

DECEMBER 2007

ISSUE 60

Peace and Reconciliation
Gallery, Coventry

Heritage Cubes

Clowning around
–the Pollard Trail

SHCG Conference Review
& Objects in Focus

SHCG NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP



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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:
21ST APRIL 2008**

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.

Alternative formats:
Electronic copies and alternative formats are available on request. Please call 01904 650363 or Email: lydia.saul@hullcc.gov.uk

Send all contributions to:
Lydia Saul,
Wilberforce House Museum,
Hull City Council,
25 High Street, Hull
Email: lydia.saul@hullcc.gov.uk

Front Cover: Coventry Cathedral after the bombing, see p07.
Contents Photo: Food for body and mind, delegates enjoy tapas, talking and a tiple or two! see p11.

Welcome to Issue 60. First of all a huge thank you to Victoria Rogers and the rest of the Committee who helped to organise a very interesting and enjoyable Annual Conference. If you missed it then do read the review on page 11.

Also at the Conference we held our AGM and sadly had to say goodbye to Briony Hudson who stepped down as Chair after two years. We wish her all the best and thank her for all her hard work as Chair and as Seminar and Conference Organiser for a number of years before she got the top job! There were a few other committee changes so thank you also to Rebecca Fardell for editing the Journal, Emma Williams for organising seminars and Patrick Colquhoun for the work on the Website, hopefully we will continue to see you at SHCG events.

Jill Holmen has admirably stepped up into the role of Chair, and the four newly elected members of the committee have now been allocated their roles, welcome to you all. A full list of the current committee is on the back page.

This Issue of the News includes articles about two very different projects going on at The Herbert in Coventry, the Pollard Trail and the Peace and Reconciliation Gallery. While in the North East, Heritage Cubes are the latest community project. In the Object Focus section the Spa building in Leamington is discussed, along with Slavery Records which fit in to the theme for Conference 2007 and a Referee's Scrapbook which looks forward to the theme for Conference 2008.

I hope you enjoy reading them along with all the other articles in this Issue. There is just space to say a huge thank you to all the contributors past and present. This is the last News I will be editing as I am going on maternity leave in the New Year. It has been an enjoyable experience editing the News since December 2003. I am passing on the editorship to Lydia Saul, so I am sure she will be putting out a call for articles for the next edition in March, the deadline is 21st April 2008. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

SARAH MAULTBY-EDITOR

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SHCG MATTERS

Annual Conference 2008: 10th–12th July 2008

Join us at our annual conference to explore current theory and practice in social history curatorship.

As usual the conference will run from Thursday lunchtime until Saturday, with conference sessions, a full social programme and accommodation included in the price. The committee are currently planning the next

conference, we are looking at the theme of 'Sport and Leisure' bringing in the impact of the 2012 London Olympics on the museum world and the role of social history curators in this area.

More information about the Conference will be available on the website in the New Year.

Your Web Editor needs you...!

This is a very exciting time for shcg.org.uk. SHCG's partnership with the MDA, as well as the MLA's work with Subject Specialist Networks mean that we have a real opportunity to improve our website and make sure that it is doing what it needs to do.

So that we can make SHCG's website work for you, we would be really grateful for feedback on the current site, how and why you use it, and how you think we can improve it.

We are especially interested in knowing:

- Do you use the website?
- How often do you use it?
- What do you use it for?

- How easy is it to use and navigate around?
- What would make you use it more?
- What would you like to see on the website?
- Are there any other 'museum profession' websites you use that you think work particularly well?

Any comments, short or detailed, technical or techno-phobic will be very gratefully received!

Please send any thoughts, suggestions or comments to:

Victoria Rogers, Cardiff Museum Project,
The Old Library, The Hayes,
Cardiff CF10 1BH
Email: vrogers@cardiff.gov.uk

The Equiano Exhibition goes on tour

The Equiano Society and Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, funded by Birmingham City Council, have launched two touring exhibitions that will celebrate the extraordinary life of Olaudah Equiano (c.1745 - 1797).

Clare Parsons

Curator Project Manager
The Equiano Project.

Equiano was kidnapped, enslaved at the age of 11, served as a sailor in the Royal Navy in the Seven Years' War against France, bought his freedom for £40, and eventually became a best selling author and major figure in the campaign to abolish the Slave Trade.

The Touring Exhibitions have been created as part of The Equiano Project as a way of reaching wider audiences across the region and throughout the country, to compliment the main exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (29th September 2007 - 13th January 2008). A number of venues including community centres, churches, shopping centres and libraries have already booked to host the touring exhibitions.

Both the touring exhibition and the main event at Birmingham Museum and Art



Olaudah Equiano, *The African: Frontispiece to 'The Interesting Narrative', 1789.*

©Local Studies: Birmingham Central Library.



The Equiano touring exhibition at Dale House, Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust.
©Local Studies: Birmingham Central Library.

Gallery, designed by HKD, use Equiano's autobiography *The Interesting Narrative* (1789) to tell his fascinating story. The touring exhibitions comprise of nine self supporting panels that follow Equiano's journey from Africa to enslavement, from the Royal Navy to the West Indies and from freedom to campaigning for abolition. Four panels contain replica objects available for viewing, which can be removed for supervised handling sessions, bringing added context to Equiano's adventures.

The first opportunity that the public will have to see the Equiano Touring Exhibition, will be at Dale House, Ironbridge Gorge Museum from Saturday 25th August. The Equiano project team can support venues with installation, advice and financial assistance for organised events. For enquiries about the touring exhibitions, please email the Equiano Project team on equiano@birmingham.gov.uk and further details will be posted on www.equiano.org.

The Equiano Project is a partnership between The Equiano Society and Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery. It also includes a publication, an informative Education Pack, a website and a programme of events. The project is supported by the

Heritage Lottery Fund, Birmingham City Council, The Equiano Society and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Renaissance in the Regions.

Wardown Park Museum
1400-1700

Luton Museums
Luton

VICTORIAN CHILD
At Work and Play

9 October 2007 to 17 February 2008

Opening times:
Tuesday to Saturday
10am - 5pm
Sunday 1pm - 5pm
(Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day)

Free Admission

Come and find about the lives of children growing up during Queen Victoria's reign in this revealing exhibition. Join in with a Victorian school-room, Victorian Christmas games and other family activities on special event days. See over for details.

RENAISSANCE EAST OF ENGLAND
museums for a changing lives

LUTON

Email list roundup

Membership of SHCG's popular email list continues to grow, with over 160 members now using the list to discuss topics relevant to social history in museums.

Comparing prices from past and present has been the subject of two lively discussions on the list. For retail prices CO-OP grocery records can be helpful, and a book called *The What It Cost the Day Before Yesterday Book from 1850 to the Present Day* by Harold Priestley (Havant: K. Mason, 1979) was recommended, leading to a run on available secondhand copies on Amazon and Abebooks.com!

There are also a number of online comparison calculators on the sites of Economic History Services <http://eh.net/hmit/>, MeasuringWorth.com <http://measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare/> and the National Archives <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency>. Of course, context is important when performing calculations and in another

discussion, list members were reminded that care needs to be taken to compare like with like. For example, it was pointed out that house prices vary regionally, and in any case these have been subject to much greater inflation than retail prices.

Practical queries have included how to hang decorative ceramic plates - a commercially available system of sliding Perspex arms was recommended.

Informal learning now occupies a proportion of many curators' time, and recent discussions on the list have featured the practicalities of producing backpacks, interactive exhibits, and replica board games.

As usual there has been collective pondering over mystery objects. Successful identifications included a steel 'strike-a-light' for striking flints and an unusual artefact with metal blades that rotate in sunlight - revealed to be a Crookes radiometer, sometimes popularly called a light mill.

