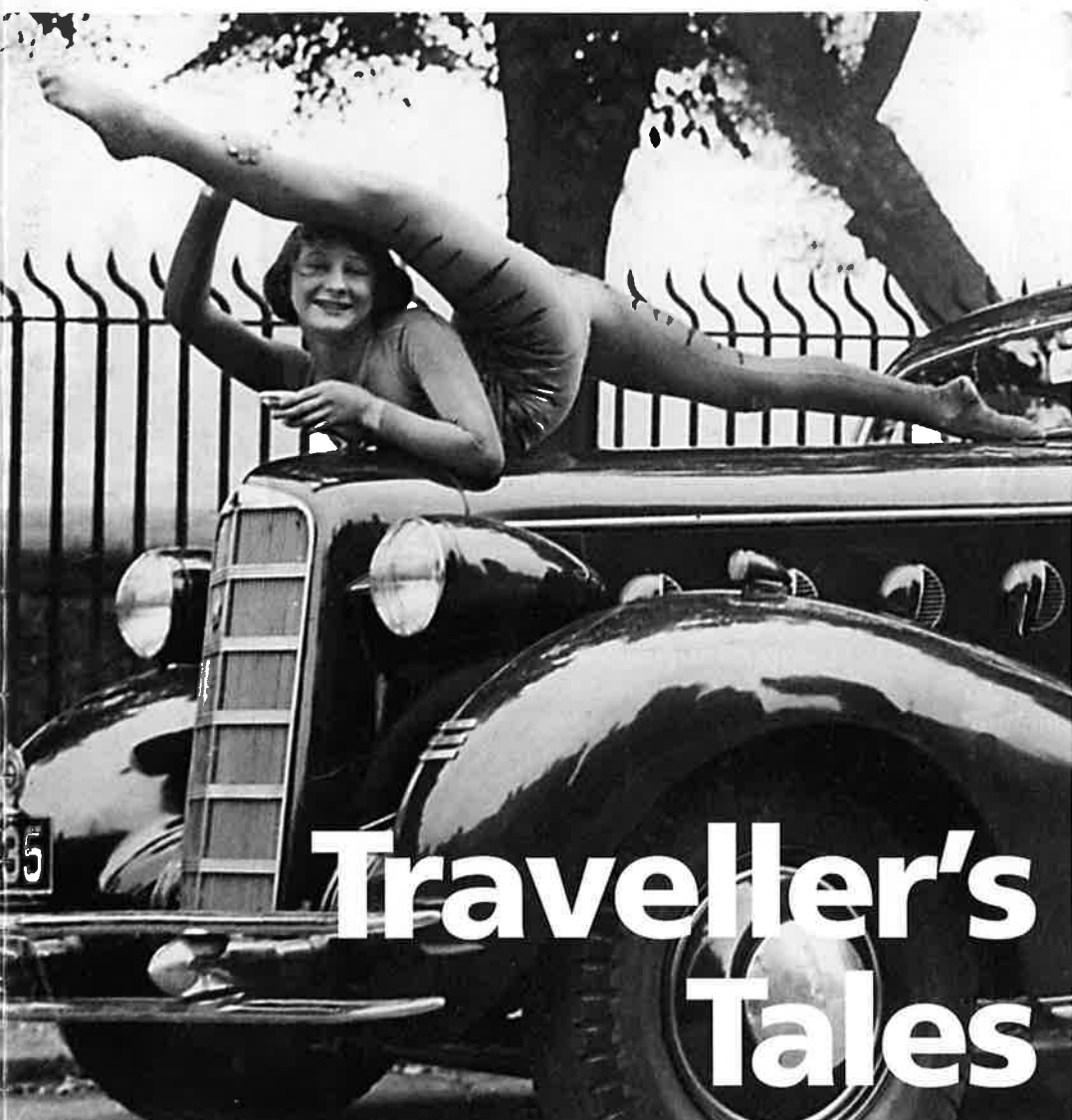


JUNE 2004

ISSUE 53



Traveller's Tales

**Cross Culture
Community
Exhibitions Strategy
Seminar Reviews**

SHOGGNEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP

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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The Eye of York,
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Email: news@shcg.org.uk

Front Cover:
Patricia Dearlove (nee Gruneklee)
born in Australia, who came to
England as an 'Adagio dancer' with
her brother in the 1930s and married
a Leeds musician.

SHCG News design by Paul Cook
Email: info@pcookdesign.co.uk

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:
1ST OCTOBER 2004.

Welcome to issue 53.
It is summer at last and I have tried to reflect this with a suitable seaside theme for the quiz, so I hope you enjoy completing it during your tea break.

The Seminar organisers have to be congratulated on a full and varied programme. Included in this issue are two reviews for seminars which took place over the winter and there are two adverts for seminars coming up this autumn. Look out for the notices in the Bulletin Board section for the Medical Day and Collect and Connect!

I hope you enjoy reading about the Cross Culture project at Vestry House Museum and 'Travellers Tales' an exhibition at Abbey House Museum, Leeds. There is also an excellent review for the book 'Bogs, Baths and Basins' written by David Eveleigh. For those of you able to make the ASW you might get to see some of David Eveleigh's bogs, baths and basins as he has kindly agreed to give us a tour of Blaise Castle House Museum on the Saturday morning.

Talking of which the Annual Study Weekend is rapidly approaching. This year it is in Bristol and Bath and a full programme of lectures and social events have been organised. It promises to be a great few days and we look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible. The AGM takes place on the Saturday afternoon and there are few places available on the committee. Please think about getting involved, it doesn't take up too much time, it looks good on the CV and is great networking!

There is just enough space for me to make the usual plea for articles. The deadline for the next issue is Friday 1st October 2004.

SARAH MAULTBY-EDITOR

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By popular request, this year's venues are in the South West: the cities of Bristol and Bath. As usual, the Annual Study Weekend will mix current issues in social history curatorship with a focus on a particular theme, this year hidden aspects of Georgian and Victorian history. Most social history museums have 18th and/or 19th century objects in their collections, so there should be something to interest you!

Thursday 15th July (afternoon)–Bristol

The first day will look at current concerns. The South West is one of the Renaissance in the Region phase one hubs and there will be an update on progress together with a look at the particular situation in Bristol, which has recently been awarded lottery money towards the first phase of a new Museum of Bristol. Other speakers will look at the situation for the phase two hubs in the rest of England, regional partnership projects and the impact of the National Lottery at the end of its first decade. The evening will include an historical tour of the harbour area of Bristol.

