

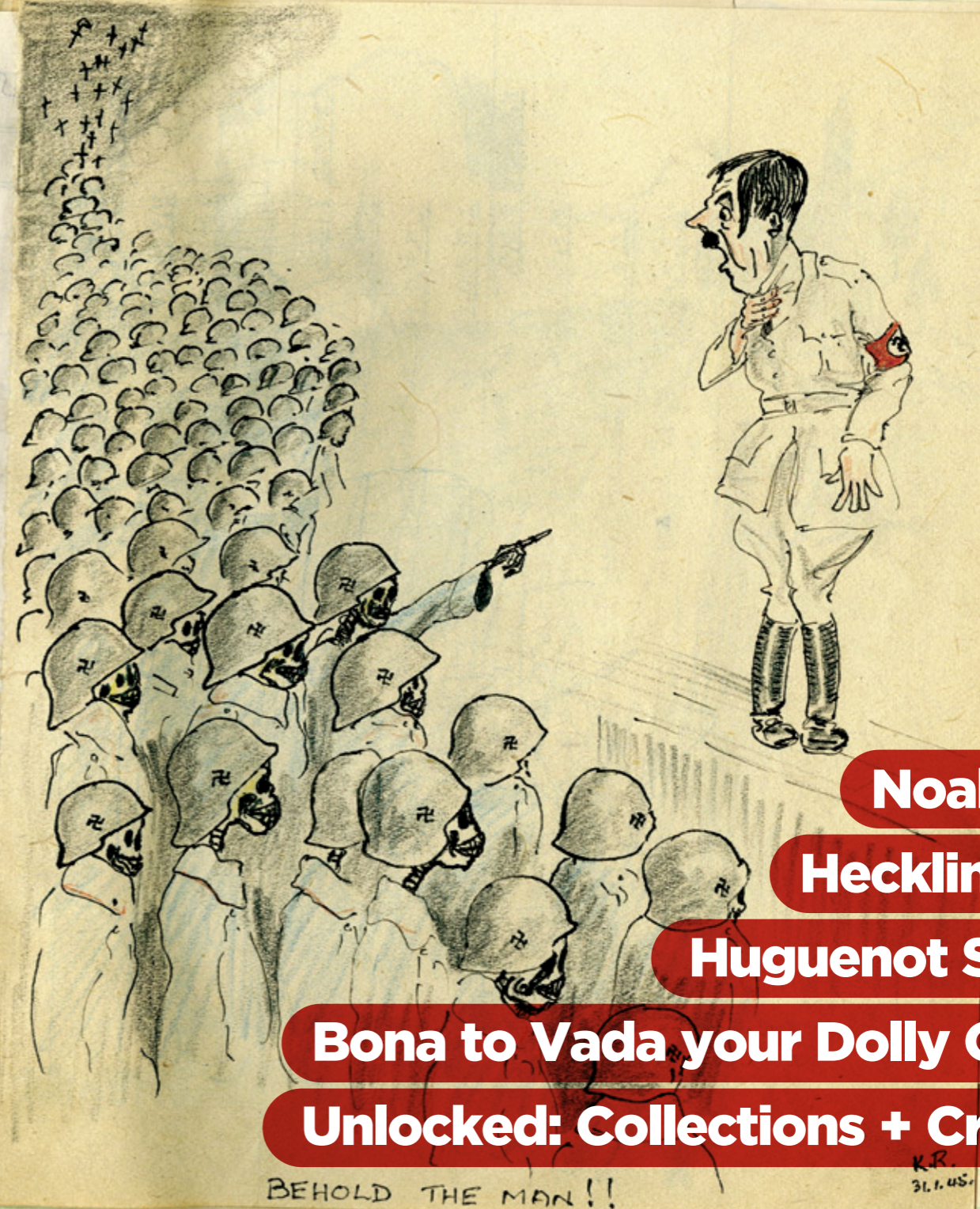


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 - (3) To make every reasonable effort to procure and to subsequently surrender to you an original bill properly endorsed.
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Noah's Arks
Heckling Hitler
Huguenot Summer
Bona to Vada your Dolly Old Eek!
Unlocked: Collections + Creativity

Join SHCG?

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

Fiona Byrne
Curatorial Assistant
Human History Department
National Museums Northern Ireland
Email: fiona.byrne@nmni.com

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 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:
28 August 2015**

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 *News* are wide ranging and do not necessarily express the views of the SHCG committee or SHCG, unless otherwise stated.

The suggested word count for submissions is: Bulletin Board 100-300 words, Theory & Practice 900-1,000 words, Reviews and Object Focus 400-500 words (one page) or 900-1,000 words (two pages), Tea Break 300 words. Please submit your article by e-mail, saved as a Word file (Arial 12 point). Images can be e-mailed or, if high resolution, submitted on a CD (high resolution preferred). Images should be accompanied by a brief caption and credit details.

Advertisements:

Full page: £300, half page £200, quarter page £125.

Send all contributions to:

Adam Bell
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Front Cover: *Behold the Man!!*
by Ken Rolfe, drawn on Ministry of Food scrap paper, 1945 (see p.30)

Image courtesy of Cartoon Museum



Welcome to Issue 74

If, like me, you're a fan of the unexpected and the downright bizarre, be sure to check out a new online gallery of artefacts connected with the Battle of Waterloo. 200 unique and fascinating objects, drawn from museums and private collections across Europe, are showcased on the website www.nam.ac.uk/waterloo200 - some of which have never before been seen by the public.

Among my favourite items are the 'Waterloo teeth' - dentures fitted with real human teeth, extracted from the mouths of the dead after the battle. Then there is Captain Holmes' vertebra, a truly bizarre and suitably 'spine-chilling' relic. Holmes was the senior officer of the 27th (Inniskilling) Regiment, and was killed during the fighting on 18 June 1815. His widow had his body macerated (boiled) and the damaged vertebra, along with the missile that caused the fatal injury, was removed, dried, varnished and set in silver, to serve as a ghoulis memento mori.

Some museums specialise in the macabre, the weird, wonderful, and bizarre. At the Avanos Hair Museum in Turkey, visitors are presented with a vast assemblage of hair, collected from more than 16,000 women, displayed in the suitably creepy setting of a small, dark cave. The International Cryptozoology Museum in Portland, Maine also displays hair samples, as well as faecal matter and native art, illustrating mankind's search for creatures such as the Yeti, Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster.

Although I'm guessing the majority of readers don't spend their days lovingly curating collections of hair, or the faecal matter of mythical beasts, I'm sure most of us could name at least one or two weird things in our collections. I posed the question on SHCG's e-mail list - here are the highlights...

Appropriately, considering the bicentenary of Waterloo, Leah Mellors informed me that Saffron Walden Museum has a lock of Napoleon's hair, cut from his head immediately after his death on the island of St Helena in 1821. Lowri Jones' favourite bizarre items in the Asian ethnography collection at the British Museum include a pair of beaded Siberian snow goggles, complete with radioactive glass beads; a pottery cage for cricket fighting, from China; and a "slightly soiled looking Indonesian loincloth".

Claire Whitbread told me about a collection of Charles & Di commemoratives at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, including an unopened bottle of Royal Wedding special brew and, inexplicably, a brick. A rather rudely shaped delftware cup from the eighteenth century is Jen Kavanagh's personal favourite at the Museum of London, whereas a cat-shaped pin cushion is Ciara Canning's curious candidate from Colchester's collections.

An ex-curator from a well-known social history museum disclosed the tale of a colleague who took it upon themselves to assemble a vast collection of Satsuma orange wrappers. "All these wrappers" said my correspondent, "are neatly stored in a couple of boxes and beautifully catalogued, unlike the rest of the collection the curator was meant to be looking after!"

My joint prize for weird stuff goes to the Garden City Collection, Letchworth Garden City, and the Scottish Fisheries Museum at Anstruther. The former is proud custodian of a curious example of town-twinning-tat: a pair of wooden clogs with a bunch of plastic grapes inside. The Fisheries Museum has not one, but two candidates for the most bizarre museum artefact: a plaster cast of a "deformed trout" made by Victorian eccentric and naturalist Frank Buckland (I'm told that Frank liked to sample unconventionally sourced meat, so when he heard a panther had died at London Zoo, he arranged for a couple of chops to be sent his way). The second item is a nineteenth century 'dog buoy': a fishing net float made from the skin of a dog. Dogs, it would seem, were once bred especially for the purpose!

See page 29 for illustrations of the above.

Adam G. Bell
Editor, *SHCG News*

Issue 74 Contents

BULLETIN BOARD

Notice of AGM	3
Tools of the Trade	4
SHCG Conference 2015	4
Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Grants	4
SHCG e-mail list	5
AIM Advocacy Toolkit	5
Huguenot Summer	6
South and East	7
Museums Federation	7
Women's History Network Prize	7
M&S Company Archive	8
International Museum Day	9
Reviewing and	9
Rationalising Collections	9
Museums Freecycle Scheme	9
Daily Herald Archive	10
Maney Publishing	11

THEORY & PRACTICE

A Patchwork Museum	12
Unlocked: Collections + Creativity	14
Bona to Vada your Dolly Old Eek!	16
Revealing the User Voice	19

REVIEWS

SHCG Conference 2014:	20
Deep Impact	
Exploring Sexuality at the	24
Wellcome Collection	

OBJECT FOCUS

Noah's Arks	27
Bizarre Collections!	29

TEA BREAK

Heckling Hitler	30
SHCG Trustee Contacts	31



6. Huguenot Summer



12. A Patchwork Museum



20. SHCG Conference 2014

SHCG Matters

Notice of AGM

The AGM will be held on 18 June 2015 at Derby Museum and Art Gallery. All SHCG members are welcome to attend, whether attending conference or not. Nominations for new Trustees, motions for discussion and apologies should be submitted to Jenny Brown, SHCG Secretary by 5pm on 18 May 2015. Please e-mail jenbrown@aberdeencity.gov.uk for further information.

Jenny Brown

SHCG Trustee
jenbrown@aberdeencity.gov.uk



Derby Museum and Art Gallery

Tools of the Trade

Since the last update in *SHCG News*, the Tools of the Trade films project has been completed. There are now eight films available to view on SHCG's YouTube channel. The films cover the tools and the trades of the Blacksmith; Rope Working and Rigging; Sail, Sack and Canvas Working; Leather Workers; and the Cooper.



A Cooper uses a Cresset which is placed inside the cask to fire it, adding steam to the process. Image courtesy of Luke Unsworth and Sarah Hayes

The original aim of the project was to produce high quality films that enabled museum professionals to identify tools within their social history collections. We also hoped the films would add to the viewer's contextual knowledge of when and how these tools were used and made, enabling collections to be used more effectively.