There have also been attempts to track down items wanted - mention of a Green Shield stamps catalogue prompted a small

amount of reminiscence as well as several practical suggestions. The list continues to be a genuinely useful resource both for announcements and information-sharing, and to expand the collective knowledge of social history curators. If you're not already a subscriber, why not join in?

Joining the list

If you would like to join the list, please send an email to shcg-list-request@mailtalk.ac.uk (this is also the address for any queries) stating your name and whether you are a personal member or employed by an institutional member. You will receive an automated acknowledgement of your request, but please note that requests to join the list are then processed manually, not automatically.

**Jack Kirby-Thinktank,
Birmingham Science Museum**

If you have any queries about the list please email Jack via:
shcg-list-request@mailtalk.ac.uk

Object Lessons update



Good progress is being made with Object Lessons, SHCG's project to produce a range of learning resources for history curators, which is funded by a grant from MLA's Renaissance SSN Implementation programme.

Following an online survey of members (thanks to all of you that responded!), the production of the resources have been prioritised into the areas that you said you most wanted further training and guidance in. SHCG will therefore be

producing three boxes in the first phase of the project, covering the identification and care of metals, plastics and wood. Each box will contain a range of objects made of the appropriate materials, along with written resources to guide you through their correct identification and care. A fourth box will cover conservation problems in general, with a chance for you to get your hands on some dead nasty bugs in a safe environment!

The objects to be used in the boxes are coming from museum disposal schemes. Particular thanks go to Beamish, the North of England Open Air Museum, who has kindly donated the majority of the objects to be used for handling. If you are looking at disposals of small items in your museum and think you have things which could be put to good use by SHCG, please get in touch. Objects can be in a poor condition, as they can be used to illustrate corrosion, infestation or wear!

As part of the development of the Plastics box, SHCG is also running a seminar on 5th December in Wakefield in partnership with the Plastics SSN. Responses to the day will be used to shape and inform the final

resources. Details of this day were circulated via the SHCG e-mail list.

In addition to the permanent boxes, SHCG is also running a one-day seminar on 22nd February 2008 with Robert Opie at the Museum of Brands on identifying and caring for ephemera. Further details of this will be sent to members in due course.

Object Lessons is due for completion in March 2008, after which time the boxes will be used to enhance the regular SHCG training seminars. They may also be borrowed by individual museums or groups of individuals (for example, an AMA study group) for self-directed learning over a number of weeks.

If you would like to know more about the project, please contact:

Zelda Baveystock,
Newcastle University
Tel: 0191 222 3858 or
Email: zelda.baveystock@ncl.ac.uk



Heritage Cubes

What do the North East Police History Society and the Embroiderers Guild have in common? Don't know? How about Durham Scout County and the Northern Archaeology Group? - still don't know? The answer is they all have a collection of objects which they are storing as part of the Heritage Cube project at the Regional Resource Centre, Beamish.

Helen Barker

Collections Access Assistant,
Regional Resource Centre,
BEAMISH,
North of England Open Air Museum

The Heritage Cube project was planned as part of an innovative joint storage initiative between Beamish: The North of England Open Air Museum and Tyne & Wear Museums. A unique scheme, the Heritage Cube project recognises that there are significant collections held by groups outside of North East museums and that these groups often have dedicated and

expert members but lack the funds or facilities to store their collections safely. As part of the Heritage Cube project groups have access not simply to storage facilities, but to the knowledge and skills within the body of staff at Beamish and Tyne & Wear Museums as well as access to the Collections Study Room - a space where they can meet, study and display their collections.

Initial consultation carried out during the planning stages indicated that there was considerable interest and support for providing temporary storage lockers from regional heritage groups and societies. The project was supported by the HLE, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Catherine Cookson Trust, the Designation Challenge Fund, the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Sir James Knott Trust. Since the project was launched in 2006 scores of local history and community groups across the North East have been approached to find out whether a) they have a collection of objects and b) whether they would like to store their collection free of charge in museum

standard storage as part of the Heritage Cube project.

Some of the first groups to take part in the project included The North East Police History Society, the Doxford Friends' Association, Daisy Hill Play and Youth Group, Crook and District Local History Society, the Charlton Photographic Collection and the JW Armstrong Trust; the diverse nature of the groups reflecting both the breadth and active nature of heritage and community groups in the North East. Groups are encouraged to access their collections and can do so simply by arranging a time with a member of the Collections Access Team. The partnership between Beamish and Tyne & Wear Museums is reflected in the make up of the team which comprises staff from both organisations. The Collections Access Team administers the Heritage Cube project as part of their wider remit to facilitate access to the stored collections in the Regional Resource Centre and Regional Museums Store. Neither Beamish nor Tyne & Wear



Above: An example Heritage Cube that the Collections Access Team take out and about to promote the project. Left: Crook and District Local History Society packing items to go in to their cube.

employees have access to objects stored within the Heritage Cubes; they can be accessed only by group members.

The project has gained momentum since it began with ten groups now actively using their cubes and a further three in the process of applying for space. Three groups, the North East Police History Society, the North East Branch of the Embroiderers Guild and Durham Scout County, have held successful exhibitions in the Collections Study Room. The first Heritage Cube Exhibition was held in the Regional Resource Centre in June 2007 and this enabled three groups to show parts of their collections to members of the public. The second Heritage Cube exhibition took place in September enabling a further two groups to exhibit material and engage members of the public. A newsletter is circulated bi-annually in order to keep the groups informed about what is going on and to give them an opportunity to promote their own events.

In November the first Heritage Cube training event is taking place in partnership with the County Durham Community Heritage Project. This event will cover basic collections care and is open to all organisations taking part in the Heritage Cube Project and other interested groups. The Heritage Cube project, through events such as the training day, aims to encourage community and heritage organisations to think carefully about the long term care, storage and development of their collections. Many of the groups involved in the Heritage Cube project are looking for a permanent home for their collections and the Heritage Cube Project offers them an ideal opportunity to consolidate and care for collections whilst thinking about future plans. The Heritage Cube project has enabled

Beamish and Tyne & Wear Museums to develop and strengthen their relationships with community and heritage organisations within the region. These relationships are very much two-way; they enable museums to access the particular knowledge and expertise within the groups and provide opportunities for groups to access the skills and expertise of museum professionals. The groups have already been able to enrich projects run by both Beamish and Tyne & Wear Museums. The Doxford Friends' Association was instrumental in moving the Doxford Engine to the Regional Museums Store and the group continues to work to maintain the engine. They have recently participated in a Heritage Cube exhibition where they engaged visitors and gave guided tours of the engine, greatly enhancing its interpretation in the store. Similarly, the North East Police History Society have supported and strengthened an outreach project by helping young people at risk of offending to engage with museum collections.

The Heritage Cube project provides a

positive working model of consultation and co-operation between museums and community and heritage groups. The success of the project demonstrates that museums and these groups can work successfully in partnership to care for and facilitate access to knowledge and collections. The joint storage facility at the Regional Resource Centre was a finalist recently at the Institute of Conservation awards in the Care of Collections category. The judges commented that "the Centre celebrates ordinary life and the Heritage Cube scheme is an imaginative feature offering communities a space to store items they choose themselves because of their local significance."

If you are interested in the Heritage Cube Project and would like to find out more about it, please contact:

The Collections Access Team,
Regional Resource Centre
Tel: 0191 370 4000
Email: collectionsaccess@beamish.org.uk

The Peace and Reconciliation Gallery

The Herbert in Coventry is currently undergoing a large redevelopment which is due to open in 2008. It will create a number of new permanent galleries, temporary exhibition spaces, education facilities and a History Centre for the City Archives.

