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ISSUE 54



**Contemporary Collecting
Seminar Review**

ASW Reviews

**Memory Clinics
in Montreal**

SHCG NEWS

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.

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Contents photos:
Steph Mistoris enjoying the
Historic harbour cruise, Bristol.
—ASW Reviews.

Troop Ship 'Hydaspes',
—The Thurlow Album.

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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: 25TH APRIL 2005

Welcome to Issue 54. As I write this a weather warning has just gone out that we are heading for the coldest winter in years, hopefully the forecasters have got it wrong but if not forget the cold as the News has now arrived to bring you glad tidings of SHCG past, present and future events!

The Annual Study Weekend in Bristol and Bath went very well, the speakers and the venues were both interesting and varied and everyone enjoyed themselves. I would just like to say thank you to the committee members who spent a lot of time organising it, as it all ran very smoothly. Also I would like to thank our colleagues in Bristol and Bath who welcomed us into their museums and stores and made the visits really fascinating.

The committee is currently working on ASW 2005 so put the dates 30th June to 2nd July in the diary and it will be held in South Wales. The title is 'The real thing...?' and will cover many different aspects of interpretation. More details will be available in the New Year.

Thank you to all those people who contributed to this edition of the News and I will finish with my usual plea for articles. The deadline for the next bulletin is Monday 25th April 2005.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year...

SARAH MAULTBY—EDITOR

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ASW 2005:

‘The Real Thing...?’

30th June–2nd July 2005

South Wales

Above: 1950's Room, York Castle Museum. The real thing...? recreating room sets will be discussed at ASW 2005.

Next year's Annual Study Weekend will be in South Wales.

It will discuss the virtues and pitfalls of the many ways of bringing history to life, from recreating room sets to costumed interpretation to commissioning new technologies. As ever, it promises a lively mix of papers, hands-on workshops, museum visits and vital opportunities to recharge your social history batteries in stimulating company.

Put the dates in your diary now, and further details will follow shortly!

We are considering re-introducing a session for delegates to talk about current projects they are involved in.

If any members would like to speak for 15 minutes on any aspect of their current work, please send a proposal to Zelda Baveystock at Discovery Museum, email: zelda.baveystock@twmuseums.org.uk by Friday 10th December. The session will go ahead if sufficient proposals are received.

To register your interest in ASW 2005 and receive updates as soon as they are available please email:

asw@shcg.org.uk

Hidden Lives Revealed —A Virtual Archive

The Children's Society announces the launch of a major new online resource - **Hidden Lives Revealed**.

www.hiddenlives.org.uk is an exciting and unique new resource for anyone interested in British social history.

The site has something for you if you are at school learning about the Victorians or even at university studying social work. Maybe you have an interest in Victorian architecture - or perhaps you'd just like to play the online games or download a screensaver.

Focusing on the period 1881-1918 www.hiddenlives.org.uk includes unique archive material about poor and disadvantaged children cared for by the Waifs and Strays' Society, as The Children's Society was then known.

www.hiddenlives.org.uk features a range of archive material, previously not widely accessible to the public, as well as articles and learning materials that help to interpret these stories for a modern audience. No other Internet archive exists that gives you the opportunity to browse through such unique material - documents that contain information about Victorian and Edwardian children, families and social issues that have not been recorded elsewhere.

www.hiddenlives.org.uk features the full contents of around 150 case files of children who were in the care of the Waifs and Strays' Society from this period. Even though some of these cases are from over 100 years ago, every attempt has been made to maintain the children's anonymity. Each case is summarised and linked to pages about the actual children's homes they lived in.

Photographs from The Children's Society Archive illustrate some of the grinding poverty of the time, and also show how children's lives were turned around when they entered the care of the Waifs and Strays' Society.

The texts of various publications will soon be available on the site - these include the supporter magazines *Our Waifs and Strays* and *Brothers and Sisters*, as well as the Waifs and Strays' Society's Annual Reports.

Why not visit www.hiddenlives.org.uk and see how Britain has changed in the last 100 years.

**Nigel Spicer—Hidden Lives Revealed
Project Leader**

Email: nxs@childsoc.org.uk

Collections for the future

As I am sure you are aware the Museums Association is currently

undertaking a major enquiry into the future of the UK's museum and gallery collections.

SHCG has been asked

to comment on the document

circulated by the MA. SHCG

discussed the document during the afternoon session of the 'Connect and Collect' seminar and Zelda Baveystock is currently writing an SHCG response based on feedback from that session. An abridged version of the SHCG response will hopefully be published in the next issue of the News.



Medical Seminar now in the spring

The medical collections seminar announced in the last edition of the News has had to be postponed.

Apologies for any confusion or inconvenience caused. The day will now be held at the newly refurbished Museums of the Royal College of Surgeons in February 2005. The sessions will look at a range of medical objects from pharmacy to dentistry, with opportunities to learn about health and safety, a chance to pick the brains of some of

the curators of specialist medical museums, and with plenty of time to get to grips with strategies for identifying the more common objects that might be lurking in your stores!

Further details will be available on the SHCG website, and all members will receive booking details. For any other information, contact; Briony Hudson on seminars@shcg.org.uk



Memory Clinics at the Centre d'histoire, Montréal

At last year's SHCG / MA discussion day on ethics, the subject area that appeared to raise the greatest concern was oral history. Many delegates felt either inadequately prepared for or insufficiently aware of the sensitivities surrounding undertaking oral history and reminiscence work.

Zelda Baveystock
—Senior Curator of History,
Tyne and Wear Museums

Zelda visited Montreal as part of a Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship, looking at representations of multiculturalism in urban museums.

At the Centre d'histoire in Montréal a more unusual (and bolder) approach has been taken. Building on the metaphor of a blood donation clinic, the Centre has been developing a series of intergenerational Memory Clinics (*clínicas da memoria*) as a foundation block for its community exhibitions. After one day's professional training, young people dress up in white coats and stethoscopes and, armed with registration forms, interview the older members of their community in cubicles set up in a public space such as a church or community centre. Only after the memories have been 'extracted' are participants rewarded with the usual cup of tea and a biscuit...

The first community to offer themselves up for memory donation in this manner was the Portuguese. Three clinics were held, resulting in some 60 recorded interviews.

If people brought in objects, these were digitally photographed and immediately added to a Powerpoint projection for waiting participants to watch - thus encouraging further objects to be dug out of closets.

At first I thought this approach was unnecessarily gimmicky, and rife with hazard. Participants may feel uncomfortable en masse in a public space, both physically and emotionally, and ill-prepared for the aftermath of re-living what for many are traumatic memories. Many Portuguese in Montréal have never spoken to their children or grandchildren about why they left Portugal in the 1950s, what their life was like before they came to Canada, or the struggles they had faced on arrival. These are emotional stories of political conflict and poverty, and ones which might not be best served by the pseudo-clinical setting.



Above and Previous page: 'Encontros. The Portuguese Community - Neighbours for 50 years'.

But the metaphor on this occasion proved to be useful for a group of people who did not necessarily value their own 'ordinary' histories. Blood donation, while not exactly a pleasant or comfortable experience, is done out of a sense of community duty. In this sense, participants could quickly grasp the community importance of passing their history on to the next generation.

My doubts over the process were further subdued on viewing the exhibition that grew out of the first round of Memory Clinics. *Encontros. The Portuguese Community - Neighbours for 50 Years* is a deliberately joyful affair. It has proved to be one of the most memorable community-based exhibitions I have seen for a long time, with a visual flair and wit that engages the visitor without avoiding dealing with some of the more difficult issues.