The SHCG Trustees and firstBASE Editorial Committee are very

pleased with the films, and we hope you'll use and share them with your colleagues and volunteers. You can find the films by searching on www.shcg.org.uk/firstBASE-home or by going to SHCG's YouTube channel.

We're currently carrying out some evaluation of the project, so if you do have any comments you'd like to share please e-mail me at emma.harper@postalheritage.org.uk. Finally, I'd like to take this

chance to thank our Project Co-Ordinator Sarah Hayes, our film maker Luke Unsworth, and all the participants who have helped to make this project such a success.

Emma Harper
SHCG Trustee
emma.harper@postalheritage.org.uk

SHCG Conference 2015

Join us for SHCG's 2015 conference 'A toast to the future! New ways of engaging' on Thursday 18 June at Derby Museum and Art Gallery and Friday 19 June at Millennium Gallery, Sheffield.

This year's conference includes interactive workshops, tours and presentations on a wide range of themes: from the super-fans of Dr Who to the Good Humour Club of the eighteenth century, and how you can be effective with

advocacy, to exploring new ways of using digital technology through exciting case studies.

Conference is a great opportunity to hear about the experiences and learning from a range of institutions across the country, to take part in valuable knowledge building workshops, and to have the opportunity to network with others in the sector.

You can get a ten per cent discount

on the full conference package when you book with our early bird offer (discount available up to 5pm on Thursday 23 April). To book, and for information about the free place scheme (deadline 23 April, terms and conditions apply), please visit www.shcg.org.uk/conf15.

Jemma Conway and Verity Smith
SHCG Trustees
jemmaconway@barnsley.gov.uk
veritys10@gmail.com

Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Grants

Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Grants provide £50,000 annually for travel and other practical costs to help curators undertake collection and exhibition research projects. Since its inception 160 curators and researchers have been helped at more than 100 institutions. Applications under £1,500 can be accepted at any time, while applications over this amount are considered three times a year. The

next deadlines for submissions are 3 June and 23 September 2015.

Further information, including eligibility criteria and details of how to apply, can be found on the Art Fund website: www.artfund.org/supporting-museums/jonathan-ruffer-curatorial-grants. If you are interested in making an application, please telephone the Programmes office at the Art Fund on 0207 225

4816 for more information and to discuss your proposal. We will not process any applications that have not been approved for submission in advance by the Programmes office.

Rachael Browning
Programmes Manager, Projects Art Fund
rbrowning@artfund.org

SHCG e-mail list

Tooth keys, tipper toilets and oxen shoes! We've had a bumper time over the last few months on the list. Mystery objects have been appearing on a regular basis, with list members succeeding in identifying almost all of them. Amongst the varied items that our pooled knowledge has helped with are oxen shoes, tooth keys, a gas meter, a sailmaker's stiletto and a sickle user's finger protector. The e-mail list has also proved a useful arena to get recommendations for services, including copywriting, conservators for stone work, and exhibition designers. And there have also been really useful conversations around how to deal with asbestos in cookers, where to find a working Edwardian tipper

toilet, and advice on the best technical kit (be it a projector or scanner) to buy.

The list is a great benefit of SHCG membership, but it relies on having a wide network of people for the exchange of knowledge, advice, and often a bit of humour. If you're a member of the group but not yet on our e-mail list, why not sign up and give it a go? All you need to do is e-mail shcg-list-request@jiscmail.ac.uk, stating your name and type of membership.

Don't forget, if getting lots of e-mails in your inbox fills you with dread, it is possible to opt for a weekly summary of what's been happening on the list – just make sure to mention this when you sign up.

Connect with SHCG

In addition to the e-mail list, we also publicise our events and activities via our website and social media accounts, so please feel free to visit www.shcg.org.uk, follow us on Twitter @SHCG1 and like us on Facebook (search for "social history curators group"). If you're coming to conference this year, we'll be using #SHCG15 to tweet about all the goings on!



Catherine Newley
SHCG Trustee
catherine.newley@stalbans.gov.uk



Decorative object, 12 cm long and made of bone, identified as a sailmaker's stiletto for making holes in canvas. Submitted by Ciara Canning on behalf of Lisa Little at Norfolk Museum Service. Image courtesy of Ciara Canning

AIM Advocacy Toolkit

The Association of Independent Museums (AIM) has produced a practical advocacy toolkit that will be useful for independent museums, those with local authority funding, university museums or anyone who needs to be able to advocate better for their museum. The new AIM Advocacy Toolkit, supported by Arts Council England and developed by DC Research is designed to help museums make convincing connections between their activities, and the contribution

these activities make to the wider social and environmental outcomes that are important to their partners and funders. It can be used by all museums across the UK and comprises an impact evaluation/assessment framework which has been tested using evidence from a number of AIM member museums.

You can find further information about the new toolkit, and download the associated

documents from the AIM website: www.aim-museums.co.uk/content/evidencing_social_and_environmental_impacts_of_museums/. DC Research will also be leading a session on how to use the Toolkit at the AIM Conference in June 2015.

Tamalie Newbery
Executive Director, Association of Independent Museums
tamalie@aim-museums.co.uk

Huguenot Summer



Above: A Spitalfields silk dress, dating from around 1765. Owned by Dan Cruickshank, a Huguenots of Spitalfields Trustee. Right: A gentleman's waistcoat, woven by Huguenot weavers, displayed at Dennis Severs' House. Inset: A Spitalfields garden looking through to Fournier Street, where the finest early eighteenth century houses in London can be seen.

The Huguenots of Spitalfields is a registered charity. Our focus is heritage and education, highlighting the contribution the Huguenots made to this country. They transformed the skills-base, revitalising the textile industry, and their involvement in the City of London - banking, insurance, stockbroking - was crucial. They were thrifty, talented, industrious, and the first refugees, bringing among other things the Protestant work ethic (and oxtail soup!).

Over 50,000 Huguenots came to England, mainly to Soho to be near the Court, and to Spitalfields, where there was already a weaving community. Outside of London, they also settled in towns like Bideford and Norwich. Never before, until very recent times, had England received so many immigrants. As a result, one in six of us have Huguenot ancestry.

In the Spring of 2015, the Huguenot Heritage Centre will

open in Rochester, and the Duke of Buccleuch will be staging a Huguenot exhibition at Boughton Hall - often referred to as the English Versailles.

This year the Huguenots of Spitalfields will be staging its third Festival - Huguenot Summer - which will run from June to September 2015. Partners include the V&A, Museum of London, British Museum, Courtauld Institute, Dr Johnson's House, Natural History Museum, and the Fan Museum. The London Metropolitan University - Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design - is organising a cross-faculty project and the University of Kent have convened a study day: the Huguenots and Walloons of Kent and South East England.

A full programme of events and booking details can be found at www.huguenotsofspitalfields.org. SHCG members are invited to hold their own events on a

Huguenot theme - such as talks, walks and displays - which can be added to the programme. For more information, please contact Charlie de Wet: info@huguenotsofspitalfields.org.

Alongside the Huguenot Summer festival, the charity has developed Huguenot Traces - also accessed through our website - which invites contributions of information about Huguenot buildings, artworks, roads, architecture and artefacts. SHCG members are encouraged to add details of objects in their collections with Huguenot links, as well as highlighting them on their own websites, as a means of recognising and promoting Huguenot history in their localities.

Charlie de Wet
Chair
The Huguenots of Spitalfields
info@huguenotsofspitalfields.org

South and East Museums Federation



The South and East Museums Federation (SEMF) is an independent membership organisation which aims to promote, support and develop our members on a local and national level. Members benefit from networking opportunities, behind the scenes visits and an annual European study trip - all contributing to Continuing Professional Development.

In July 2014 we held a study day in Cambridge. It was the first SEMF event I'd attended, and I really enjoyed the experience. Being part of the Federation is a great opportunity to visit different places, meet other people who work in museums, and to hear from them about projects they're working on.

Sally Ackroyd was at our London study day in November 2014. Sally said: "We looked at two very different approaches to First World War commemorations, in two very different museums. At the Garden Museum we met with the Curator of *Gardens at War*. He

talked us through the development of that exhibition, and how they chose to work with a floral artist to provide impact and atmosphere. We then went on to discuss the plans for their big redevelopment.

"Next, we met staff at the Imperial War Museum who gave us a great insight into the development of their new First World War galleries. Overall, it was an extremely thought provoking and rewarding day, with visits to contrasting museums and of course the all-important discussion with colleagues about new approaches and techniques to try."

David Juler joined us on our Brussels study trip in January 2015. David said: "Brussels boasts that it has around 100 museums. So, what better place to go for a museum study trip? We visited The Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, the Comic Art Museum, and the Museum of the City of Brussels. This provided the opportunity to explore galleries, view exhibitions

and meet staff and volunteers. It was an interesting situation in which to network and discuss the sector, and to learn about the problems faced by museum professionals in Brussels, as well as their successes."

After a visit to Reading in March 2015, our next meet is at Gainsborough's House, Sudbury, on 13 May. Why not come and join us?

Membership of SEMF is open to everyone working in museums and galleries in the area, including Berkshire in the west and Norfolk in the east. Our members include people working in large and small museums, volunteers, students and freelance consultants. All are welcome. Annual membership costs £10: find out more on our website www.semfed.org.uk.

Lauren Ephithite
Curatorial Assistant
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Women's History Network Prize

Have you carried out a local or community history project with, about or for women? Did your project participants produce a documentary, pamphlet, book, exhibition, artefact or event to share your findings? Was or will the project be completed between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2015?

If the answer is yes, then please consider nominating yourself for the Women's History Network Community History Prize, sponsored by the History Press. This annual prize of £500 is awarded for a community history project by, about or for women in a particular locale or community, which has led to the production of

a documentary, pamphlet, book, exhibition, artefact or event. The activity must have been completed between the dates noted above.

The Prize will be judged by a panel comprising representatives of the Women's History Network (WHN) and the History Press, as well as archivists and community historians, and awarded at the WHN National Conference in September 2015.

Individuals or groups can nominate themselves or someone else. For further guidance or advice on the application process, e-mail Professor Maggie Andrews: maggie.andrews@worc.ac.uk.

Completed nomination forms and supporting evidence must be submitted by 31 May 2015.

To see details of last year's winner and those projects awarded a Highly Commended status, see: www.womenshistorynetwork.org/2014-community-history-prizewinner-announced.