The Peace and Reconciliation Gallery will be one of these new permanent galleries, exploring a unique part of Coventry's heritage not currently highlighted within the museum. Coventry's link to peace and reconciliation stems from the bombing during the Second World War. One month after the raid the Provost of Coventry Cathedral made an appeal against seeking revenge which led to the establishment of an International Centre for Reconciliation. The City Council was involved in building post war links with cities in former enemy countries, based on shared experiences of war and a desire for

peace. A range of other groups and individuals in the city were also involved in working for peace and this is a role which continues today.

The main themes of this gallery; wartime experiences, international friendship, community conflict and peace work illustrate this heritage whilst opening up a debate around wider issues. A range of gallery interactives will encourage active engagement with these themes and stimulate debate. A key part of this is a drama based interactive in which the user is placed in a conflict scenario and asked to make choices and face the consequences of their decisions. The aim is to encourage greater awareness and challenge preconceptions and to introduce various approaches to conflict resolution.

Gallery Development

Developing a firm concept and detail design to illustrate the gallery themes was a lengthy



Above: The Japanese Ambassador watching 1000 paper cranes being released from the Cathedral ruins, Coventry Peace Month 2003.

Right: The Coventry branch of CND on a protest march.

and challenging process. The difficulty of exploring some of these themes in a gallery space was compounded by the reliance on potential loans which had not been identified at the design stage. We therefore had to maintain a flexible design which could incorporate the developing content. This includes an area for temporary displays in which we will explore some of the gallery themes in more detail as well as focus on topical issues.

A key part of the gallery development has therefore been to identify, develop and create content by building strong links and partnerships with a range of groups.

Community Links

An important part of the gallery, which highlights Coventry's continuing link to peace and reconciliation, are the stories of local people who have been affected by conflict and/or work for peace. We have made links with a range of people including anti-war protestors, peace workers and people forced to flee conflict at different periods. This has resulted in the donation and loan of objects. We have also conducted video interviews with some of those involved and created a film for the gallery. Identifying and contacting relevant people was initially a difficult process, primarily

because this is a diverse mix of individuals who are not necessarily part of an organised group, but also due to the sensitivity of the subject matter. It is hoped that the gallery will provide a basis on which to build further community involvement.

Local Partnerships

There are a number of local groups and organisations which are integral to this story, including Coventry Cathedral and Coventry University which has a Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies. The gallery builds upon initiatives The Herbert has been developing over a number of years, to develop new partnerships with these kinds of organisations within the city.

These partners have contributed to the gallery development process but have also provided the necessary content to tell their stories. Visitors to the Cathedral and students at the University are all key audiences which the gallery aims to attract. We therefore aim to build upon these partnerships further to develop a co-ordinated approach which expands upon current visitor figures and profile.

National Partnerships

Loans are an important part of the initial display and will continue to play a role as

we update permanent and temporary elements in the space. The Imperial War Museum has been a key partner in this and also acted in an advisory role, in terms of handling what can be difficult and sensitive issues. We have worked closely with the Art Department who have assisted in the process of identifying relevant works for loan. We have also made links with other institutions such as Wolverhampton Art Gallery and the Peace Museum in Bradford who have relevant collections in terms of the gallery themes.

International Links

Twinning links between Coventry and cities like Dresden, Kiel and Warsaw after the war were based on shared experiences of war and a desire for peace and reconciliation. We have initiated partnerships with organisations in a number of Coventry's twin cities in order to explore this history in the gallery. This was a lengthy process due to the challenges of working with various international partners and as a result it has been difficult to fit into the design timescale. However it has ultimately resulted in the loan of material which we can incorporate due to the flexibility of the design and the temporary display elements. We have become part of the International Network of

Museums for Peace through which we have not only improved our knowledge of this area but also made links with a number of key peace museums. We hope this will form the basis of broader international links which feed into The Herbert's work in many different ways.

Education and Events

We are keen to develop on our international links with school groups. An important part of this will be video conferencing equipment in adjacent education spaces. We have explored how we should focus our core education programme and worked with the Citizenship Advisor and local teachers to try and identify gaps in current provision and the kinds of sessions and resources we could offer. We have also trialled a few different ideas for sessions and projects with different schools groups.

The partnerships which we have made have been vital to the gallery development. The organisations and groups we have worked with also form a key part of the visitor base we hope to attract. However we also hope that they will continue to play an important role as the gallery changes and develops in the future.



Natalie Heidari pour

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The Pollard Trail

Clowning around with museum objects

In recent years, the issue of underused collections in museums has increasingly come to the fore. The Museum Association's report, 'Collections for the Future', was particularly important in addressing this issue. Since then, there have been discussions, conferences and projects which have tried to find solutions to this difficult problem.

Many organisations are becoming more daring in their approach to getting collections out of store and making them more accessible to the public. In 2006, The Herbert was able to use some of its collections in a way which they had never been used before...

The Herbert is a local authority museum and art gallery, situated in the heart of Coventry. It is currently undergoing a phased, multi-million pound redevelopment, which will result in new sculpture and performance spaces, 7 exhibition spaces and a spectacular two level glass covered court.

Since November 2000, The Herbert has been host to a theatre company, Triangle, with a formal partnership agreement since April 2001. Triangle's productions are firmly based on personal stories, some of which are rooted in the city of Coventry. Their work has toured internationally and won a number of awards including, in collaboration with The Herbert, the Museum and Heritage Award for Best Educational Initiative.

Triangle, supported by The Herbert, have worked on a number of projects in recent years, often stimulated by objects in the museum's collections. The most recent of these, The Pollard Trail, was innovative and daring, taking museum objects out into the community in new and challenging ways.

This collection was donated to The Herbert in 1987 and consists of a range of material, all of which was owned by local man, Irving Pollard. Pollard was a photographer in the motor industry, but in his spare time was involved with many local groups, including amateur dramatics. He often performed as 'Chico the clown' and much of the collection was related to these performances, including costume, props and photographs.



Members of the CMP Soc on the Pollard Trail.
Photo by David Remes.

The most fascinating part of Pollard's story relates to the Coventry Blitz. During this terrible event, Pollard was so traumatised that he lost both his memory and voice. He began the recovery and healing process by recreating some of the objects he had lost. The project therefore not only focussed on a performer whose story was firmly rooted in the city, but also explored issues of memory, identity and loss. In addition to this, it was an extremely valuable chance to use a collection which had mainly been kept in store since its donation. Although it contained some fascinating objects, many were unusual and difficult to interpret in traditional museum contexts.

The project has developed massively since 2004, when Triangle first discovered the Pollard collection. In this time there was much experimentation with various sites and ideas in collaboration with the local community and surviving associates of Pollard himself. The Herbert's curatorial team were integral to this process from the beginning, and were part of the evolution of the project.

The culmination of this work was The Pollard Trail, a very different 'tour' around the area of Hillfields where Irving Pollard lived and worked. Hillfields is an inner city area, which is due for large scale redevelopment over the next few years. Different sites around Hillfields were used to



Irving Pollard as Chico the Clown. The costume he wears is now in The Herbert's collections and was used on the Pollard Trail. Right: Objects from the museum were used throughout the trail in unexpected ways.



tell the story of Pollard's life. In some instances, parts of Pollard's life were enacted at the site of their original occurrence whereas at others, sites were used as physical metaphors for events. For example, the hospital at which Pollard recuperated was actually in Bromsgrove so a rehabilitation centre in Hillfields, was used to represent this time in Pollard's life. The tour was led, and much of the project was planned and organised, by the 'CMP Soc', a group of alternative personas created by Triangle artists, described as amateur re-enactors and entertainers. Members of the public found themselves interacting with CMP Soc and from there were able to decide how far they would engage with the trail.