The exhibition is divided into two symbolic houses, part reality and part fantasy. The houses are conceptually figured using simple white muslin sheets and draped furniture, rather than full-blown room reconstructions. One half of the room is the house left behind, as many Quebec Portuguese apparently continue to maintain a property in Portugal, in the hope of their eventual return one day. The other side is the Montréal house and garden, filled with typical Portuguese artefacts - pottery, domestic items, ephemera and so on. Liberal use of artificial grass, picket fencing and white window boxes filled with gaily coloured artificial flowers attest to the community's love of their outdoor spaces, while a washing line strung with costume, hand embroidered tablecloths and textiles gets round that tricky problem of how to display lots of similar material with an absence of suitable display cases or

mannequins. As the introductory text says, "each of these houses contains a little of the history and the soul of Portuguese Montréalers". It communicates the constant struggle of any immigrant of being both 'here' and 'there' in spirit. While many of the objects are precisely what you'd expect to see in a depiction of 'the Portuguese' (cockerels and brightly coloured pottery), other more personal items with accompanying oral history testimony are slotted in-between. So, for example, we see the key to the first Montréal property owned by one participant, with a statement of how much it meant to her.

It is often problematic when asking a community to represent its heritage not to fall back on stereotype or cliché, or to present a diversity of views that genuinely reflects the different beliefs and experiences contained within. In Montréal, for example, there are currently some 40,000 Portuguese or Canadians of Portuguese descent, and while they once predominantly lived in one area of the city, they are now scattered across many districts. No exhibition could ever encompass this variety, but this one did at least seek to dispel some common misconceptions. Throughout the room were simple cupboard doors, painted in the Portuguese national colours, with simple statements of what people often believe it means to be Portuguese, along with a 'What do you think?'. Opening the door revealed a sometimes detailed, but balanced answer to statements ranging from the banal "Portuguese speak Spanish", to "the Portuguese are all fervent Catholics", "the Portuguese are all right wing", and "the Portuguese immigrant community is, without question, a throwback to the 1950s, fixed in time".

(Since Canada is bi-lingual by law, museums must present all information in both French and English. At the Centre d'histoire the process of translation sometimes leaves texts reading rather oddly, or much less concise than we are accustomed to in the UK).

The lightness of touch is not confined to this exhibition, but is something of a trademark at the Centre d'Histoire. Jean-Francois Leclerc, the Director, is actively trying to expand the boundaries. An earlier exhibition on the hidden history of live-in domestic workers used contemporary artists to work as facilitators. One resulting performance-based work involved current domestic workers visiting homes where archive and census records had revealed their historical counterparts had worked 70 years ago. They placed a handmade doll with the name of the appropriate worker on the doorstep - a domestic blue plaque if you will - to remind everyone of residents who are rarely remembered and never commemorated. In the process they discovered many connections between past domestic work and their current experiences, suggesting the problems some of them faced was more due to the inherently exploitative nature of the work rather than their race or status (many Montrealer live-in domestics today are Philipino immigrants, whereas in the 1930s they were more likely to be French Quebecoise).

This sense of imagination and willingness to experiment is perhaps one which we could all learn from. So, the Memory Clinics don't strictly meet our ethical standards, but they have started up a process of dialogue between young and old, and in the short term at least, produced a refreshing and enjoyable exhibition. Personally I would be happy with that for starters!



ASW 2004: Delegates' Reports

It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that a social history curator in possession of a good collection must be in want of a life (just ask my friends!).

And so a goodly number of us descended on Bristol and Bath for the SHCG Annual Study Weekend; an event noted in all good history curators' diaries as an opportunity to be nosy, pick up new ideas, recharge batteries and to meet people who 'understand'.

Karen Spry

Karen is currently working as a Curatorial Officer for Worcestershire County Museum Service, seconded to Bromsgrove Museum.

I was also hoping for scandal, gossip and outrageous shenanigans; though this being a weekend of Hidden Histories, all signs of the above were, unfortunately, hidden.

The weekend started well, on a Thursday and at lunchtime, so that the first afternoon, the political update, was attended eagerly by curators fresh from a three day week and full of good food. Demonstrating that SHCG does not skirt around the issues affecting us most directly we kicked off with a case study look into phase one and phase two hub services, inviting a comparison of approaches.

As Stephen Price for the phase one Bristol Museums and Liz Wilson for phase two East Midlands hub presented their overviews of preparing for and working as part of *Renaissance in the Regions*, I was struck mainly by the outward looking perspective of one and inward looking perspective of the former. For me this proved an interesting

distinction between services and valuable insight into the progressions undertaken in order to achieve their allotted status.

Next came a look at the North West's *Connecting Our Histories* project, a project of mutual co-operation and self-learning, whilst rounding off this afternoon of manageable chunks of politics was left to Judy Aitkin of the Heritage Lottery Fund. We were provided with a welcome reminder that the often tedious, sometimes frustrating and always lengthy business of submitting lottery bids, is often worth the effort, and assured that despite increased pressure on funding, we mere curatorial mortals will have a chance to exert influence. Good to know.

Friday morning saw us curatorial types whisked off to Bath for the day. First stop was the Roman Baths and Pump Room where we were based for the morning and sat in jaw dropping fascination as three very different but equally interesting



Above: Evening drinks reception at Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery.
Previous page: Stuart Burroughs, Curator of the Museum of Bath at Work.

professionals gave us their own personal insights into interpreting lives through objects.

The first to speak was John McVerry, Project Director of the National Trust property Tyntesfield. Despite being from the other side John's story had all the elements of a typical museum thriller: financial constraints (not being able to acquire the whole property), politics (descendants who hold and will not release to the Trust the family archives) and, unusually for the NT, a store full of 'dross'.

While most of us are still trying to fathom the collecting policies of the past which have left us stores full of said 'dross', we may now have an anthropological insight into the hidden histories of previous curators and their intentions towards this material. John's intentions are to leave all responsibility for decision making to future generations!

However, Tyntesfield is almost unique amongst such properties in having the everyday bits and pieces complete with the house. It is worth bearing in mind that curatorial dross is only dross because all past curators seem to have had the same ideas! For John, the finding of this material enables him to explore more fully the social history of the house, upstairs and downstairs,

something few NT properties can boast.

Following John was Giles Waterfield from the Institute of Historical Research examining the portrayal of Black and Asian servants and slaves in British portraiture and paintings. From him we learned that people with coloured skin were a more familiar sight in the eighteenth century than the nineteenth and were therefore of greater curiosity value in the latter; that there are very few signs of caricature or ridicule and that generally, black servants were depicted in very much the same way as white ones.

However, Indian servants are often portrayed respectfully in their own costume while African servants are dressed exotically and out of context. Not only does this say much about the lives of the servants themselves, but is also indicative of the ways in which masters attempted to interpret the cultures of their servants. These histories are not so much hidden as there for the viewing.

To round off the morning, and get us in the mood for lunch, Peter Brears, one of those enthusiastic museum and historic house consultant / interpreters (he even had the beard), gave a paper on preparing and serving a Georgian dinner. Peter covered the food of all classes, from a Pemberley style banquet to bread and 'mucky fat'. However, the most fascinating detail came in the

distinction between the eating customs of different types of labourer.

Weavers, colliers and agricultural labourers all had different eating habits it seems, dictated by spending patterns, availability of fuel and cooking facilities, and provision by employers. Weavers for example were thrifty souls who ate simple finger food at the looms, while miners lived the high(er) life, hand to mouth, spending on good food while they could. The sociology of food is really rather compelling and I loved the idea of pie eating etiquette amongst agricultural labourers. Perhaps Peter should turn his hand to investigating the sociology of curatorial lunches...

After this gem of a morning, the group divided off to pursue one of three options, the Museum of Costume, the Museum of Bath at Work or a blatant skive and mooch round Bath. Tempting though the latter option was I opted for the Bath at Work choice.

The museum is slightly out of town and as we wound our way through the streets, no doubt looking to passers by like an overgrown and slightly better behaved school group, it was quite noticeable that it wasn't the easiest place to find for a Bath newcomer. Nonetheless, once there we found a museum with a rather exceptional collection, inherited from an enthusiastic amateur, of working life objects and ephemera.