Maggie Andrews
Professor of Cultural History
University of Worcester
maggie.andrews@worc.ac.uk

M&S Company Archive

Marks & Spencer holds a unique place in British social and retail history. The M&S Company Archive tells the remarkable story of the business, from Michael Marks' Penny Bazaar stall at Leeds Kirkgate Market in 1884, to our position today as an international retailer. The Michael Marks Building at the University of Leeds houses the collection, along with the free *Marks in Time* Exhibition.

The archive was established in 1983 when M&S appointed a company archivist to bring together historic records which were scattered across numerous head office departments. Located above Wood Green store in London for many years, the collection was moved to its new home in Leeds in 2012. As well as the exhibition, a reading room service was introduced, which is open to students, academics, the general public, and M&S employees.

The archive collection represents the entire corporate memory of a leading and iconic British retailer, and is the sole source for key primary source material covering all aspects of M&S. The collection includes annual reports and accounts, Board and Chairman's papers, financial and sales reports, HR and legal records, employee magazines, catalogues, advertising material, film, clothing, food packaging and other merchandise, as well as plans and photographs showing store development.

The collection documents how consumerism has changed from the late nineteenth century to the present, showing changes in how people live, eat, shop and are clothed. The advertising and marketing material is a valuable source for class, gender and communications studies. Innovation in food science and textile technology is well represented, with the collection showing how scientific developments translated to new products, reflecting changing



Advert for St Michael biscuits, 1957. Image courtesy of M&S Company Archive

customer behaviour. The HR records provide information about the history of employee relations and staff welfare. There is material for the local historian too – the collection covers stores across the whole of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and so gives an insight into local communities, high streets, local workforces and customers.

We offer a free schools programme, outreach, and bespoke group travel, as well as exciting events throughout

the year. Our exhibition is open Monday to Friday from 10am-5pm, and the reading room is open Tuesday to Thursday from 10am-12pm and 1pm-4pm. Take a look at our website to find out more: www.marksintime.marksandspencer.com.

Katie Entwistle

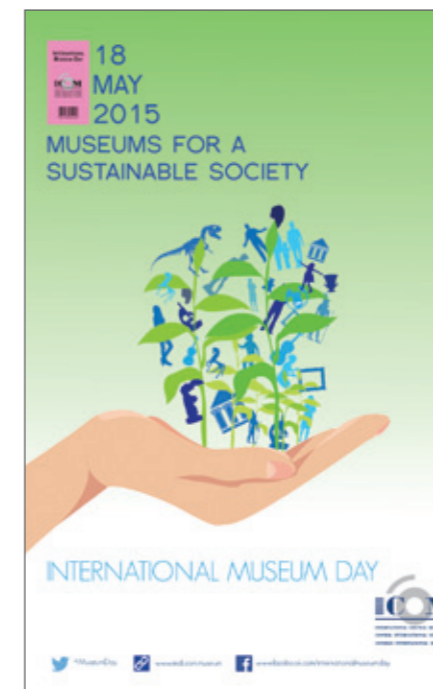
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International Museum Day

Every year since 1977, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has organised International Museum Day (IMD). On this day, participating museums plan creative events and activities related to the IMD theme, engage with their public and highlight the importance of the role of museums as institutions that serve society and its development.

Organised on and around 18 May each year, the events and activities planned to celebrate IMD can last a day, a weekend or a whole week. In 2014, more than 35,000 museums participated in over 140 countries from all continents.

In 2015, the event will celebrate the theme: Museums for a Sustainable Society. One of the most important contemporary challenges shared by people all over the world is to adapt new ways of living and to develop within the limits of nature. The theme Museums for a Sustainable Society recognises the role of museums in raising public awareness about the need for a society that is less wasteful, more co-operative



International Museum Day poster
Image courtesy of ICOM

and uses resources in a way that respects living systems.

Find out more from the ICOM website, where you can get advice about how to go about planning your IMD activities, as well as download the IMD poster, postcard and web banner: <http://network.icom.museum/international-museum-day>

Reviewing and Rationalising Collections

To help museums review and rationalise collections the Collections Trust has produced a guide and a series of good practice case studies. *A Guide to Selecting a Review Methodology for Collections Rationalisation* by Heather Lomas aims to support museums in considering and selecting appropriate methodologies to guide the rationalisation process. It also identifies issues to consider and the support available. The good practice case studies reveal how five institutions went about reviewing their collections. The institutions were: The Polar Museum; The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; North Hertfordshire Museums Service; Leicestershire County Council Museums Service; and Historic Royal Palaces. The guide and case studies were produced with the support of Arts Council England. They can be viewed and downloaded from www.collectionstrust.org.uk/openculture2014. Scroll down to the 'Collections Management Policies / 2.2 Development Policy' section.

John Woolley

Development Director
Collections Trust
john@collectionstrust.org.uk

Museums Freecycle Scheme

Museum Freecycle UK is a group on Freecycle for UK museums and galleries to exchange exhibition build items and other materials for free, in order to reduce the environmental footprint of the industry.

The Freecycle Network™ is made up of 5,221 groups with 320 members across the globe. It's a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free, and thus keeping good

stuff out of landfills. Membership is free, and everything posted must be free, legal and appropriate for all ages.

To view the items being given away or sought in Museum Freecycle UK, you must be a member of the group. This group is an entirely new, beta concept for UK accredited museums and associated organisations. It is where you can post build items that you no longer require and don't have

room to store. The recipient picks up the items when and where you want, eliminating shipping costs, disposal fees and helping to keep tons of good stuff out of the landfill! The benefits are mutual; a win-win if ever there were one. Tell your colleagues at other museums. The more museums participating, the better it is for all.

See: <https://groups.freecycle.org/group/MuseumFreecycleUK/posts/all>

Daily Herald Archive



Above: Rent strike demonstration in the East End, 7 August 1938.

Left: Timmy the cat, guardian to the prize budgerigars owned by Mr Daniel Brown of Gateshead.

Images courtesy of Daily Herald Archive, National Media Museum Collection / SSPL

The *Daily Herald* (1912-1964) was one of Britain's most popular daily newspapers with a large, left-leaning working-class readership. Born out of a strike-sheet produced by militant printers, the paper retained strong links with the Labour movement throughout its existence, and was the official paper of the TUC between 1922 and 1930. In 1933 it was the best-selling daily paper in the world, and throughout the 30s, 40s and 50s it was a common feature of British life. However by the 1960s it was losing readers, and in 1964 it was rebranded and re-launched as the *Sun* and subsequently sold to Rupert Murdoch.

In this period advances in printing and camera technology enabled an explosion in photojournalism and the *Herald*, in common with most papers, developed a large photo library. Organised by topic, place and people, by the time the *Herald* closed this library had grown to contain around three million photographs. It would be possible for the hard-pressed picture editor to easily lay his hands on stock images for, say, the county of Argyll, or to pull the original prints from a recent story of violent death in Wakefield from the box file marked "Murders/ Yorkshire/N-Z"!

The archive, acquired by the National Media Museum in the 1980s, provides a remarkable resource for photographic and social historians, and for picture researchers. Visits to view the archive can be booked by contacting research@nationalmediamuseum.org.uk, and digital images are available via the Science and Society Picture Library (www.scienceandsociety.co.uk/).

Michael Terwey

Head of Collections and Exhibitions
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Museum Studies from Maney Publishing

To read these journals online, or for more information on how to submit or subscribe, visit the journal homepages as detailed below.



Museums & Social Issues

www.maneyonline.com/msi

Museums & Social Issues focuses on the interaction between compelling social issues and the way that museums respond to, influence, or become engaged with them. The journal responds to topics such as race, immigration, health care, democratic process and more.

The journal is available online from **Volume 1, 2006**.



Museum History Journal

www.maneyonline.com/mhj

Museum History Journal interprets "museum" broadly to provide a multidisciplinary forum for studies of a variety of museum-related topics including the histories of institutions, exhibitions, collections, architecture, and individuals' biographies.

The journal is available online from **Volume 1, 2008**.



Costume

www.maneyonline.com/cos

Costume is a scholarly, refereed publication presenting current research into historic and contemporary dress. The journal publishes articles with a worldwide remit; it maintains a balance between practice and theory and concentrates on the social significance of dress.

The journal is available online from **Volume 1, 1965**.



Textile History

www.maneyonline.com/tex

Textile History is an internationally recognised, peer-reviewed journal and one of the leading publications in its field. The journal's remit has always been to facilitate the publication of high-quality research and discussion in all aspects of scholarship arising from the history of textiles and dress.

The journal is available online from **Volume 1, 1968**.

Recommend these journals to your librarian for 2015

If you feel that a subscription to these journals would be beneficial to your library, please recommend them to your library or use our online journal recommendation form to do so! Simply complete the online form and we'll email your librarian with information about your chosen journal or subject collection:

www.maneyonline.com/recommend

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A Patchwork Museum

In November 2013 the Museum of East Anglian Life successfully applied for funding, as a part of SHARE Museums East's 'Community Cabinet' project, to set up a programme of temporary displays curated by local community groups. This work was underpinned by the Museum's involvement in the 'Our Museum' initiative - funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation - which aims to facilitate a process of development and organisational change within museums and galleries that are committed to working in active partnership with their communities.

To get the 'Community Cabinet' project started and to build upon an existing relationship with the Acorns Family Centre in Stowmarket, I approached the Young Parents Group, which meets at the Centre each week. Like most relationships, we started by having a chat.

We spoke frankly about the outcomes that had been pre-agreed with the funders, the different approaches they could take to the project, and more generally what the group thought of the Museum. It was the last of these conversations that was the most telling - I couldn't have hoped for a better list of things that a group of young people might name when asked to describe the Museum of East Anglian Life. Everything from "modern" to "conservation" and "family days out" to "having fun" was dutifully written down on the large piece of paper that I put in the centre of the young parents and their children. The group wanted to be polite and encouraging, but when asked if they had ever visited the Museum, most of them said no. I think we'd all respond similarly if asked to describe something that

we thought should or might be important, but not really anything to do with us.

And who could blame them? As a sector we acknowledge that there are significant barriers to encouraging people to visit museums, including entry fees, the lack of provision for visitors with accessibility needs or those travelling with young children, the perception that it's going to be 'boring', amongst other things. Together these obstacles reinforce the idea that museums aren't a 'place for them'. The group decided that they would like to visit the Museum to see where their 'Community Cabinet' might be displayed, to have a look around the site and see some of the costume that was in the collection.



The young parents made blankets and toys, appliquéd with their children's initials and other designs.