Key to this tour was the use of the actual objects which had belonged to Irving Pollard and their placement throughout the local area in shops, cafés and pubs. This, however, created a number of ethical issues for the curators at The Herbert. Although it was clearly very important to use the genuine objects, the areas where they were to be placed were very far from traditional museum galleries. There was no environmental control and very little security. How was this to be resolved?

A number of discussions followed, both within the curatorial team and with Triangle, leading to solutions that were acceptable to both Triangle and The Herbert. Firstly, it was decided that one person would be responsible for the museum objects at all times. This person would not be part of the tour but would place the objects in the correct positions at the start of the day, check on them at regular intervals, and also pack them away and secure them. This ensured the security of the objects.

Secondly, the objects were divided into those which were most vulnerable and those

which were more robust. Anything that was more fragile was displayed by CMP Soc only when appropriate to the performance and following curatorial advice - this included a number of textile objects which were obviously more sensitive to light. However, it was agreed that there were a number of objects which could be displayed in shops and cafés throughout the day, as they needed less stringent conditions.

Thirdly, as part of the process of display, the shopkeepers and café owners were involved in selecting objects and their placement. It was clearly explained to them the significance of the objects and the care that needed to be taken, and most were happy to be involved in this way.

There were obviously difficulties in this process, one of the main ones being the differences in mindset between the curator and the artist! While our aim was to preserve and care for the objects, viewing them as valuable resources, CMP Soc initially perceived the objects to be like other props in their performances. However, both groups had the same final objective, which was to allow greater access to the collections. With good communication we were therefore able to resolve many of the issues and emphasise the importance of the collections and their care.

The Pollard Trail was carried out over two weeks in August 2006 and had many outcomes.

Hillfields is home to many different communities, including a large Kurdish community. The project was highly successful in involving this community in ways that a traditional museum outreach project may not have done, particularly with regards to connections between objects and people. The Pollard collection included many photographs of the places where he

had lived and worked in the Hillfields and thus connections were made to the current uses of these locations. For example, an owner of a local sweetshop was shown photographs of the area after it had been bombed, which he knew nothing about. This led to further discussions and even an impromptu concert on the streets of Hillfields involving the CMP Soc and local people! By taking the museum objects out onto the streets of Hillfields, people were not expected to enter an unfamiliar and, for some, intimidating environment i.e. the museum.

The project also led to lots of new material about the museum objects being collected. New photographs and oral histories were collected which greatly added to the value of the original objects. These are now being compiled on new media, including the internet and DVD Rom and continue to develop.

Finally, in terms of care of collections, no damage was done to the museum objects. Due to the careful planning involved, all objects were safely returned to the museum.

Crucial to the success of the project were trust and communication between Triangle and The Herbert's staff. Due to the long-running relationship which already existed between Triangle and The Herbert, museum staff felt confident that Triangle were aware of the issues surrounding use of museum objects. Museum staff were also involved at every stage of the process and were able to voice any concerns they felt.

Although this was an ambitious project which used museum objects in totally new ways as well as a steep learning curve for the museum's staff, it proved to be highly successful. It allowed non-visitors to access, interpret and add to collections in a far more accessible format than many museum displays. It also added to The Herbert's knowledge of an unusual collection.

The success of this project has meant The Herbert may be more ambitious in the future with their use of collections - although collections care is at the forefront of every curator's mind, it must be acknowledged more readily that preservation is not an end in itself. With careful planning, more collections can be used in new and innovative ways, often with surprising results.

For more information on this project please contact Claire Selby

Email: claire.selby@coventry.gov.uk.
Alternatively, please visit:
www.triangletheatre.co.uk
www.ninaandfrederick.co.uk/blogs/pollard



SHCG Conference 2007

'Too Hot to Handle?

Exploring emotive issues in social history.'

This year's conference aimed to examine how social history museums can interpret controversial and emotive subjects, including those that disturb and affect, or subjects that are more difficult for the public to engage with. It took place in Sheffield with a day trip to Hull, just a week after the torrential rain and floods. Theresa Whittaker and Gillian Whitham have written an excellent review of the three days.

Thursday 5th July: Working with emotive issues

The conference opened with Dr Fiona Cameron from the University of Western Sydney discussing *Safe places for unsafe ideas? Museums, 'hot topics' and moral predicaments*. It was an excellent way to start the conference; posing questions that would be revisited throughout the weekend such as, what are the roles and responsibilities held by museums in presenting controversial and taboo topics and how do they manage the responses of their audiences to this content? Further issues raised were political in nature,

such as are museums manipulated by the stipulations of funding and used as tools to promote morality and to legitimise government policies? Dr Cameron questioned the 'right time' to portray controversial events; current hot topics are often seen as too highly charged and risk undermining the museum reputation for impartiality, emotional distance and balanced research. She suggested that topics can become 'safer with time' when a body of scholarly knowledge has had chance to emerge and bring shape to collective memory. We were also asked whether some subjects such as terrorism, are unworthy of balanced review. By broaching these issues in the exhibition space are museums giving legitimacy to something that is illegitimate, or in the climate of post September 11 is it our responsibility to provide a point of reflective reference and enable the visitor to question their place in the world? Finally, Dr Cameron asked if museums should be places for social activism and consequently places which bring about social change. She advocated that museums can be 'agents

of change' with the power to challenge peoples' ways of thinking, particularly if visitors are encourage to participate in and become producers in the museum medium.

Annette Day, Senior Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting at the Museum of London, discussed the exhibition *Belonging: voices of London's refugees* which was created as part of the Refugee Communities History Project. This groundbreaking project was initiated when the Evelyn Oldfield Unit (a refugee agency) proactively approached the museum with the exhibition proposal and a passion to inform the wider community of refugee issues and to counteract negative media coverage. Between 2004-6 over 150 in depth interviews were collected, supported by photographs, objects and other items, which formed the basis of the exhibition. The interviews were gathered by 15 fieldworkers, most from the communities with which they worked. It was acknowledged that through their personal contacts and sensitive understanding of cultural etiquette, they were able to build up



Above: Contemporary galleries at Wilberforce House Museum, Hull. Right: The guided tour, part of the evening reception at the Masonic Hall, Tapton.
Previous page: Conference delegates outside Weston Park Museum.

trusting relationships and achieve much more than museum staff alone. Each fieldworker undertook MA level training at London Metropolitan University so that their skills were sustainable and transferable beyond the project, empowering communities to continue the collecting of their own histories. Annette stressed that collaboration, shared decision-making and community ownership were key, with the museum taking the role of facilitator. In dealing with difficult subjects, Annette reinforced the need to be very audience-minded and to deconstruct every idea in detail from their point of view. As many of the issues are seen as part of a wider public debate, it was crucial to be transparent about display and content decisions. There was significant press coverage of the exhibition and the project participants were also recruited as media spokespeople and trained to deal with awkward questions. Public reaction was largely positive, yet a decision was made to also display negative comments from the visitor's book which became a valuable part of the exhibition debate.

Helen Gurney from the Hertford Museum presented on *Passing places*. A project working with the local gypsy-traveller community. This project ran from 2002-2004, as a temporary exhibition within this small, independent museum and was the first contentious display to be tackled. In this case, the Hertford Traveller Education Project approached the museum with the initial concept and a later successful application to the HLF provided funding for a 6 month exhibition and events programme.

The aims of the exhibition were to; attract and involve new audiences, provide enjoyment for travellers and non-travellers and facilitate learning. The HTEP provided support and contacts with a hard-to-reach and often cautious community; and contributed a vital non-museum perspective. The exhibition themes were ambitious for a small space and included the history of early travellers, fairground and circus connections, the impact of the holocaust and contemporary traveller life. Helen found it particularly problematic to source objects for display as many stereotypical canal art items were available, yet community loans were difficult to negotiate due to their sentimental value. Generating school visits was also difficult as the exhibition was initially seen as less relevant to non traveller children. Staff and freelancers focused on addressing prejudice in the local community through literacy and storytelling for KS2, and role play activities for KS3. The summary advice from Helen when working with specific community groups was: to make your aims and objectives clear from the outset, make good contacts with organisations that can assist you, do thorough research, and learn the etiquette and subtle differences between the communities.

