

The logo for SHCG NEWS, featuring the letters 'SHCG' in a bold, white, sans-serif font inside a red square, followed by the word 'NEWS' in a larger, white, sans-serif font.

SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP

Issue 83 November 2019

A photograph showing two women in a room with red curtains and a floral patterned sofa. They are working on a large, detailed cardboard cutout of a historical object, possibly a piece of furniture or a decorative element. One woman is standing and leaning over the cutout, while the other is sitting on the floor, also working on it. The cutout is a complex, multi-tiered structure with intricate carvings and a long, pointed top section. The room has a patterned rug and a window with red curtains in the background.

SHCG Conference Who are we curating for?

Also inside this edition:

Music at Brodsworth

Storytelling through
sound

A star object in focus

The Peterloo Cane

Museum Review

Stepan Bandera Museum

Welcome to issue 83 of SHCG News



Hello everyone, welcome to the latest edition of SHCG News. We have a new committee (see page 19 for more details) which includes a brand new Editor (me). I'm very excited to be working with such a great group of people and being the first in the know when it comes to content for SHCG News.

As I began putting together this newsletter I looked through some previous editions and found one compiled by a predecessor in this role from the close of 2016. The editor's letter discussed the results of the Brexit referendum held that year and I thought it interesting to note that three years on we still find ourselves in a sea of uncertainty.

I hope that many of you will have taken the opportunities discussed in that newsletter around contemporary collecting objects which tell the stories of 'such a step change in our country's history'. I'd love to hear what you've done to record the discussions, divisions, and activism that has taken place since then.

With a general election looming in December we also find ourselves with more uncertainty as we move towards a new year. We may live in uncertain times, but we certainly live in interesting ones.

The new year also gives us a chance to reflect on what we have accomplished over the last twelve months but also across the 2010s, a decade which has seen significant changes in the museum sector. In this edition of SHCG News there are articles featuring fascinating objects, reviews, and some great reminders of the excellent work taking place in these uncertain times.

I'll see you in the new year, and we'll see what happens eh?

SHCG Matt Exley

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Please contact SHCG Marketing & Partnership Officer Georgina Ascroft to discuss options and prices:
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Front cover image

Installing the 'cut-out' of the 1902 Monarch gramophone in the south hall of Brodsworth Hall as part of their *Storytelling Through Sound* exhibition.

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Join SHCG?

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

E: membershipshcg@gmail.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: 14th February 2020

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 and Practice 900-1000 words,

Reviews and Object Focus 400-500 words or 900-1000 words.

Please submit your article by email saved as a Word file (Arial 12 point). Images must be a high resolution and can be submitted by email or, if necessary, USB.

Send all contributions to:

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Background image: Digging Deep at the National Coal Mining Museum

SHCG Incoming Committee Members

Following conference and the election of the 2019/2020 SHCG committee we'll meet some new faces in this and the next edition of SCHG News.



Lowri Jones - Treasurer

Why did you want to become a trustee?

I've been a member of SHCG for years and although I hadn't initially been intending to apply to be a trustee, I got caught up in the excitement of conference and was convinced to stand! Taking a more active role in such a friendly group that does really valuable, helpful work is

very appealing, and is something I'm pretty excited about.

What are you looking forward to as part of your role at SHCG?

As Treasurer I mostly deal with the seemingly dull financial bits – but actually, reconciling payments can be really satisfying if you have the sort of mind that enjoys everything being neat and organised! I'm looking forward to getting to know the rest of the committee and the rest of the group better, and to building contacts with people around the country through our various activities.

Where would you like SHCG to go in the future?

Maintaining the great services we have is really important, but there's always more that we can be doing – increasing our membership, producing new learning resources, arranging events... I'd love for SHCG to be demonstrating (even more than it already is) how social history is important for all museum work, and making sure that people know it's a relevant organisation for everyone, not just for traditional social history curators.

Matt Exley - News Editor

Why did you want to become a News Editor?

I really wanted to find out more about what is going on in the wider museum community and not just my venue or museum service. I thought joining SHCG committee would give me an amazing opportunity to meet people engaging in really exciting work across the sector.

What are you looking forward to as part of your role at SHCG?


As News Editor I get to be the first point of call for all the fascinating case studies and articles that members send to be included. This gives me first dibs on finding out some really cool stories and information. It also forces me to hone my editing skills and really delve in to other people's practice.