Friday 16th July–Bath

This day will focus on the Georgians and the Victorians. The morning sessions will concentrate on domestic aspects of 18th and 19th century life, including the hidden

histories of servants. In the afternoon, delegates will split up into groups for practical workshops on aspects of the collections in two of Bath's museums, or explore some of the other museums in the city. In the evening we shall have a reception at Bristol City Museum.

Saturday 17th July–Bristol

In the morning, delegates will view the fascinating social history collections displayed at Blaise Castle House Museum, set in beautiful parkland on the edge of Bristol. Moving on to the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in the city centre, the afternoon session will focus on innovative approaches to revealing histories of empire and cultural diversity.

Accommodation

This year delegates will have the opportunity to book their own accommodation. This means that the overall cost of the conference fee will be kept low and delegates can choose their preferred standard of accommodation. Details of central Bristol accommodation, from budget to mid-range, will be provided by SHCG.



For further details about
ASW 2004 please contact:

email: asw@shcg.org.uk



Collect and Connect!

Contemporary collecting and audience development

A one day seminar, early September 2004.
Venue in the Midlands—TBC

Social history curators increasingly want to keep their collections up to date, and meet the challenge of reflecting the diverse communities living in Britain today. This seminar looks at projects which have aimed to work with groups and individuals to broaden the scope of museum collections, including both objects and oral history. There will also be consideration of the long-term impact of some of the contemporary collecting projects undertaken for the Millennium celebrations. Case studies will include projects based in London, Sheffield, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Newport, South Wales.

Full details to follow.
For queries contact:
seminars@shcg.org.uk

Oral History Society Annual Conference

This year's Oral History Society Annual Conference sets out to investigate the challenges, implications and opportunities raised by putting oral history on display. Oral history has come of age in the public's consciousness, with personal testimony being increasingly recognised as a valuable element of contemporary historical interpretation, and an incomparable educational and artistic resource.

The secondary presentation and interpretation of oral history is the objective of many oral history projects, but using oral testimony for public display raises practical, technical and ethical issues. This conference sets out to investigate the challenges, opportunities, and implications of using oral

history in museums, archives, libraries and galleries, television and radio, print and electronic publication, performance and artwork, landscape and the built environment, schools and outreach activities.

The conference will take place on 12th & 13th June at Bournemouth University.

For additional information see the conference website at:
<http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/conferences/?1>

(This was current at time of going to print however it may have passed by the time of mail out. If so do get in touch with OHS to see if delegates' papers are going to be published. Ed.)



Medical Seminar

Have you got false teeth, surgical instruments or bottles of medicine lurking in your stores? Are you having problems identifying them? Are you worried about looking after them? Perhaps you've shied away from putting them on display because you're unsure about them?

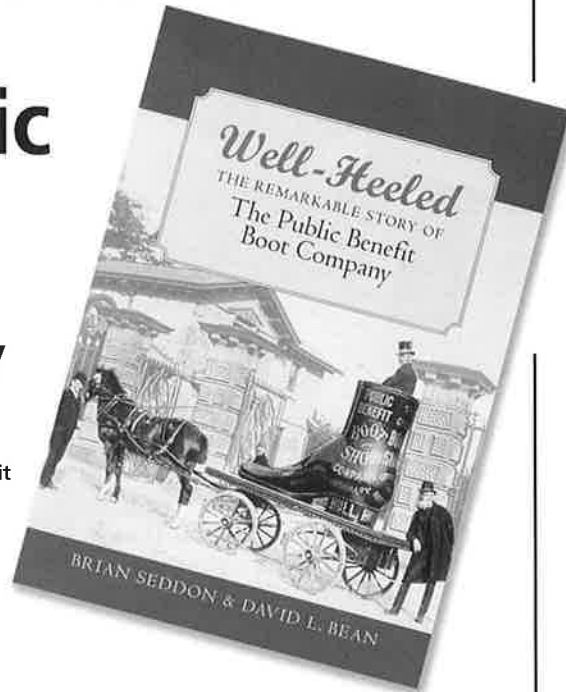
This year's winter seminar aims to provide you with some 'first aid'! Drawing on the expertise of many of the specialist medical museums, the idea behind the day will be to demystify some of the medical objects that are commonly found in general social history collections. The day will also include information about

health and safety, and help to provide you with some useful contacts and recommended resources for tackling these objects.

As we're still in the planning stages for the seminar, please feel free to contact Briony Hudson on seminars@shcg.org.uk if there are particular medical areas that you would like to see covered, or particular issues that you need support on. Due to the London location of the majority of health and medicine museums, the seminar will take place in the capital. Full details, including venue and date, will be mailed to members and posted on the website as soon as they are available.

Well-Heeled: The Remarkable Story of The Public Benefit Boot Company

A new book is being published in autumn 2004 about The Public Benefit Boot Company (that later became Benefit Footwear) and their trading partner Lennards Ltd.



For many decades they traded in hundreds of cities and towns throughout England and Wales. The richly illustrated hardback book chronicles the story of how people worked together in fulfilling their vision of creating a vast boot and shoe empire. Ex-employees add a rich contribution to the narrative with their recollections of the social changes that took place as the result of two world wars, economic slumps and prosperity. Far more than a tribute to the founders and builders of this remarkable business, the book throws new light on the footwear trade as a whole.

For more information or to order your copy in advance contact:

Phillimore & Co. Ltd.
Shopwyke Manor Barn,
Chichester,
West Sussex PO20 2BG

Email: bookshop@phillimore.co.uk
Buy online at: www.phillimore.co.uk

(I look forward to the reviews in Book Corner in a future issue of the News! - Ed.)



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



Traveller's Tales: The evolution of an exhibition idea...

'Traveller's Tales' is the first exhibition to open at Abbey House Museum since the lottery-funded refurbishment in 2001. This is a display drawn almost entirely from the reserve collections in Leeds and was internally funded by Leeds City Council with a budget of less than £4000 to cover the cost of graphic panels, case back-drops, publicity leaflets and an evening opening.

Kitty Ross

Curator of social history and costume,
Leeds Museums and Galleries

This was the first test of whether the new temporary display gallery would serve its function as a useful flexible space for interesting social history displays that don't cost the earth. In negotiation with the design team on the Abbey House lottery project we had tried to ensure that the museum had at least one space which was a neutral display area with potential for change, in contrast with much of the rest of the museum which is highly designed and inflexible (reconstructed Victorian streets and a childhood gallery designed around nursery rhyme characters). The gallery has

thirteen floor-to-ceiling cases built around the walls. These are of varying sizes but with several large enough to accommodate large objects (costume dummies, furniture, a penny-farthing). Within these, an assortment of wooden blocks can slot into grooves in the case walls and adjustable bars allow items to be suspended. The designers originally intended each case to have a pictorial back-drop, but in practice these are often completely obscured by the objects. For *Traveller's Tales* only four back-drops were produced (images taken from old glass lantern slides blown up to 1.5 metres square) in cases where they would have enough impact to justify the cost.