The museum displays its contents in a series of tableaux depicting predominantly masculine local trades, placing emphasis on ambience and space rather than individual objects and interpretation text. This is the only museum in Bath to cater for locals as well as the tourist market, and so the curator also tries to address missing links through temporary exhibitions and lectures.

It seems a real shame for Bath not to have a museum which does justice to the local population and considering the Museum of Bath at Work appears to be a poor relation to the other city museums, it is much to the credit of the curator that he works as a lone crusader to champion the Bath that isn't Roman and Georgian centred tourism. Perhaps we as a group did not fully appreciate this, as the poor curator found himself bombarded by ideas and good intentions, and was left looking somewhat crumpled and shell-shocked.

Elsewhere in Bath, the group visiting the Museum of Costume found out how artistic licence affects our perception of period clothing. During post visit feedback I was reassured to discover that in an era of inclusion and working with disaffected

youths, today's museum professionals are full of empathy, showing that they too can smirk at the notion of a 'dark Fanny' (Price - from the film interpretation of Mansfield Park)! Meanwhile, the skivers sampled the local shopping and can testify to the excellence of the charity shops.

And so to the last day. The morning was spent at Blaise Castle museum, a satellite museum of Bristol museums service and great exponent of the usefulness of Ikea shelving, (a.k.a. good displays on a tight budget! Ed). For anyone interested, they have some rather lovely costume there. We then transferred to the afternoon venue, the Museum of Empire and Commonwealth in time for lunch, the AGM and an afternoon of papers relating to tackling multicultural history and breaking down barriers. All thoroughly inspiring stuff.

The one misfortune was the lack of time available to fully explore the Museum of Empire and Commonwealth, though my initial impression was that it was an incredible feat and really managed to portray the enormity of the Empire in its very ambience.

By the end of the weekend we were just about saturated with knowledge, good ideas and nice food and ready to recharge our batteries again. We filtered off feeling full and satisfied, leaving the two cities to recover and the host curators to attend therapy.

I was one of two SHCG members to be offered a free place on this year's Annual Study Weekend (ASW) at Bristol and Bath. Having been a member for just less than a year, I thought this was pretty good luck on my part.

Elizabeth Amais—Curator

**East Surrey Museum,
Caterham.**

I have spent the past 5 years since graduating from the Leicester course as the curator of firstly Eden Valley Museum in Edenbridge, Kent, and now East Surrey Museum in Caterham. Both are small independent museums concentrating mainly on local history and archaeology. I don't often get the chance to attend conferences and study weekends because the financial resources just aren't there. SHCG generously covered the cost of the conference and accommodation, which turned out to be the same guesthouse that

most of the committee were staying at. This was a great idea because as a first-timer it is sometimes difficult to break into the cliques that often form when the same people attend an event every year. In the end ASW was nothing like that.

Unfortunately I had a commitment on the Friday that I could not get out of and so I will obviously concentrate my review on the parts that I did attend, namely the Thursday and Saturday during the daytime and both of the evenings (well I couldn't miss Friday night could I?). I have two main points to make, firstly the excellence of the formal part of ASW itself, but also the importance of the social aspect of the weekend, which many others and I found extremely useful.

The first part of ASW, the afternoon of the Thursday, was devoted to a 'political update'. The first speaker was, fittingly, head of Bristol Museums and Art Galley Stephen Price. Stephen spoke about the renaissance of Bristol Museums and its role as the lead partner to the South West Museums hub. He described the process of creating a new Museum of Bristol, which has received a £10.27 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant including £853,000 to transform the Industrial Museum where this part of ASW took place. The emphasis was on talking and listening to local people, which revealed what people really wanted, namely city specific exhibits and a reflection of contemporary life. This process revealed local interest in hidden histories, being the story of the creation of Bristol's wealth - which often meant slavery and exploitation.

Next up was Liz Wilson, speaking about the life and times of a Phase 2 Hub. For those of us working in small independent museums the development of the hubs can seem very remote and there is a lot of confusion about what the impact will be on that level. It was very illuminating and refreshing to hear this warts and all account of the process and there was a lot of lively discussion on this topic during the tea break.

Eleanor Moore's talk on *Connecting Our Histories*, a grass roots group of museum professionals and academics from Greater Manchester, outline the work undertaken by the group to develop transparent and inclusive approaches to working with local audiences, which complemented what Stephen Price had spoken about earlier. What I found most useful here was firstly the way that the group had come together independently of Hub collaborations, out of a perceived need. This is what group are supposed to do but we all know of groups which have lost their way. Secondly the work the group has done to find the hidden



Andy King, Bristol Industrial Museum, guiding us through an historical tour of Bristol harbour.

histories in local collections and to translate this into a practical form with the redisplay of an existing exhibit, bringing forward the alternative stories.

After tea break Judy Aitken spoke animatedly on the past 10 year of HLF funding, the successes and difficulties, current opportunities for museums, the future of HLF and some of her own favourite projects. If I was flagging after having eaten so much cake in the tea break and having travelled so far, I certainly perked up when Judy showed a slide of children standing outside my own East Surrey Museum, which illustrated Julie Ellis's *Something Else* project. Judy's honest and positive approach was useful and practical, and again sparked discussion later on.

As I said earlier, I had to miss the Friday sessions, so I'll move swiftly onto Saturday. We began the day at Blaise Castle House Museum, where we were given a guided walk through the galleries with Curator of Social History David Eveleigh. David explained the origins and changing uses of the museum and its relationship with the city museums service. He also talked about the difficulties of funding and the changing local environment, and demonstrated how some of the effective exhibits had been put



Above: Looking up at a replica of a Bristol Biplane suspended from the ceiling in the entrance hall of the Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery.
Right: David Eveleigh, Curator at Blaise Castle Museum,



together on a shoestring budget. I can't overemphasise how useful it is to be given the opportunity to visit Blaise Castle and the Empire and Commonwealth Museum which was our venue for the afternoon, particularly when accompanied by the curator. Most of us fit in our museum visits in our own time, which makes it something of a busman's holiday, and yet the sharing (and poaching!) of ideas is so important and can't be done better in any other way.

The afternoon's talks were all on the theme of diversity and representing issues and collections which have been brought to the forefront in recent years. Dr Gareth Griffiths, director of the Empire and Commonwealth Museum, gave an inspiring account of how the museum was established despite opposition and a highly controversial issue, and outlined plans for the future. Ruth Dass of Interculture talked about different innovative approaches to breaking down cultural barriers and involving new audiences, and used the example of *Carnival Messiah*, which brought together Trinidadian calypso in the setting of a stately home built on the profits of slavery, and wowed a sceptical audience (again, extra interest for me here - my sister in law appeared in it so I am feeling extraordinarily well

connected). Finally Rita McLean of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery ended ASW with a look at Black History projects and partnerships. Rita demonstrated how the museums were looking at their collections and galleries to see how they can be relevant to the increasingly diverse audiences of Birmingham.

I said earlier that I wanted to highlight the importance of the social aspect of ASW, which shouldn't be dismissed as a necessary extra to the important business of the speakers. The delegates attending ASW ranged from the youngest members in their first posts, to more experienced professionals. Bringing these two groups together in an informal setting is vital to **the exchange of ideas, advice and sympathy! At work this is not always possible and at conferences can't be taken for granted because those that I have attended in the past tend to appeal (sometimes due to cost) to one particular group, whereas SHCG brought together a wide range of people. Many of the delegates were in positions similar to my own, where they are the sole professional and where there are no museums within easy distance. This can be very isolating and you can sometimes feel like you are constantly re-inventing the wheel and that**

you are the only curator with a particular set of problems. Meeting people in similar circumstances and those who have been through it all before is incredibly helpful. So many people said that the social aspect was the most important part of ASW to them, which is not to denigrate the formal proceedings. How useful to be able to hear speakers talk on subjects relevant to us all, and then to be able to discuss them with a wide range of perspectives on hand.