Image courtesy of Museum of East Anglian Life

At the end of the group's guided tour, one of the members asked me if they were 'allowed back' or if they had to ask someone first. It had never occurred to me that no one had ever told them that the Museum was run as a service to be used or that we worked for them as much as we work for anyone. As a response to this we now ensure that the Acorns Family Centre receives copies of our posters and fliers to distribute amongst the people who use the service but we've still got a long way to go before we adequately meet this challenge. I can't help but wonder if, as a sector, do we need to be more explicit in our invites? We're good at targeting groups that the sector would traditionally consider 'hard to reach' for project work, but do we do enough to invite all kinds of people to be visitors?

After our tour and a bit more chatting, our project planning began in earnest. Although the Museum of East Anglian Life has a strong reputation for working in partnership, we wanted to take this even further. I recognise that ideally we would have worked with the group to put together the



Alison Stockmarr, artist and session facilitator, with the young parents and their children, showing off their work.

Image courtesy of Museum of East Anglian Life

funding bid but SHARE Museums East were incredibly flexible and as long as we had a cabinet at the end of the project, they were happy for the group to tackle the 'Community Cabinet' challenge in any way they chose, which allowed us to start from scratch (nearly!).

Together we laid out the rules of our partnership. I agreed, on behalf of the Museum, that we would provide a space for the group, provide healthy snacks and be honest with them. The group agreed that all decisions would be made by a vote, meetings would be held at the Museum on a fortnightly basis, and we would complete the project by the end of October 2014. We had no formal agreements in place and nothing was signed; the project was based purely on trust.

A partnership agreement is designed to 'cover your back' and help ward-off potential confusion or failure. For many, perhaps nearly all partnerships, this is completely appropriate. For this project, however, it felt like using a traditional paper document would have forced the group to work with the Museum's traditional

structure, rather than challenging the Museum to try working in new ways. In retrospect, I could have offered the choice of using a formal agreement to the group, but I was concerned that this would put up a barrier between the Museum and the young parents. It was important that they were in control of the project, and using 'our system' would have removed some of this power.

With these ground rules in place, their work began. The group chose the type of evaluation to use, how often to meet, who they wanted to work with, what interpretation to use to explain their work, who to invite to the 'Community Cabinet' opening, how to spend the budget and all the other decisions, big and small, that create an exhibition.

As the group had expressed an interest in the Museum's costume collection, we looked through boxes of delicate lace dresses, bonnets and christening gowns. Having been inspired by the collection, the group decided that they wanted to work with fabrics. They chose to make bunting, blankets and soft toys made from old baby clothes, and



A young parent gives her child a keepsake toy that she'd handmade.

Image courtesy of Museum of East Anglian Life

personalised their creations by appliquéing their children's initials and names.

I started this project with the hope that I was going to welcome the group into the Museum, but instead I realised that the young parents had welcomed me into their group. By handing over the decision-making process, their display was intensely personal and represented their relationship with their children.

One of the group members summed it up best: "It may not be perfect or straight, but I made it and no one can take that away."

A full evaluation of the project can be found on the Museum's website: www.eastanglianlife.org.uk/geisha/assets/files/Community%20Cabinet%20Final%20Report_YPG2014.pdf

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Unlocked: Collections + Creativity

Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service's *Unlocked: Collections + Creativity* project ran between April 2013 and March 2014, with funding from the Arts Council England Strategic Support Fund.

The project showcased a new way of experiencing the collections at Colchester and Ipswich Museums. It focused on the archaeology collection at Colchester and the world collection at Ipswich. Community groups, young people and families worked with the objects and local arts practitioners to share cultural knowledge, personal stories and instinctual reactions through a variety of art forms. Improved documentation captured these new perspectives, and links to online media were used to unlock the collections to new audiences.



Unlocked Unleashed community pop-up exhibition, February 2014.

Image courtesy of Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service

The *Unlocked* project embodied the Museum Service's commitment to putting audiences at the heart of interpretation in order to create new understandings of the collections. How we access museum objects and document community activity is at the heart of the project. The short time span of the project made it necessary to focus in-depth on a few objects in the collections, rather than a wide number in less detail. 15 objects from the world collection and 15 objects of Roman archaeology were chosen to cover a range of materials, use and form, and to have wide appeal to the target audiences: communities, young

people and families. The object-centred concept of *Unlocked* proved a major success factor:

"It was good having things at close proximity - it improved the kids' observation skills and behaviour, and having the precious thing was really good. It was nice being able to pick things - figurative things that had a starting point such as the dog, and relate it to modern day concepts and compare with old and new." - Artist.

Partnerships have been at the heart of *Unlocked*. Collaboration with our audiences in both towns has happened through close partnership with local authorities, arts organisations and further and higher education providers.

We worked with on-site and neighbouring arts partners Pacitti Company, New Wolsey Theatre, Firstsite and the Minorities Gallery. The project outputs included performances by youth theatres, arts-based investigations by under 5's, family holiday activities, supplementary school art projects, and site-specific course content with further and higher education providers: Colchester Institute, Suffolk New College and University College Suffolk.

One arts partner highlighted the originality of being able to interpret the objects from scratch:

"the scope to anonymise the objects and make that open - remove the context and start afresh. It was a kind of reverse journey - intriguing."

The work with Pacitti Company has been innovative and included five project strands under the title 'Performing Collections'. There are relatively few examples of a partnership between a museum and visual and performance artists like those associated with the Pacitti Company. Their mission is to "pursue excellence in making, commissioning,

curating and delivering high quality, original, interdisciplinary works of art and live events by engaging in rigorous research and development activity, resulting in outcomes and distribution initiatives that are of value to the widest audiences possible". The process has been an enlightening and challenging one. Artist-led research has posed interesting and provocative questions that suggest what radical change within the sector might look like.

Community activity in museums is not always visible to visitors. New technology enables us to share and celebrate fresh perspectives of collections with more people, including those that might not usually visit. If you tweet, post, or pin you can follow the *Unlocked* project and see some of the fantastic work that has happened, via Twitter, Facebook or Pinterest. Twitter has proven the most successful, as we have more than doubled our followers within the activity period.

A key part of our community activity has been with supplementary schools. Focused on the 15 objects from the world collection, including a carved wooden dog and decorative gourd, young people from the

Carved wooden duck, Unlocked object 2013/14.

Image courtesy of Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service



New Wolsey Theatre NT2 group perform at the *Unlocked Unleashed* week, February 2014.
Image courtesy of Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service



Portuguese, African, and Anglo-Chinese communities responded to the collections through dance and sculpture.

Supplementary schools include complementary, community and Saturday schools. In Suffolk, supplementary schools operate mainly at weekends and the majority are staffed by tutors and volunteers from the communities they serve. Some offer study support for National Curriculum subjects, some community language teaching and religious studies, and all offer cultural activities of a broad and varied nature.

The *Unlocked* objects were introduced at the start of both the sculpture and dance projects, but a traditional interpretation was not offered to the pupils. The role of the professional dancer, sculptor, and the 'Unlocked' Community Engagement Officer was not to reinforce an interpretation, but to draw out new ideas and references from the pupils through

exchange. The final performance and artworks were multi-layered, reflecting not only a new unique interpretation of the objects, but also the new meanings and understandings that emerged from the young people over time.

Some of the families involved in this project were not previously aware of the museum, but were drawn in by their children and many have visited since. The supplementary schools projects have been a collaborative process and resulted in the formation of a 'Community Leader's Panel' at Ipswich Museum, and new partnerships between the museum service, the Suffolk Supplementary School Partnership, and the community team that lead this work at the British Museum. The Portuguese and Eastern European supplementary schools now use Ipswich Museum regularly and are collaborating with the museum for an art and landscape project in July 2015.

It's exciting to think how communities have connected, and will continue to connect with museum collections over time, and how these new partnerships will grow. We believe the documentation of people's responses to the 30 objects will leave a legacy of today for tomorrow, with digital technology acting as a tool to document as well as present new ideas.

Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service will be building on the learning from *Unlocked* to deliver a three year project called *The Training Museum*, funded by the Arts Council England Resilience Fund 2015/2018.

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Bona to Vada your Dolly Old Eek!



The Head Archivist at the Fales Archive.
Image courtesy of Susan Lord

Polari Mission started life in 2012 when artists Jez Dolan and Joseph Richardson set out on a mission to save Polari: a bold yet secretive part of gay history, and one of the world's most endangered languages.

In 2014 the two artists were invited to exhibit in Bury Art Museum's fourth *Text Festival* which ran from April to August. The festival is an internationally recognised event investigating contemporary language art (poetry, text art, sound and media text, and live art). *Polari Mission*, with its focus on an endangered language, fitted the *Text Festival* brief perfectly. Bury's *Polari Mission* exhibition was curated by myself, Jez and Joseph, and a body of new artwork was created especially for it.

The Polari Language

Polari was first heard as long ago as the eleventh century. Known as 'Thieves' Cant', it was used by this underworld culture to disguise illicit behaviour. It then resurfaced as a distinct subculture in the early 1700s, in the form of 'mollies' - men who dressed up in feminine costume for fun, and met in ale houses under the cover of darkness. For them, it was a secret means of communication.

The Polari language has many influences and cultural crossovers, including Italian, Yiddish, Romany/gypsy, Cockney rhyming slang, and the slang used in the travelling circus and fairground communities, but its growing use, ironically, started its decline.

It reached its apogee in the 1960s on the radio programme *Round the Horne*, through the characters Julian and Sandy, two out-of-work and explicitly camp actors who spoke in Polari. But this meant that people outside gay culture started to understand it. Polari lost its impact and fell out of use.

Right: Susan Lord and Jez Dolan installing the personal archiving cases.
Image courtesy of Steve Walton

The Exhibition

The *Polari Mission* exhibition took place in Bury Art Museum and, in order that their mission should progress, the artists created new artworks such as screen prints and 'quiche plates' (a quirky interpretation on the ubiquitous pie chart). The artists, after an extensive tour of the museum stores, were also keen to display museum objects alongside their artworks, such as items from a Punch and Judy puppet collection; a glass rolling pin used by sailors as a good luck charm; and a pair of size eight red patent leather stiletto shoes, all of which have links to the Polari language.

Also on display was a Polari etymology, which begins in the eleventh century with the Thieves' Cant and ends in the present day with *Polari Mission*. A Polari flash card game created by the artists invited the viewer to brush up on their Polari vocabulary, and a Polari app was available to visitors on an iPad in the gallery foyer, enabling users to search the Polari language and post their comments via Twitter. Two video pieces, *Cottage* and *Theatre Curtains*, could be viewed in a small display space just off the main museum stairway - aptly named, as it would happen, The Toilet Gallery.