I probably need to clarify the title and make it clear that the exhibition relates to travel in the broadest sense and is not a scholarly in depth study of the Traveller community! As a theme it fitted in well with many of the projects that Leeds Museums and Galleries have recently been involved with.

In particular, Leeds was a partner in the *Moving Here* project, the NOF funded National Archives web-site cataloguing the experience of migration into England (www.movinghere.org.uk).

Moving Here enabled the museum to identify and digitise material relating to the Jewish, Caribbean, Irish and South Asian communities in Leeds and to make links with various community groups such as the Leeds Jewish Historical Society and the Leeds Barbados Association. In a similar vein, Leeds joined the Imperial War Museum North and Bradford Museums in an community education project *Moving Minds* which involved young people in building and decorating a yurt!

Earlier, in 2001-2, Abbey House Museum had worked with the Leeds Diasporan Stories Research Group to produce a panel about the work of the Leeds Anti-Slavery Society. The group's research had uncovered evidence of people of African and Asian origin visiting or living in Leeds from the late 18th century onwards. Their starting point had been the realisation that the anti-slavery campaigner Oludah Equiano had visited Leeds in 1791. The Leeds Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1853, also invited prominent American campaigners such as Frederick Douglass and Sarah Parker Remond. Probably the most colourful character that these researches discovered was Pablo Fanque, a black circus



Above: The Ross family of Chapeltown, Leeds, about 1895, a Jewish family originally from Poland.
Above Right: Aunty Emily and Uncle Joe on a new machine about 1888.



Left: Patricia Dearlove (Nee Gruneklee) born in Australia, who came to England as an 'Adagio dancer' with her brother in the 1930s and married a Leeds musician.

owner who was buried in Leeds in 1871.

However, there was always a danger that small projects such as these can get marginalised and confined to *Black History Month* events to be done once a year or else to look as if they do not fit in with the rest of the displays. One of the motivations behind the *Traveller's Tales* exhibition was to be able to include these stories as part of a much wider picture. At a time when newspapers are full of scare stories about hordes of immigrants arriving, I felt it was important to show that immigration and emigration are integral and positive aspects of our history. One of Leeds' biggest firms and the epitome of Englishness, Burton's Tailors, was founded by a Lithuanian Jew who arrived in 1885 aged 15 as an 'economic migrant'.

The case on migration was in the end titled *Making an New Home* and includes a lovely painted wooden model of a removals van as well as letters home from a Leeds family who settled in Wisconsin in the 1850s and the 1948-9 papers of a Hungarian 'displaced person' which were found under his floorboards in Leeds after he died. Probably the most poignant exhibit is the painted elephant tusk which was confiscated from a Jewish family fleeing the Islamic revolution in Iran, by HM Customs in the early 1980s (they didn't have the documentation to prove its antiquity and their ownership of this family heirloom).

I was conscious of the need not to ignore the uglier and less comfortable aspects of travel, such as the slave trade or the smuggling of endangered species. I tried to be non-judgmental when dealing with issues of international collecting (or cultural plundering!). Leeds Museums started collecting in the 1820s when the British had

a pretty free hand to collect what they wanted. The natural history, archaeology and anthropology collections all contain objects of international importance (which will form the core of the New Leeds Museum displays in 2007). Items were selected for display where we had interesting biographical details about the collector, such as James Motley, an engineer working in Borneo who sent hundreds of animal specimens back to Leeds, only to be massacred out there with his family in 1859.

All of this starts to make the exhibition seem very serious and worthy, but I think that it comes over more as light hearted and frivolous. I wanted to pick objects which had a story to tell, the quirker the better. Sometimes this could highlight new aspects of familiar objects. Older visitors to Abbey House always remember a tiger skin rug which graced the *Victorian Parlour* display in the pre-lottery museum. A recent lucky glance through the early accession registers revealed that the animal was shot by Mr J.P. Wilson of Leeds in the District of Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh, Central Provinces, India in 1911, which has certainly made me look at the rug in a new light.

Other subjects that the exhibition brushes on include travel accessories, boots, shoes and walking sticks, public transport, travel for work, imports and exports, military and colonial history (in 200 words and a small case), package holidays and the sea side! No room for in depth analysis, but hopefully something to please everyone. I had particular fun picking out children's books and toys dealing with imaginary and fantasy travel (even this is not without controversy - the display includes the Upton sister's classic *Gollywog's Polar Adventure*).

Despite possibly giving the impression at the beginning that this exhibition is the fruit of extensive consultation and community involvement, I have to confess that it was largely a product of curatorial whim and just a subject that I have been obsessed with for years. I was given full editorial control and have to take responsibility for any mistakes or omissions. At the opening it was pointed out that I had failed to include any material about the canal system or Ledgard's bus company, and also displayed my ignorance of the difference between hydrogen and hot-air balloons.

Because this was an exhibition with a relatively small budget and very few strings attached it was a rare opportunity to have fun and to get out of the stores a number of oddities which would otherwise seldom get displayed. It was probably my last chance to indulge in individual creativity without the expectations of working with curatorial teams, designers, architects and public focus groups. Leeds' next big project is the preparation for a new city centre museum which is due to open in 2007 as part of a £19m lottery deal - a completely different way of working!

The exhibition runs until April 2005 at:

**Abbey House Museum,
Abbey Walk,
Kirkstall,
Leeds, LS5 3EH
Tel: 0113 230 5492
www.leeds.gov.uk**

**For an independent review of the exhibition please visit the 24 hour museum web site:
www.24hourmuseum.org**



Cross Culture: Breaking down cross-cultural barriers at the Vestry House Museum

Vestry House Museum is the local history museum for Waltham Forest, a north east London borough. As part of an on-going programme to make the Museum more representative of the population it serves, we embarked on a six-month project with the local 'Arabic Speaking Women's Association' (ASWA). This was funded by a New Audiences grant of nearly £3,000 from the Museum Development Fund of the London Museums Agency.

Anna Smith & Luisa Squatriri
Vestry House Museum

We wanted to work with ASWA for several reasons. Due to their central role in family life, women seemed a good choice to target for increasing the diversity of our family visits. In addition, because of the wide range of national origins represented in the group, there would be an interesting diversity of

perspectives. Muslims and Arabic speakers are often excluded from mainstream opportunities and representations. We had links with ASWA previously through an exhibition we had hosted at the Museum, and through the local Council for Voluntary Service and the Black and Minority Ethnic Alliance.

