

Issue 67

June 2011

SHCG

news

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP



**Interpretation at the People's History Museum**

**Social History Cuts...SHCG Fighting Back**

**Using Collections with Communities**

**Enamel Signs: Classics for All Time**

## 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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**Liverpool L3 4AX**  
**Tel: 0151 478 4068**  
**Email: [kay.jones@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](mailto:kay.jones@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)**

## Write an article for 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:**  
**21 OCTOBER 2011**

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 copy of your article by email, saved as a PC word file or richtext format. Illustrations for articles are always welcome. Original photographs can be returned.

Alternative formats:  
Electronic copies and alternative formats are available on request.

Send all contributions to:

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**Assistant Keeper of History**  
**Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums**  
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Front Cover: New galleries at the People's History Museum, pg. 10



## Welcome to Issue 67

"We're all in this together" may be a memorable sound bite, but it's of little consolation to those of us who, together, make up the social history museum community, many of whom are currently facing severe cuts to budgets and staff.

At the Museum of London, the Senior Curator of Social and Working History post has been axed, adding to the deletion last year of MoL's Senior Curator of Oral History post.

A considerable reduction in local authority funding at the Museum of Croydon will result, in the opinion of one inside source, in "fewer collections staff and less capacity for engaged community history practice".

Warwickshire Museum Service has deleted an Assistant Keeper of Human History post, under which social history was a major remit, and SHCG News has learned that the Service proposes to axe the posts of Keeper of Social History and Keeper of Archaeology in 2013, to be replaced by a single Keeper of Human History post, managing both collections. This could mean, according to one source, that Warwickshire Museum Service will "no longer have any specialist social history staff". Warwickshire's proposal to merge two keeper posts is still within a consultation period and there is always the possibility (although our source thinks this unlikely) that the proposal may change.

The Renaissance cuts have been felt keenly at the Harris Museum & Art Gallery in Preston, where the result has been a reduction in curatorial staff and the exhibitions programme. Ameliorating this, the Harris has however secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a new history gallery and programme commencing in 2012.

SHCG was concerned to learn of proposed redundancies at York Museums Trust, including several curators who are specialists in social history. We feel this will be a sad loss in particular for York Castle Museum, home to one of the country's oldest and best social history collections.

At my own institution, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, the History Team has suffered a significant blow, as the posts of Principal Keeper of History, Senior Keeper of History and one Assistant Keeper of Social History post have all been deleted.

The picture, however, is not uniformly bleak, in fact one correspondent wished to make it known that his institution was not facing cuts or job losses, but enjoying "increased investment this year and record visitor figures to boot". On a similar note, social history provision at Beamish Museum has also been flourishing lately, with the recent appointment of two Assistant Keepers of Social History.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubting that there are serious challenges in the present and yet to come for social history in museums. Some are worried that museums are on track for a "return to the 1980s". Only time will tell.

**Adam G. Bell**  
**Editor, SHCG News**



22. *Bell Époque: 30 Years of Steve Bell at the Cartoon Museum.*  
© Steve Bell, published in *The Guardian*, 22 November 2010.

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## SHCG Matters

### SHCG Annual Conference

#### Who Do We Think We Are? Working with Social History Collections in the 21st Century

People's History Museum,  
Manchester and International  
Slavery Museum, Liverpool  
7 & 8 July 2011

Are we subject specialists or generalists? What are the defining skills of those who work with social history and what should they be? In these times of limited funding, overstretched resources and the need to demonstrate impact, we might be forgiven for losing our sense of identity in an attempt to be all things to all people.

This year, SHCG conference explores what it means to work with social history collections in the 21st century. Join us for papers and case-studies from other museums, heated debates and practical workshops.

#### **New this year!**

Skills development sessions to prepare you for working with social history in the 21st century.

#### **Exclusive preview!**

Explore the much anticipated Museum of Liverpool, ten days before it opens to the public.

By attending "Who Do We Think We Are?" delegates will:

- Develop relevant new skills and refresh and update existing ones
- Contribute to strategic discussions about the role and status of Social History within the sector
- Be inspired to try new ways of working and implement ideas. Make useful contacts and build support networks
- Have a chance to reflect on and review your own role and practices, as well as those of colleagues

Joe Carr

To book a place,  
e-mail [joe.carr@btinternet.com](mailto:joe.carr@btinternet.com)  
(closing date 20 June 2011)

# SHCG Fighting Back!

Since its inception in 1974, one of SHCG's key aims has been to campaign on issues which concern our membership and to advocate for social history museums, collections and staff.

While we understand that most museums are having to make cuts due to reductions in their funding, it has come to light recently that social history is bearing the brunt of cuts in some museums.

Many organisations are collecting data and monitoring the cuts being made in museums, but the SHCG committee is keen to be more proactive in advocating against cuts, adding to the debate around them, and ensuring that the effects of cuts on social history collections are taken into consideration in decisions made.

We have put together a series of letters and press releases ready to send to governing bodies and local media, and have already sent one to York Museums Trust in response to their decision to make several curators redundant.

Please send any information, suggestions of how we can help, or tip-offs of what's happening in your area to: [discuss@shcg.org.uk](mailto:discuss@shcg.org.uk)

Remember, the earlier we get to hear about it, the sooner we can try and help influence decisions! All input will be treated in the strictest of confidence and can be made anonymously.

Victoria Rogers

Chair, SHCG committee  
[vrogers@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:vrogers@cardiff.gov.uk)

## firstBASE Needs You!



firstBASE is SHCG's website resource which aims to be a first point of contact to help you find information relating to your collections, for both interpretation and identification. It holds references to books, publications, websites and museum collections – pointing you in the right direction to find out more about your collection or social history subjects.

Those who came to last year's conference know that we are seeking funding to improve and redesign the website, so it is more dynamic, responsive and easier to use. Part of this work is to increase the amount of information held on the site...and here, we'd like YOUR help.

Have you recently researched a topic for an exhibition?  
Have you produced leaflets or pamphlets about your collection or exhibitions?  
Have you come across the most useful book about an object or social history topic?

We want to know about:

- pamphlets issued by museums on social history subjects or objects
- identification factsheets
- key books and texts (including out of print ones)

- useful websites
- museums who hold particularly strong collections in specialist areas and which may be a source of information and advice – especially those with hidden ones
- booklets published in conjunction with exhibitions
- research conducted as part of wider funded projects (e.g. like that undertaken across the country for various projects to commemorate the anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade)
- handover sheets produced by retiring curators

Help us to pull together all these sources of social history collections knowledge and information in one place, and help us make firstBASE the place to go to learn from each other's experience, increase our knowledge and understanding of our objects, and improve the identification and interpretation of social history collections. Email any suggestions to: [firstbase@shcg.org.uk](mailto:firstbase@shcg.org.uk)

Lastly, while the firstBASE steering group are knowledgeable about collections and objects, we are less so about computers and technology! If anyone with a more technological head on their shoulders would like to volunteer to sit on the steering group and advise us on the technical possibilities of firstBASE, again, please contact: [firstbase@shcg.org.uk](mailto:firstbase@shcg.org.uk)

## SHCG Website

Please remember to keep checking the SHCG website for the latest news, such as information about this year's conference and upcoming seminars and events.