Where would you like SHCG to go in the future?

I'd really like to encourage more people who do not necessarily work within exhibitions or curatorial roles to take an active interest and be part of SHCG. For example there's some amazing work being undertaken



in education and learning teams and I'd love SHCG to showcase how relevant it is for all people working in some way with social history collections to access the amazing resources SHCG offers!



The Future of Social History: *Who are we Curating for?*

Social History Curators Group Annual Conference, Edinburgh 18 and 19 July 2019

Who are we Curating for? - A question that was the theme of this year's conference and one that everyone working in museums should be reflecting upon. As the Assistant Curator working on the Blackpool Museum Project, this theme resonated particularly strongly with me and I was thrilled to be awarded this year's free place.

Our team is in the enviable yet highly challenging position of creating a museum from scratch and we want to get it right! Questions such as this have been a fundamental part of our planning process and I was keen to hear from colleagues across established institutions about their experiences in trying to address them.

The stunning city of Edinburgh was the perfect destination for discussing this topic; a thriving cosmopolis steeped in incredible histories. Just walking to the conference venue on the first day was an inspiring reminder of how diverse and fascinating humanity is and how invisible many people are in museums across the world.

Day One

The first day of the conference was held in the City Art Centre, a place that is no stranger to creating narratives, having originally been part of the Scotsman newspaper

buildings. To get things started Piotr Bienkowski and Christine McLellan delivered the keynote address. Piotr went first, reiterating the importance of the conference theme and explaining that to answer this question effectively we must also consider who we are curating with and open up museum collections. He also outlined how important reflective practice is to ensuring sustainability and meeting the needs of your audiences without pointing blame. To illustrate these points further, Christine described several successful initiatives at Glasgow Museums working with different groups, including *Art Extraordinary* where people who have experienced issues with their mental health helped to research works by Scottish art therapist Joyce Laing.

Next Samantha Jenkins from the People's History Museum warned of the dangers of curatorial bias and neglecting the 'other' side of the story. If we only engage with topics that we support or only present narratives that fit with our own beliefs, this creates a one-sided view of the world and does not reflect the highly complex societies that exist within it. We must present different perspectives and identities within displays, collections and research in order to create authentic narratives that help people understand the world we live in. However, Samantha recognised that this is not always possible in practice and gave the example of the People's History Museum deciding to remove an anti-trans sticker within their *Disrupt* exhibition after much consideration.



On a similar note Jen Kavanagh and Dr Domenico Sergi from the Museum of London discussed embracing those 'once-in-a-generation' moments to capture different perspectives surrounding an event. They described the work that was undertaken by their museum to capture the feelings of Londoners in the run-up to Brexit and the challenges that they faced in doing this. Many of the responses they received were emotive, inspiring and surprising but they also faced resistance to the Museum of London involving itself in a political topic. This shows that some people still hold very staunch views about the role of museums and their remit.

After a refreshments break, Dr. Tehmina Goskar, the Director and Curator of the Curatorial Research Centre gave her talk on their flagship programme *Citizen Curators*, an annual free mentoring and training course taking place 2018-2021. Tehmina explained that as collections are bodies of knowledge and knowledge is power, *Citizen Curators* was founded to create a mechanism for two-way conversation between collections and audiences by diversifying the people who research and interpret them. Tehmina revealed that sticking points and challenges arose, including perceptions of staff hierarchies and responsibilities but that this was to be expected with any project working towards change.

I enjoyed hearing from Danielle Patten at The Geffrye Museum who discussed working with members of their Faith and Culture Forum to create an AV installation in the new Home Gallery of the museum. In a project that reminded me of Daniel Miller's wonderful *The Comfort of Things*, people were filmed discussing deeply personal objects within their homes to show that the concept of 'home' is not homogenous and explore how people reflect their identities within their environments. This is part of renovation work being undertaken at the Geffrye which looks very exciting and I can't wait to visit.

A delicious lunch followed and a chance to chat with a room full of interesting and interested people. We were then ready to begin the afternoon's sessions which predominantly focused on effective collections management. Kicking things off, Lowri Jones, Senior Curator at the Royal College of Physicians discussed the very relatable topic of rationalising museum collections, including grappling with vast and uncatalogued collections, making dreaded disposal decisions and facing logistical headaches that we have or will have to deal at some point during our careers. Following this, Sarah Brown from the Collections Trust held an interactive workshop which asked us to work in groups to discuss how we can obtain information about uncatalogued objects or those with an unclear provenance. We voted on issues surrounding this topic and even admitted to what we do (and don't do!) when it comes to following procedures and conduct risk assessments on objects and collections.