The Museum's outcomes were fairly concrete: to acquire new objects for the collection; to create a new display around old and new objects based on the women's stories; to discover what can engage diverse audiences with the Museum; to discover how the Museum could be improved to meet the needs of the diverse local community; and to carry out a process of engagement with one group to develop them as a longer-term audience.

The outcomes for the participants were hoped to be: enjoying interacting with the existing collection; bringing new ideas and perspectives to the Museum collection;

breaking isolation; increasing confidence; visiting the Museum independently and bringing family and friends.

These outcomes were achieved in many ways over the six months of the project. In addition there were some surprising results that had not been accounted for.

The Sessions

The project took the form of four group sessions between September 2003 and February 2004. These sessions were comprised of handling sessions with existing Museum objects, and lunch [prepared by the women and paid for through the grant]. Eating together was an important social aspect and hook for participants. We also evaluated the project within the sessions and discussed the purchasing of new objects and the format of the display.

Each session lasted for around four hours. We learned through trial and error what worked best for a session, including



Above and left: Some of the women at the launch, by their display.

that having more than 30 participants was unmanageable. As the sessions settled down to between 15 and 20 people, working in smaller groups around tables gave the women more confidence to contribute their recollections. And although we planned our facilitation, we found we had to adapt and perfect it so that participation and recording were effective. There was a noticeable growth in their confidence across the sessions, as the women became familiar with us, the facilitators, and became committed to the project. For example, in session three, one woman who had attended all the sessions but had not said anything, undid her headscarf, unpinned her long hair and placed it on the table and laughingly demonstrated how she had her hair straightened by a flat iron! The group leader acted as a translator, but with time more of the women became confident about using their English with us (although our Arabic did not improve much!)

Factors that helped these sessions to run as they did were: a flexible attitude from Museum staff and the facilitators; several (three or four in total) facilitators from the Museum staff and community organisations (who took on different tasks of prompting stories, recording, interpreting, photographing, supervising the handling of objects etc.); commitment from the community group; and a dedicated space within the Museum to hold the majority of the sessions.

Further, we made sure that the group leaders were involved from the beginning, planned sessions with them and evaluated with them. We tried to make sure that the

group and its members were compensated for their contributions, beyond being included in the Museum space. The group provided lunch and were paid for it. The group was also paid travel expenses and for translating the exhibition text, which was bilingual. Where we were not so successful was with the childcare arrangements, even though payment was offered.

There was inevitably a last minute rush in creating the exhibition, getting the final stories and objects together to be displayed (as last minute contributions continued to arrive!), as well as the challenges and time consuming nature of preparing a bilingual exhibition.

Outcomes for the Museum

The grant included a small amount of money for purchasing objects for the Museum collection. As with many small museums, much of our collecting is passive and often entails local white residents coming into the Museum to donate items. As part of the *Cross Culture* project we wanted to undertake some contemporary collecting that would more adequately reflect the diversity of the borough's population today. Our guidelines stated that items needed to come from the borough, from local shops, and they needed to be significant, such as what memories it evoked, popularity and use in the women's countries of origin, etc. In fact, collecting this way did not go to plan, due to the women's enthusiasm! However, most of the contemporary items still managed to fulfil the criteria of the Museum's Collecting Policy that states that the items must have

been used within the borough. Of the seventeen 'new' objects that featured in the display, nine were bought for the Museum locally, four were donated and four were loaned. The donated objects were brought from the women's homes and it was explained clearly to them that they could loan them if they wished. However, they felt quite strongly that they wanted the objects to stay in the collection, reflecting the positive relationship they had developed with the Museum. Each woman was photographed with her object, and the story recorded.

For the display, we opted to place the women's interpretations of the old objects into the existing layout (11 stories in total), which make the tired Museum displays more lively and integrate the new perspectives more effectively into the Museum. We chose to highlight the new acquisitions in a separate case, as they were quite diverse.

In the longer term it would be the ideal to incorporate the new acquisitions into the main displays as well, perhaps thematically, but time, staff and money constraints limited our ambitions at the time.

The women were excited by the prospect of working to create their own exhibition, having new experiences and exchanging ideas. As for any person, sharing and contributing ideas is often a hook, particularly when they are listened to, valued and receive an enthusiastic response. Our evaluation around what would continue the women's engagement with the Museum included touching objects, becoming familiar with the Museum and its staff and attending events that include their families. They also mentioned that more exhibitions about different cultures like their own display, would bring them in.

Outcomes for the Participants

The stories, recollections and laughter that emerged from handling the Museum's objects showed the women's enjoyment of the experience, which was backed up by evaluation. They said learning about different countries (from each other's stories) made them closer to each other. A young mum in the group said she enjoyed learning about her heritage from older women in the group.

The project definitely served its role as an opportunity to break the isolation of the women in their daily lives. With low incomes, minimal to adequate English language skills, and lack of knowledge of their local environment, the women have few opportunities for recreation and



Left: The facilitation team: L-R
Tandiwe [BME Alliance],
Anna [VHM],
Luisa [VHM],
Laila [ASWA].

Anna Smith was previously
Acting Manager at
Vestry House Museum,
she is now the
Cardiff Museum Project Officer.
email: annasmith@cardiff.gov.uk

Luisa Squatriti was a
volunteer at Vestry House Museum,
she is now a
Small Groups Development Worker,
Voluntary Action-Leeds.
email: luisa.squatriti@val.org.uk

interaction outside the home. The increased confidence of many of the women was apparent in their willingness to speak up, contribute, and engage in conversation in English with Museum staff and the facilitators. What was interesting was that the women really grasped what the Museum needed from the project, in terms of a display 'product' and understood how they could help to make that happen. The women were so enthusiastic about the objects they had bought and were donating that the queue to tell stories and have their photographs taken for the display was almost like a production line! In a sense this made the final display feel like more of combined effort, which was an unexpected outcome. For the launch party over 55 people attended, and some of the women could be seen proudly showing their husbands and children their contributions to the display.

Conclusions

Evaluation shows the *Cross Culture* Project was an apparent success for both parties involved, and managed to fulfil the majority of its aims. However, it also really did break down some cross-cultural barriers between a non-traditional museum audience and a small local history museum. We were fortunate to have six months of funded work, but most of all as museum staff (one full time, one volunteer) we were fortunate to have the opportunity to work with people who demolished all preconceived notions of what it would be like to work with a marginalised section of the community, surprising us with their insight, intelligence, humour and good will at every turn.