Some other changes and updates to the website are in the pipeline, and hopefully we will be able to unveil them in the next edition of SHCG News!

Visit us at <http://www.shcg.org.uk/>

## Facebook

SHCG has nearly 200 followers on Facebook. Our followers are from all over the world, and don't have to be paid up members of SHCG, so it really is a brilliant tool for linking up with parties interested in social history from across the globe and from a wide range of institutions.

The Facebook page has enormous potential as a forum for discussions and receives in the region of 600 views a week, so please do stop by and why not start a discussion or pose a question and see what sort of opinions and feedback you get? Or better still, post some images of what you have been up to in your museum. Let the world see what you do!



search Facebook for  
"Social History  
Curators Group."

## SHCG Mailing List

The ever-popular SHCG Mailing List continues to thrive and play host to a lively mixture of conversations, from pest and object identifications to job adverts and information about seminars and conferences. The list is also a great source of opinion and support, and it is easy to gather advice from colleagues on all aspects of museum work. For example, in the last few months advice and experiences have been shared about the use of social media in museums, and software for managing archive collections.

So if you aren't already a member, join up by sending an email to [shcg-list-request@mailtalk.ac.uk](mailto:shcg-list-request@mailtalk.ac.uk), stating your name and whether you are a personal member of SHCG or employed by an institutional member. If you work for an institutional member, please also state the name of the institution. Be part of the network, get to know your colleagues, stay up to date and have fun!



Tesco bag dated early to mid 1980s by mailing list members

ac.uk, stating your name and whether you are a personal member of SHCG or employed by an institutional member. If you work for an institutional member, please also state the name of the institution. Be part of the network, get to know your colleagues, stay up to date and have fun!

# Launch of PostCart Kiosk

A brand new digital touch screen kiosk, titled *PostCart*, was launched at Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum on 6 May 2011.

*PostCart* is one of several Digital Content Development projects (DCD) set up and funded by Arts Council West Midlands to encourage the creative use of digital technologies to facilitate access to, and enhance, public

engagement with the arts.

At Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum *PostCart* takes the form of a touch screen digital station, from which gallery visitors are able to browse the collections, peep behind the scenes, look into store rooms, open boxes and curate their own exhibition in one of the virtual galleries. Users can also design and print their own postcards and greetings cards, using visual material from the Art Gallery & Museum collections.

As part of this project, Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum invited Midlands-based artist-curator Gérard Mermoz to explore its collections and record his responses, in the form of *Artist Postcards*, to suggest fresh ways of looking at the collections. These *Artist Postcards* can be viewed in one of the virtual galleries on the touch screen kiosk and printed on demand. They offer suggestions about

how one may approach museum objects and reinterpret them in freer, more imaginative ways than one might expect in a conventional museum display.

Gérard adds, "Trying to get a sense of nearly 11,000 objects which make up the collections at the Art Gallery & Museum, I responded by making images which captured my own encounters with the objects: in their storage boxes, on shelves or, in the case of pictures, on sliding racks. The resulting postcards are intended as open visual propositions about looking. The stakes are high: how to set these over-familiar objects free, and give them a new lease of life, through the creative play of our imagination, blowing the cobwebs off outdated forms of museology."



Artist Postcard by Gérard Mermoz, titled 'In Limbo'

Tammy Woodrow

Publicity Officer, Leamington  
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# MoDA is Moving

The Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture's museum building at Cat Hill, north London closed to the public on 8 April 2011. During the summer of 2011, MoDA's staff and collections will be moving to a new home in Colindale, close to Middlesex University's Hendon campus.

The new-look MoDA will re-launch in October 2011, with a new approach to sharing its collections Online, On Tour and On Request.

## Online

MoDA's new website will put the collections centre stage, making it easier to browse. There will be more images, more information about what they've got, and they are making it easier to find what you are looking for. The website <http://www.moda.mdx.ac.uk/> will be re-launched in October.

## On Tour

MoDA will be sending all its new exhibitions on tour to venues around the UK. The first exhibition *Petal Power*, will be shown in October at the Knitting and Stitching Show at Alexandra Palace, London, before touring elsewhere.

## On Request

Anyone can make an appointment to view the collections in the Study Room at MoDA's Collections Centre in Colindale, north London. This service will be available from October.

Follow MoDA's blog (<http://modamuseum.blogspot.com/>) to keep up to date with the progress of the move, and to hear about new developments.

William McDonald

Administrator, MoDA  
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# UCL Student Exhibition

The Leventis gallery in UCL's Institute of Archaeology is currently displaying an exciting exhibition on climate change, designed and curated by 11 of this year's MA Museum Studies students.

The exhibition is called *Climate Stories: Past and Present* and examines climate change from a historical perspective. The content draws on different disciplines, reflecting UCL's leading research in archaeology, anthropology and geography.

Through human stories, the display aims to inform visitors how different communities have met the challenge of climate change in the past. One of the stories told is 'London and the Little Ice Age', which explores the extreme

winters in England from the 14th to the 19th centuries. During this period the River Thames would completely freeze over and festive public frost fairs would be held yearly on the river.

The exhibition concludes by reflecting on how we perceive our own changing climate today, using contemporary objects and photographs of people from the local community.

*Climate Stories: Past and Present* is free and open to the public on weekdays, 9am to 5pm. The exhibition will run until March 2012.

Charlotte Jones

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# Redevelopment at Preston Hall Museum



Behind the Scenes at the Museum at Preston Hall Museum



Some of the weaponry collection

Preston Hall Museum and Park in Stockton on Tees is part way through a four year redevelopment which began in 2008. Over 3.8m of the £7m overall fund was secured from Heritage Lottery Fund, which will see the repair and conservation of the Grade II listed Hall and the addition of improved access, along with the development of interpretation, exhibits and visitor facilities. In addition there will be improved collections access and care as well as improved education facilities. Developments so far have included the construction of a new Collections building to house the museum's object collection and the renovation of an old store to house the museum's archive, ephemera, book and ceramic collections. The latter also includes a dedicated space for the public to view and study the collections. Additional facilities also include a dedicated education centre in a former lodge and a craft resource workshop designed to help train and promote traditional crafts.

The museum closed in September 2010 and reopened in February 2011. This period allowed staff and volunteers to clear the collections from the Hall into the new store to allow work to begin on the repair of the Hall itself. While the Hall will be closed during the redevelopment, the period street and the ballroom

will remain open to the public, except for the period between September 2011 and 2012, when repairs and the installation of the new exhibitions will be undertaken in these areas. In the ballroom an exhibition called *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* was installed to give an insight into the many hidden treasures and quirky objects within the museum service collections, and to allow for open storage of some of the larger objects from the Hall.

So far over 5,000 objects have been moved into the new store where, with the aid of teams of volunteers, they have been cleaned, sorted and re-boxed. This will be the first time that the majority of the collection has been stored in the same location within a purpose-built facility, and substantial work has been undertaken to amalgamate and re-pack the collections into one space.

In addition, a further project will start in 2011 with a successful grant of £300,000 from HLF to restore the Victorian walled garden and orchard where fruit, vegetables and herbs will be grown alongside traditional herbaceous planting. The introduction of a vine house, cold frames and space for beehives will complete the renovation. The re-opening of Preston Hall Museum and Park will be in late spring 2012.