The evening activities chosen were a good mix of formal and informal. The historical tour of Bristol Harbour and takeaway pizza on the boat, washed down with the contents of the onboard bar, was great fun (could this be because we started drinking at 7.30pm and some people didn't start eating their pizza until quarter to 10?!). Whereas the evening reception at Bristol City Museum - where we had the whole museum to ourselves, what a treat - followed by dinner at a restaurant, encouraged high falutin' discussions...at least in the early part of the evening anyway!

I am so grateful for my free place on ASW. I had an interesting, useful and enjoyable weekend, made new contacts and felt part of the wide museum world. Thanks SHCG.

I have been a member of the SHCG for four years but only recently have I had the opportunity to go the ASW and I am very glad I went. It is not often as a Custodian that I get the chance to share my interests in objects.

Patrick Colquhoun

Rangers House

On the Thursday I arrived at the Industrial Museum in Bristol not expecting lunch. Delighted to be tucking in to a plateful of fancy chicken legs and artichoke sandwiches, I found myself talking to an enthusiastic bod from Bristol who modestly said he worked with some curators at the Bristol Museum. I thought the face was familiar as it turned out to be Stephen Price the Head of Bristol Museums and Art Gallery who is also a former member of the SHCG.

The first day's talks were on the theme of Hubs and Heritage Lottery Funding and how these have had an impact upon the rejuvenation of Museums and Heritage Projects in the regions.

Stephen Price made a good case for making the Bristol Hub as important a Post-Industrial cultural centre as Merseyside.

Liz Wilson from East Midlands Regional Hub gave a well-informed tour of the East Midlands Hub - a 'Phase 2' as it is now called. Spread out over six counties, this region is long overdue for upgrading containing as it does some of the most deprived education services in the country.

There is a much larger world out there for funding nowadays and I was impressed by the sheer range of Heritage Lottery Fund projects that Joan Aitken described in her talk on ten years of HLF.

Connecting our Histories grew out of a need to extend research and interpretation of multi-cultural social histories in the Manchester region beyond what is possible in the local Museums.

Eleanor Moore gave a good insight into the aims of the project and the kinds of people involved which include academics, audience development researchers, library staff and Chinese elders working on silk weaving identification and alternative labelling for non European objects. An interesting discussion followed on the question of how a project based museum culture can be sustained in the future. Should we be spending our time now

justifying future projects, not yet thought of, to governments not yet formed or should we be leaving that for future generations of museum and heritage workers to worry about?

In the afternoon Andy King, the Bristol Industrial Museum Curator, showed us round some pretty impressive looking hardware in the stores. But it wasn't all industry. Sandwiched in between the cigarette rolling machines and packing presses stood pieces of archaeology no one living knows anything about. Andy is hopeful all is set to change when hub funding really kicks in.

Later on Andy guided us through Bristol Harbour on a 'booze boat'. Cruising through the misty rain we were given a good account of the tide of engineering brought in to stop the tide of water from flowing out.

To stem our increasing appetite Pizza's of all description were ferried in at every tide and dutifully scoffed. There was much chatter and the noise of beer can's being sounded as the evening progressed.

By 9.30 Andy's excellent talk took us through such subjects as the final voyage of SS Great Britain and the dimensions of the Brutalist post war Shot Tower. All of this dimly heard over the general hubbub.

On the second morning we had the luxury of the use of the Pump Rooms in Bath for a series of talks on the hidden history of the home. Throughout this fine morning we could never forget our proximity serenaded as we were by a bathroom Sinatra whose voice welled up from somewhere inside the ancient bathtub next door.

John McVerry, the National Trust Project Director from Tyntesfield, kicked off with a well researched talk on Tyntesfield.

Surprisingly for the National Trust, Bellini's and Busts have been jettisoned in favour of the stuff of work such as domestic clothing, bell boards and garden tools. A lot of emphasis has been placed on interviews and opportunities for people who have worked on the estate over time to talk in a 'video box' and contribute to the sound archive. It seems to me that the National Trust hasn't completely abandoned 'high brow' and still knows which side its bread is buttered on. John McVerry's eyes lit up when talking of the Ritzy Victorian dining room and the high intellect of the Library collection. And what is wrong with that you may ask?

Another subject for discussion was the degree to which Tyntesfield servants played up to their masters by showing pride in their occupation in photographs and paintings and the degree to which other less fortunate servants remained voiceless.

This brings us to the next speaker, Giles Waterfield, who gave us a revealing talk on the portrayal of Black and Asian servants and slaves in Britain.

There are few single portraits of white servants in British portraiture but there are many pictures featuring white servants seen as beacons of loyalty. African slaves in this country became servants after being freed and were often portrayed as exotic possessions in made up clothes. In contrast Sikh's of the 19th century such as Queen Victoria's Tutor were portrayed sympathetically and without embellishment. Giles argued that this was because Indian people lived and worked alongside British colonists and were familiar whereas Africans being slaves were at several points removed.

Next up Peter Brears, a Museum and Historic House consultant gave an excellent illustrated talk on dining by all classes in the Georgian era. Rather than talk about the layout of a quality Georgian table, Peter spoke first about cellar occupants of Leeds making his way up through the classes. I was humbled to discover that people relied upon such things as 'mucky gravy' fat based pancakes, offal, peas and tea made from treacle and mint (tea being too expensive) to sustain them throughout the week. Meat was only consumed once a week if that.

Weavers took their porridge standing up from one bowl, a spoon for each person. There was no room for furniture at breakfast as they were too busy using the space for weaving.

Agricultural and colliery workers fared slightly better living on oat cake, fruit pies and meat pancakes in the field or pit and a roast at home. There was no use of cutlery at breakfast for many of the poor who would eat with their left hand.

Once we reach the middle classes we find much use of cookery books, table layouts and courses. Amongst many gems I was amazed to hear about tables that offered jelly based playing cards to diners wanting an additional gamble.

With the aristocracy their footmen kept manuals for table laying. Aristocratic houses had a wet larder, a dry larder, a game larder, still room, bake house, pastry room, salting room, confection room, 'hot' cupboard, ice

house; the room list goes on and on. The Curator of the Museum of Bath at Work, Stuart Borroughs, is an eloquent and besieged man. Besieged by volunteers and besieged by 5000 bottles of historic mineral water. The question he posed is should the museum concentrate only on its collection or should it include the whole world of work?

To help us decide in the course of the afternoon we were shown round an unusual collection of plant machinery designed specifically to produce brass and copper plumbing for the Edwardian home. The Bowler collection, as it is called, also features many advertising posters and cards from places as far away as Manchester.

The Curator raised his voice only once when he spoke of 25 years of voluntary service at the Museum. We pretended not to notice the small dog beneath his feet and the owner alongside.

The discussion, which followed, proved indecisive. Some members of this activity group including myself thought the aims of the museum too diffuse. Should it not just concentrate on its 'water services' collection? Perhaps it should be called 'The Museum of Hygea' in keeping with that other famous local attraction?

As we all know many Museums have a lot of things they don't want but can't get rid of. A discussion on this went round the group and evolved into questions of what to do with 5000 unwanted 78's, several Printing Presses and an entire Underground Escalator.

That evening we were treated to a splendid reception at Bristol City Museum. Custodial staff stayed on to keep the Museum open for us and served us drinks. I felt like saying yes I am one of you. I know what it is like to have one eye on the public and one eye on the objects. Come out from the shadows - this is our 'hidden history'!

A lasting image of Bristol is of a Crusty sitting on the harbour early one morning. Deep in concentration, tools in hand, he hammers chunks out of the paving, leaving behind him a trail of meaningless shapes for the walker to gaze at.

Hidden History? I don't know about him but I think I have shared something this weekend.

Collect and Connect:

Contemporary collecting and the future of collections

SHCG seminar -1st September 2004, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The seminar's morning session discussed the collecting of contemporary objects, an activity which whilst increasingly common amongst social history curators, is not always accounted for in museum's forward plans or collecting policies.