New Community Exhibitions Strategy

How do museums plan their temporary exhibition programmes? Last year, the Ragged School Museum Trust, led by Liz Braby (who has since moved to another job in South Wales), developed a Community Exhibitions Strategy to formalise the exhibition planning process and set standards for exhibitions. Although a lot of knowledge and expertise had been built up over the years by Museum staff and volunteers, it was felt that it would be advantageous to set this out as a formal strategy to guide future work.

**Jack Kirby—Curator
Ragged School Museum**

The strategy sets out the role of the exhibitions programme within the Museum's broader mission, highlighting the opportunities to use the stored collections, collect new material and expand the Museum's strong oral history archive. A commitment to reflecting the diverse communities of East London is included. At the same time, the strategy does not dictate specific themes and gives considerable freedom to choose subjects that are linked to the Museum's collections and

mission. The strategy sets out how exhibitions will be funded and their location, duration and frequency. It formalises the connections between the Museum's curatorial and learning functions, and sets out standards to make the exhibition accessible to a selection of audiences. Text size, use of language, translation, and seating are all covered. The need to evaluate exhibitions is addressed, with suggested methods for small-scale evaluation by staff and volunteers.

The potential for exhibitions to tour is highlighted, with practical guidelines based on the collective experience of Museum staff but never previously written down. Long term maintenance of touring exhibitions is also considered. Finally, the strategy covers exhibition marketing to both the local and wider community, including publicity, press releases and launch events.

Any readers who would like a copy of the Community Exhibitions Strategy should contact Jack Kirby, by email at: jack@raggedschoolmuseum.org.uk or by post at: Ragged School Museum, 46-50 Copperfield Road, London E3 4RR.



How to Identify Watchamacallits

–24th February 2004,
York Castle Museum

York Castle Museum hosted another popular 'How to Identify Watchamacallits' workshop on a wet and windy day in February. The workshop attracted 17 delegates from across the country, with curators travelling from as far afield as the Royal Cornwall Museum and Museum of Welsh Life. The day was led by Briony Hudson and Steph Mastoris, supported by curators from York: Sarah Maulby, Josie Sheppard, Richard Stansfield and Keith Matthews.

Hannah Maddox

Hannah was the Assistant Keeper of Social History at Beamish Museum. She started a new position as Curator of Community History for Norfolk Museums Service in March.

Steph kicked off the day by saying how integral these skills are to the overall work of museums. He stressed, "if you don't know anything about your collections, how can you interpret them and make them truly accessible for your public?" His introduction to identification emphasised 5 key points to consider: an object's purpose, method of production, context, significance and date. Furthermore, Steph highlighted the symbiotic relationship between function, form and materials, and how this key can provide valuable clues about an object's origin and use. Have you heard the sorry tale about the chocolate fireguard?

The first part of the day was then divided into mini-seminars. Keith Matthews led the introduction to firearms, sat behind a table

covered in rifles, shotguns, blunderbusses and animal traps. Safety was his first concern, showing how to check a gun safely and how to deactivate if necessary. Keith explained that the law on gun control is complex and encouraged any one uncertain to contact their local Firearms Training Officer. At present, many firearms in museums are seen as curios and, like deactivated firearms, are exempt from the law. However, deactivated firearms may also be made illegal in the future and as such, Keith warned against deactivating further specimens, thus preserving the objects' integrity, until the law is clarified.

Richard Stansfield led the next discussion on silver, stressing that the first thing to remember is that silver was always owned to impress. An overview of the evolution of



Above: Identifying objects at the Watchamacallits seminar.



silver followed, tracing the development of Old Sheffield Plate, (which reigned supreme between 1780 -1890) through to the development of EPNS, (popular from the 1890s onwards). A brief discussion on hallmarks highlighted the major marks for London (leopard's head), Birmingham (anchor), Edinburgh (thistle) and Sheffield (crown) as well as some of the more popular makers marks. To help curators through this tricky subject, Richard suggested keeping a copy *Jackson's Silver and Gold Marks* to hand.

The last morning session focused upon identifying textiles. Josie Sheppard encouraged delegates to touch their collections, in order to gain a better understanding of different textiles and their construction. She used the classic example of comparing cotton and linen, which is heavier and colder to the touch. The group discussed different materials, comparing natural silk and cottons, with chemically treated Victorian fabrics and later Twentieth Century manmade fibres such as rayon. Common conservation problems were obvious here, especially with materials weighted with tin salts or coloured with dyes prone to rotting. Accessories were also covered, with the group gaining top tips on how to spot tortoiseshell and jet from other common reproductions, such as early plastics and vulcanite respectively.

After lunch, the group was able to get to grips with a wide range of social history objects. Each group spent time examining domestic items, craft tools, friendly society

regalia and ephemera and made short presentations to the seminar as a whole. Favourite objects included a stoneware puzzle jug, rush light holder, ice cream mould and a lesser-spotted gas powered tin smithing tool, which we all agreed looked like a real death trap! This was a great opportunity to work with different collection types as well as exercising new skills of deduction.

Feedback from the seminar was positive, with delegates agreeing that SHCG should organise similar events in the future. Many agreed that their confidence had increased, especially when dealing with unfamiliar collections within their own museums. Charlotte Taylor, Collections Manager at Hartlepool agreed, "I think the best thing was getting close to the guns just because I never have. It gives me confidence to handle our collection as well as knowing what all the Health & Safety implications are." Natalie Raw, from Tyne and Wear Museums, felt it was a great opportunity to learn about other types of collections outside her own field. She commented, "for me in particular, as I am in some ways quite specialist in what I do, working mainly with costume and textiles, it was good to get to see and learn about identifying different collections."

These workshops continue to be a great success and go some way to fill the skills gap that many Museum Studies courses and in-house training fail to provide. Elissa Haskins, from Tyne and Wear Museums,

found the day really useful, saying, "I appreciated the day because there is so little object-based training to be found at the moment. And I suspect it's an area in which many junior professionals feel they lack experience." Steph Mastoris concluded, "these events are a great opportunity to get to grips with the real stuff of museums. After all, why did most of us go into this business?"

I wholeheartedly support SHCG's efforts to tackle this training gap, especially as the SRAs are moving away providing reasonably priced training in favour of a more strategic approach. On my own home turf, curators in the North East are taking positive steps to address this problem, by coming together to share skills and promote best practice.