Nicola Moss then talked about her own experiences in undergoing a daunting rationalisation project at St Andrews Preservation Trust Museum and how important and helpful it was to seek advice from curatorial colleagues within the museum sector. I'm sure her final point resonated strongly with everyone who has worked with collections; it might look cute but is it useful? Sometimes it is all too easy to put off making difficult decisions when it comes to disposal.

To support this point, the final session of the day was taken by Sharon Macdonald, Jennie Morgan and Harald Fredheim who outlined their work on the *Profusion in Heritage Futures* project which explores how people in homes and museums make decisions about what to keep for the future and why we often have a 'cupboard of doom' for items we can't bring ourselves to dispose of. It is clear that we often feel as though an object has

'staying power' and because it has been in a collection for a long time it has earned its place to be there. However we must consider creative approaches to 'losing objects well' including recycling, repurposing, adopting and reusing.

With lots of food for thought and a long list of actions to take away, we enjoyed evening drinks and a museum-focused quiz (which my team did not win!) followed by a delicious meal at Howie's before tumbling into bed at the very impressive student accommodation.

Day Two

Day two was held at the wonderful Dovecot Studios which is now based at the former site of the Infirmary Street Baths. Following more than a century of tapestry weaving, Dovecot's Master Weavers continue to collaborate with artists and designers on tapestry projects and commissions ensuring that the skill of tapestry weaving remains vibrant in the 21st Century.

Having taken our seats, the keynote, *Unruly Bodies and Minds* was given by the esteemed Jocelyn Dodd, who explained that societies hold entrenched attitudes towards difference and often appear to value certain lives over others. Most notably 'disablism' is not a word you can find in the dictionary. Jocelyn explained that we need to move away from archaic notions that a person with disabilities needs to be cured or is somehow less of a person, weak or dependent. As museum professionals we should be giving people with disabilities a voice to



share their experiences, stories and knowledge and avoid creating barriers within our museums that make people feel invisible, alien or valueless.

In places where there is a high tourism market such as Edinburgh, local residents can often feel overlooked or unimportant. Diana Morton from Museums & Galleries Edinburgh described how important she feels it is to celebrate local histories and identities and gave examples of some community engagement projects that she has worked on. One project involved setting up a museum within a local school which was very popular with children, staff and parents. The cases did have to



be changed to lockable ones however after new and unofficial objects began to be added!

Ben Paites from Colchester Museum outlined the ideal approach that social history curators should take when approaching an exhibition and called it *Who wants to be a Community Curator?* He explained that in order to create a successful community-focused exhibition we must emulate the famous television gameshow and ask the audience for their input, phone a friend (or several) in the museum sector to seek advice and solutions to any issues encountered and ensure that displayed items are split 50:50 between objects from the Museum and objects supplied by people for display. Having a space for people to react or voice their opinion in response to emotive topics is also incredibly important.

Next Jenny Noble told us about the fantastic work of Glasgow Women's Library which was set up to empower, respect and value women, address inequalities and celebrate diversity. They soon realised that the Dewey Decimal System was problematic for them as it disallows ambiguity, for example in terms of gender or sexuality, and such linguistic labelling can reinforce archaic stereotypes. GWL therefore adopted a topic based system to avoid difference and separation. Jenny also discussed the importance of rapid response collecting to conserve material from key events in women's history.

Jana Golombek and Konrad Gutkowski's fascinating talk focused on collecting sounds, thanks to new developments in sound studies. Most of us will be used to collecting visual examples of cultural heritage but will not have considered sounds as being part of this process. Setting out to change this, two projects run by LWL-Industrie museum called *Work with Sounds* (2013-2015) and *Sounds of Changes* (2017-2019) resulted in a sound collection which link to the industrial and post-industrial world. I can't wait to see if I can use this approach on future projects to record events, structures and objects through sound.

During the lunch session we had the opportunity to go and explore Dovecot Studios where I saw the wonderful *Baths to Bobbins* exhibition which explores memories of those who attended the Baths as well as the story of its conversion to a modern tapestry studio. We also had the chance to see featured works and creations from artist collaborations displayed around the balcony of the former swimming pool.