Mark Dennis from the Museum of Freemasonry certainly had the most entertaining title to his paper - *Where's the goat? - Potential and pitfalls in displaying Masonic collections*. This was an illuminating talk which drew our attention to the fact that Masonic history has become increasingly hidden in the museum world

and often falls outside many of our collecting policies, despite the fact that Masonic groups are still active and have a strong material culture. As a group they often face a great deal of prejudice; either ridiculed and the butt of jokes or mistrusted and the focus of conspiracy theories and satanic connotations. Much of this anti-Masonic sentiment is perhaps due to the belief that all Masons are white, male and middle class and the fact that so many of their practices are conducted in secret. Mark presented the curatorial dilemma of educating the public about the Masons while maintaining their right to privacy. He highlighted the professional confusion that often exists over Masonic objects, particularly as the symbolism appearing on them is often difficult to interpret due to the multiplicity of possible meanings. Interpretation is also hindered by a lack of professional literature and guidance on the subject. Mark drew our attention to the difficulty of presenting a subject from a 'neutral' standpoint; however much we may aspire to objectivity, our audiences are never neutral. He clarified this with the example of the reconstructed Masonic Lodge at Beamish, where curators had to defend their interpretative approaches when people came with their own preconceptions and opinions. Mark emphasised that Masons are often not protected or respected in the way that other religious or community groups are, yet it is our responsibility to remember their context as fraternities and friendly societies, which historically were very important to community life and identity.

We were treated to a very friendly and generous welcome at our evening reception at the Masonic Hall in Tipton.

Our hosts gave us a guided tour of the Masonic Hall, and answered the many questions that we had.

Friday 6th July: Exhibiting Emotive Issues

This year, as we are all aware, sees the bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade, and what better place to host the day's discussions than at the newly refurbished Wilberforce House.

The day was kicked off by Lydia Saul, of Hull Museums who spoke on *Interpreting slavery and its abolition at the Wilberforce House Museum*, which reopened on the 25th March 2007 at a cost of £1.6 million. The previous displays created in 1983, had been designed without consultation and later evaluation found that there was; too much emphasis on Wilberforce, no African perspectives and that the terminology and vocabulary reinforced prejudice and a Eurocentric viewpoint.

The new plans for Wilberforce House therefore stipulated that; African narratives needed to be central, Wilberforce needed to be placed within a more holistic abolition context, and history had to be linked to contemporary issues such as institutionalised racism and sex slavery. The consultation process involved many diverse groups to inform the language, topics and images used. The process revealed that people wanted coverage of what life and culture was like in Africa before slavery and this formed the basis for the West African Cultures galleries. For this gallery, objects were needed from other collections and this emphasised the need for better links and partnerships with other museums such as the British Museum and the Horniman. According to Lydia the 'middle passage' was the most sensitive and difficult gallery to interpret; the previous reconstruction of a slave ship had given the impression of enslaved Africans as 'passive victims' and had shocked and distanced visitors rather than informed them. The new display uses first hand narratives to reveal hidden histories, such as the experiences and brave insurrections of African women on board the ship. The Plantation Life gallery shows the treatment of people as commodities and explores the economic impact and legacy of the slave trade. The decision was made to display distressing objects such as instruments of cruelty, as they powerfully portrayed the fear and humiliation that kept the plantations functioning. The contemporary galleries raise awareness

of African Diaspora, contemporary slavery and provide opportunities for feedback through the *Freedom Forum* interactive. They also attempt to counteract the obvious negative legacy of slavery with some positive focuses such as showing case studies of talented British people of African descent.

Following this Michael Terwey, from the National Maritime Museum presented on Curators, content and consultation: Reflections on the display of slavery and empire at the NMM. The *Atlantic Worlds* gallery opens in November and this presentation was therefore a reflection on the development process so far. The new gallery will replace the previous *Trade and Empire* gallery which was criticised for either glorifying the empire or making people feel ashamed or guilty for Britain's role in it. As a result, consultation has been placed at the heart of the gallery concept, design and construction. A key difficulty with attempting consultation in the planning process was; how do you start consultation early when there is nothing concrete to show? Questions identified from the start were focused around what will be displayed, who develops the content and the politics of exhibition decision making. The project team took a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach encompassing curators, subject specialists and learning and access officers. The team identified gaps in the NMM collections and sought to bridge them by using interpretative media and artistic commissions, while addressing them through the collecting policy in the longer term. Michael emphasised that consultation has to be planned, strategic and embedded, and a policy of 'Engagement and Involvement' was adopted in order to move beyond consultation to co-production. Michael also stated that although consultation enables you to more accurately anticipate audience responses, it also brings with it the realisation that no approach will fit all.

Alison Kelly gave us an immersive presentation on the controversial Ku Klux Klan exhibition *Generation KKK: Passing the Torch*, shown at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art in Glasgow between November 2005 and April 2006. The exhibition consisted of 40 black and white photographs taken by US photojournalist, James Edward Bates. His uncomfortable images raise awareness that the racial violence, hatred and intolerance associated with the Klan, still exist today. Perhaps the most controversial are the chilling images of young children

demonstrating the transmission of extreme views from one generation to the next. This work had never been shown in a public venue before and the decision was made to exhibit it because it presented an opportunity to explore difficult issues such as white supremacy, the role of religion in white supremacy, and connections between religion and racism. It was difficult content to deal with as the photographs clearly humanised those who practice racism and hate and the comfortable distinction between good and bad is blurred and disturbing. St Mungo Museum is not a morally neutral organisation and it was therefore essential to develop a clear interpretation plan which included; learning about the KKK both historically and in contemporary USA, facilitating more general discussion about racism and separatism, and highlighting stories of people who are discriminated against in Glasgow due to their race or religion. The exhibition interpretation was enhanced by James Edward Bates who worked closely with the museum and enabled visitors to question what it had been like living among Klan members. Additional interpretation layers included folders of information and reflection sheets for young people. In the latter they were asked to question the use of symbols to assert identity or cause division and intimidation, whether children can be blamed for racist behaviour, and to place themselves in the position of the victims in the images. Facilitated sessions were offered for young adults, schools and young offenders and these often met with criticism in the local press with headlines such as "Images of racism used to shock Scotland's school kids". The second part of the presentation focussed on visitor feedback gathered through the comments book. Negative comments included anti-American sentiment aggravated by the Iraq War, 'white trash' comments reflecting a sense of moral superiority, and in other cases racism was transmuted into sectarianism as parallels were made to the orange order. In summary Alison commented that controversy should never be courted for its own sake - if museums make themselves contested spaces, they need to prepare themselves for unsafe and unsatisfactory responses from visitors.

Trevor Parkhill, Keeper of History at National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland, delivered a paper on the question; Can a contested history be exhibited to a divided society? He concentrated on the lessons learned from the *Conflict. The Irish at War* exhibition, displayed in the Ulster Museum in Belfast



Alison Kelly speaking about the Ku Klux Klan exhibition.