Like SHCG, Museums North's Social History Panel is developing a programme of collections training days. Last year's annual study day focussed upon costume collections and was a sell out success, proving without a doubt the need for more curatorial training in the region. So far this year, the Panel has planned a seminar on regional ceramics and a study day focussing upon maritime collections, linked to SeaBritain 2005. Anyone interested in this work should contact:

martin.routledge@twmuseums.org.uk

Thank you SHCG for such a stimulating and rewarding day. And thank you for the free place. Long may the good work continue!



Best Foot Forward: SHCG seminar on shoes –21st October 2003, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery

This seminar was just the sort of hand-on object based seminar the SHCG does so well. We all wear shoes, and probably all have some pairs lurking in our collections, but few of us would feel confident in dating an unprovenanced shoe or recognising a specialised shoe-maker's welt tool.

Kitty Ross

Curator of Social History & Costume,
Leeds Museums and Galleries

Northampton Museum is the authority on the history of shoes and has a magnificent designated collection of over 12,000 pairs. Rebecca Shawcross gave a very authoritative talk, giving us useful tips on how to identify different styles and

fashions from 1600 to the present day. Did you know for instance that elastic was invented in 1837 and was used almost immediately in boots?, or that the first reference to a shoe buckle was in Pepy's diary? It was also intriguing to learn that exotic animal skins were often used for 1940s shoes due to a shortage of leather!

Sue Constable then introduced the tools of the trade, and made us swear to never call a shoe maker a 'cobbler' (who only repairs shoes), and not to muddle a last with a shoe tree.

The day also included a tour of the new stores and tips on the best way to store shoes to minimise handling by researchers.

Finally, the fascinating subject of 'concealed' shoes was discussed. These shoes found sealed above doors or in chimneys of houses from Medieval times to

the 1920s are often the only examples of working class footwear which does not otherwise survive. They are thought to imbue the spirit and properties of the wearer whose shape they have acquired and thus to bring good luck and protection to the weakest points in the house.

Northampton deals with lots of enquiries and keeps an index of reports of concealed shoes from across the world. The Winchester Textile Conservation Unit maintains a similar database of concealed clothing.

If you have any enquiries about shoes, please contact:

**Northampton Museum
and Art Gallery, Guildhall Road,
Northampton NN1 1D
Tel: 01604 238548**



Object Focus: Dick Turpin's Whistle?

York Castle Museum has in its collection a small ivory whistle. It is nicely carved at one end with a figure holding onto a barrel. The figure, by his dress, is a sailor and probably dates from the eighteenth century. It will shortly be going on display, not for its own sake, but because it was allegedly once owned by Dick Turpin.

Michelle Petyt

Assistant Curator of Social History,
York Castle Museum

For anyone not familiar with the story of Dick Turpin, very briefly it is this. Dick Turpin was born in Essex in 1705. He was a butcher by trade and began his criminal career by selling stolen meat. He soon progressed to housebreaking, highway robbery and murder. He fled north to escape justice and set himself up as a horse dealer, assuming the name of John Palmer. Not surprisingly the horses he dealt in were usually stolen. The law finally caught up with Turpin in 1738 when he shot a game cock in the street and then threatened to shoot a bystander. He was sent to the House of Correction in Beverley and

then to York Castle (now part of the Museum) when evidence of his horse stealing came to light. It was while at York Castle that Turpin's true identity was discovered and he was hanged on April 7th 1739 for horse theft.

Even those who are familiar with Turpin may not recognise this story. Far better known is the tale of the dashing handsome highwayman who rode from London to York in a day on his faithful mare, Black Bess. This image, however, is mainly due to a popular novel, *Rookwood*, written in 1834 by William Harrison Ainsworth. Although largely forgotten today *Rookwood* was a

huge success, the first edition selling out in four months. Ainsworth reinvented Turpin, changing him from the murdering thug of history to the thrilling hero of legend. This is the Turpin that we know today.

All of which brings us back to the whistle. There is no specific mention of a whistle in any of the published accounts of Turpin's life in the 18th century or after. These accounts do mention gifts he supposedly gave to various parties at the time of his execution, including hatbands and gloves and to a certain married lady, a gold ring and two pairs of shoes and clogs. There is no mention of a gift for the hangman or the clergyman who attended him at the gallows. By the 1950s we know that the whistle was owned by the Yorkshire Philosophical Society and was on display in the Yorkshire Museum. A magazine article of 1956 calls it Turpin's whistle "which the highwayman used to summon his accomplices and to give warning of approach to his rendezvous." The article states that Turpin gave the whistle to the clergyman present at his execution. The article also mentions the fact that the whistle had been recently stolen from the Yorkshire Museum.

The whistle reappeared in 2002 in the showrooms of a local auctioneer and had somehow acquired a provenance complete with documentation. The documentation consisted of a hand-written note declaring that the whistle had belonged to Turpin, and that he had given to the clergyman who had then given it to the senior fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge. It then passed through the hands of at least three more people until it finally came into the possession of a Mrs Smythe. The document measures 156 mm by 222 mm and curiously bears part of a stamp duty mark. It does not take the form of a letter or any legal document and has no date or signature. The paper is certainly old,

although it looks as though it has been screwed up and then flattened out again; perhaps to make it look older. The contents are written in faded ink in an authentic style, but it is too neat, too authentic. The pencil lines are clearly visible. Neither the clergyman nor the senior fellow is named although all the other owners are. Is Smythe an attempt at an 'olde' version of Smith?

Is the document a fake? If so why, when the whistle already had an accepted provenance? Perhaps it was produced to convince a buyer. A more expert eye than myself will have to decide for certain, but I have my suspicions.

But did the whistle actually belong to Turpin? There is no evidence to say that it did, but so far there is no evidence to say that it definitely did not. It is not alone in its association with Turpin. We also have in the Museum the irons that he reputedly wore whilst in the prison. If you look further afield than that, there are enough pistols dotted around the country that apparently were his to make you wonder if he was either very generous or very careless with them. There is also a leather bag conveniently marked 'R Turpin'. Did any of these things belong to the real Turpin? Probably not. But I think that we can say that they belong to that other Turpin, the mythical Turpin of the stories and poems. Turpin is a historical celebrity and just like the celebrities of today, everyone wants a piece of him. Somebody wanted the whistle to have belonged to Turpin and that in itself is interesting.