For further information about the redevelopment and updates see [www.stockton.gov.uk](http://www.stockton.gov.uk) or contact the museum: [prestonhall@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:prestonhall@stockton.gov.uk)

Gemma Lewis

Collections Rationalisation  
Worker, Preston Hall Museum  
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Roller racking supplied by Qubiqa Ltd.

# Look and Please Touch: Using Museum Collections with Local Communities

**Throughout my Masters degree in Art Gallery and Museum Studies, and my career so far in the museum sector, the question of ‘access’ has been ongoing. I have taken it as read that there will always be certain restrictions to collections access and that not everyone can view all that a museum has in its collection, let alone handle it or use it outside of the museum environment. Handling collections are now routine and accepted practice, and I use them throughout my work with communities, schools and families, always with care and sometimes with caution. They are, after all, effective tools for telling a story and illustrating a point. They allow direct access to objects and can enhance the participants’ experience of the collection.**

As part of my AMA programme, I spent three weeks at Tairāwhiti Museum in Gisborne, New Zealand in November 2010. Tairāwhiti’s collection includes art, Māori artefacts, social history, photographs, textiles and natural history. They have a number of exhibition spaces and have both permanent and temporary displays. Their vision is “to become an integral part of the community of the Tairāwhiti through building strong and enduring relationships with community groups,” and their education department is dedicated to realising this vision. Education sessions include in-house workshops with schools as well

as a diverse and wide-reaching programme of activities with communities across the region. The collections department also have close and trusting ties with local people, iwi (tribes) and organisations, offering access to objects for a range of occasions.

Although Tairāwhiti do use some non-accessioned objects on some of their outreach work, the museum’s focus when working with schools and communities in-house is to provide direct access to collection items if appropriate to the lesson. Collections Manager Ann Milton-Tee explains that these sessions offer “a unique experience for the students, the direct access being the only chance they have had or will probably have, to Māori taonga (treasures), Victorian clothing and significant art”. Milton-Tee works closely with the education officers at the museum to allow this direct access, despite the time it takes to remove artefacts from the stores and prepare them for open display. She feels that the value of direct access makes this process all the more worthwhile, particularly as it provides an “understanding on how Tairāwhiti value the objects and why [the museum] takes such great care

*“It is this direct contact with artefacts, and the experience it offers the participants that I was so impressed by, and which made me want to challenge how this work is undertaken in my own institution”*



Jen Kavanagh in New Zealand, Nov 2010

of them for future generations”. The number of “wow” comments they receive also motivates them to continue to provide this direct access. Some of the collections items brought out for sessions are rare and incredibly valuable, but as Milton-Tee explains: “no-one can understand the true wonder of a korowai’s (Māori cloak) muka (beaten and woven flax backing), its fineness, suppleness, shaping and superb workmanship until they have handled it, examined it, up-close-and-personal! And they will never forget the intricate addition of thousands of feathers to the front”.

Handling of the objects is done with care and under close supervision of museum staff, with students and participants taught the value of wearing gloves and moving the objects properly. Although collections care is obviously a priority, “the bottom line is to let the students completely understand and hopefully appreciate the items by examining them, handling them, and asking questions,” Milton-Tee explains. It is this direct contact with artefacts, and the experience it offers the participants that I was so impressed by, and which made me want to challenge how this work is



undertaken in my own institution. Working with handling objects has helped to illustrate ideas and give context to projects, but hasn't ever had the participants amazed or truly engrossed in the object's story. Although they are authentic artefacts, the fact that they are not deemed rare or precious perhaps impacts on the participant's experience of being in contact with the object, and as a result doesn't provide the unique experience of handling something that is of real value to the museum, and also to the community the museum serves.

The open access to collections at Tairawhiti Museum does not reflect the overall attitude of museums in New Zealand, in the same way that the restricted access I have encountered so far in my career is in no way a reflection on how collections are used in the UK as a whole. What I witnessed at Tairawhiti, however, has inspired me to push the boundaries of what access I provide to participants who take part in community curating projects at London Transport Museum. It has also made me further question the value that allowing access to collections has on those we are engaging with. When asked why Tairawhiti Museum provides this open access, Ann Milton-Tee simply replied "why not?" And why not indeed? If we educate and trust those we work with, removing the 'look but don't touch' rule to some of our collection items may bring our audiences closer to our collections and allow young people to feel more comfortable about visiting museums throughout their lives.

The opportunity to visit Tairawhiti Museum was generously provided by the Trevor Walden Bursary through the Museums Association.

[www.museumsassociation.org](http://www.museumsassociation.org)  
[www.tairawhitimuseum.org.nz](http://www.tairawhitimuseum.org.nz)

Jen Kavanagh

Community Curator, London Transport Museum  
 jennifer.kavanagh@ltmuseum.co.uk



**Top:** Tairawhiti education officer Jennifer Pewhairangi with a student, handling the korowai (Maori cloak)

**Middle:** Students handling a range of Victorian artefacts as part of a school session at Tairawhiti Museum

**Bottom:** The main entrance of Tairawhiti Museum, Gisborne



# Oral History and Audio Visual Interpretation at the People's History Museum



**B**etween October 2007 and February 2010 the People's History Museum in Manchester undertook a major £12.5 million capital redevelopment project. The museum doubled in size through a large new building connected to the Edwardian Hydraulic pumping station which housed the previous incarnation of the museum.

The project brought all the museum's services together on one site, providing two new purpose-built main galleries, along with a new archive and reading room, textile conservation studio, shop, café and reception. The new museum's main galleries explore the world-changing ideas fought for by the working people of Britain, and chart the growth of the nation's democratic history from the early 19th century to the present day.

The visual power of the museum's banners, posters and placards, alongside the fascinating personal objects and effects, can tell only one part of the story. They often illustrate the collective rather than individual stories. In creating the new galleries both the museum's in-house exhibitions team and the design contractors,

Headland Design, were very aware of how much the spoken, as well as the written word, has played a part in the campaign for democratic rights. The new museum's displays are neither still, nor silent. From the very early planning stages every effort was made to ensure that passionate and persuasive oratory, as well as personal spoken testimonies, were incorporated. They add atmosphere and help to bring the displays to life, but most importantly in the People's History Museum they add *people's* voices. The emotional dimension is amplified by the stories of these individuals who were involved in and impacted by the events that the galleries illustrate. Importantly, oral histories and sound recordings are also a way of delivering an added level of information without crowding the galleries with too much text, so selections were made that expanded and not just supported the displays.

Prior to the redevelopment the museum's long-term galleries had not incorporated oral histories and only used audio in a limited way. The emphasis put on oral histories was therefore in some ways a new departure for the museum. However, through a varied programme of changing exhibitions that were curated in-house and regularly evaluated, the museum staff had developed a good knowledge of the advantages and pitfalls of including oral history in exhibition displays. We had discovered that the majority of visitors are unlikely to listen to long extracts, so knew to limit the selections we made for the new galleries to less than two minutes (ideally shorter). The perfect oral history clip is short and to the point. Though many museums use headphones rather than telephone style handsets our research suggested that some people are reluctant to put on headphones as they can't then hear what is going on around them, as well as for hygiene reasons. But we had also found that simply including oral histories played via a plain handset was not enough. Many visitors mistook the handsets as telephones for use by the Gallery



A visitor listens to an actor recorded speech at one of our Speakers Corners.