Contemporary collecting is an active, not passive pursuit, which goes far beyond the acquisition of objects alone, to include documents, oral testimony and contextual material. However, museums need clear objectives in what they are or are not going to collect, rather than just adding to stores that are already full, with many items never again seeing the light of day.

The first paper, by Zelda Baveystock, Tyne & Wear Museums, entitled *Contemporary Collecting: an overview* dealt with what we mean by contemporary collecting and theories of what and how we should collect. Zelda is about to start a new post in the North East Hub, as Keeper of Contemporary Collecting, and is in a good position to share her ideas about the subject.

At the heart of contemporary collecting, Zelda stated, is the collection of 'stuff'. She was then brave enough to show slides of her flat full of 'stuff'. She has drawers and cupboards full of 'stuff'. When we go shopping in a supermarket we are confronted with a massive choice of 'stuff' to buy. When we have finished with the items, we have to decide whether to bin or re-cycle

them. Some we can never part with. We have an emotional reaction to all of our 'stuff', as it can be evocative of a time, a place or an association. We could tell a great deal about Zelda from all the 'stuff' in her flat - approximate age, marital status and interests.

However, would we want to collect all of these items for our museums? How do we choose what to preserve and what to waste? Our role as social history curators is to record the material culture of everyday life for our locality. But, everyday life doesn't stop, so we also need to record the present. In today's world, much is ephemeral and fashions change very fast, so we must collect now and record the context of that collecting.

What should we collect? Zelda discussed in detail different ways that this could be approached. Objects could be collected that build on the strengths of the existing collection and reflect themes that are represented in the museum.

Another approach would be to collect contextual material, such as images, sounds, interviews and questionnaires, rather than the objects themselves. In Sweden, SAMDOK, a group of 85 museums, was formed in 1977, to record, rather than collect, contemporary cultural information. Eight working groups within SAMDOK record information and material cultural based on different themes such as leisure; domestic



life; and manufacturing and services. This is a good example of a co-ordinated approach, but it needs massive resources.

Strategic collecting is another approach, which has been taken up by a few museums, such as Guildford who produced a card index of every shop in the High Street. This was a planned, annual snapshot of each shop and how it changed over time. Other thematic approaches include collecting ephemera, such as all the Christmas cards received by certain people or all the direct mail received by specific households over a period of time. Projects such as these, however, have to be extensive and comprehensive to have real value.

Qualitative or humanistic collecting recognises that the gaps in collections are more revealing than what has been collected. Museum collections have been shaped in the past by both curators and donors. People offering items to museums must see them as worthy of preservation. In the spirit of tackling social exclusion, we need to shed our 'curatorial blinkers' and let others tell us what is important. For example, some museums may find that they have little related to women in their work collections, or little related to ethnic minorities.

This approach is usually dealt with on a project-by-project basis, targeted at specific groups, often through outreach. For example, Warwickshire Museum's *I wear what I want* project, which targeted

teenagers, recording and collecting their clothes and accessories, and associated contextual information. There were a number of millennium collecting projects, for example *Making History* at Tyne & Wear Museums, in which people were asked to donate five objects that had meaning to them. These 'people-focused' projects dealt as much with issues and beliefs as the objects themselves. They also tackled the problem that only certain 'types' of people donate objects.

Tyne & Wear Museums undertook a survey to see where their contemporary items had come from and found that it was mainly from the curators themselves. Collecting, therefore, needs to be more representative, getting more people involved and contributing to the collections. The donating of objects is one of the basic points of contact between the public and curators, and encourages people to visit museums. Other added benefits are a sense of pride and increased confidence. People donating their contemporary objects feel more involved and are helping to build the social history collections of the future.

However, contemporary collecting programmes do have their critics. For example, Josie Appleton in *Museums for the People* said that people go to museums to see unusual things, not things they can see in shops. However, as Zelda pointed out, museums and ideas change all the time

and what constitutes knowledge is not fixed. Contemporary collecting is at the heart of 21st-century debates on museums, which are questioning what and how we collect. As a result, we need to have clear aims and objectives on how we approach the subject and incorporate it in our forward plans.

Rachel Reynolds, Clifton Park Museum, Rotherham, discussed two projects, *Collecting 2000* and *Ourselves Our Place*, for which she was Project Co-ordinator.

The aim of the *Collecting 2000* project, at the Museum of London, was to build relationships with London societies, reach new audiences and involve them in collecting. Each society approached was asked to donate one item which they felt represented them and defined their activities at the start of 21st century, plus a 50 word statement. This could be an object, image or recording. Outcomes from the project were an exhibition, website and publication. They aimed to collect from 1,000 groups, and had to consider a number of collections management issues, such as the size of objects and not collecting food.

Rachel discussed various dilemmas that were highlighted during the project, such as the influence of the curator in selecting an object. The decision should be handed over to the group, but occasionally the project organisers intervened and pushed them in one direction. The museum collected many items that had a clear value, but for some



Above: Edge Hill girls exploring an evacuee loan box before making their own, 'Community Memories' project, Newport.
Right: Leaflet for 'Community Memories' project, Newport. Previous page: Zelda's collection of 'stuff'.



objects it is not certain how they will ever be displayed again.

The *Ourselves Our Place* project, at Sheffield, aimed to extend the museum's activities into the communities and to reach new audiences. The project was to record and celebrate the lives of Sheffield people, giving them a sense of self and place and enabling them to relate key-defining moments in their lives. They targeted areas of Sheffield with low visitor figures to the museum. The outcomes included events and displays, learning opportunities, adding objects to the museum collection, reminiscence and local history activities, an interactive website where memories could continue to be collected and learning resources for local schools. The emphasis was on sustainability by continued links and partnerships in the community.

Most of the objects used in displays were on loan and went back to the owners when the exhibitions closed. It was felt that this was the best approach, rather than insist that they donate their objects. Many offered their objects anyway. Rachel went through the type of dilemmas that were encountered in this project, such as avoiding stereotypes and tokenism.

The final session of the morning, *Community Memories: an oral history project*, was presented by Liz Braby, Newport Museums and Heritage Service. Liz has been employed to manage this specific project in Newport, and despite only having been in the job for ten months, has achieved a great deal.

The aim of the *Community Memories* project is to work with Black and Minority

Ethnic (BME) groups in the Maindee area of Newport, to collect their life stories. Their stories and experiences will be promoted to the wider city community through exhibitions, publications, web pages and school resources. The project was established to recognise the valuable contribution that BME communities have made to the development of Newport. To date, their experiences have been largely unrepresented in the formal heritage of the city. It is also hoped that members of BME communities will feel empowered by sharing their stories and that there will be a greater tolerance among different cultures within the city.

Liz discussed in detail the achievements of the project so far, which included lots of useful, practical information on recording oral testimonies, setting up temporary exhibitions, creating loan boxes and developing a 'community kiosk'.

One of the 'mini-projects' that has been completed to date, is the creation of a DVD of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Stories. This explored the reasons why people had to flee their country of origin and how they felt about their lives now. By hearing their stories, it was hoped that negative perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers would be challenged and that they would feel empowered by being given the chance to share their experiences. Links were made with support groups in Newport, to put Liz into contact with refugees and asylum seekers in the area, whilst preserving the anonymity of the participants for safety reasons. Liz also pointed out that recording the oral testimonies of the refugees and

asylum seekers could be an emotional experience, not only for the participant, but for the Project Officer as well.