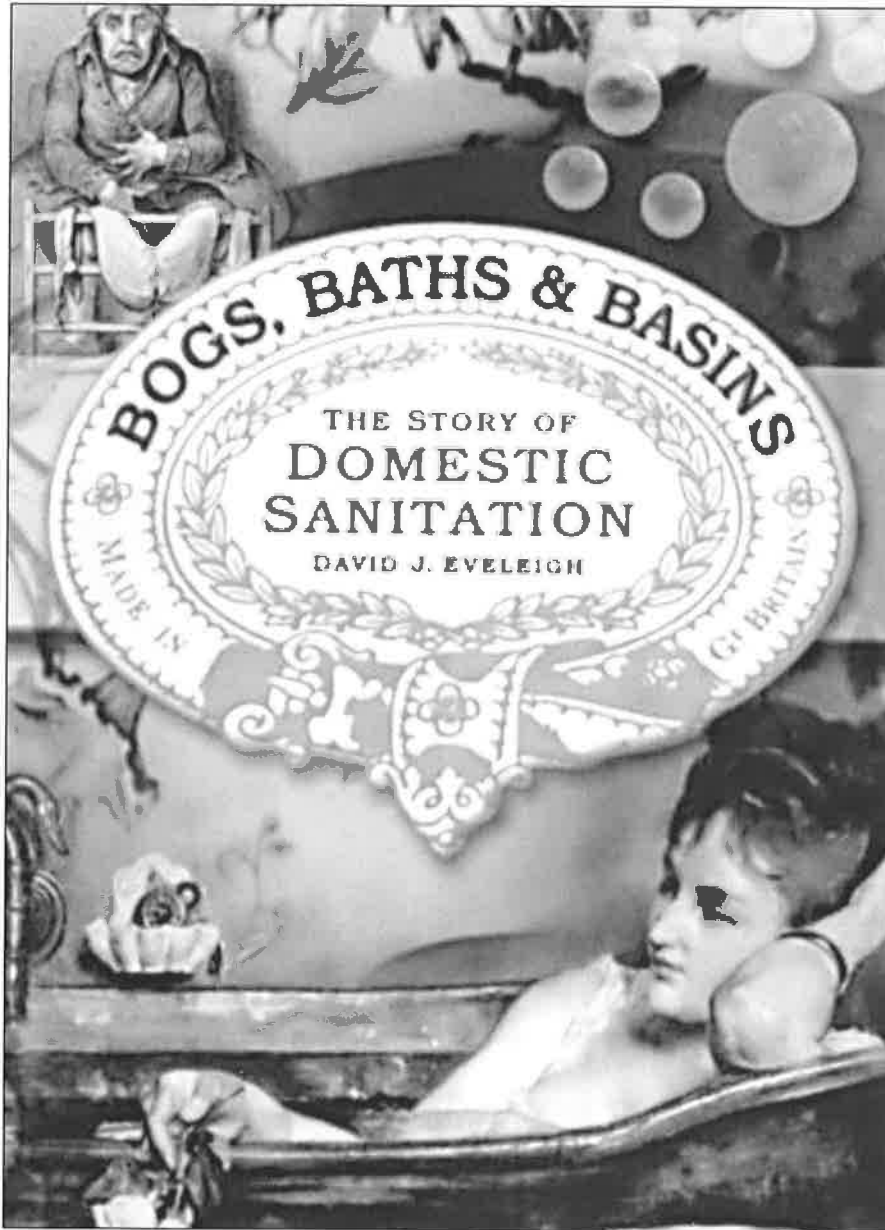
So the whistle will go on display as 'allegedly' belonging to Dick Turpin. And even if it was never his, it is still a nice object with its own story to tell.



Above: The whistle in 1956 just before it was stolen.
Left: The whistle and document in 2002.

The whistle along with other objects relating to Dick Turpin are on display until January 2005 at:

York Castle Museum,
The Eye of York,
York YO1 9RY
Tel: 01904.650335



'Bogs, Baths and Basins.
The Story of Domestic Sanitation.'
David J. Eveleigh
Sutton Publishing, 2002

I picked this book off the shelf because I was interested in the interaction between domestic and public baths. Having opened the book, I was intrigued by the range of topics and the, often beautiful, illustrations. For a book on such a literally basic subject, it certainly covers numerous bases. If you need to know how the bathrooms of today have evolved, which company made the Dolphin water closet and from which date, or the difference between a plug, tip-up or lavatory wash basin, this book will meet your needs.

David J. Eveleigh, Curator of Social History for Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, covers an incredible sweep of domestic sanitary history, and at an amazing number of levels from cultural overview to technological nuts and bolts. The illustrations play an important part in the story, and the book takes full advantage of the fantastic line drawings in manufacturers' catalogues, alongside photographs, caricatures, architectural plans, adverts, technical drawings and letterheads. The main text also incorporates focus panels on important individuals in the story including Thomas William Twyford, Reverend Henry Moule, Henry Doulton and of course Thomas Crapper. These short biographies, each with a portrait

photograph, worked well as a way to give full details of the movers and shakers, without interrupting the flow of the book.

There is also an extensive use of quotations and sources to set the developments in the wider social and political context. The opinions of the well-known social commentators such as Chadwick, Mayhew and Rowntree contrast nicely with a range of enlightening literary quotations - from Flora Thompson in *Lark Rise* to *Candleford* to Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*. The history of toilets, sinks, baths and showers intersects with the history of housing, hygiene, public health, national and local legislation, pressure groups, water and sewage services. There are also many cultural references, to interior design, changing fashion, borrowings from other countries and times (Pompeian spray and shower bath, anyone?), and of course, class distinctions. In 1864, the architect Robert Kerr asserted that "no house of any pretensions will be devoid of a general bathroom." It was many decades before the majority of the population could achieve this dream. I particularly enjoyed the balance between all of the varying factors, practical, technological, and aspirational, in the chapter *Cleanliness and Godliness - Victorian attitudes to bathing and various kinds of bath*.

For someone most interested in the social and cultural factors, I struggled with the amount of technical detail of how all the different types of water closet worked. However, as a reference book, you know this level of explanation is there to come back to, as is a comprehensive list of water closet brand names, which would be useful to date examples in a museum collection, or even to date photographs.

I thoroughly enjoyed the extensive range of sources, social and cultural, as well as technological history. Even though my current collections contain no bogs, baths or basins, it was an entertaining read, and undoubtedly the definitive book on the subject.

Briony Hudson

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Royal Pharmaceutical Society,
1 Lambeth High Street,
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**'The State of the Office:
the politics and geography of
working space'**

by Max Nathan with Judith Doyle
London: The Industrial Society, 2002,
ISBN 1-85835-942-2, £20, paperback.

This exciting book is part of The Industrial Society's 'Futures' series, which looks at emerging trends in work structures and architectures, shifts in working culture and notions of working life.

