasy. Should this part of modern culture be reflected in museum collections?

Oral History

A paper given by Annette Day from the Museum of London looked at the large subject of ethics in relation to oral history in museums. The MA Code relates in spirit to oral history, but only one section mentions it directly, and this merely refers to following other guidelines. These include the statement produced by the Oral History Society (OHS) at <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/ethics/>, which is aimed at a wide audience but contains some relevant advice for museums.

An oral history interviewer has a responsibility to their interviewee as a human being as well as a resource. It is vital to prepare for interviews and do background research on unfamiliar subjects. The interviewee will also have his or her own agenda and hopes for the interview, and this should be recognised: refugees for

example might want to focus on what they have found positive about coming to a new country rather than solely reflecting on problems.

Interviews can be disturbing experiences if difficult or painful issues are (sometimes unwittingly) covered. The interviewee should be made aware that he or she can pause for thought, and does not have to answer every question. It is important not to rush away after the conclusion of an interview - the interviewee may need to relax after covering emotional issues. Some interviewees may need additional contact for a time, though any relationship must remain professional. There is a third party in each interview in the form of the museum, and it may be appropriate to keep in contact through a corporate avenue of sending newsletters and publicity material.

The issue of consenting to use of interview material should be carefully explained to interviewees, so that their consent is informed. Interviewees are placing their trust in the museum, and future use of material should be governed by the original spirit and context of the interview. Ideally, contact should be made before the interview is used in future projects to which the interviewee has not directly consented. These points were echoed in the group discussions that followed Annette's paper.

Feedback from the discussions suggested that preparation is the key to tackling the issues that Annette raised. Good and substantial professional training (lasting more than one day) was identified as a key objective by all three feedback groups. One cannot refer to books for advice in the middle of an interview - curators need the confidence to make informed decisions quickly. Some recordings may contain sensitive or confidential information and it was felt that access to these should be restricted for a period, with good records kept to explain the situation to future curators.

Participants also highlighted the fact that oral history has huge advantages for understanding how objects were used. It was suggested that interviews could be held in museums to take advantage of this fact, although this would need the unreserved agreement of the interviewee: the OHS guidelines advise that interviewers should abide by the preferences of interviewees regarding location. Participants were however well aware of their moral obligations such as the potential impact on meaning of editing transcripts for exhibitions. A final point discussed was the

potentially controversial or offensive comments made by some interviewees and how these might be dealt with, both during an interview and when using the material: there was some feeling that condemning the opinions of interviewees during the course of an interview was undesirable.

Working with communities

Nick Lane of the London Museums Agency raised a number of issues about working with communities. An initial point is how a 'community' is defined, and by whom - people themselves, or a museum, or local or central government. Definitions can be artificial, as individuals are so diverse. Clearly it will be impossible to reach every member of a 'community' directly, so working with groups is frequently the practical solution. However, museums must be aware that talking to a small number of people does not in itself count as 'community consultation'.

Nick highlighted the need to understand how communities view their local museum. It will often be necessary to build trust before the museum is seen as a legitimate repository for the histories and artefacts of a community. Some museums have found that communities are uninterested in or confused about the role of their local museum, or even hostile to what may be perceived as an institution connected with the establishment, cultural imperialism or even racism.

There may be many cultural and political sensitivities in working with communities, for example where issues of faith are concerned. Curators need to use common sense, be aware of politics, and genuinely respond to what people say and are asking for. It is also important not to underestimate communities: an assumption may be that members of a community are only interested in 'their own' history, whereas they may in fact be interested in a whole range of histories.

The discussion about contemporary collecting had already addressed some issues relating to communities. Participants also noted that the Code's expectation that museums should consult and involve communities has different implications for specialist collections compared to general local history museums. Clearly how a 'community' is defined is crucial here: the Code's glossary does not attempt this and perhaps it should be acknowledged as varying from museum to museum. The 'communities' served by a specialist collection might include (for example) academics across the country, although

creative curators can make such collections relevant to a wider audience.

Much of the discussion focussed on barriers to involving communities. Project-based funding is inflexible if a programme runs into difficulties, and can disappoint users when the project ends if the outcomes are not sustained. Time, resources and organisational culture may all be barriers to working with communities and the commitment of senior management is often necessary. Yet curators can overcome these hurdles. Sustainable elements can be built into funding bids, for example permanent displays can be updated to include objects from contemporary collecting programmes. Positive Action Traineeships and active volunteer recruitment may be used to begin to address issues of workplace diversity and change attitudes within museums. Working with communities is not easy, but in my view this is no reason to reject the challenge.

There was not time in the seminar to consider issues relating to areas such as reminiscence or research, but the quantity of debate outlined above suggests that most of those present found the seminar a useful opportunity at which to discuss ethical issues.

Do you want further ethical advice?