The exhibition also featured a display of personal archives made up of items on loan from members of Bury Council's LGBT group (the artists ran personal archiving sessions with the group prior to the exhibition). Jez and Joseph were interested in exploring

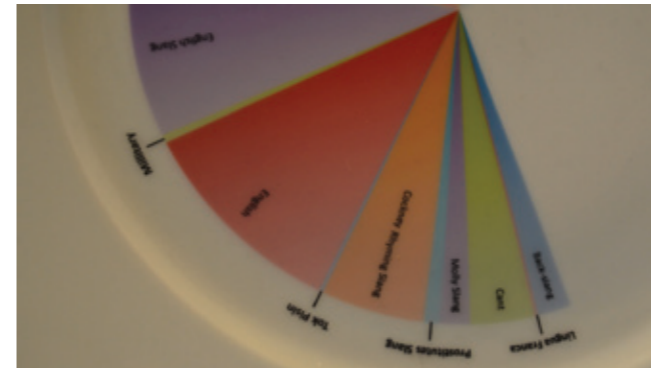


Above: Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence doll.

Below: Quiche Plate.

Right: Flyers given out at Manchester gay club nights in the 1980s.

Images courtesy of Susan Lord.



people's feelings around 'coming out', and wanted the objects to reflect this.

Polari Mission Archive

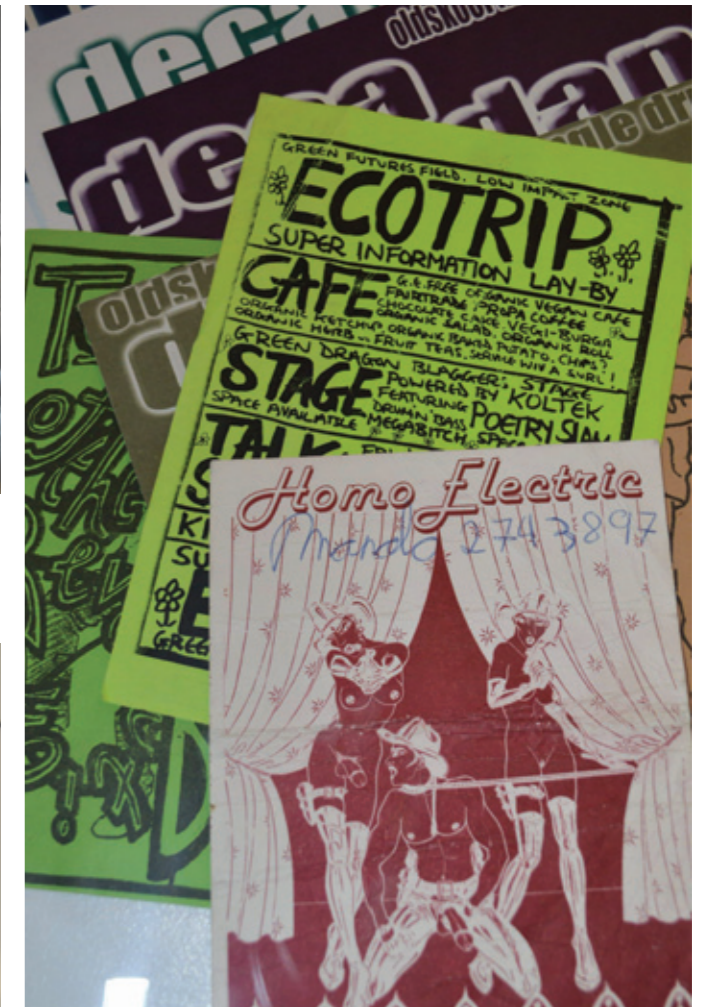
The artists saw their mission as being a continuous piece of work, and at the end of the exhibition they agreed to donate their *Polari Mission* research to Bury's Text Art Archive. The Text Art Archive, based in Bury Art Museum, was established in March 2013. It was set up in conjunction with the Centre for Poetics at Birkbeck University of London and Bury Archives Service, with the intention of documenting, securing, and making easily available information on the history and practice of language art.

The archive holds hundreds of physical and digital items

including scanned images, correspondence, artists' personal documents, audio, video, and original artworks. What makes this archive stand out is its mix of art and archival material, and the fact that it holds the largest dedicated collection of original language artworks in the country. The Text Art Archive's aim is to stimulate critical thinking and writing, and to re-imagine the role of an archive by unlocking its artistic wealth, inviting artists to work with the archive and create new works. The artwork can be accessed via Bury Archives' online database: <http://archives.bury.gov.uk/>.

Progressing the Archive - NYC Curatorial Study Trip

In May 2014 I secured funding from the Art Fund's Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Grants



programme to fund a study trip to the Fales Archive & Special Collections, and the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York City. The Fales collection includes the Downtown Collection and The Riot Grrrl Collection, which feature primary resources dealing with feminism, queer theory, gender theory and punk activism, the downtown New York arts scene, DIY culture, and music history. The Downtown Collection is unique in that it has art at its core, as does Bury's Text Art Archive.

The Lesbian Herstory Archives, established in 1972, is home to the world's largest collection of materials by and about lesbians and their communities. What is interesting about the Herstory Archives is that they openly admit that some of their principles are a radical departure from



Items displayed at the Fales Archive. Image courtesy of Susan Lord



Items displayed at The Lesbian Herstory Archives. Image courtesy of Susan Lord

conventional archival practices. I met with the co-founder Deborah Edel to discuss these radical departures, and to explore new ways of working with archives.

I was particularly interested in exploring the terminology that the two New York archives used to catalogue their collections, and the language they used to interpret their exhibitions. I wanted to discover the ways they draw upon and showcase their gay legacy materials. I was intrigued to find out whether, for instance, they used the words gay/homosexual/lesbian/transgender when cataloguing, or did they omit

them altogether? How did they decide whether an item should be classed as 'gay' and put into their collection? I was also interested in seeing their collecting policies, to see if it was made clear to donors that their items would be described as gay and would be interpreted as such, and to find out how the donors feel about this?

My research trip fed directly into how we categorised the Polari research archive here at Bury. The *Polari Mission* research archive is the first queer collection to be donated to Bury's Text Art Archive, and we wanted the documentation

and categorisation of it to be totally visible and transparent, right from the outset; we wanted to facilitate marginalised voices. We are in the exciting position of putting in place a completely new and transparent approach to documenting and categorising this part of queer history.

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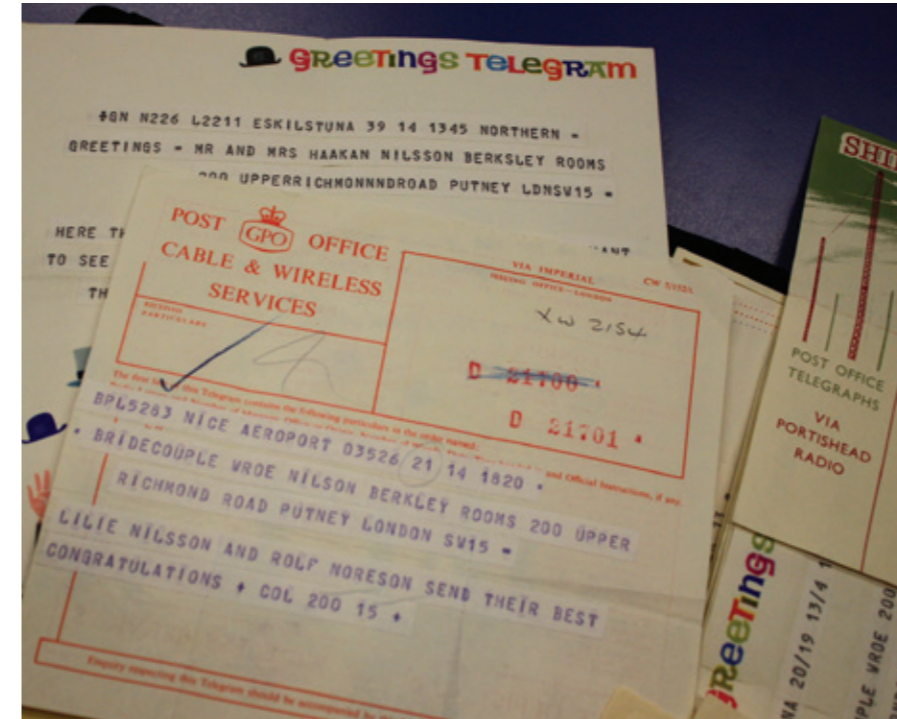


Deborah Edel, co-founder of The Lesbian Herstory Archives. Image courtesy of Susan Lord



The personal archiving cases in *Polari Mission*. Image courtesy of Susan Lord

Revealing the User Voice



Above: Examples of some of the telegrams shared by the public. Below right: The hard of hearing group in a project session. Images courtesy of Science Museum

Science and technology collections often represent powerful social histories, but not all science museums take the approach of bringing these human stories to the forefront when it comes to exhibitions and object interpretation. More often than not, peoples' voices are heard through the biographies of major names: famous scientists, important inventors and sector-leading innovators. These powerful figures have traditionally been represented by the white male, and although incredibly important and relevant to the history of science, these figures prove difficult for everyday visitors and diverse museum audiences to relate to.

The *Information Age* gallery at London's Science Museum opened in late 2014. It tells the story of over 200 years of innovation in communication and information technologies, through the eyes of those who invented, operated or were affected by each new wave of technology. From telegraphy and crystal radio sets through to mobile phones and the World

Wide Web, the gallery aims to reveal the personal stories behind both unique and familiar objects.

To help uncover these stories, a number of participation and collaborative collecting projects were delivered as part of the gallery's development. One of these focussed around the area of the gallery dedicated to telling the history of the World Wide Web. The introduction of Web dramatically changed the way people communicate, but in particular it had a significant and unique impact on those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

An everyday object such as a keyboard doesn't necessarily reveal much of this story, when simply displayed in a showcase, but its significance can shift dramatically when told by those who have experienced its impact first-hand. To reveal this user-centred history, a group of hard of hearing participants shared their experiences, and also discussed how best to present these stories to the Museum's visitors. A decision was made to produce a series of

short films to be displayed as part of a digital screen exhibit in the gallery. Together, the group co-curated and developed the concepts for the films, as well as starring in them.

Other projects involved collecting personal telegrams from across the UK and overseas, along with photographs and stories which reveal their relevance; and working with the Samaritans to collect working history objects from their branches, along with emotional and powerful oral histories of what it's like to be a caller and a listener with the service.

But has this approach been a success? Do visitors find it easier to relate to the scientific content through seeing themselves in these technology stories? Or do barriers to engaging with objects of this nature still remain? The Museum is conducting a major piece of summative evaluation, from January to June 2015, to try to find answers to these questions, and to help the Museum move forward with its approach to revealing new personal narratives within its collections. We also invite you to visit the gallery for yourselves of course!