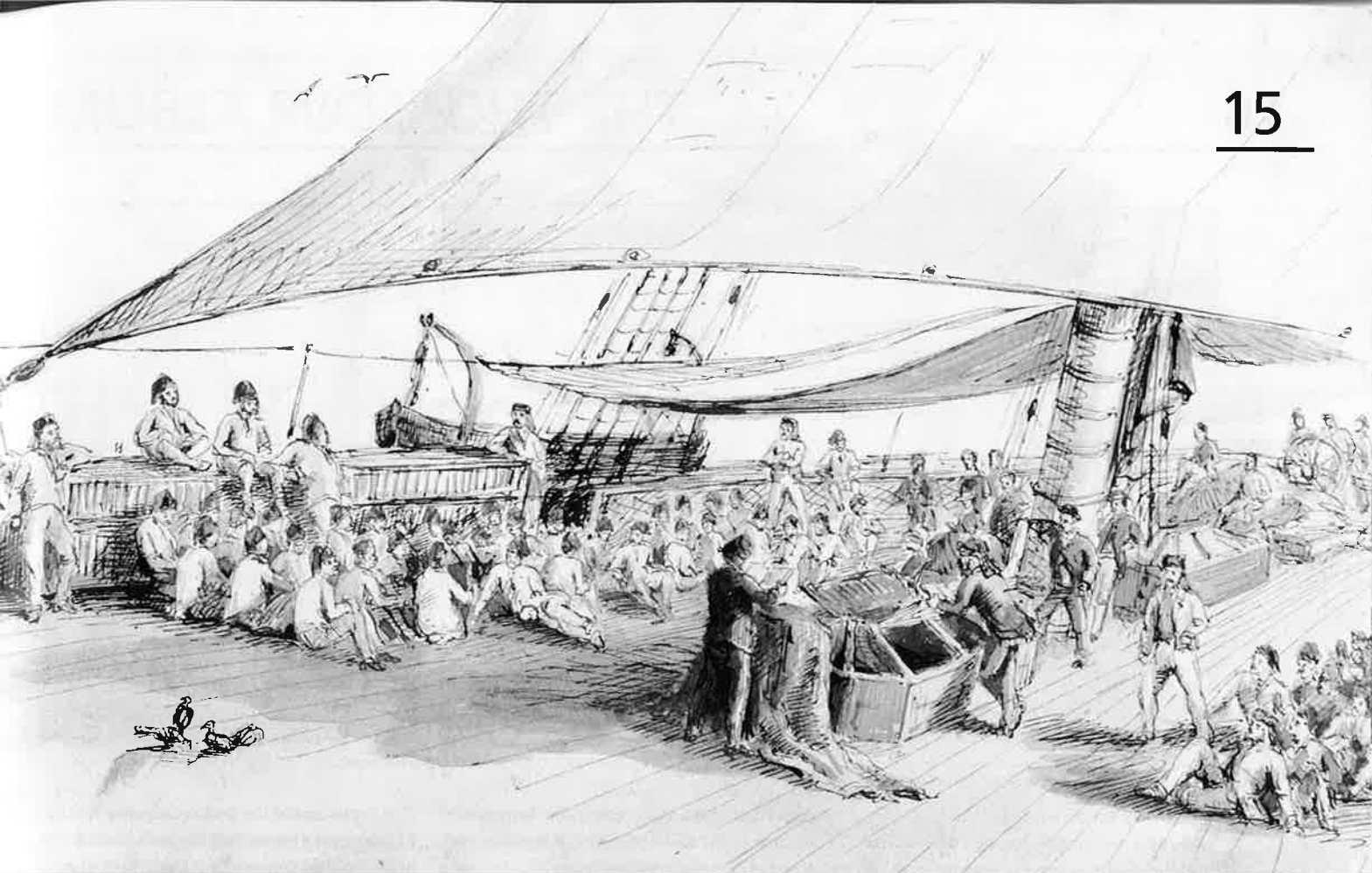
The *Community Memories* project has a few more years to run and future work includes the creation of an oral history archive, an Asian wedding exhibition, a multi-cultural nursery rhyme CD, a website and a school oral history project.

As an end to these fascinating sessions on contemporary collecting, all of the people attending the seminar were asked to tell the group about the most recent contemporary items that their museum has collected and why. The answers were varied and included - copies of Heat, OK and Now magazines at Tyne & Wear Museums, because they had Michelle from Big Brother on cover, who is from Newcastle; Robbie Williams and Take That fan club merchandise, acquired by The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent to fill a gap in their collections relating to local personalities; and a Bolton Wanderers 'foam finger' collected by Bolton Museums to add to their football memorabilia collection.

Clearly most of us are collecting contemporary material culture, with at least some idea why. The papers presented on the day certainly raised questions about what museums should be collecting and recording, as well as giving sound practical advice on what methods to use and potential dilemmas and issues.

Katey Goodwin
-Collections Officer, Local History

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery,
Stoke-on-Trent



Object Focus:

The Thurlow Album

Abbi Lock

Collections Registrar
(Acquisitions & Disposals)
National Maritime Museum
Greenwich

On the 19th August 1865 the Troopship *Hydaspes* left Gravesend for Calcutta; she was one of many merchant ships chartered by the Admiralty to transport soldiers and their families to British India in the wake of the 1857 Mutiny. This particular voyage carried soldiers from the Royal Horse Artillery, amongst them the 26 year-old Edward Hovell Thurlow, who had just joined the army as a Lieutenant.

Thurlow whiled away the four-month voyage to India by sketching views of the sea, or passing landmasses, but he also recorded the small incidents that made up the journey and the mundane everyday rituals involved. He sketched his fellow ship-mates, posing consentaneously or in unguarded moments, and annotated each image with both factual information and humorous observation as one would a photograph album or scrapbook.

Thurlow rose up the ranks to become a Captain in 1867, but he was never a famous military figure or, indeed, a famous artist. So why when an album containing 185 drawings and watercolours from his

Hydaspes voyage turned up at auction in 2002 did the National Maritime Museum (NMM) bid frantically for it, paying double the reserve price in order to secure it?

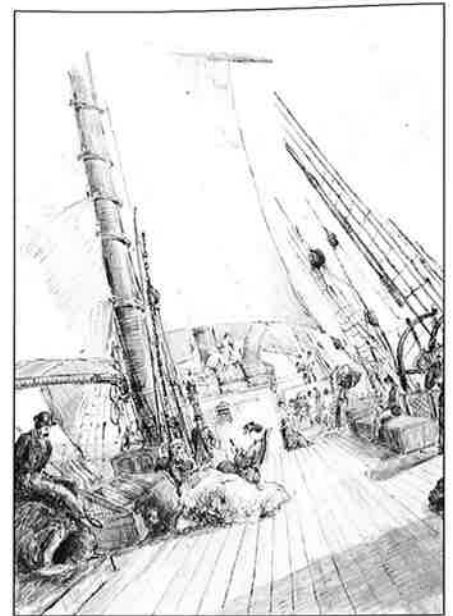
The Thurlow album shows us what it was like to travel to India by sea in the days before the Suez Canal. It also describes life aboard one of the first auxiliary steamships (a sailing ship with an engine for extra power) and a converted packet ship at that. What makes it truly unique and valuable however, is the insight it gives us into the daily human aspects of the period and the clues it gives us to the attitude and opinions of a young soldier.

Most of the drawings depict Thurlow's fifteen fellow-officers (all be-whiskered Victorian gentlemen in civilian clothes), with very few drawings depicting the rest of the 'troop'. Each of Thurlow's friends had their portrait taken, their names provided in the captions beneath the images. The Non-officers appear as a group of nameless individuals in *Group of gunners*, in the background in a few deck scenes and as a congregation in *Service on board the Hydaspes*

(while a handful of figures in civilian clothes huddle by the mainmast).

So many of Thurlow's drawings are set in roomy saloons and on a spacious deck that we are given the impression that *Hydaspes* was quite empty on this voyage. Indeed one would be forgiven for thinking the setting is a mail packet or cruise-ship. However, the titles *Troop deck by night* and *Two ladies in the married deck* hint that there is much that Thurlow omits from his 'narrative'. *Troop deck by night* depicts a myriad of hammocks, the shape of sacks, with uncomfortable-looking soldiers sprawling out of them. This image forms a great contrast to Thurlow's portrait of his own cabin with its large window (complete with window-seat and pet dog) and robust attractive furniture.