When we were all back in our seats, Charlotte Holmes from the National Trust asked us to identify where the tense silences are in our museums and establish whose stories are missing. Charlotte also explained that we must also become allies to under-represented communities and transfer the benefits of any privileges we hold to those who lack it. Another very important reminder from Charlotte was to always be aware that although you may

deeply empathise with the struggle of a particular person or group, this conversation is not about you. It is our job to provide a space for their stories to be represented and finding ways for them to speak.

This paved the way for Rhona Ramsay's discussion of the representation of Gypsy/Travellers and museums, a community with 300,000 members across the UK but who are generally not visible in museums. Rhona told us that the gypsy community generally do not visit museums as they don't feel that they contain anything for them. Because of this distance and lack of engagement, many collections will unknowingly have objects that relate to these communities, items which are crying out for contextual information on their value and provenance. We all need to be doing more to open up our collections and let marginalised groups tell their stories.

Sarah Cartwright and James McGuire from the Paisley Museum gave a talk on how they have worked with Katy Wilson-Scott from Kairos to co-produce projects surrounding women's histories. The Paisley Museum is currently going through a period of redevelopment and so this is the perfect time to disrupt the male gaze and create a space that is bold, ambitious and progressive. Having undertaken an audit, staff identified working-class women's histories as being particularly under-represented and are working with groups such as Kairos to change this.

This topic prepared us well for Tracey Weller's workshop where we split into groups to read some contemporary narratives focusing on working class experiences. Each group discussed their piece but also our own experiences of class distinction and addressing these within displays. On the related theme of improving engagement, Erin Partridge ended the conference with an interactive session involving a beautifully designed handout. This included space to answer questions designed to work towards creating an action plan to break down any barriers that may currently be stopping people from engaging within a museum space.

I came away from the conference buzzing with ideas and considerations to share with my team, a long list of museums and exhibitions to visit and a renewed sense of purpose for my curatorial career. We all need to be working towards making museums comfortable spaces that are engaging for all. As the Paisley Museum team put it, we will be the generation that opens minds, not closes them.



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In the Land of our Fathers

“In the Land of our Fathers” has been the most recent historical temporary exhibition at the Cynon Valley Museum, South Wales. It has explored themes of identity, community cohesion, and inclusion through the game of rugby.

Rugby is synonymous with Wales, despite it being the last home nation to form national bodies for both the men (1881) and women’s games (1994). Alongside religion and industry, the game was a cornerstone of identity and culture for over a century in the Welsh Valleys. The values of the game, such as respect, hard work, and a team ethos, were mirrored in other elements of life. Rugby enabled co-operation across the breadth of communities, from landowners, to colliers, to middle-class professionals, everyone was involved in their local club.

The process of the exhibition was intended to be community driven. There are 7 men’s senior clubs in the Cynon Valley, stretching across the region. In addition, The Timbers, the Cynon Valley Women & Girls Cluster team are hosted at Aberdare RFC, and Mountain Ash RFC are the home ground for the Welsh Academicals.

The exhibition was designed to bring together the histories of the clubs across the Valley, as well as highlight significant contributions made by Cynon Valley players to the national game. Since the inception of the WRU in 1885, over 25 men and women have gained a cap for the Welsh team. As part of the museum’s role to raise aspirations and inspire, it was important that these men and women’s achievements were highlighted. This was achieved through a “wall of fame”, with each player’s



The central case in the museum showcased a current Welsh shirt, current Timbers girls’ shirt, and jersey (white) worn by Tommy Keegan in 1935 for the Mid District match against a touring New Zealand.

career summarised in potted biographies. Items were also loaned from the WRU collection, which included

The Cynon Valley has certainly produced some players who will go down in the history books. Some highlights of the “wall of fame” included Les Mansfield, one of only four men to have played for Wales both before and after the Second World War.

The exhibition has also enabled more collecting for the Museum. Through our Friends group, we have been put in touch with Les Mansfield’s son, who has donated his father’s diaries from WWII, as well as other ephemera from his rugby career.

The exhibition will also have legacy for the clubs. Most of the 7 local clubhouses have implied that they would like to host the exhibition. Permission has been sought from the WRU for clubs to loan items, co-ordinated by the Museum team, which means the exhibition will be displayed alongside club’s own collections of photographs, objects, and ephemera from their rich histories. Once this tour is complete, each club will receive the panel relating to their club from the exhibition, as well as the potted biographies of internationally capped players from their club, for permanent display in the clubhouses.