Assistants, not realising they were part of the exhibition. This was the case even though they were sited beside a panel giving details of the speakers and the content of the sound clips. Finally, our research also suggested that visitors were more likely to listen to the whole clip if they knew how long it was going to last. Armed with this practical experience, along with the philosophy for the content selection, we were able to plan the audio content for the new galleries.

The galleries feature both ambient sound and contained sound. During the early planning sessions areas for potential sound elements were identified. The locations for both were plotted on to a floor plan and decisions made on which topics to pursue, with a view to ensuring that the audio was distributed evenly throughout the displays, limiting the potential for sound conflicts within the gallery space.

The majority of the ambient sound is delivered through our unique *Speakers Corners*, which allow visitors to experience, as if they

were there, excerpts from some of the greatest political speeches of the past two centuries, from those of Henry Hunt and Ernest Jones (recreated by actors of course) to those of Nye Bevan and Margaret Thatcher. They illustrate the important part that speeches have played in the development of democracy in the UK, and help convey the passion and commitment of those involved. Visitors select these speeches by straightforward push buttons. The audio is linked to a projector which plays contemporary crowd scenes, to give the feel of being in a crowd listening. These images are also combined with kinetic text. The text, a transcript of the speech, not only fulfils access requirements, ensuring visitors with hearing impairments are not excluded, but through the playful treatment of the text, adds to the experience of the *Speakers Corner* for all visitors. Through use of different fonts and the varied movement of the text as it appears on the screen it creates the feel of the speaker and the speech.

**“I liked ... the text appearing on the screen at the same time”**

Recordings of political speeches that were made recently enough to have been recorded were provided by the British Library Sound Archive. The gallery covers about 200 years of working class history, so some of the earlier

speeches on the *Speakers Corner* are taken from contemporary transcripts in newspapers and recorded by actors. Care was taken to recruit actors with appropriate regional accents and the recordings were combined with sound effects to create the atmosphere of the event – for example the sounds of a mass meeting in the open air or a gathering inside a large hall.

**“Well thought out displays with good interactive facilities, particularly the speeches”**

Learning from our experiences in changing exhibitions, we chose to deliver the more personal oral history recordings via telephone handsets, connecting visitors to recordings of real people involved in real campaigns, from suffragettes to soldiers. The handsets used are adapted period telephones, linked to the topic of the display. These help create an appropriate atmosphere. They are integrated in to the displays but every telephone point also provides seating, transcripts and an information panel to make it clear they are not museum objects, but phones for use, to explore and discover more about the particular topic through the memories of an individual involved.

**“Kids loved all the cupboards and boxes with things in and phones (that worked – been to museums where things don’t work and it’s very frustrating)”**



**Above:** Visitor listening to the oral histories relating to 1980s campaigns. **Previous page:** The People’s History Museum showing the original Edwardian building and new building which houses the main galleries.

As the museum does not collect oral histories itself, all of the clips were sourced from the British Library Sound Archive, the Imperial War Museum Sound and Film Collection and the North West Sound Archive. Sourcing a wide variety of material from several different collections was labour intensive. Around three weeks were spent visiting the archives and listening to and selecting the clips. This investment of time along with the use of gallery space and of course financial commitment involved in purchasing the clips, paying for editing and software design, as well as the hardware for actually playing them was well worth it. The direct contact it gives visitors with the past and those who were part of the museum's story is incredibly powerful.

**"I enjoyed the interactive phone displays where you can listen... this brings history alive!"**

In addition to the delivery methods outlined above, oral history recordings are available as one element of two touchscreens in the galleries. One touchscreen explores the history of the Communist Party of Great Britain, while the other adds more information for visitors to explore in the *Banner* gallery. As with the telephone points, transcripts are provided and timings given, though this time via the touch screen. Seating is also provided.



Unique archive film is also used throughout the museum - both to provide a further layer of interpretation and, as with the multi-screen *Banners Unfurled* presentation that surrounds the visitor in the *Banners* section, to recreate the experience of 'being there'.

Prior to closing for re-development, the People's History Museum was well-known for its innovative 'living history' programme using professional actors and participatory drama to bring to life the people covered in the displays. The main galleries now contain a fully functional *Mini Theatre* which hosts a wide range of performances for schools, families and general visitors. One of these performances is a further way that oral histories are used at the People's History Museum. *No Bed of Roses* follows the story of a young girl, Gabrielle, and her decision to move to the UK from the Caribbean in the 1950s. The story is based on oral histories that were gathered from three Manchester women who had themselves migrated from the Caribbean.

Many visitors to the galleries want to comment on and debate the present as well as the past. The galleries encourage this via a unique interactive video booth where visitors can air their own opinions on the question 'Is democracy an idea worth fighting for?' These clips are now being



The period handsets used in different areas of the main gallery

collected, sorted and stored, with a view to using them on our website and in the displays in the future.

Since the museum opened we have been able to undertake some evaluation through our 'test drive' period (a three week trial opening before the museum's official re-opening on 5 March 2010). During this time every visitor to the museum was invited to fill out a feedback form relating to their experience of the new museum. We received over 1000 different responses, relating to every element of the visitor experience from the toilets, the café and even the cleanliness of the adjacent river, but inevitably a lot of the responses related to the main galleries. Overwhelmingly they were positive and several related to the audio visual element. The quotations included in this article are taken from that feedback.

**"Overall really interesting and good use of levels of information so you can skim read or find out more detailed info"**

There have inevitably been some teething problems, the main one being how to set a level on the ambient sound so that it is clearly audible on a very busy day in the gallery but is not distracting for visitors on quieter days. All of the sounds are linked back to a central switch which has three settings; mute, medium and loud which gives us some flexibility. This has proved useful but we are continuing to monitor and alter the sound levels. There have also been some issues with the period phones as all the cables to the handsets have had to be replaced with modern wire due to wear and tear. But that in itself suggests heavy usage, so it is a problem we are happy to have to deal with! Overall the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and we hope that the audio visual elements in the gallery continue to interest, educate and inspire our visitors for years to come.