At the ethics seminar, participants discussed whether there was a need to tie together some ethical guidance in a simple, easily accessible format. SHCG could produce a set of guidelines to extend the MA Code, as the Museum Ethnographers Group has done for their subject area (<http://www.museumethnographersgroup.org.uk/ethglines.htm>).

Another suggestion made at the seminar was to publish actual (anonymous) case studies contributed by members to the SHCG website and/or News. These would give examples of situations where members had to grapple with ethically difficult issues and details of the actions that they took.

We need your input!

If you would like SHCG to take these ideas further forward, we need to know:

- 1) what you would like
- 2) whether you would be able to contribute.

If the Committee get no response to this appeal, they will assume that members are not interested, and they will take no further action.

Contact us on seminars@shcg.org.uk to make your voice heard.



Object Focus: This is not a toy? The Simplex Typewriter

On Tuesday 19 August 2003, the National Museums of Scotland acquired a Simplex typewriter manufactured in New York, U.S.A. by the Simplex Typewriter Co., Inc., in 1930. Named the 'SPECIAL DEMONSTRATED (sic) MODEL A', it was patented in the U.S.A. in 1892, and in 1923 was enjoying '...an active holiday sale in toy and department stores.'¹ This in spite of the fact that the acquired model has a printed insert: *'The Simplex Typewriter / MORE THAN A TOY / The child with a Simplex in / the home, learns to pick out / letters, to spell and write, / making school work easier: / As stated by a noted educator, / "Amongst children, / those with (sic) typewriter in / the home before school / days start, as a rule / advance with greater / facility in school and / college studies than do / those not so fortunate"...*

Perhaps the circular index mode of typing² on this machine was promoted to make it attractive to children who had not yet acquired the manual dexterity to hold and manipulate a pen or pencil to create legible text. A 'simple' process of turning an index wheel, then selecting and pressing the required character, pre-inked by a circular pad, allowed the formation of capital text

only on paper or card of any length and width 6 1/2 inches (65mm). Both the type and the so-called "keys" of this Simplex are made of black rubber. As one presses down the selected type at the printing point, a simple device pushes the carriage or typehead forward one space. This machine originally had a tube of mauve Simplex typewriter ink, 'highly concentrated for duplicator, copy book or press', according to the printed instructions, but it no longer exists, although several examples of childhood typing, perhaps by the donor, were discovered in the original cardboard carton, including reference to 'FREE THE SUPER TOOTLEE (sic) FLUTE / NO. 738 MAR. 7TH 1970. / THE BEEZER FOR BOYS A IND (sic) GIRLS / ED(?)I(?)VERY TUESDAY 6D.', a British cartoon-style comic. Further tubes of typewriter ink, necessary due to the use of pads for inking rather than a ribbon, were available by mail order from the maker's New York address priced 15 cents a tube. The instructions consist of a very rough sketch of the lock notch mechanism in use, together with 316 words explaining how to write, ink, and avoid distortion of the fragile and flexible rubber type.

Originally, the Simplex was meant to serve as a serious writing machine for those of modest means - the price of the first Simplex was \$2.50; a Remington went for \$100. At that time, around 1892, the Simplex was made at Great Jones Street in New York. As the market in used keyboard typewriters became significant, around the late 1890s, most index machines were forced off the market. However, the robust little Simplex, occupying the plankton position in the typewriter food chain, survived as a child's toy. This 1930 example does produce clear work; it just takes twenty times as long to produce it as a keyboard typewriter would.³