For more information on the *Information Age* gallery and the project's approach to revealing user stories, visit www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/iaparticipants.



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SHCG Conference 2014

Deep Impact: Demonstrating the Value of Social History Collections

Glasgow and Newtongrange,
26-27 June 2014



Above:
Glasgow's Riverside Museum,
location for Day One.
Image courtesy of Jemma Conway

Left:
Delegates perched on one of
Riverside's famous 'grass chairs'.
Image courtesy of Jen Kavanagh

The SHCG annual conference of 2014 focussed on how museums can make an impact on the communities around them, and how this effect can be measured.

Our home on **Day One** was Glasgow's Riverside Museum, a striking re-imagining of a transport museum with stunning architectural features, right on the banks of the Clyde. The first item of the day was a keynote discussion panel featuring four delegates from Glasgow Life, the body responsible for looking after and promoting sport and culture in Glasgow. The panel discussed the ways they embed community engagement within their work and, perhaps more crucially, how they understand the value of what they do.

Mark O'Neill, Glasgow Life's Director of Policy and Research, began by discussing the idea that participation in museums can help to lengthen lives. Health sector studies have shown that mental and cultural stimuli enrich lives, thereby lengthening them, but we do not clearly articulate the method by which this happens. He argued that, as part of

this enrichment, community participation needs to be about reaching specific groups rather than aiming for absolute numbers.

Chris Jamieson, of Glasgow Open Museum, continued by discussing the use of social history collections in community outreach work, and the power that they can have to bring people together and facilitate networks within communities. Nikki Smith, Area Manager for Glasgow Central Hubs, demonstrated that in her work it is essential to facilitate communities accessing cultural experiences in their own space, and on their own terms. Having a venue in the heart of a community and using already established trusted networks in an area, such as Housing Associations and the NHS, is key to engagement in this context.

Lawrence Fitzgerald, manager of the Riverside Museum, concluded by discussing ways of making museums accessible to non-users, and posed this question: if you had £5,000, would you spend it on new content and displays, offer free transport to and from the museum, or create a play

area to make the space more welcoming to families and less intimidating as an institution?

The panel certainly raised challenging questions about how we measure impact, whether that is through statistics, evidence of growing independence in accessing culture, or indeed whether it is measurable at all: how do you measure a smile?

Next up was Jemma Conway talking about Experience Barnsley's year-long project which focussed on the impact on the town of the 1984/85 miners' strike, as told through the voices of those who experienced it, as well as the young people who have grown up in the wake of those turbulent years. The project included inter-generational work between Women Against Pit Closures members and an all-female youth panel; this was particularly inspiring as it allowed the older women to play a key part in helping the younger participants connect with this period in time. To help illustrate this, Jemma showed us a video of all the women singing a WAPC song,

'We are Women, We are Strong!', to which the youth panel had added their own verse.

Watching the video was an emotional experience. The effective and creative dual voice labelling, giving different individuals' stories and reflections on the strike, was something that struck a chord with many of the people that I spoke to. To tell such a charged story in an unbiased yet sympathetic manner, and still succeed in gripping people emotionally, is a really hard balance to strike.

There then followed Maria Erskine's talk on Nottingham Museums and Galleries' innovative work to raise awareness of the city's industrial past whilst also aiming to improve people's health: this used their Players Tobacco archive to link with Nottingham City Council's target to decrease rates of smoking in the area. The project has fantastic potential to have a deep long-term impact, by helping to promote and generate good health choices in Nottingham through developing programmes linking with early intervention and health partners, as well as secondary schools, within the city. This project was remarkably challenging, as it demonstrates how thinking outside of our museology bubble can reveal the potential of social history collections - to impact people's lives beyond the learning or cultural experience that we can often limit ourselves to.

After a delicious lunch our focus switched to the award-winning House of Memories (HoM) programme developed by National Museums Liverpool. Similar to Nottingham, the programme aims to have a positive effect on the health of its users, this time by helping individuals and families to 'live better with dementia' using a range of reminiscence resources including the Memory Toolkit and Memory Suitcases. The project targets those best placed to reach users - the health and social care sector - and currently around 5,000 of these professionals nationwide have

been trained to deliver the HoM resources. Carol Rogers stressed the importance of meeting carers not as curators in a museum, but on their own territories and using their language; of those trained in 2012 only 20 per cent had visited a museum before working with HoM. Statistics like these remind us how inaccessible or intimidating we can sometimes be, as a sector.

The final talk of the day, given by Heather Robertson of Glasgow Life and Alex Papanikolaou of Freedom One Life, focussed on the co-production of a display about wheelchairs at the Riverside Museum. 35 wheelchair users, including Alex, contributed to the development of the display. The project highlighted the importance of building relationships with communities that are the focus of an exhibition; it is often felt that traditional attitudes towards wheelchair users vary between pity and admiration (particularly since London 2012), whereas in reality users want the wheelchair to be viewed as a tool that, with the right physical environment, can be forgotten about. In light of this, users were given the opportunity to decide on the content and key messages of the display; there was no curatorial voice at all.

Projects such as these can allow museum professionals to adapt and develop their own practice.



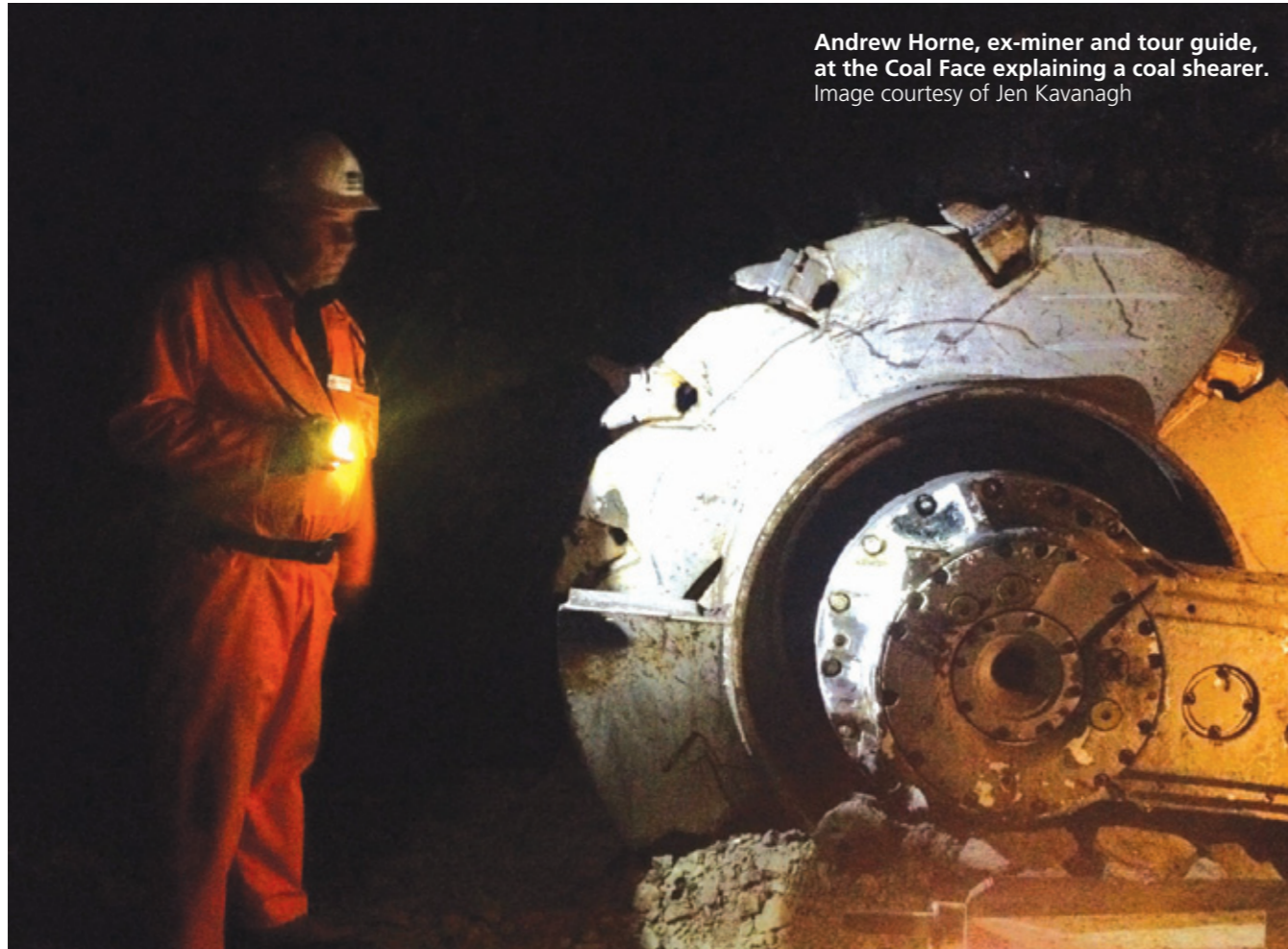
Riverside's 'Infinite Velodrome'.
Image courtesy of Glasgow Museums

We should aim to establish real people at the heart of every display through *speaking* to them. Heather's last words left us with a challenge; is it right that we speak on behalf of other people?

We were then treated to a fabulous tour of the Riverside Museum - a transport museum that has managed to ingeniously weave social history themes and individuals' stories throughout beautifully designed displays. Our guide had lived in Glasgow all his life and his passion for his city, and the stories that have made it and for which it has acted as a backdrop, was clearly visible.

At the AGM the question was posed as to whether the word "curator" in SHCG limits membership. As a curator working within an outreach-focussed team, I think that this conference and much of what SHCG does would be of great value to my colleagues. However, they were not previously aware of SHCG's relevance to them, possibly because of the use of "curator" in the name.

After a visit to the Tenement House museum (the beautifully restored home of Miss Agnes Toward during the early half of the twentieth century) it was onwards to a scrumptious tea at



Andrew Horne, ex-miner and tour guide, at the Coal Face explaining a coal shearer.
Image courtesy of Jen Kavanagh

centre. It was both encouraging and a challenge for us all to see a working example how a museum can be the heartbeat of a community and a resource for all.

After lunch it was time for a pithead tour, the highlight of which was the extraordinary steam-powered winding engine. Our guide, himself a former miner, was both knowledgeable and engaging, and the experience reminded me why I love industrial heritage.

There followed a series of simultaneous sessions, the first of which I opted for was a workshop on improving your museum's impact led by Maurice Davies of the Museum Consultancy. We explored ways of looking above and beyond the occasionally narrow and resource-focussed world of museums when looking to deliver a project intended to have impact in the local community. We were encouraged to create outlines for projects, working backwards from the impact we wished to have, to what we would have to do to make this happen, and then finally

the resources we would need. I found this particularly helpful and strikingly simple, and I shared it with my colleagues upon my return to work.