Kate Chatfield

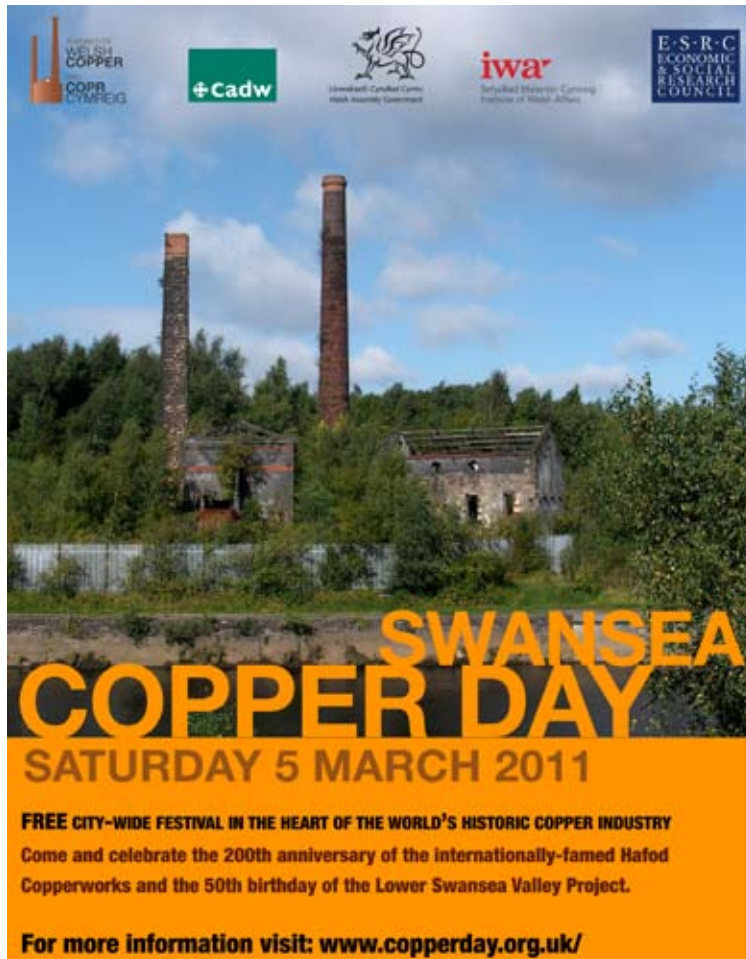
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# If only Every Day could be Copper Day...

Anyone doubting the wide public appeal of industrial heritage should have experienced Copper Day in Swansea on Saturday 5 March 2011. The day was organised by the team working on Swansea University's Global and Local Worlds of Welsh Copper Project, funded by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council). It is estimated that about 2,000 people were drawn to Swansea over the weekend, lured by an interest in copper, its past, and a desire to find out more.

A shared interest in copper resulted in unprecedented co-operation between public and private bodies and galvanised a diverse range of people into making this exceptional day happen.<sup>i</sup> It was a completely voluntary collaboration with no dedicated resources of time or funds. Its success relied on the goodwill and contributions of, at the final count, 29 different organisations, groups and individuals. In total 29 activities and events took place at 13 venues, some of them continuing beyond the day itself. From museums, libraries and archives to social clubs, trade organisations and enthusiasts, Copper Day was a free festival of talks, films, tours, displays and the distribution of information and expertise.

<sup>i</sup> The initiative did benefit from a small grant to print bilingual information leaflets and project banners from Cadw and a further small grant from Swansea University's College of Arts and Humanities for placing the bus advert and refreshments for the reception for participants.



Poster for Copper Day showing the last two surviving chimneys of the Hafod copperworks

Two important anniversaries inspired the festivities: 200 years since the first copper ingot rolled out of the internationally-famed Hafod Copperworks of Vivian and Sons, and the 50th birthday of the Lower Swansea Valley Project which began a pioneering post-industrial urban land reclamation scheme that sought to return the valley back to its natural state, after the centuries of slow poisoning from the smelting and refining works. However we also wanted there to be a legacy. These new collaborations demonstrate the great appetite for heritage-led change in Swansea and will

be an inspiration to other post-industrial regions that have for too long been ambivalent about their history. The sheer number that turned out on Saturday 5 March, in addition to the host of comments left on the website ([www.copperday.org.uk](http://www.copperday.org.uk)) affirm even further the depth of feeling there is for the city's heritage. We heard reports of visitors coming to Swansea from as far afield as Derbyshire, Birmingham and Weymouth. This is astonishing for an event that was organised in very little time, relying on word of mouth and the internet for publicity.

### Why Copper Day happened

The ESRC Welsh Copper Project is ostensibly a follow-on knowledge-transfer project. It is one of several collaborations that embrace academia and heritage. This particular project is a partnership of five organisations with broader representation from an advisory group: Swansea University, the National Waterfront Museum (part of Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales), the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, University of Glamorgan and City and County of Swansea. Although the historical anchor of the project is Swansea's role at the centre of what some historians have argued was the world's first integrated global industry, the project has embraced the much wider history of Welsh copper, particularly the story of Mynydd Parys copper mine near Amlwch on Anglesey, for a forthcoming exhibition. The stated outcomes of this project are:

- A public policy forum on heritage-led regeneration (held on 14 October 2010)
- A major temporary exhibition entitled *A World of Welsh Copper / Byd Copr Cymru* at the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea (July-October 2011)
- A follow-on travelling exhibition to tour national venues in Wales and the UK
- A website forming a central repository for information, resources and networks related to the copper industry
- Engagement with global audiences via social media applications such as Twitter and YouTube
- A programme of digitisation, prioritising collections which would benefit from preservation and increased access, especially business archives
- The availability of material for educational packages targeted at university and lifelong learners.
- 3D visualisations of historic Swansea copperworks and computer-generated animations
- The publication of a major

academic study on the development of Welsh copper industry and its heritage within global terms of reference

And nowhere on this already lengthy list is a free festival devoted to copper heritage. While all of these aims and objectives will be familiar to anyone who has worked on projects that increase access to collections, broaden audiences and generally raise the profile of a place or subject, they are, one could argue, 'slow burn' outcomes. And rightly so. For a one-year project during which all these things are put in place, it is essential to have sustainability in mind.

For instance, the much longer term aim for the heritage-led regeneration of the derelict area at the old Hafod and Morfa copperworks in the lower Swansea valley, has largely come about through the meeting of minds in the university and local authority, in no small part following the public policy forum on 'History, heritage and urban regeneration' held at the National Waterfront Museum in October 2010. The talks given by representatives from Cornwall and New Lanarkshire on their experiences, challenges and success in regenerating ex-industrial sites seemed to inspire a new way of thinking in the

'decision-makers' that attended. Similarly, the aim of Swansea University's Richard Burton Archives, home to business archives of world significance relating to the Welsh metal and coal industries, to raise the profile of under-used business archives as a resource for researchers and teachers, will be considerably aided by the digitisation programme that this project is helping them put in place. Beyond merely reproducing documents, the digitisation of business archives requires careful cataloguing, description and most importantly, interpretation. There is a wealth of information in these archives that are not only of benefit to economic historians and curators of industry but also to social historians and curators who would welcome 'new' sources of information to weave into the stories they tell.

The news of this project and its ambitions also awoke simmering passions amongst the local community, museums and other heritage organisations. There has always been a general knowledge of Swansea's copper heritage, however, except amongst the few, this seldom extends beyond its moniker as 'Copperopolis'. Furthermore, several individuals and organisations were already raising the profile of this heritage within their own settings. After



Audience waiting for the commencement of Copper Day, standing room only

the public policy forum there was a tangible feeling that the chattering mouths asking for 'more to be done' were biting at our door-steps and that we should think about something that we could do quickly and cheaply to demonstrate a joint commitment to this crucial element of the local sense of place. And so the idea for an 'open day' was mooted, including perhaps a few tables with some information in the hallway of the National Waterfront Museum.