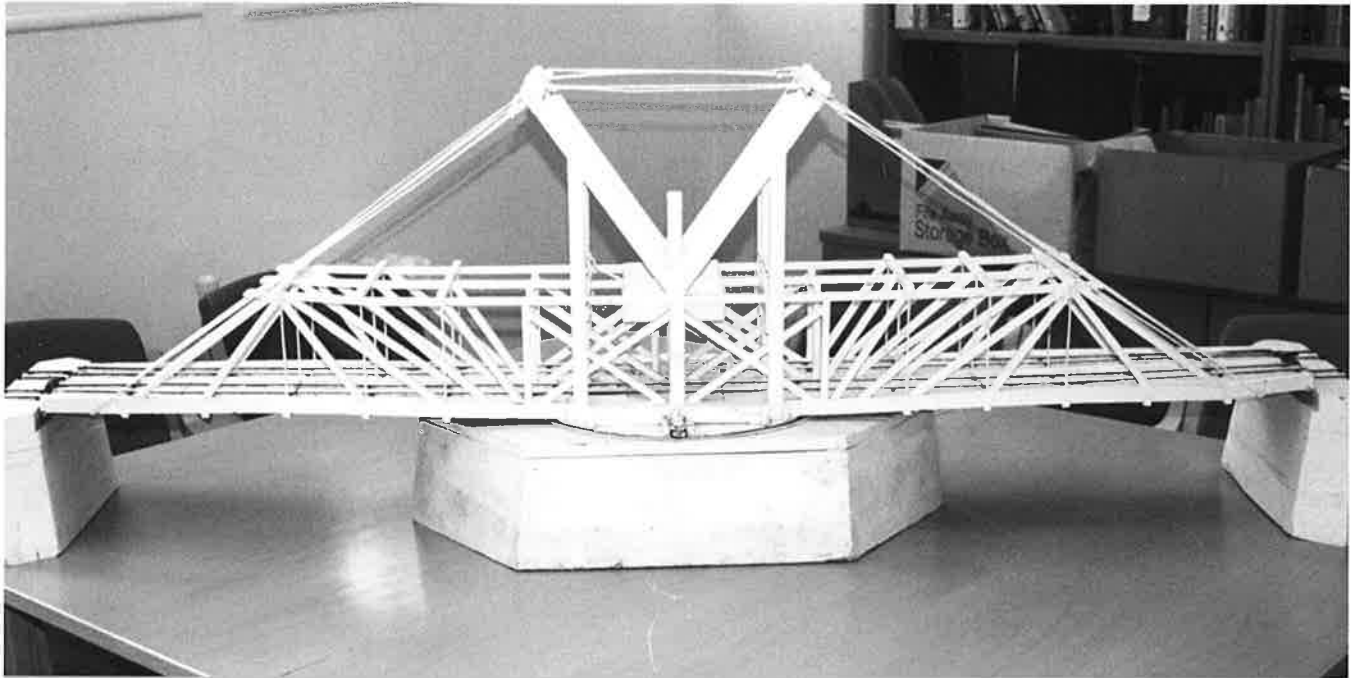
The ambiguous nature of the 1930 Simplex is shown in a colour printed leaflet provided with the Demonstrated A model; it is described together with Models B, D, and E as being 'The Best Gift for Boy or Girl / Also Useful for Grown-ups'. This particular example is dated by the amazing inclusion of a blank and nearly mint condition 'TYPEWRITER COMPETITION ENTRY FORM & RULES' open to all owners of the 1930 Simplex Typewriters lettered on dial A, B, C, D, or E, with letters of between 50 and 100 words on the topic of 'your Simplex Typewriter, a simple description of the machine, how it works, its cost, and mention that you are going in for the Competition, and suggesting that your friend does the same.' Prizes were awarded in four age categories, from under 6 years of age to 15 years. The closing date for the competition was February 28 1931, entries for which to be sent to the 'SIMPLEX TYPEWRITER ROOM, 14, 1 Newmann Street, Oxford Street, London, W. 1.'. Prize winners' names were made available at local toy dealers during April 1931.

Notes:

- 1: 'A condensed history of the writing machine' (1923), reprinted as 'Collector's Guide to Antique Typewriters' edited by Dan R. Post, Arcadia: Post-Era Books, 1981, page 35.
- 2: 'The history and development of typewriters' (1964) by G. Tilghman Richards, M. I. Mech. E., London: HMSO, pages 8-9.
- 3: Website: <http://xavier.xu.edu:8000/~polt/tw-of-month-04-96.html>

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Object Focus:

John Eede Butt's model for the railway bridge across the River Arun at Ford, 1844

Perhaps one of Littlehampton Museum's most important artefacts is best known to the railway fraternity. It is a working model of a railway bridge that was offered as a solution to the problem of crossing the River Arun. Largely built of wood, it has metal track and a central pillar that incorporates a lead-lined tank.

Rebecca Fardell—Curator
Littlehampton Museum

When the London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR) Company planned to build a railway from Shoreham to Chichester they knew that it would involve crossing the River Arun. This presented challenges to the engineers as the Arun is a fast following river that was busy with shipping in the nineteenth century. Once Ford had been decided on as the location for the bridge, the Admiralty insisted that the railway company provided a clear waterway of 18.28 metres (60 feet). The 1844 Railway Act also required that the railway 'provided compensation to the owners of Littlehampton Ferry for the loss of tolls due to the railway bridge at Ford.'

John Rastrick, the LBSCR engineer was initially unsure that the Ford bridge was possible but a Littlehampton businessman came up with an innovative design. John Eede Butt was a building and timber merchant whose business had been established in the late 1820s and continued until it was taken over by the national firm of Travis Arnold in 1944. Butt and Sons was the major importer of timber into Littlehampton, one of the harbour's most significant trades.

Butt's design for the railway bridge at Ford involved the central section of the bridge swinging out of the way of shipping. The bridge would be built into a central tank to which water could be admitted. Water would be pumped into a chamber in the base until the bridge 'floated'. It would then be easily swung to clear the waterway and then be returned to lie across the river. The water would then be pumped out of the tank and the bridge would be ready for railway traffic to pass over it. Butt built a working model of his bridge to demonstrate his design to the Parliamentary Committee and it is this that is now in Littlehampton Museum.