Thurlow's drawings often contain women, but they tend to be the wives of officers (Mrs Gage, Mrs Trupper, Mrs Treadcroft and Mrs Clifford et al). There is very little information about the life of other women on deck, or the families of the 'Gunners'. In one image a 'soldier's child' is



Above from left: 'A few incidents that occurred during the gale', 'Sketches of figures at Cape Town', 'Quarter deck of the Hydaspes'.
Previous page: 'A Service on board the Hydaspes'.

brought up on deck for the 'ladies' to play with, and presumably handed back down into the depths when the novelty wore off! Thurlow's depiction of 'married deck life' comprises a scene showing two women at blows. His condescension is palpable in the caption 'Report made to me afterwards by the vanquished party "and yes onor she massacred me with the pot she did"'.

To be fair to Thurlow he does not ridicule only the lower social classes, but his fellow officers too. There are plenty of 'in' jokes in the captions and he delights in drawing his mates at their least attractive (for example *Tanner RHA & his hair in a breeze*) but this is in the spirit of mischievous fun. He doesn't shy away from depicting himself looking ridiculous either, apparent in the series of drawings *A few incidents that occurred during the gale* including *I am hoisted onto my chest of drawers* and *My traps break loose at night & shower themselves onto my head*. The fact that Thurlow takes the trouble to recreate his ordeal by retrospectively drawing himself hints that this album is played for laughs and made for an audience.

Thurlow paints Cape Town (an intermediary stop) with eyes of wonder and clearly takes great delight in capturing the intensity of colour in the exotic landscape; particularly in his views from Table Bay. He has the same approach to the native 'Hottentots' (*Khoikhoi*) he depicts. He sketches them as curiosities, nameless figures carrying strange shaped bundles, smoking, or simply sitting, painted for the brightness of their dress, displayed against enigmatic blank backgrounds. The only time they are humanised is when they are

presented in the same way as the lower-class women in the married deck: i.e. fighting. A scene of two black men arguing has the corresponding 'mock' script as a caption: '-1st Hott: You one damn black man! -2nd Hott: 'And you one damn black Nigger (a fact)'. This is one of few instances where Thurlow's witticisms fall flat when read in the twenty-first century. They make the album challenging to interpret and display and I found it squirmingly embarrassing transcribing the caption to this particular image, but it is refreshing to read the uncensored views of a middle-class colonialist gentleman nonetheless.

Thurlow's depiction of the women in his social group is entertainingly varied and perhaps displays a progressive attitude towards the female sex. They are sometimes portrayed as ideal Victorian ladies, involved in gentle pursuits such as reading, sewing, and playing the piano and the respect shown to them is clear (Thurlow draws formal cameo-style portraits of them; an honour not extended to any of his male companions). Yet Thurlow does not put these women on a pedestal; many of his images capture the same women in very informal, if not 'un-ladylike' attitudes for the time. For example, in *A Scene in the saloon during the Gale - A certain lady gets out at the gathers* one female assists another in adjusting her dress in a un-picturesque and deliciously un-selfconscious way. In *Col & Mrs Gage - Sunday!!!* a fully clothed Mrs Gage lies snoozing on a bare deck, and in *Mrs Gage in the Gale Oct 30th* she seems to be taking delight in the way her hair streams out from under her bonnet and is getting straggly in the wind.

The depictions of the leisure pursuits of the RHA are very interesting from a social-history point of view. Thurlow tells us that cock-fighting was 'A little amusement we used to have on the deck early in the morning before the people were up' and that 'B' was invited to prove his 'qualifications as a boxer' by fighting 'Mr F the Engineer' (both sketches are sprinkled with a liberal dose of red ink). Tamer pursuits included singing songs on deck, playing cards, drinking and reading 'Hindostanee'.

The Thurlow album has not yet been displayed to the public - it resides in the NMM Paper conservation Studio, awaiting the removal of the drawings from their backing paper and their re-mounting onto museum board (This will help to preserve the drawings and will make the images easier to display).

I had the pleasure of cataloguing part of the Thurlow album, and deciphering the scrawled handwriting, as part of the NMM Inventory Project. What I read and saw fascinated me. I had never encountered such a unique object before. It is so human, and it's effect so immediate. Every drawing is full of vitality, imbued with humour, and beautifully executed. The overall feel is one of a delicious Victorian Comic book. It is so packed with social history detail that there is not nearly enough room to mention it all here, and there are many other themes and ideas yet to be explored. The aesthetic quality of the album alone makes it priceless in my eyes and I hope, when it is finally available for display, that the general public get as much enjoyment out of the Thurlow album as I do.

The Hidden World of Stanhope Viewers: Have You Seen Yours?

It's not every day that you discover something that you've never heard of before in a doll's house collection and it's nothing to do with dolls house furniture.

**Michelle Day—Curatorial Assistant
Harrogate Museums & Arts Service**

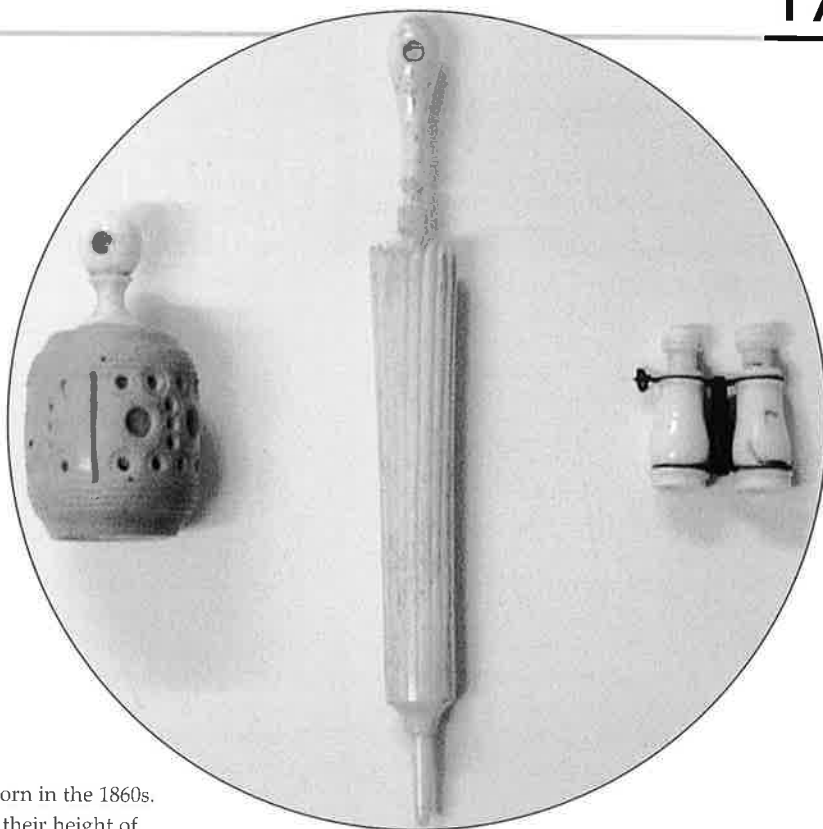
A colleague of mine was cataloguing the contents of a doll's house when she came across an ivory umbrella. We were discussing whether it was an umbrella or a parasol when the Curator said it was a Stanhope and promptly put it very close to one eye and told us she could see six views of Banbury!! Not sure if this was a wind-up, I asked to see for myself. In putting the handle of the umbrella / parasol close to one eye, I really could see six views of Banbury in sharp clarity! It seemed amazing to see clear photographs through a hole that is so tiny; 1/10th of an inch to be precise.