For the organising team (two people who already had full-time jobs) however, there were two things that drove the Copper Day campaign in a different direction. First, that this was a golden opportunity to genuinely reach out to as many people as possible, with the focus being on local communities, and second, that it had to be free. The biggest criticism of the 'History, heritage and urban regeneration' day was its cost, and cries of elitism were well heard. The team already knew that many activities such as tours of the old copperworks sites, talks, reminiscence and museum tours went on in parallel without much recourse to each other.

What if we had a day when it all went on at the same time? And why stop at what museums, libraries and local history societies do? In a bid to take a global approach to copper, the team enlisted the help of an industry body, the Copper Development Association UK; a local working people's club, Landore Social Club—itsself housed in what used to be the offices of the Hafod works; and used the anniversary of the Lower Swansea Valley Project to reunite some of its pioneers, such as the Conservator Steve Lavender. Once the idea for the day was explained, everyone we requested contributions from said yes. Swansea Museum, who were planning an exhibition on Copperopolis, swiftly got to work to make sure it was open for Copper Day. The Glynn Vivian Art Gallery used the opportunity to create a display relating to its refurbishment project to return to the original bequest of Richard Glynn Vivian – from the famous Swansea copper family.



Aerial view of Yorkshire Imperial Metal works, Landore

And so we pooled our resources and skills, started a blog for the day ([www.copperday.org.uk](http://www.copperday.org.uk)), clandestinely printed off posters which we designed ourselves, fed information to the local papers, wrote pieces in football programmes, placed an advert on the local buses, created picture shows for the BBC's Big Screen in the middle of town, and told everyone we spoke to (and asked them to pass it on).

The response to the day exceeded our expectations in spades. There had not been so many people walking in the valley since the tree-planting days of the 1970s, and probably more than that. Having begun to organise this some time before Christmas 2010, Saturday 5 March 2011 arrived with a cool breeze and a beautiful sunrise, and even a full hour

before the day was due to start, queues began at the doors of the National Waterfront Museum. The rest, as they say, was Copper Day and you can read all about it on the website. One comment sums up the responses we received afterwards, "Could you do it again please?"

[www.copperday.org.uk](http://www.copperday.org.uk)  
[www.welshcopper.org.uk](http://www.welshcopper.org.uk)  
 Twitter: <http://twitter.com/copperhistories>  
 YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/copperhistories>

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# Marvellous Medicines: Making the Most of Medical Collections

**Having never been to a SHCG event before I wasn't sure what to expect, but when the opportunity arose to go to a medical collections seminar I jumped at the chance. Working with medical collections daily I often get the impression people perceive them as quite grizzly (which they often are!) so I was keen to see how other people approach them. The day sought to address the difficulties facing museums with medical collections and how to use them effectively for display and education. Held in the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh on 24 September 2010, the choice of venue was certainly impressive and inspiring.**

The first speaker was Chris Henry, Heritage Manager at the Royal College of Surgeons, who gave a potted guide to the history of the building as well as highlighting some of the more interesting aspects of the collections. I was particularly interested to know that the first curator/conservator (in practice, if not in name) of the museum was Robert Knox, infamously known for receiving murdered bodies for dissection by Burke and Hare. It was an excellent welcome to our surroundings for the day and charged our enthusiasm for the lunch time tour.

The next speaker was Alan Humphries, Librarian at the Thackray Museum, with an illustrated guide to identifying medical collections. Advocating the use of medical trade catalogues as being the best basis for identification, Alan took us through a very useful presentation on the 'usual suspects' of medical collections and how to differentiate between them. Identifying medical instruments can be a very tricky task and specialists are few, so the hints and tips from Alan were welcomed and well received.



Emma King then took us through the Medicine at the Movies project, a UK Medical Collections Group (UKMCG) joint project across six UKMCG members. The project aimed to engage groups of adult learners with medical collections and to then produce a short film. It was a great example of medical collections being used in a different way, and how different perspectives can really change the interpretation. One of the key themes in this project was that the participants were encouraged to produce everything themselves; there was no input from museum sources except for collections

information and training on using the filming equipment. This led to very different perspectives of medical collections and the result is refreshingly new. The project also produced a film making guide which can be disseminated to other museums to encourage this sort of project in the future. The films can all be seen on YouTube, simply search for UKMCG.

Julie Wakefield then demonstrated a very engaging presentation of family events she has run, inspired by objects from the museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

Demonstrating a very 'hands on' approach, Julie showed us a basic pill rolling technique using plasticine which can easily be used in family workshops. Two other remedies were reproduced using herbs. It was clear to see that these activities must be very popular with family and school groups, making me think differently about how to ensure the collections take a more active role in museum activities for families and groups.

After a spot of lunch we had an excellent guided visit around the Royal College of Surgeons. I particularly enjoyed hearing about



the different characters that used to inhabit the old hall, as well as the many literary references to the building. For instance, Sherlock Holmes is reputedly based on Joseph Bell, a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, and Ian Rankin used a balcony in the building as a murder scene. During our tour, we had an opportunity to see the temporary exhibition *'Skin Deep: The Restoration of Form and Function'* which tackled the subject of facial reconstruction, past and present.

Leonie Sedman from the Victoria Gallery and Museum, University of Liverpool, then presented us with a curatorial nightmare – how to display a collection you have no knowledge of but which is of significant importance within its field and needs to be displayed. Thankfully, rather than becoming bogged down in the problems, she and her colleagues undertook a process of learning about dentures and successfully displayed the collection in *'Nasty Gnashers and Dreadful Dentures'*. This was possibly the scenario which many museum curators can relate to, particularly with medical collections; what to do when facing the unknown. It was encouraging to see how the museum had handled the mammoth task positively, and the end result is a display full of intrigue which would leave even the most ardent dentophobe happy!

Eleanor Lanyon and Julia Nurse then made sure we were all paying attention when we were subjected to a quick sexual health quiz before they told us about the Wellcome Library's AIDS poster project. A perfect example of how medical museum collections can be used with contemporary learning practices, the use of AIDS posters as an educational tool demonstrates a new direction for museum collections. I was really buoyed up by the prospect of using a medical collection in such a way which is relevant to young adults and can fill a gap which may be missed by parents or schools. Using the museum as neutral ground meant the participants did not feel the usual

pressures which can occur when discussing difficult topics such as sexual health and AIDS.

The last talk of the day was by Jane Hughes from the Hunterian Museum who discussed 'The Treatment of George', a project which resulted from an exhibition about skin, race and identity. Using collections depicting a skin disorder known as "piebaldism" in Asian and Black people during the 18th Century, the Hunterian ran workshops for year 8 students. These workshops allowed the students to explore the collections and the science behind skin conditions in a fun and informal way. It also provided a platform to learn about people who live with these conditions today and culminated in producing a short piece of drama to raise awareness of such conditions. Through working with the Camden Out of School Learning Team and the Bloomsbury Theatre the project was able to use different means of expression, such as drama, with the students. Again, this was another encouraging presentation about how medical collections can be used to raise awareness and educate, but in a dynamic format.