The Committee was impressed with Butt's design but it was based on a new theory that had not been seen to work in practise. It was

therefore reluctant to apply his plans to such an important public undertaking as the railway. Instead, a telescopic bridge designed by Rastrick was used.

Despite failing to get his bridge built, Butt had a big impact on the Ford bridge. Rastrick's design included Butt's idea of having a central moveable section for the bridge and he was given the contract to build the bridge across the River Arun. The front page of the Illustrated London News on 15th November 1846 was dedicated to the Ford Bridge; it declares that the bridge 'does credit to the careful workmanship of Mr Butt of Littlehampton, contractor for the work'. The principles behind Butt's bridge have been used many times since.

Perhaps it was just as well that Butt's design was not adopted: Butt envisaged a double track bridge across the Arun rather than the single track bridge that opened in 1846. When the bridge was rebuilt as double track in 1862, the new Littlehampton branch line was laid. This gave the town its own central station which was vital in the development of the town and its holiday trade. Had Butt's bridge been built, Littlehampton may have been a very different place.

HOMELESS MEN.

The object is to identify the names in the first column with the place or object in the second column for which they are noted.
For example: (1) NELSON (15) TRAFALGAR

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Nelson | 1 Hastings | <i>Example:</i> 1 & 15 | 16 The B.B.C. | 16 The Atlantic |
| 2 Hobbs | 2 The Derby | | 17 The Prince of Wales | 17 Cricceith, Wales |
| 3 Bishop of London | 3 Hughenden | | 18 Napolcon | 18 Balmoral |
| 4 Colonel Lindbergh | 4 Plymouth Hoe | | 19 Landseer's Lions | 19 The Daily Mirror |
| 5 Eros | 5 Trafalgar Square | | 20 Nero | 20 Wimbledon |
| 6 Mlle. Lenglen | 6 Lords | | 21 The M.C.C. | 21 St. James' |
| 7 H.M. the King | 7 White House | | 22 Dean Inge | 22 Daventry |
| 8 Disraeli | 8 Kensington Palace | | 23 Sir Francis Drake | 23 Venice |
| 9 The Pope | 9 Rome | | 24 Guy Fawkes | 24 The Guildhall |
| 10 Old Kate, | 10 Lambeth Palace | | 25 Queen Victoria | 25 St. Paul's |
| 11 William the Conqueror | 11 Surrey | | 26 The Prime Minister | 26 House of Commons |
| 12 The Lord Mayor | 12 Chequers | | 27 President of U.S.A | 27 Versailles |
| 13 The Doge | 13 A tub | | 28 Archbishop of Canterbury | 28 Fulham Palace |
| 14 Wilfred | 14 Piccadilly Circus | | 29 Lloyd George | 29 St. Helena |
| 15 Louis XVI. | 15 Trafalgar | | 30 Diogenes | 30 The Vatican |

Test your knowledge by doing this 1930's quiz, ideal for afternoon or evening parties! (or perhaps just a tea-break). This quiz is an extract from 'The Puzzling Pastimes' series c.1930. The answers are below, but no cheating!

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| Nelson | 1 | Trafalgar |
| Hobbs | 2 | Surrey |
| Bishop of London | 3 | Fulham Palace |
| Colonel Lindbergh | 4 | The Atlantic |
| Eros | 5 | Piccadilly Circus |
| Mlle. Lenglen | 6 | Wimbledon |
| H.M. The King | 7 | Balmoral |
| Disraeli | 8 | Hughenden |
| The Pope | 9 | The Vatican |
| Old Kate | 10 | The Derby |
| William the Conqueror | 11 | Hastings |
| The Lord Mayor | 12 | The Guildhall |
| The Doge | 13 | Venice |
| Wilfred | 14 | The Daily Mirror |
| Louis XVI. | 15 | Versailles |
| Diogenes | 16 | The B.B.C. |
| | 17 | The Prince of Wales |
| | 18 | St. James' |
| | 19 | St. Helena |
| | 20 | Napoleon |
| | 21 | The Prince of Wales |
| | 22 | St. Paul's |
| | 23 | Dean Inge |
| | 24 | Sir Francis Drake |
| | 25 | Plymouth Hoe |
| | 26 | Guy Fawkes |
| | 27 | House of Commons |
| | 28 | Queen Victoria |
| | 29 | Kensington Palace |
| | 30 | The Prime Minister |
| | | Chequers |
| | | White House |
| | | U.S.A |
| | | Lambeth Palace |
| | | Archbishop of Canterbury |
| | | Lloyd George |
| | | Cricceith, Wales |
| | | A tub |

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