The Stanhope Viewer is an optical toy named after its creator, Lord Charles Stanhope (1753-1816) who was a politician and scientist and was married to Pitt the Younger's sister, Hester. His most notable inventions are a microscope lens that also bears his name and the first hand operated iron printing press. The Viewer has a very simple construction and uses new technology of the day. The lens in a Viewer is 8mm long with one flat end, and the other convex. The technology used is called photomicrography, which was first patented in 1859. Photomicrography produces tiny transparent photographs, which display amazing detail of up to a dozen images. All this is often encased in ivory or bone taking various shapes. And so, the Stanhope

Viewer was born in the 1860s. They were at their height of popularity from 1890s to the early 20th century, usually containing views of popular resorts, attractions and travel destinations. Royalty was a popular subject for Stanhopes particularly Queen Victoria and her family. The last commemorative Viewers were made for Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953. A sought after subject is International and World Trade Fairs due to the historical value of their dates and the limited manufacture of such Viewers. What makes them really attractive as a collector's item is that the casing for the lens comes in many different and often practical forms.

In my research to find out more about Stanhope Viewers, I found Viewers in mini binoculars, miniature umbrellas, letter openers, knives and penknives, needle cases, pens, scissors, tape measures, rings, seals, rosaries and pendants. Rare examples include whistles, walking canes and perfume bottles. Many early examples have a very simple casing such as a tubular needle case or presented in a simple telescope form, not disguising the viewer's purpose at all.

Harrogate's collection has two known examples. Both hold pictures of travel destinations displaying six photographs in the same format. The umbrella's view has a title in the middle saying *A Memory of Banbury* and is surrounded by photographs of Banbury Cross, two Parish Churches, Town Hall, Old Houses and Broughton Castle. Our second Stanhope is in the form of binoculars and is *A Memory of Harrogate*. Through one side there are six pictures of the Old Sulphur Well, the Concert Rooms, Victoria Baths, the Prospect Hotel, Harrogate from White Hart Hotel and Prospect Place.



Through the other side there is the same title, but only four photographs; two duplicates of the Well and the Concert Rooms and two panoramic views of Harrogate. The only distinguishing marks both Stanhopes display is on the pictures where McKee of Dublin is stated. Whether McKee were the main manufacturers of the miniature transparent photographs or the maker of the whole optical toy, I have yet to discover. I also found out that there isn't much written about Stanhopes, not even a collector's guide. Just one recently published book by Jean Scott called *Stanhopes: A Closer View*. The website of Stanhope Micro Works is well worth a visit as it has a museum section where one man's fantastic collection is displayed. Unfortunately you can't see into the Viewers, but you can explore the myriad of forms a Stanhope can be in.

Whichever form a Stanhope takes, its hidden secret is easily missed. So, when you are next sorting through small items in your social history collection, look out for a small, seemingly pointless hole in the side of objects. It could just hide a whole new dimension that you never knew you had in your collection.

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'Opening Doors: Learning in the Historic Environment'
An Attingham Trust Report,
Giles Waterfield (ed.).

Review by Michael Terwey

A high point of this year's Annual Study Weekend was the presentation by John McVerry of the National Trust, talking about the work at Tyntesfield to interpret the house as a place where people worked as servants as well as a playground of the rich. Gratifying though it was to see evidence of the Trust's attempt to use the presentation of a property as a way of telling histories usually ignored in stately homes and through that deliberately attempting to connect with new audiences, it is worth reminding ourselves that the historic environment is a sector far behind museums in addressing pressing issues of social inclusion and intellectual access.

The discrepancy between the museum sector and the historic environment is startling. At a time when *Renaissance in the Regions* is putting more Education Officers on the ground in museums than ever before,

there are only four Education Officers covering the 350 properties that make up the Historic Scotland estate, English Heritage have 11 covering 400 sites, and CADW have no Education Officers at all.

This is driven home by *Opening Doors: Learning in the Historic Environment*, edited by Giles Waterfield. The report was commissioned by the Attingham Trust and attempts to survey, evaluate, and recommend improvements to learning in the Historic Environment. Its model is the 1997 report *A Common Wealth: Museums in the Learning Age*, an influential document written at an opportune moment, which epitomises the current orthodoxy which puts learning, in its broadest sense, as the central function of the museum. Waterfield's report moves onto the



same fertile ground and aims to bring the bounty of governmental attention, support, and crucially, investment home to the institutions of the historic environment.

In this context the report provides a fair summary of the issues facing the sector and a comprehensive shopping list of recommendations to help achieve it. These call on the government, and the

institutions that operate in the sector, to undergo a fundamental change in culture, to move from bodies concerned solely with conservation, to agents of learning and social change. In making these arguments there is scarcely a buzz-word left unmentioned, an audience group un-noted or opportunity un-identified. And by synthesising the individual wish lists of a great many professionals, the report manages to achieve a broad cross-section of the sector. And so very reasonable it all is too.

A HORTICULTURAL HOTCH-POTCH.

The Answers are the names of either Fruits, Flowers, Trees, Vegetables, or Herbs.

1 Two (fruit).....	_____	13 A herb meaning to regret.....	_____
2 An interfering fruit.....	_____	14 A tree which is a stale joke.....	_____
3 A vegetable which is a letter of the alphabet.....	_____	15 A flower which is a musical instrument.....	_____
4 A vegetable found in a bone.....	_____	16 A herb which flies.....	_____
5 A flower used by upholsterers.....	_____	17 A tree which is a part of London.....	_____
6 A demure lady named Rose.....	_____	18 A flower which is the best policy.....	_____
7 A tree found near the sea.....	_____	19 A popular flower on the Stock Exchange.....	_____
8 A tree which is a residue of coal.....	_____	20 A wise vegetable.....	_____
9 A flower which is also a fish.....	_____	21 A dangerous vegetable in a ship.....	_____
10 A tree worn by ladies in the winter..	_____	22 A Scandinavian vegetable.....	_____
11 A herb where money is made.....	_____	23 A tree used by a housemaid.....	_____
12 A tree which fades away.....	_____		

- Answers: 1 Pear 2 Medlar 3 Pea 4 Marrow 5 Phlox 6 Primrose 7 Beech 8 Ash 9 Anemone 10 Furze 11 Mint 12 Pine 13 Rue 14 Chestnut 15 Viola 16 Thyme 17 Poplar 18 Honesty 19 Stocks 20 Sage 21 Leek 22 Swede 23 Broom

But, and this if the major failing of this report, it neither outlines a coherent strategy nor effectively sets priorities. Curiously, for an advocacy document, it fails to actually argue why learning is important within the sector, assuming that the reader is already in agreement that it is simply a good thing in itself. And by presenting an extremely long list of recommendations, it actually implies there needs to be an all or nothing approach to remedying the situation. I can't help but think that if I were a politician, or an official at the DCMS, and this report landed on my desk it would half convince me of the need to do something, but fail to persuade me why it needed to be done, and why it was more important than other demands on the public purse.

A fundamental question actually needs to be asked here: what are we preserving the historic environment for? I believe it is because the history of the country is written in the remains, buildings, trees, battlefields and monuments that litter our landscape. And if fail to interpret it effectively, and only allow the few to look at it and see the richness of our history, we betray the many who, through their taxes and their will, allow preservation to happen. So promoting learning in the historic environment is actually more than a political and moral imperative, it is also a canny conservation tactic. A people that appreciate the value of the historic environment, are a people that will not only act to prevent its destruction, they will pay to save it.

What we really need is the active engagement of government in promoting the learning potential of the sector. As the report argues "whilst public, voluntary and private bodies spend many millions each year on conserving the historic environment, proportionately small sums are dedicated to helping people enjoy and understand these buildings and sites". And the government could do a lot to remedy this. Just as the HLF specify that each project they fund needs to have a clear strategy to engage with the public in terms of learning and social inclusion, grants given by the statutory bodies could build in similar requirements. At the moment we have the bizarre situation of government policy being implemented through the HLF rather than English Heritage, CADW and Historic Scotland.

A lot has been achieved in museums since A Common Wealth was published in 1997. A similar sea-change is required in the historic environment. I sincerely hope that this report helps to move us towards that goal. But the argument for accessibility still needs to be made, the debate has yet to be won, and the stakes are as high as ever.

SHCG COMMITTEE 2004-2005

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