The seminar was very positive and I personally got a lot out of it. Seeing how different medical collections are being utilized was rather inspirational and I came away from the seminar full of enthusiasm for medical collections and how people are using them. It gave me many new ideas about how to represent medical collections in a different way as well as having the opportunity to speak to the people involved. The speakers on the day were very well received and I would like to thank them, as well as the SHCG organizers, for a day well spent in Edinburgh.

Go to: [http://www.shcg.org.uk/scripts/resources\\_training.asp](http://www.shcg.org.uk/scripts/resources_training.asp) for downloadable resources from the day, including a list of medical trade catalogues and other useful primary sources for the identification of medical collections.

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**Above & previous page:** *Nasty Gnashers and Dreadful Dentures: the history of false teeth* at the Victoria Gallery & Museum

# Enamel Advertising Signs in Focus Classics for All Time

**Enamelled iron advertising signs were the vanguard of modern advertising, making their mark in the 1880s and in some cases staying put for a century.**

Modern advertisers tend to shy away from references to Classical history and culture, the brand name change in 1990 of the confectionery bar 'Marathon' to 'Snickers' being symptomatic, 'Nike' (footwear) and 'Kouros' (fragrance) being exceptions to the rule. Not so the Victorian and Edwardian pioneers of modern advertising, because for them and for the British public at whom they aimed their hard sell, Classical history and myth were core studies in schools for all social classes; indeed for many educated Britons of the period, Latin was their second language.

Below is a small but representative selection of classically inspired trade names in use between the 1870s and 1970s (italicization indicates that the product was advertised using enamel signs): Acme (generic prefix), Ajax (scouring powder), *Arcadia* (soft drink), *Bovril* (meat extract), *Carta Carna* (dog food), *Cerebos* (salt) Ceres (cake), *Chlorodont* (toothpaste) *Corona* (soft drink), *Dulux* (paint), *Lux* (washing powder), Marathon (candy bar), Mars (candy bar), *Melox* (dog food), *Omega* (watch), *Pegasus* (logo of Mobil petro chemicals), *Phoenix* (sewing machines), Plasticene (children's modeling clay), *Pyruma* (fire-proof cement), Spartan (cigarettes), *Sphinx* (soft drinks, spark plugs), Trident (automobiles, chewing-gum, boats, weapons system), *Trojan* (automobile, condoms) *Venus* (pencils),

*Veritas* (gas mantles), *Vesta* (Bryant & May matches and generic term for match-box), *Viol* (bone marrow / malt vitamin supplement food), *Wincarnis* (health drink). Advertisements of the period appeared in newspapers, were printed on paper, card, tin, glass, plastic (latterly) and manufactured in cast iron, aluminium and enamelled iron and copper, throughout the period. This article deals specifically with enamelled iron.

The following is a list of definitions, derivations and implied meanings of a selection of the above trade names. Note that, with exceptions, the imagery employed in the adverts did not necessarily reflect the 'classical' trade name. There are instances (e.g. Phillips's tea) where classical imagery was used without a classical trade name.

**The Trojan Utility Car** went on the market at £230, reducing to £125 in 1925, the same as a Model T. Ford automobile. A Trojan was a citizen of the ancient city of Troy, site of Homer's Iliad; Trojans were proud of their tough uncompromising lifestyles.



**Bovril** is the trademarked name of a thick, salty meat extract, developed in the 1870s by John Lawson Johnston and sold in a distinctive, bulbous jar. It is made in Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire, owned and distributed by Unilever UK. The first part of the product's name comes from Latin *bos* (genitive *bovis*) meaning "ox" or "cow". Johnston took the -vрил suffix from Bulwer-Lytton's then-popular 1870 "lost race" novel *The Coming Race*, whose plot revolves around a powerful energy fluid named "Vril".



**Cerebos** is an English brand of salt and, more recently, other flavourings and nutritional supplements. Its promise, "See How It Runs", described how fine the salt was. A boy chasing a chicken and pouring salt over it is an icon that has become synonymous with the brand. The Latin roots may be from *ceres* and *bos* (for use with grain and meat) and/or *ceres* and *os* (good for brains and bones, the small print on the tin claiming that Cerebos "contains mixed phosphates constituting the food strength of bran usually thrown away forming the substance of bone brain & nerve").



**Phillips's** (c.1890) tea had no overt Classical connection; its pseudo classical image reflects the prevailing fashion in the arts, intended to lend weight to this brand of tea which was one of scores of rival brands of tea that were on the market prior to WW2.



**Arcadia** was a UK soft drink in several flavours available during the 1930s - 50s. Greek: *Αρκαδία* – Arkadia is one of the peripheral units of Greece. It is part of the Peloponnese. It takes its name from the mythological character Arcas. In Greek mythology, it was the home of the god Pan. In European Renaissance arts, Arcadia was regarded as an unspoiled, harmonious wilderness.



**Venus Pencils** were a brand name of pencils made by the American Lead Pencil Company, starting in 1905. The production of Venus pencils gave the company an early start on other major companies in the move to high-end pencils that were mainly aimed at artists and architects. Suggestive of conferring artistic excellence on the user by reference to the Aphrodite of Milos (Greek: *Αφροδίτη της Μήλου*, *Aphroditē tēs Mēlou*), better known as the Venus de Milo, is an ancient Greek statue and one of the most famous works of ancient Greek sculpture. Venus was a Roman goddess principally associated with love, beauty and fertility, who played a key role in many Roman religious festivals and myths. From the third century BC, the increasing Hellenization of Roman upper classes identified her as the equivalent of the Greek goddess Aphrodite.





This striking image of a well-to-do lady posed in the back of a Landau, holding a bottle and wine glass of Wincarnis, is one of the 'classic' enamel signs, much sought after by collectors.

## Case study: Wincarnis

Some of the most glamorous enamel advertising signs, issued about 1900 by Colman's (of mustard fame), tell several stories about the life and times of late Victorian / Edwardian Britain.

So successful was the medium of the enamel sign for advertising Wincarnis wine- tonic that a whole suite of different designs was issued. No primary evidence such as manufacturers' archives or other records exist of precise dates of issue, or of quantities made and distributed, or who designed them or what they cost to manufacture. However, I have been lucky in having located several picture postcards that include – quite incidentally – examples of Wincarnis signs *in situ*, as well as a colour photograph, taken about 1980,



Based on the quoted number of doctors and the early graphics on the bottle, this is presumed to be the earliest enamel sign in this selection of Wincarnis advertisements, dating to about 1890.

which adds a conclusion to the story.

There is a similar dearth of information for all enamel signs, the manufacture of which started with the Patent Enamel Company of Birmingham in the 1880s. By 1910 Britain had over a dozen factories devoted to manufacturing enamel signs (as well as other enamel ware); continental Europe soon had its own factories, and by the 1920s enamel signs were being manufactured world-wide. Due to wartime destruction and a lack of understanding of the value of depositing records with local archives when businesses closed down, hardly any hard evidence of technical or commercial information has survived.

Introduced in 1887 (and still in production today, without the meat extract, for sale mainly in former British colonies), Wincarnis was popular as an alcoholic tippie taken on the excuse of curing nervous disorders by middle class women for whom the solitary taking of alcohol would normally have been socially unacceptable. The music hall catch phrase "for medicinal purposes only" is a sly reference to ladies taking a daily tippie.