(December 2003 - 2006). The exhibition sought to provide a historical context for the often violent nature of Irish history starting 10,000 years ago and leading up to the last 30 years of 'Troubles'. The key question posed was, how can a suitably distanced approach be adopted to events that still live painfully in collective and individual memories? Trevor suggested that the museum was seen by community groups as a 'neutral venue', a non-threatening environment, where engagement with a difficult past was possible and where people from different factions could meet and show solidarity. This capacity for cross community engagement was cultivated in the 'Conflict' exhibition which received visits from over 200 community groups. Objects for potential display were obviously inflammatory in nature such as a roll of honour of IRA activists killed in action and posters of loyalist prisoners of war at The Maze Prison Camp. It was therefore essential to facilitate consultation with a wide spectrum of the community and this resulted in a sense of shared responsibility for the material on view. This process also led to the recording of oral histories from a diverse range of people which were displayed alongside the objects.

Sarah Batsford from the Imperial War Museum gave us an overview of the

development of The Holocaust exhibition. At the time of opening in 1993 there was no European precedent for such a display in a space separate to a site of atrocity. This ambitious 5 year project provided a much needed permanent resource for learning and commemoration. Key to the success of the project was the formation of an advisory panel whose members all had direct or indirect experience of the Holocaust. The panel debated all aspects of the exhibition from its location within IWM to issues of content censorship, object inclusion and design features. Due to the disturbing nature of some displays, an introductory area was created to act as a buffer to the rest of the IWM and to prepare and orientate visitors. Design techniques were used to subtly denote changes in the exhibition content, for example as the visitor goes through to the occupation area, the colour of the exhibition darkens, the temperature drops slightly and the corridors taper in. After viewing the exhibition there is a reflection room containing a video, voices of survivors and feedback opportunities. In terms of the education programme, the decision was made to impose an age restriction of 14+ and pupils receive an orientation session and post exhibition debrief. Although the exhibition covers many harrowing issues, Sarah

acknowledged that there are still difficult areas that have not yet been fully explored such as the humanisation and motivations of Nazi perpetrators who are often seen as the demon 'other' and the effects of the legacy of guilt felt by collaborating nations. SHCG members raised the interesting issue of what mechanisms were in place to support museum staff engaged in researching such emotionally effecting content. Sarah suggested carefully structuring workloads so that people are not dealing with distressing imagery/oral histories for long periods of time. Training also needs to be provided for facilitators who are required to deal with visitor reactions to upsetting content.

Tracey Bradley from the National Coal Mining Museum for England gave a moving talk entitled 'Witness: Disaster, Rescue and Recovery' an exhibition of mining disasters. The exhibition was chosen as it represents a key part of mining history that has had a major impact on communities; in some cases whole generations of men and families were wiped out in a single incident. One of the initial difficulties was that the small display space meant that only a limited number of disasters could be prioritised - how many lives had to be lost before an accident qualifies as a disaster? The exhibition had to meet the difficult criteria of engaging a general family audience, while being

sensitive towards those who were intimately involved. Tracey became very emotionally engaged with the exhibition content and chose to design the layout and narrative herself. Eventually 5 disasters were decided upon and the stories of witnesses, rescuers and those who died were told through quotes from contemporary sources such as eye witness accounts, newspaper reports, oral history recordings and commemorative material. This was supported by emotive objects recovered from the disaster scenes and projections of images, archives and contemporary newsreel footage. Wherever possible Tracey wanted visitors to take away a positive message, therefore constructive outcomes from the tragedies were highlighted such as developments in technology and changes in legislation. Community groups such as Creswell local history society were contacted and Tracey developed sustainable links with survivors of one of the disasters covered in the exhibition. Interactives were kept appropriately low key in the shape of a simulation of a rescue desk that would have been present in every pit; and educational activities were provided in association with St John's Ambulance. Tracey found that the exhibition became used as a place of memory for all who had lost their lives in accidents. Although there was unfortunately no room for a contemplation space within the original exhibition, plans have since been made for a memorial garden and a database has been created to form a permanent record of those who had lost their lives in mining accidents.

Saturday 7th July: Identity Shapers

Elizabeth Carnegie, Lecturer in Arts and Heritage at Sheffield University, kicked off the day with an interesting discussion entitled *Reclaiming a hidden past, or banishing the recent past: collective memory, dark histories and the museum*. Elizabeth described the museum as 'a shaper of the past', a mediator, with the responsibility of creating history displays which honestly represent communities while remaining sensitive to participant's needs and fear of exposure. Key focuses included individual versus collective memory, displaying 'the truth', community collusion in memory-making and political revisionism. In the context of social history museums, Elizabeth introduced the concept of 'stigma management', whereby people often tell you what they think you should hear as a way of protecting themselves. She warned that

memory sharing can expose people and we change their role by putting them on display; it is likely that sometimes they won't recognise themselves or like what they see. Elizabeth went on to describe museums as 'containers of intimate death' and this is particularly true when museums become associated with memorials. Often sites associated with recent dark histories or death sites, such as the Museum of Terror, Budapest or Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide in Cambodia, have become forums for the expression of pain or containers of memories. Such spaces are 'witnesses to themselves' and can be an important part of rebuilding life in the present. In other cases such as in Mostar, Elizabeth found that a museum was unnecessary as the city itself has become a memorial to the conflict, and local people are trying to forget or remember in their own ways. In such cases 'open' secret histories and 'anti exhibitions' can be formed as material culture is hidden away, considered 'not for now' but saved to be revisited in the future. Elizabeth investigated why we display dark histories; is it to boldly go further than other museums, to bring unity through remembering in a particular way or to be honest about what it is to be human?

Kris Brown a research fellow at Queens University in Belfast discussed *Healing through remembering. Living with History: conflict, contested histories and museums in Northern Ireland*. Kris examined how museums and exhibitions in regions of conflict deal with representing political violence, identity and communal antagonism. Museums are closely entwined with collective memory and have the difficult task of making meaning out of contested pasts for fractured communities. An added complication is that museums are undeniably political structures and there is a danger that museum narratives can be implicitly moralising or 'inclusive' to only one group, giving prominence to one political voice and deepening segregation. Kris advocated that for true inclusion to take place, multiple voices need to be heard with minimum interpretation and intervention from the curator. He used the Troubled Images exhibition as an example of an inclusive display which represented all aspects of the political spectrum.

Georgina Young from the Museum of Croydon presented *Is Croydon crap? Facing down negative perceptions of a place and its people*. This talk highlighted the potential and problems that can arise when museums are challenged with representing a place and

its people. The public image of Croydon as a place is bad, and negative perceptions of it as a place are often interwoven with stereotyping and misrepresentations of its people. Until the 1990s, Croydon did not have a museum and had few collections. A lot of visitor research was done and in 2006 the Museum of Croydon was opened, with the idea of connecting the people of Croydon with the past; tying in Croydon with historical events. They have two entrances Now and Then. In the Now gallery, contemporary Croydon is explored through changing community displays; the content is refreshed every 4 months to show current objects, issues and community work.

Andrew Deathe from the National Museum of Wales spoke on *Shock and Awe: Using controversy to promote an audience reaction*. He advocated that within museums there is room for a more controversial stance to be taken, believing that the power of controversy sparks debate. Including all viewpoints, negative and positive, provides access for people of differing views. It perhaps allows them to see themselves and potentially change their opinions. How do we decide who and what viewpoint we will exhibit? He left us with the challenge to be brave, to stir up controversy and to be prepared to discuss and allow debate to happen, stating that temporary exhibitions are the testing ground for such displays.

Overall the conference was a reassuring success; the talks were varied in theme and provided a good balance of theoretical 'food for thought' and practical transferable advice. The site visits to Wilberforce House, Hull and Weston Park Museum, Sheffield were great opportunities to discuss specific displays in detail with curatorial staff and see controversial material displayed in innovative and sensitive ways. Perhaps most valuable of all were the opportunities to meet new colleagues and discuss things further in the informal settings of the bars and restaurants of Sheffield!

Many thanks to all who organised the ambitious timetable of presentations, visits and events; we hope to be back for more next year!