The exhibition will not only have a physical legacy in the clubhouses, but has enabled the museum to make better contact with these groups, who are integral to the cohesion of the local community, but historically, not represented in the museum’s demographics.

SHC Norma Gregory

Director, Nottingham News Centre CIC

W: www.nottinghamnewscentre.com

W: www.blackcoalminers.com

Member of the Rhigos RFC committee and Rhigos and Wales player Dai Morris reminiscing with the photographs on display.



Music at Brodsworth: Storytelling through sound

Violinist Eleanor Matthews © Historic England Archive



Silhouette of lost violin © Historic England Archive

Brodsworth Hall is a country house near Doncaster, South Yorkshire, built and furnished in the 1860s for Charles Sabine Augustus Thellusson and his family.

It was lived in by three generations of the same family and the house came into the care of English Heritage in 1990. Whilst the gardens were restored, the house has been conserved. The house is presented approximately as it was found, complete with peeling wallpaper, washed-out carpets and eclectic contents to reflect how the fortunes of Brodsworth faded and fell into gentle decline throughout the twentieth century.

However, the house was not always as quiet as the existing visitor experience suggested. Careful research of surviving inventories, sheet music, auction catalogues and archival documents enabled us to piece back together the musical life of the hall and its inhabitants, revealing skilled musicians, lost instruments, details of balls and parties, and much more. The extent and range of the Thellusson family's musical skill became apparent when the sheet music collection was investigated, catalogued and photographed. 'Music at Brodsworth' was the result of this research.

We were presented with an opportunity to design an installation which would bring music back to Brodsworth, share previously hidden stories of the inhabitants, enrich the atmosphere inside the hall and improve the visitor experience. The project raised thought-provoking questions, such as: how do you embed music into a historic house when all but one of the instruments the family owned are no longer at the house? How does the addition of music add or detract from the 'authentic' presentation of the house?

Planning for the project centered on the sheet music collection, which provided the source material for a musical soundscape. We wanted the music project to have a strong connection to Brodsworth, for visitors to feel that they are hearing what the family would have played and listened to. For this, it needed to move beyond buying off-the-shelf period appropriate music and putting CD players in various rooms. What better way to explore the music the family enjoyed playing than by recording the actual music that they played? This would provide the strong link between the house and the music that we wanted, and move towards a more 'authentic' auditory experience of music at Brodsworth. 'Authenticity' is a word much used and contested, and although nothing could ever fully replicate the Thellussons themselves making music in the drawing room or the day nursery at Brodsworth, this was the next best thing to immerse visitors in the experience.



Sound engineer Morgan Roberts in the library © Historic England Archive

Recording the music

Hitherto unknown musical talents were revealed in colleagues, as an internal call for help resulted in finding a cellist, singer, violinist, banjo and mandolin player to record the Brodsworth sheet music. A cornet player in a local brass band volunteered his services, and we hired a professional pianist and harmonium player to complete the list of instruments that were needed. Despite the rush to arrange many people in a short timescale (it was realised that we needed to complete the recordings before the house was open for the main season due to the need for complete quiet), everything came together. This included arranging in advance for our team of gardeners to stop mowing and hedge trimming during the recording sessions! Two days were spent with a sound engineer recording the musicians in situ at Brodsworth, playing music from the collection in the rooms where the music would have been played. It was incredibly special to hear music the family had played at Brodsworth for the first time in over a hundred years.

Music in each room was carefully themed to avoid repetition and to represent the social and family use of the spaces throughout the ground floor of the hall, as evidenced by archive material and historic photographs. Visitors might overhear a reluctant child learning the piano, a confidant harmonium player practising for sheer joy, or a military music man fondly remembering his time in the British Army. Music was transmitted via concealed technology in a number of ways, including motion sensor, constant ambient sound, and varying sequences of tracks with 'breathing spaces' between each piece.

Some of the sheet music collection which inspired the soundscape
© Historic England Archive

The sequence included:

- 📻 Cornet music coming through into the entrance hall.
- 📻 Piano, cello and banjo music drifting down the main staircase as though from the day nursery.
- 📻 Gramophone records in the south hall (sounding exactly as the family used to hear it, crackles and all, as the recordings were taken directly from some of the old and well-used gramophone records in the collection at Brodsworth).
- 📻 Harmonium music in the billiard room.
- 📻 Montage of violin, cello, piano, voice and mandolin in the drawing room.
- 📻 Piano music in the library.