The immodest claims for the product's curative potential reflects the reliance by the public on patent medicine at a time when a visit to the doctor was prohibitively expensive. Wincarnis was just one of dozens



Assuming that the fashion for extensive text and slogans, evident in signs from about 1900, was superseded by changes in graphic design fashion that espoused brevity and clarity, this sign is believed to date from the 1930s. Official concern about the accuracy of advertising claims increased at this time.

of nostrums, pills, potions and remedies on offer to the public during this era. Many enamel signs advertising these would have been fixed to the outside and inside walls of chemists' shops, but were equally likely to be found on any gable end, on railway station platforms, fences and waiting room walls, and indeed fixed to buses and trams.

Enamels were used to advertise thousands of products and services. Their great advantage was their longevity - they resisted the atmospheric pollution of the late industrial age, unlike paper posters, which quickly rotted away.

The images on the following page show examples of the 'landau lady' Wincarnis sign, on display at a bus depot and on a Welsh village general store.



The style of the nurse's uniform, the Art Nouveau flourish linking the 'W' and 'R' in Wincarnis suggests a date between 1890 and 1920. The increase in the number of doctors' recommendations from 8,000 to over 10,000 suggests that this sign was issued later than the one illustrated alongside.



Bus driver Percy Burge stands between an inspector and a conductor beside their 48 Paddington Green bus at Abbey Wood Plumstead Garage, about 1920. A Wincarnis sign shares wall space with enamels advertising Beasley's Ales & Stouts. In this instance the adverts on the bus are paper, but enamel signs were also in common use on buses and trams.

The shop pictured below, tacked to the side of the 13th century Tower House at Talgarth, Wales, advertises itself as 'Evans, Builders and Ironmongers', but has many advertising items (enameled copper letters on the windows, a Wincarnis enamel sign and a hoarding for temporary paper posters) indicating that it doubled as the town's general store. The shop was probably photographed about the late 1930s, judging by the design of the Robin starch poster, the number of telephone lines, the style of road signage and the car. The colour photo of the Talgarth shop, (pg.3) from about 1980, shows the Wincarnis sign still in situ, but the paper poster hoarding has been removed.

Andrew Morley

Lifelong collector and expert on vintage advertising, Andrew Morley has curated a touring exhibition of his enamel sign collection (*So Near & Yet So Far*) which is available to hire. For further details email [andrew@andrewmorley.com](mailto:andrew@andrewmorley.com)



Note the Art Deco style paper poster above the shop doorway. Up until the 1980s May Evans ran the shop, which is now a tourist information centre. The Wincarnis sign vanished during the 1990s.

# Ancient Order of Foresters Sash



Detail of the printed silk panel

**This sash belonged to John Cadman who was a member of the Wigan branch of the Ancient Order of Foresters (AOF). John Cadman worked at Kirkless Ironworks and died in 1949 aged 83.**

The AOF are one of the oldest friendly societies in the country. They were formed around 1790 in Yorkshire. The society was originally called the Royal Ancient Order of Foresters (RAOF) probably after the Royal Forest at Knaresborough. At first, the Foresters seem to have been a purely sociable organisation until the members decided that they had a duty to assist their fellow men who fell into need "as they walked through the forests of life". Members paid into a common fund from which sick pay and funeral grants could be drawn.



A Forester from Abram near Wigan  
© Wigan Archive Service

The branches or lodges of the AOF were called courts after medieval forest courts and the officers used titles such as Ranger, Woodward and Beadle. John Cadman was a Past Chief Ranger. This is shown on the sash with the gold letters 'PCR'. Past Chief Rangers were chosen by their fellow members to serve in office for a period of three, six or 12 months. A PCR was often presented with a sash as a mark of recognition. He would then have worn it with pride at anniversary parades and other social events.

Like many friendly societies the AOF had their own highly symbolic regalia including collars, sashes and badges. In the AOF a sash, sometimes known as a scarf, was one of the key items of personal regalia. The sash had to be 6 inches (15.2 cm) wide and 2¼ yards (2.1 metres) long. It was worn over the right shoulder and tied at the left of the waist. Members could either buy the official sash or use an ordinary scarf and add the necessary elements, a more cost-effective option. The latter appears to be the case for this sash. The metal lettering PCR has been hand-sewn to the sash along with a printed silk panel, padded satin star and gold fringe. The sash is green with purple edging.

The printed silk panel would have been purchased from George Tutill, who is better known as a banner maker. The panel features the motto "Unitas, Benevolentia, Concordia" meaning "Unity, Benevolence and Concord".

The silk panel also contains the emblem of the AOF. This consists of a shield divided by a cross with various symbols incorporated into the shield, including clasped hands, bows and arrows, a bugle horn and running stags. Above the shield is a coronet, a stags head and the all-seeing eye. On either side of the shield is a Forester. On this sash one of the foresters is male and the other is female. From 1892 onwards women were



Ancient Order of Foresters sash

able to become members of the AOF. Before 1892 they were not allowed to join and both Foresters on the emblem would have been male.

The Foresters still exist today and provide financial, social and charitable activities. There is one court operating in the Wigan area, Court Faithful Abraham 1549.

The sash is on display at the Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan.

## Sources

'Discovering Friendly and Fraternal Societies: Their Badges and Regalia' by Victoria Solt Dennis (Shire Publications, 160 pages, ISBN: 9780747806288)

The Foresters Heritage Trust website - [www.aoforestersheritage.com](http://www.aoforestersheritage.com)

Foresters Friendly Society website - [www.forestersfriendlysociety.co.uk/our-history.aspx](http://www.forestersfriendlysociety.co.uk/our-history.aspx)

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# 'A Good Screw' – Suggested Design for St George's Hall, Windsor Castle

by Steve Bell

Published in *The Guardian*, 19 December 1992

**On 20 November 1992 a fire broke out in the Queen's Private Chapel at Windsor Castle before spreading to the adjoining St. George's Hall, stripping it of its ancient timber roof.**

Heritage Secretary Peter Brooke pledged that the costs of returning the castle to its former glory would be borne by the public purse. A number of Labour MPs demanded that the Queen should dip into her own coffers to help fund the restoration and start paying income tax.

Bell's take on the traditional pyramidal representation of social hierarchy, with the monarch at the apex, points to the enduring distinctions within British society and their roots in economic relations.

The Queen's subjects, from humble citizens at the bottom, to those in the armed forces, the judiciary, the established church and members of the House of Lords are depicted winding their way in a spiral towards the monarch; they are shown stooped over, tongues extended, licking the backsides of those in front. The great screw grows out of "Ye Publick Purse" which is surrounded with barbed wire and guarded by a pair of Grenadier Guards.

Steve Bell has been drawing cartoon strips and leader cartoons for *The Guardian* since 1981. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential cartoonists of the last 30 years. *Bell Époque: 30 Years of Steve Bell* can be seen at the Cartoon Museum, 35 Little Russell Street, London, 25 May – 24 July 2011.

Anita O'Brien

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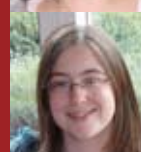
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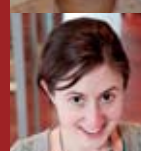
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