Reviewed by

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A Journey through the Turkish Bath

Liz Simpson has been working with Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum as part of the Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme at the University of Warwick, to uncover the history of the Turkish Bath at the Royal Pump Rooms, possibly the Museum's largest 'object'. Her research draws on the collections of the Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum, as well as the British Library's collection of Victorian guides to the medical uses of the Turkish bath and has opened up new ideas for the interpretation and use of the space.

The Leamington Spa Turkish Bath, or Hammam, provides an oriental sanctuary tucked away within the shell of a 19th century building. Built at the Royal Pump Rooms in 1863, the Hammam embraces an Eastern theme, which starkly contrasts with the neoclassical design of the encasing structure; a stylistic disparity which highlights the discrete nature of this internal space. The architecture is not the only feature which defines the boundaries of the Hammam. When in use, entering into the Turkish Bath involved walking through metaphorical walls of culture and cleanliness. Admittance was only granted once the bather had divested himself of his shoes and had replaced his urban, bourgeois apparel with bathing dress, or *fula*. Once inside the Hammam these boundaries served to shut out the external world and, as the sombre air of the bath calmed the senses, allowed the bather to engage with an inner realm of fantasy.

Today the architectural footprint of the Hammam is still evident comprising two of the three original hot rooms or sudorific chambers, as well as the cooling room, or frigidarium. These rooms have been incorporated into the local history gallery of Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum. The frigidarium has been restored to its former glory, with the original tiles and brickwork being uncovered, its decorative



scheme recreated and its stained glass windows refashioned. On entering this room, visitors still gain a sense of encountering an exotic and secret space.

The Turkish Bath was erected in Leamington as part of a project to reinvigorate popularity for spa treatments and to modernise the existing hydropathic establishment. The efficacy of the Turkish bath as a cleansing, revitalizing and curative agent had been popularised in the years running up to the building of the Hammam on this site, most notably by diplomat and traveller David Urquhart. These 'luxurious and health giving institutions' had already begun to appear in most large towns in the kingdom. Britain, it seemed, had been gripped by Turkish bath mania and the Royal Pump Room Committee was keen to hop onto the bandwagon.

The popularity of the Hammam was also fostered by a middle-class population striving to find socially permissible leisure activities within a constraining Victorian value system. The Turkish bath fitted into the refashioned model of leisure which encouraged morality and progress, health and physical fitness, the arts, travel and knowledge.

Yet the initial decision to introduce the Hammam to the Leamington Spa Royal Pump Rooms was heavily criticised. The local population had hoped that the renovation project would revive the appeal of the healing and health giving properties of the saline waters brought forth from the Leamington springs. These waters had been the selling point of the spa up until this point, recommended in the treatment of an exhaustive list of conditions. As such, it came as a shock when proposals for the renovated pump rooms included the construction of a Turkish bath, which did not rely on the internal action of the saline



waters of the town, but rather, involved the external use of pure water.

Tensions around the Turkish bath were not only generated by its uneasy relationship with existing hydropathic practices, but were also caused by debates over the pseudo-scientific claims expounded by its promoters. While writers such as Urquhart promoted the Turkish bath as a universal panacea, many physicians condemned it as being not only useless but also potentially dangerous.

Nonetheless the Leamington Spa Hammam soon gained high acclaim and widespread popularity pulling visitors in from Banbury, Rugby and Stratford. George Elson, shampooer at the Hammam, reported that by 1900 the bath was frequented by up to sixty bathers each week.

The Turkish Bath was viewed as both as a site of leisure as well as a location for healing. In his book, *Notes, critical and otherwise, on the past, present and future of Leamington*, John Gibbs acknowledged the Baths use in treatment of illness and the alleviation of disease symptoms.

He reported:

"May 7th, 1873 - Witnessed this day, at the Turkish Baths, Pump Room, Leamington, the arrival of a gentleman, about thirty years of age, suffering from an acute attack of rheumatism and gout in the left leg and foot; and the instantaneous relief he received on taking a seat in the calidarium. He looked as he felt - thankful for the change. My advice to everybody is - Go and see these baths and the effects of them upon the afflicted".

Meanwhile, Elson's autobiography alludes to the use of the Hammam as a site of relaxation and recreation; a place to which individuals 'came for enjoyment as well as benefit'. Elson's work offers a fascinating insight into the use of the Hammam on a daily basis; his descriptions bring to life its

rooms, which were once a hubbub of activity. The bath provided a place in which bathers could casually debate the issues of the day, or discuss the latest gossip, whilst enjoying the bathing process. By offering both a luxurious experience and a powerful therapeutic effect, the Turkish Bath provided an arena in which health, pleasure, culture and curiosity could collide.

While regular visitors to the Hammam were accustomed with the Turkish bathing process, those less familiar with the bath were often anxious as to what awaited them. Horror stories of the almost suffocating heat

of such baths, and the shampooing process which saw bathers being rigorously "scrubbed, buffeted, and kicked", left many bathers apprehensive. Elson recalled one such bather:

"On one such occasion I guided a stranger into the box to undress, and went to finish off with the cold spray a lively spark who made more noise than usual as the cold water fell over him, when on taking him out of the cooling room, I just perceived a vanishing part of the stranger going out of the passage door, with only one arm in his coat. I heard afterwards that he had heard

the shrieks of my boisterous bather and fearing there was something fearful in store for him, he slipped on his clothes again and fled, leaving his ticker and foregoing his bath".

Anecdotes such as this demonstrate why Elson's autobiography has proved an invaluable source in reanimating the rooms of the Hammam. His text and this research has opened the way for the use of new interpretive techniques in the space through future displays and events at Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum.



Punishment Records from the Sarah Plantation, Essequibo, Guyana

As birthplace to William Wilberforce, one of the leading lights in the struggle for the abolition of the slave trade, Hull Museum Service has a large collection of objects relating to not only the life of Wilberforce, but the slave trade and the campaign for its abolition residing within its Social History collection.

Many of the objects within the collection throw light on the harsh conditions endured by those taken from their African homeland and sold into slavery, but a series of objects dating from the late 1820's/early 1830's for me really bring home how appalling the conditions faced by those who had had the misfortune to suffer the fate of becoming the property of another human being.

A series of punishment records from the Sarah Plantation, a sugar producing plantation located in the Essequibo Islands, West Demerara, Guyana, detail some aspects of the working life of the slaves labouring on the plantation could expect to face, particularly regarding the methods used to induce them to work for long hours, in intense heat, completing the most arduous of tasks and for little or no rewards given in return for their work. The physical labour expected of them was exceptionally hard. The cycle of work necessary for making sugar involved preparing the land for the planting of the latest sugar cane crop - which typically involved clearing land of scrub, weeds and bushes - digging cane holes and planting the new cane tops and then manuring and weeding the crop as it grew. Once the latest crop had matured (usually taking 12-15 months) the cane would then be harvested using cutlasses and transported to the mill. Here the cane was

crushed and the juice released from the crushed cane would be collected in large containers. It would then be heated and have lime added in order to clarify it before it was boiled in a copper boiler. The juice was then ladled into a smaller copper boiler in order to be re-boiled. This process was repeated in another, yet smaller boiler. The resultant syrup was then left to cool and then poured into wooden hogsheads which were left standing on wooden beams in a curing house. Molasses would seep from small holes cut into the bottom of the hogsheads. Three weeks later the remaining syrup would have crystallized into sugar and would then be exported by ship to Europe.