The other session I attended was focused on building memory walls (displays of social history objects that evoke memories and aid reminiscence), led by Crawford McGugan and Catherine Laing of The Open Museum, Glasgow. We shared the successes and challenges of our own experiences of working with handling collections for older people in particular, such as negotiating for access to particular objects for sessions. We were then given an opportunity to choose objects for a potential wall from a selection from the Open Museum. The session was thought-provoking and useful.

The final talk of the conference was given by Helen McConnell from Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives, who gave a useful insight into the successes and challenges of exploring the use of social media in contemporary

collecting. #BristolatHome was a project that aimed to amass snapshots of everyday life in Bristol during 2013. Although social media has great potential for contemporary collecting, Helen highlighted three challenges: a practical problem in the form of copyright and quality of the images uploaded; the need for considerable resources in terms of time and money to promote the project and collect the material; and the issue of how best to collect social media, which will undoubtedly be a vital insight into everyday community life in the early twenty-first century, for future generations. I think that the idea has great appeal, and would be excited to see whether these challenges can be overcome.

With these reflections, the conference ended. Each paper provided a different, but essential, insight into the creation of social impact by social history museums, and offered considerable food for thought. Many of the papers showed the need for museums to have creative and flexible approaches to sharing their social history collections and remaining relevant to, and an essential part of, their communities, rather than just a record of their past.

I would like to thank SHCG for funding my attendance at the conference, and I very much hope to return in the future. It was an eye-opening experience and reminded me of some of Beamish Museum's favourite words of wisdom:

"We do not run the museum for what is past, nor for the objects - because the past is gone and the objects are dead. No, we run the museum for the people - now and in the future."

- Tomas Bloch Ravn. Director, Den Gamle By, Denmark, 2009.

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Café Andaluz, then on to SHCG's traditional Gin Party, and so to bed...

Day Two began with a coach trip to The National Mining Museum at Newtongrange in Midlothian. The museum encapsulates the story of the development of mining through the remains of the pithead buildings of the Lady Victoria Colliery, first sunk in 1890 and which ceased production in 1981.

It was against the stunning backdrop of the Victorian Power House that Dave O'Brien began his talk (via FaceTime - a first for SHCG!) on how we measure the value of social history in museums. He discussed a number of different mechanisms ranging from cost/ benefit analyses, to wellbeing value exercises (including salary, health, access to culture etc.), but concluded that their results can vary wildly and that this cannot be done without consultation with regular users of culture. The Happy Museum

project calculated that the value of museums to wellbeing was £3,200 per year per household.

While the calculations are beyond me (check out their website for more detail!), I can't help feeling that, if this is valued by public policy builders and thereby funding bodies, this will be an increasingly important component in funding our projects in the future and one that we cannot ignore.

In her talk about the Science Museum's telegram collecting policy, Jen Kavanagh discussed the relative merits of smaller short-term projects versus longer-term programmes in terms of social impact. The Science Museum's newest gallery tells the story of the progress of telecommunications. It was created with high levels of participation from the local Cameroonian community and disability groups, as well as a telegram-collecting project

involving volunteer community collectors, connected to six partner museums across the UK. Although some innovative new content was generated for the Science Museum, the confidence generated by the project is to be regarded as a significant success; some of the partner museums felt comfortable to explore other ways of developing community centred approaches to collecting.

Next, Robert Hay discussed the work of the Lismore Museum, created by the Lismore Historical Society (Comann Eachdraidh Lios Mór) which was established in the 1990s at a time when they felt that their Gaelic heritage was in danger of being lost. The museum grew out of the community, with many people donating objects and photographs, and Gaelic traditions were re-established. The museum is the epitome of social impact, acting as a social meeting space, community centre and café, as much as it does a museum and Gaelic heritage



Jim Cornwall, ex-miner and tour guide, showing us around the Pithead.
Image courtesy of Jemma Conway



The magnificent winding engine.
Image courtesy of Jemma Conway



The National Mining Museum Scotland at the Lady Victoria Colliery.
Image courtesy of National Mining Museums Scotland Trust

Exploring Sexuality at the Wellcome Collection

Historically, museums have found sex a challenging subject to present to the public. However, institutional attitudes have been changing in recent times, with the result that sex and sexuality are now being interpreted more frequently and explicitly. The Wellcome Collection has been particularly proactive in addressing this subject over the last year or so.

By his death in 1936, Sir Henry Wellcome had amassed over a million objects from across the globe. Although a substantial proportion of his collection related to human sexuality, the majority of these objects were never included in his original museum's displays. The first exhibition dedicated to sex-related material from the Wellcome Collection took place last year at Exeter's Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery.

Intimate Worlds: Exploring Sexuality through the Sir Henry Wellcome Collection used objects produced by different cultures around the globe to explore attitudes to sex. The show, developed with the University of Exeter's Sex and History project, aimed to use objects to stimulate discussion about attitudes to sex amongst young people. Some of the innovative resources that were developed to support the show can be still be explored online.

Institute of Sexology

The Wellcome Collection's current exhibition, *Institute of Sexology*, focuses on sex research from the late 1800s onwards. It draws on around 200 objects, including archival material, film and photography. The exhibition explores the crucial role that the gathering and objective analysis of information about sex has had in challenging taboos and changing attitudes.

The exhibition's six main sections are arranged broadly in chronological order. Within the first five the focus is on important 'sexologists': 'Library' (Magnus Hirschfeld, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Henry Havelock Ellis), 'Consulting Room' (Sigmund Freud and Marie Stopes), 'Classroom' (Alfred Kinsey), 'Tent' (Bronisław Malinowski and Margaret Mead), and 'Laboratory' (William Masters and Virginia Johnson). The sixth section, 'Home', focuses on the UK's National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles, prompted by the impact of AIDS, which resulted in almost 19,000 interviews.

The work of many of the 'sexologists' included in the show has, of course, shaped the way we think about sex and sexuality, and

the way we live our lives today. A drawing of Sigmund Freud at work has inspired a reconstruction (or evocation) of his desk with some of the antiquities he kept on it. It is an effective design idea that adds atmosphere and personality; as though the visitor is about to meet Freud himself.

Letters and correspondence highlight personal stories and provide human insight. Freud for example writes to a mother about her son's homosexuality. Other personal documents illustrate just how innovative and brave some of the key figures in the exhibition were in challenging the dominant views of their time.

The lack of understanding of sex and sexuality has led to suffering and traumatic

experiences, and the exhibition includes some potent reminders about the consequences of prejudice, discrimination and intolerance. The Nazi destruction of Magnus Hirschfeld's Institut für Sexualwissenschaft and its library, is addressed early on. In 1933 Hirschfeld, Jewish and gay, watched the footage of his burning library in a Parisian cinema.

The eclectic range of artefacts includes some fascinating artworks. A watercolour portrait of Lile Elbe from around 1928 is a compelling painting in its own right. The label reveals that Elbe underwent the first sex reassignment surgery in 1930. Zanele Muholi's photographic portraits of South African women, 'Faces and Phases', raise issues about sexuality, identity, and representation; abuse, persecution and discrimination are still part of everyday life for many individuals. Contemporary artworks like this offer a personal perspective and a break from the exhibition's institutional voice.

Sex and humour are common bedfellows, and this is inherent to some of the exhibits here. Sometimes though, the humour arises from unusual encounters or odd experiences. The opportunity to sit inside a reconstruction of one of Wilhelm Reich's Orgone Accumulators provides one of the exhibition's quirkier moments. Drawing back a small pair of curtains to view an object, and then being invited to write a label to go with it is another; the object in question was a foam model of a vagina in a black carry case used for teaching.

The exhibition's final section, 'Archive', includes a bookshelf with a selection of resources, giving visitors the opportunity to sit and read more. This area seemed comparatively lightly used when I visited, creating a slightly flat ending to an exhibition that begins so powerfully with footage of Nazi book burning. However, this area is also used for

events, and I'm sure that when these are taking place the section is transformed.

The *Institute of Sexology* has an unusually long run for a temporary show. This is presumably possible because many of the objects are from the Wellcome's own collection. Special exhibitions are often resource heavy, taking a great deal of time and research, for something with a lifespan of three months or less. Here, the longer run gives the Wellcome Collection an opportunity to make iterative changes in response to visitor feedback, and maximise benefit from the project team's work and its own collection. It offers an interesting model and it will be instructive to see how the exhibition develops over time.



Sigmund Freud at his desk.
Image courtesy of the Freud Museum, London



Lile Elbe.
Image courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London



Ivory shell divided into two halves.
Image courtesy of Science Museum / Science and Society Picture Library



Display about Sigmund Freud.

Image courtesy of the Wellcome Trust

In conclusion, there is much to admire about *Institute of Sexology*, the accompanying public programme, and the catalogue. The exhibition is compact and disciplined. It is inspiring to see a type of collection that was once withheld from public display being used proactively. The need for timed tickets at the busiest times is both an indication of the exhibition's appeal, and a vindication of its approach.

Both *Intimate Worlds* and *Institute of Sexology* share a philosophy and spirit that is commendable. Many museum exhibitions have used 'sex-appeal' primarily as a marketing device, rather than

to challenge attitudes. Here, however, the desire to engage audiences in meaningful and relevant dialogue about sex is clearly at the heart of both exhibitions.

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Find out more:

www.wellcomecollection.org/exhibitions/institute-sexology

(*Institute of Sexology*, 20 November 2014 - 20 September 2015, Wellcome Collection, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE)

www.rammuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/intimate-worlds-exploring-sexuality-through-the-sir-henry-wellcome-collection

(*Intimate Words: Exploring Sexuality through the Sir Henry Wellcome Collection*, 5 April - 29 June 2014, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter)

Noah's Arks

"When I awoke this morning I was ill... and only got up at three o'clock in the afternoon. I did a little drawing, then arranged my arms; after that I did my lessons, and made a little picture and painted it. Then I played with Noah's Ark, then we dined, and I went to bed and prayed."

- From the journal of the five year old Prince Albert, written at home in Coburg, 23 January 1826.

"Staff consistently respond to the children's individual needs, adapting activities to follow their ideas and suggestions. For example, when using oats to make rain as they played with Noah's Ark and singing 'I hear thunder'. Children are encouraged and supported to think for themselves and try out new skills as they undertake tasks using a broad range of easily accessible equipment."

- From an Ofsted inspection report about a daycare centre in Sheffield, 2007.