Using new research results, Nathan and Doyle chart three urgent issues: the frequent mismatch between the types of workspace employees need, and what employers give them; second, even sophisticated ways of organising working space do not always work in practice; third, the message of good workplace design and management has not yet reached most employers - and more importantly, has not touched most employees. Although satisfaction surveys have shown that most workers are satisfied with their office space, it comes at a price: the constant modification and tinkering needed to make the space fit. Historically, office space has been 'dumb'. Bland, neat, and cheap were the criteria to be met in the office. Until very recently, the dissenting minority had a hard time being heard - they believe the office as 'smart space' allows us to work harder, faster, and better, leveraged to change company culture and working methods.

By means of examples from office history, the authors outline how much we owe to Taylorian efficiency theories to explain how we got to where we are today. The office as we recognise it was born in 1915 with the introduction of the Modern Efficiency Desk, allowing paper to flow through the office more quickly. Standardisation reached its height in the early 1960s in New York's Union Carbide building, designed by SOM. Most office design of the 1960s and 1970s copied the Carbide international style, with the focus on warehousing people. In the late 1960s, an office counterculture in the conceptual form of *Burolandschaft* pioneered by the German Quickbourner Group emerged. Its emphasis on the interlocking, fluid, organic elements of working space seemed reasonable and exciting at the time, but the paradigm received very little acceptance after complaints about privacy, noise and lack of individual control over space. However, in the long term, its influence has been rather

greater, in the form we recognise as today's open offices and flexible systems. In 1968, Robert Propst invented the cubicle as part of a panel-based office system. Taken to its limit, it soon degenerated into a byword for anonymity, isolation and extreme standardisation. The computer revolution of the late 1980s resulted in the proliferation of expensive highly modular office systems, with staff working in semi-enclosed cellular spaces. The high costs involved forced managers to seek highly standardised solutions: the themes of utility, efficiency, group solutions and corporate control of staff were dominant.

Into the 1990s, a heady mixture of architecture, research, and environmental psychology allowed pioneers Francis Duffy, Fritz Steele and Franz Becker to establish the 'Alternative Officing' school, developing rich new concepts for working space based on the interaction between people, space and working culture. With new technology, around 25 per cent of the workforce in Britain now carry out some of their work at home and use ICT to keep in touch with clients and colleagues. Other factors, such as employers' recognition of the importance of intangible assets also have to be considered. These recent changes mean that three key dynamics at work can be discerned. First, some workers may have multiple workplaces and nomadic workstyles outside the office; second, there is a move towards flexible workstyles within the office; and third, for many workers the office is being reconfigured as a forum for ideas exchange, community space, team space, drop-in point for mobile workers - or catalyst for wider cultural and organisational change.

Much of the 1990s literature focussed on the soft-edged benefits of new ways of working, showing, for example, that working space also affects productivity through levels of communication and interaction. Research by Space Syntax indicates that around 80 per cent of all work-related conversations are sparked by one person passing another's desk.

The authors point out that we need a deeper, wider, much richer understanding of people, space and organisation. We have not moved much beyond Herzberg's hygiene factors, it seems. We need to dig deeper into the futures of work: what C Holtham classifies as three types of office work of the future:

- (i) information work: processing of information in teams
- (ii) knowledge work: sharing
- (iii) knowledge work: creation.

The authors criticise these categories as being too exclusive and simplistic, yet they do have their own ring of charm about them, when looking down at the generalised workplace from a high altitude. Critically, the authors also show that the user perspective is often missing. There is indeed a wealth of published work on working space, but hardly any understanding of the user's point of view. Most critically of all, the authors emphasise the failure of Alternative Officing models to take into account the political economy of the firm; indeed, these models barely register the complex realities of the organisation. For example, working space should be set within the informal tone of the company, not just its formal culture. To understand the politics and geography of working space, we have to know the politics and geography of working life.

This useful book is rich in details and insight about the human condition in an office environment. It is a tool which the museum employer and the administrator need to have and to use. For social historians, it is an excellent reply to the question, "Why are offices the way they are?", even though it also manages to pose a lot of further, as yet unresearched, questions. Physically, the book is well constructed, with a clear, captivating typeface and layout. There is a short glossary of terms, mostly based on the work of Tanis and Duffy, and an excellent colour section at the back with 25 colour photos and accompanying oral testimony. The book also gives thirteen examples of 'top spaces' from around the world, the results of companies trying out new systems, ranging from the KI Building in Tokyo with an air-conditioning system to simulate light breezes to Thomas Cook's call centre in Falkirk which has a stream running through the office with real palm trees, plus a tropical 'sensorama'.

In conclusion, the authors state that the way forward is to create environments where space is managed well, power-sharing agreements have evolved between the different groups in the company, and everyone works more effectively as a result.

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"Find 'em" Seaside Scene

(A lovely summer holiday feel to the quiz, for this issue. Ed)

In this interesting and amusing quiz forty faults have been made in the drawing of the picture. These have been made by omissions or additions. Have fun! The answers are below, but no cheating!



- Lady and Kiddy:
 1 Lady has one arm bare, one clothed.
 2 Child stood still, Mother walking.
 3 Mother has Boot on left foot, Shoe on right foot.
 4 Child wearing paddlers with shoes and stockings on.
 5 Bucket has no handle.
 6 Bag has no chain.
 7 Beads only half-way round lady's neck.
 8 Child's spade has two handles.
- Donkeys:
 9 One Donkey has only one ear.
 10 One has three legs.
 11 One has tail of dog.
 12 No reins.
 13 Donkeys wearing collars.
 14 Cloven hoofs.
 15 Shadows fall different ways.
- People under Sunshade:
 16 No support to chairs.
 17 No handle to sunshade.
 Bathing Machine:
 18 Doors open outwards.
 19 Two wheels instead of four.
 20 No spokes to wheels.
- Oddments:
 21 No steps.
 22 Has a chimney.
 23 Fall pipe to bathing machine.
 Boat:
 24 Has rudder at wrong end.
 25 No oar.
 26 Has no seats.
 27 Three rowlocks on one side, two on the other.
 Fisherman:
 28 Wearing collar and tie over jersey.
 29 Wearing watch and chain over jersey.
 30 One large and one small sea-boot on.
 31 Holding a garden rake.
- Oddments:
 32 Crab has one big claw only.
 33 Lobster curled up as if boiled.
 34 Starfish has only four points.
 35 Flowers growing in sand.
 36 Palm trees growing on sand.
 37 Rabbit on sand.
 38 Cat paddling in sea.
 39 Boy sailing boat wearing shoes and stockings.
 40 No sides to Bandstand.

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