Due to the heavy nature of the work, as well as the inhuman and degrading conditions in which most enslaved people spent their lives - the separation of families, an inadequate diet (typically each adult slave would be given one pound of salted cod every Sunday, enslaved people were allowed to fish for themselves or grow their own vegetables but this had to be done in their own free time, usually on a Sunday) and clothing provision (each adult slave was typically given a coarse woollen jacket, a hat, six yards of cotton and a piece of canvas to make their own trousers from) and rudimentary mud/plank huts as living areas, coupled with the plantation owner's desire

for maximum sugar production in order to ensure maximum profit it is no surprise then, that forcible coercing was required in order to ensure maximum profit, and to prevent rebellion or escape.

There are seven separate records covering intermittent periods between January 1827 and December 1830. The information contained within the records is handwritten and divided into columns under the headings 'Date Entry Made', 'Name of Slave', 'Nature of Offence', 'Time and Place of Punishment', 'By Whose Authority', 'By Whom Inflicted', 'Witnessed By', 'Nature And Extent Of Punishment If A Female', and 'Nature And Extent Of Punishment If A Male.' The information written in these columns is then summed up briefly on the reverse of the document, regarding the number of lashes given overall in the space of time covered by that particular record, usually six months, how many men whipped and how many were punished in this manner how many times. The records were then sent back to the plantation's owners, Thomas and William King who resided in the St. James area of London.

The documents tell us many things about the Sarah Plantation and its management. The fact that the plantation was run by a manager (Thomas Baker) and overseers (Mr. Symes, Mr. Seward and Mr. Forte) on behalf

of the owners, as was the usual pattern for plantations such as these. One of the overseers' tasks was to authorise and witness the punishments, although, where a male was whipped, the punishment itself was inflicted by another, usually one of two named 'Mingo' and 'Pollydore.' Male and female enslaved people were punished in different manners; males were whipped whilst females were kept in solitary isolation for two to three days, usually at the plantation hospital. This can be seen as evidence that, although cruel and barbaric in its very essence as a plantation reliant upon the use of enforced labour and the methods used to ensure maximum work rate from its enslaved workforce, the Sarah Plantation's code of discipline was not as severe as other plantations in both the West Indies and Americas. It was not unusual for both males and females to be whipped, the fact that the number of 'stripes' inflicted upon males as punishment ranges between 12 and 25 on the Sarah Plantation could also similarly act as evidence to support this hypothesis, (although this could be due to the fact that excessive punishment would result in incapacitation and a lowered work rate for the plantation.) Enslaved people could be and were punished in many ways, from whipping, to branding, mutilation and execution for serious offences, whilst the killing of the enslaved by their owners went unpunished and the killing of an enslaved by a free person other than their owners was treated as trespass and the culprit would be merely fined or expected to repay the original cost of the slave to their owner. It was not uncommon for an enslaved to receive 100 or more lashes for running away, one owner in North America would even force members of his enslaved workforce into a barrel, the interior of which was studded with nails, and roll the barrel down a steep slope.

Conditions on the Sarah Plantation were however, harsh enough; the hard work and long hours of sugar production were amplified by the degrading and inhuman treatment of the enslaved. They were given European names such as Polly, Bob, Catherine, Peggy, Hope, Jane, Bunbury, Charles, Mollyrose, Grace and Christmas to replace their African names, stripping them of their identity. The offences for which they were punished also give clues to the conditions on the plantation, one is punished for stealing plantains (and another for encouraging the theft,) possibly to improve a meagre diet, others are punished for insolence, possibly as a result of anger at their situation and treatment, others for laziness and feigning sickness, possibly in an

attempt to gain a brief respite from an intolerable workload. An enslaved person was also punished for 'stealing money and intoxication,' possibly in an attempt to gain temporary oblivion as a means of escaping his unhappy life for a short while. The fact that the physical punishments were inflicted by other enslaved workers on the Sarah Plantation acts as evidence that the plantation owners used some slaves as slave drivers, slaves elevated to the role of junior overseers, whose task it was to physically encourage the other slaves to work harder and to inflict physical punishments on those who it was deemed had contravened the

plantation's code of discipline or were simply considered to be not working hard enough.

The Sarah Plantation punishment records act as a snapshot of the conditions prevalent in an era of history not that distant from our own where human beings were reduced to the level of objects to be bought and sold, and forced to work in appalling conditions and under the threat of appalling punishments.

Neil Lees

Hull Museum Service

The Nat Whittaker Scrapbook

Referees are a much maligned breed. Often accused of being attention seekers or power mad, their capabilities and parenthood are often brought into question by fans. Fans question what goes through their mind and observers could ask why they voluntarily put themselves in positions of acute stress and responsibility. I came across Nat Whittaker scrapbook during my research on the collections of the National Football Museum. It provides a fascinating insight into the refereeing world of the 1900's.

The Nat Whittaker scrapbook is a collection of paper cuttings, cartoons, scraps from correspondence, mementoes of journeys and personal invitations. Nat was a prominent figure in the development of Southern football and the game in general during the 1890's and 1900's. Born in Church, near Accrington in February 1863, Nat played in his early days for the Accrington team. A budding schoolteacher he moved to the south to attend Westminster College. During his time there he played for London Hotspur Ho and played against some of the prominent sides of the day including The Wednesday (Sheffield Wednesday). On formation of the Southern League in May 1891 he was appointed secretary. He also served as member of the FA council. In addition to this he also found time to officiate regularly as a referee and was regarded highly enough to officiate as the referee of the 1907 FA Cup Final between Sheffield Wednesday and Everton.

A large number of cuttings are comments on his refereeing. To judge from the number



of favourable quotes he was well respected and often in high demand. Critical comments are also kept and may have acted as a form of reference. It also shows the personal pride Nat might have felt in his performances, just like any player. A variety of material relating to the Cup finals he attended are included and indicate the importance of these events to him. From the clipping we also learn that he was presented with a gold watch by his fellow referees after his Cup final appearance.

The cuttings also reveal the harder side of refereeing. The *Ten Little Referees* is greatly amusing but reflects some of the difficulties of refereeing before World War One. Academics debate the scale and frequency of crowd disturbances prior to World War One but recognise that the game had problems with crowd disorder. A number of incidents focused on referees who were forced to flee angry home crowds. When modern players can often be seen crowding referees and being accused of intimidation the cartoon entitled *They explain to the poor ref* shows that this might not be as new as previously thought. The scrapbook also reveals a little of the fan in

What's the difference?

Thank you to 'Pepys Party Games' for this edition's Tea Break puzzle. There are 12 differences between the two pictures. Look very closely to spot them all!



- Answers:
- 1: Curtain larger (left).
 - 2: Socket missing from Son.
 - 3: Pipe missing under tap.
 - 4: Tree missing (by garage).
 - 5: Stone missing.
 - 6: Door handle on car moved.
 - 7: Duster larger (top).
 - 8: Steering wheel missing.
 - 9: Bucket handle, grip missing.
 - 10: Indicator light missing.
 - 11: Badge larger on bonnet.
 - 12: Cap missing from Mum's plastic bottle.

Whittaker. He included not only pictures of prominent administrators but also famous players such as J. Goodall of Derby County. Humorous cartoons also feature prominently indicating the effectiveness of the cartoon in debating contemporary issues. My personal favourite is the *Scientific Football Nursery*. The cartoon was prompted by the 'exceptional offers' made for a 17 year old Robert Crompton. Crompton subsequently went on to become an England regular, Blackburn Rovers director and the first footballer to own a car. The caption explains the papers idea for a 'Football Nursery' where footballers may be reared and trained from infancy. The scene we see is open day when agents from League clubs attend to book their requirements in advance.

Whilst there is much more in the scrapbook hopefully this piece has given an idea of its richness and humour. As a source for the sporting historian it is invaluable. Whilst the referee is always going to be misunderstood, this scrapbook gives an idea of the pride and enthusiasm that motivated Nat to brave the crowds on a Saturday afternoon.

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