Noah's Arks have been common toys, at least in wealthier households, for almost 200 years. Yet there seems to be remarkably little written about them.

Origin and history

Noah's Arks probably owe their origin to the collapse of the mining industry in the Erzgebirge mountains of the German-Czech border by the later eighteenth

century, and the miners' search for a new occupation. By the early nineteenth century a wide network of small woodworking workshops had developed, producing a variety of toys and other small wooden objects, of which Noah's Arks were just one. The industry was centred on Seiffen, and benefited from being reasonably close to Nuremberg, the traditional centre of toy-making in Europe.

The industry produced three different kinds of Noah's Arks:

- flat-bottomed Arks, essentially a pitch-roofed box, painted to look like a house, on a flat but vaguely boat-shaped base
- a similar box on a boat-form base, which could sometimes also house animals
- versions of both, in which the 'house' is covered with split straw or slithers of wood like marquetry

In Seiffen is the excellent Toy Museum, whose website offers (in English as well as German) a valuable history of the industry: www.spielzeugmuseum-seiffen.de. Another worthwhile website is 'German Handcraft Imports': www.germanchristmasgifts.com. This describes the industry thus:

While most of these original toys have found respected places in museums and private collections (worth thousands of dollars), they began as the only tenuous lifeline for people in a true cottage industry where entire families (including very young

children) were recruited to make thousands of toys each week. Folklorist Karl Ewald Fritsch (1894 - 1974) recalls his earliest childhood memories in a family of ark builders:

I see myself sitting in a huge mountain of woodshavings at the end of my father's workbench, surrounded by arks stacked in pairs like pillars... Here with ceaseless work, those arks were made that went into the children's rooms of the whole world.

While his father and his apprentices "quickly and smoothly" planed thin pine boards, his mother supervised the assembly with tacks and hot bone glue, which bubbled in a big tile oven nearby. While many tasks required the dexterous hands of parents, "the gluing and nailing could soon be transferred to the small seven year old hands of the youngest." The income from such unrelenting industriousness yielded only enough to cover the week's worth of bread and potatoes.

Conditions didn't improve through most of the twentieth century. Continually at the mercy of wholesalers, who exported and sold the goods to department stores and catalogues, the toy makers' earnings hardly increased even through the soaring inflation of post WWI Germany. When the iron curtain fell over the Erzgebirge, the communist regime tightly controlled the earnings of these skilled workers leaving them little hope of bettering their hard lives. In 1990, when the Berlin wall fell and capitalism flooded the former East German republic, workers had to quickly adapt to "free market" rules. Many longstanding ark-building families did not survive the transition.

The few that exist today have flourished, replenishing their villages which have blossomed into attractive tourist destinations.



William Lynes' Ark of 1815-25, now on display in the History Gallery at the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry.

Image courtesy of the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum



Pair of Noah's Arks, displayed at Mill Cottage Museum, Port Lincoln, South Australia. Image courtesy of Pauline Cockrill and History SA

It seems to be very difficult to date any particular product, though at the end of the century Noah's Arks sometimes had engravings of animals stuck on, which must be dateable, and presumably the Nuremberg exporters produced catalogues. If any German toy-historians have worked on them, I have yet to discover it.

Many parents, of course, have made Arks for their children, and plenty of craftspeople - amateur and professional - outside Saxony/Bohemia must have made them too. Indeed, there are lots of imaginative Noah's Arks available to buy online from small workshops.

In the middle of the 20th century large toy manufacturers also seem to have started to make Arks. Britains produced a die-cast version in the late 1930s. Today many of the big firms do them, in plastic and even cardboard.

Collectors and museums

Googling 'Noah's Arks' reveals a good many references, many of them based on dealing and collecting, though one only gets a hint of the scale of collecting: a US auction in 2000 saw a Noah's Ark with about 200 animals and about 12 figures of Noah's family reach \$28,750.

Many museums in the UK, US and Australia seem to have Noah's Arks in their collections, but very

few indeed apparently preserve any information about their origin and history. A catalogue reference 'about 1870' probably merely reflects a past curatorial guess, rather than the family story one would love to see. When I started looking for Noah's Arks I naively imagined museum registers full of notes on when the family acquired them, and reminiscences of successive generations playing with them. If anyone does have anything like that it would be good to see it published.

It would be wonderful to be able to compare how children of different periods, backgrounds and generations regarded these toys, the significance and meaning they attributed to them, and the ways in which their memories, later in life, are encapsulated in them. And because Noah's Arks are in some sense 'religious', it would be great to examine how that figures in their significance. We read repeatedly how in Victorian homes Noah's Arks were the only toys permitted on Sunday, but I am still looking for any actual evidence for this. Is it just an urban myth?

The principal toy museums in the UK have examples of Arks, but sadly none - including the National Trust - have any significant information about them. But you can find one or two museums with well-provenanced Arks, even just hunting on the web. The Ark pictured on the previous page

is displayed in the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum in Coventry. The catalogue record tells us that "The ark was probably made around 1815 - 1825. According to the donor, it was bought for William Lynes, later Mayor of Coventry, who was born in 1812".

Another example now resides at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History: "The windows and decoration are hand-painted and the piece is signed 'Bentley J. Park, Searsport, Maine, March 4, 1888'. This toy was inventoried by the donor in 1965 as part of the contents of the Bass Harbor Country Store sent to the Smithsonian Institution. Why this toy was left on the store shelf more than 75 years after its creation must remain subject to conjecture. Considering that the store was located on Mount Desert Island, which was becoming a popular destination for wealthy tourists at the time it was made, perhaps by a worker in a local shipbuilding concern made it to augment support for his family at home, or perhaps it was an antique purchased by the store owner at a later date to provide ambiance reminiscent of a world undergoing rapid change."

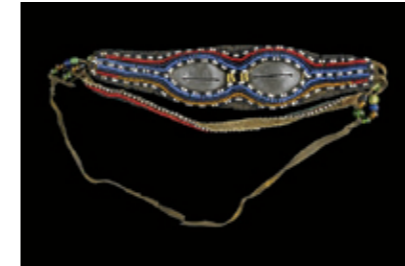
Finally, in a little local museum in South Australia, here is the sort of background about a pair of Noah's Arks, which adds so much: "German nineteenth century Noah's Ark toys. Displayed at Mill Cottage (built 1866) in Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula, South Australia. The toys belonged to the six Bishop children who lived in the house - Sidney b1869; Ethel b1871; William b1873; Amy b1876; Geoffrey b1887 and Myles b1890." These examples are 'straw-faced' (actually a fine veneer of multi-coloured slivers of wood, meant to resemble straw), and almost certainly a product of Erzgebirge.

It would be wonderful to have news of other Arks with stories that survive.

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Bizarre Collections!

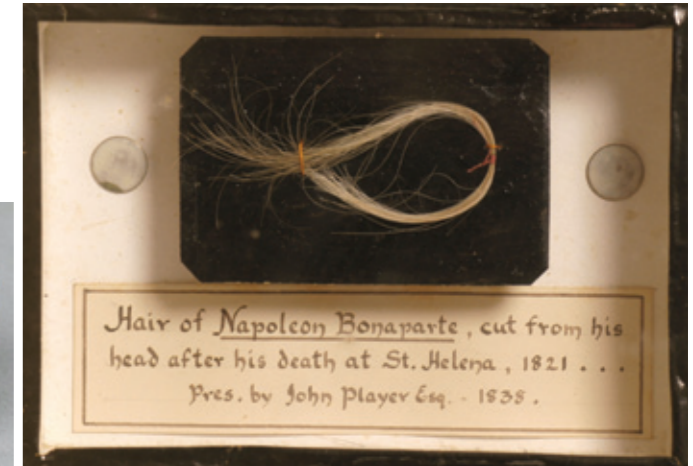
Some items in our museum collections defy explanation. We marvel at their weirdness and find ourselves asking, among other things, why? See page two for further details...



Siberian snow goggles. Image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum



Chinese cricket cage. Image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum



Napoleon's hair. Image courtesy of Saffron Walden Museum



Indonesian loincloth, slightly soiled. Image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum



Victorian eccentric and naturalist Frank Buckland. Image courtesy of Scottish Fisheries Museum



Mr Buckland's deformed trout. Image courtesy of Scottish Fisheries Museum



Fishing net buoy made from a dog. Image courtesy of Scottish Fisheries Museum

Royal Wedding special brew, 1981. Image courtesy of Wolverhampton Arts and Heritage



Amusingly shaped delftware cup. Image courtesy of Museum of London



Gaping cat pin cushion. Image courtesy of Colchester & Ipswich Museum service

Clogs and plastic grapes. Image courtesy of Garden City Collection, Letchworth Garden City

Heckling Hitler



In 2004 the Cartoon Museum was contacted by a woman called Pat Izod who wanted to offer two 'booklets' of cartoons to the museum. The 53 cartoons had been given to her father in 1945 by a work colleague, Ken Rolfe, when they both worked at the

Ministry of Food in Colwyn Bay. Drawn for the amusement of work colleagues between early June 1944 and September 1945 on Ministry scrap paper - order forms for dried milk and the like - Rolfe later bound them and gave them to George Izod.

Pat knew nothing about Rolfe, other than his name. He was clearly an amateur artist - the early pictures are very crude - but improved as time went on. Ordinarily we would not have considered accepting the pictures, but because they were

so interesting in terms of how and when they were produced, and because they gave an interesting insight into how ordinary civilians viewed events at the time, we decided to accept them.

There were some aspects of the drawings that puzzled me: some captions included German, for example Fuhrer was spelt Führer. Also a number of the cartoons, such as the one pictured left, suggest the sufferings of the German people at the hands of Hitler and were clearly anti-Nazi but not vehemently anti-German. Who was this man Rolfe, I wondered?

We decided to put out a press release which was taken up by Channel 4, who broadcast an item saying that we were trying to trace Ken Rolfe. Amazingly the item was seen by his son-in-law who contacted us. It seems that after serving during the First World War Rolfe became company secretary of NordDeutscher Lloyd (Bremen Line). I could only imagine that during this time he formed some friendships with German staff and developed a more nuanced understanding of German people. Most of the cartoons in our current exhibition were drawn for a wider public but this very personal and idiosyncratic collection, drawn for friends, tells so much about the time and reveals a deeper shared humanity which transcends nationality and the horrors of war.

Heckling Hitler: World War II in Cartoon and Comic Art can be seen at the Cartoon Museum, 35 Little Russell Street, London WC1A 2HH from 25 March - 12 July 2015.

Left: *Behold the Man!!* by Ken Rolfe, 31 January 1945.

Image courtesy of Cartoon Museum

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