Cornet player Andrew Horton © Historic England Archive

Interpretation

Whilst the sound engineer was busy editing, sequencing, and mastering the recordings ready for inclusion in the soundscape, we worked on the accompanying exhibition which used a mixture of interpretative elements including panels, hand held interpretation (such as replica gramophone records which featured the gramophone collection), audio stands, and a family trail to engage younger audiences. To represent the 'lost' instruments and make a connection between what visitors were hearing and what they were seeing, we commissioned a number of musical instrument silhouettes, or cut-outs, to position in the room spaces. Volunteer room stewards started to call them 'ghost instruments', which is an effective way to describe the cut-outs, as they hinted at objects which have been lost from the house

Evaluating the project

There have been a number of positive outcomes from the 'Music at Brodsworth' project. The soundscape and exhibition greatly enhanced the visitor experience at the hall, creating a lively atmosphere which brings the house to life through music. It demonstrated how underused object collections (in this case the sheet music collection) can be used to create inspiring experiences for visitors and raised awareness of the potential for music as a tool for visitor engagement. Finally, the project has shown how relatively small curatorial interventions can

contribute to the wider strategic 'inspiration' objective of English Heritage.

Although the project was a success and received good feedback, there are aspects which - based upon this experience - I would do differently in the future.

These include:

- ensuring that more time (if possible) is available for the planning and preparation stages, to give leeway in case of any unexpected delays.
- trying to schedule the project to launch earlier in the visitor season, rather than mid-season. This would give the project a longer run time, help work around staff and contractor annual leave, and improve the return on investment of resources.
- ensure that budget is agreed at the start of the project. As this project initially began as a research and cataloguing project without an exhibition or display element, there was no fixed budget attached. The budget was finalised midway, fortunately just before the tenders needed to be selected for the graphics element. In future, I would try to ensure that budget allocation happened prior to commencing the project.

Conclusion

Overall, making use of an underused aspect of the collection to create a soundscape has shown how previously ignored collections can be used in creative ways. To have the exact music the family would have enjoyed sounding throughout the house, recorded by live musicians in the same rooms where the family would have played is an incredibly compelling narrative for visitors and brings Brodsworth to life.



Eleanor Matthews

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Brodsworth Hall near Doncaster, South Yorkshire
© Historic England Archive

The Peterloo Cane

On 16 August 1819, blood ran in the streets of Manchester. 60,000 people had gathered at St Peter's Field, Manchester, to demand the vote. The yeomanry rode in; 18 people were killed, and 700 injured. It was a defining moment for Britain's democracy, and the massacre became known as Peterloo.

200 years later, and objects are thin on the ground. A mixture of the loss of working class history and the harsh laws meant to suppress reformers mean that most objects about Peterloo are from the yeomanry and magistrates, or commemorative pieces produced after the event. Objects from the demonstrators are almost non-existent.

For People's History Museum, this changed with one email. Someone, having seen the lead up to our major exhibition *Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest*, got in touch about a wooden cane that had been passed through his family. Scratched into the surface was the sentence:

'I was one of the dreadfull [sic] bludgeons seen on the fields of PETERLOO'

With an object like this, there's always a divided mind. Was it collected as a souvenir by a member of the yeomanry? Or was it a memento from the crowd? Is it even genuine? We got the cane in to have a proper look – a look that changed my opinion from 'this might be good' to 'the most exciting object I have ever seen'.

There were more inscriptions, including a list of names, which I deciphered using raking light and photo editing:

HUNT CARTWRIGHT COBBE WOOLER KNIGHT
WORSLEY

The donor had traced his family tree back to a Charles Worsley, who lived around Manchester in 1819. His name featuring in a list of radicals, including Henry 'Orator' Hunt, strongly suggested that the cane had been used in the crowd.

Further research proved even more promising. Using UV filtering, we realised that the 'Peterloo' message and names had been scratched into the surface of the varnish, but there were also ink drawings underneath the varnish layer. After spending a few minutes wondering what the spade-like picture was, we realised that it was a

cap of liberty – a well known and well used reformist symbol. A closer look revealed two caps of liberty and a flying flag had been drawn onto the cane.

This evidence was enough to convince me that Worsley was a demonstrator at Peterloo. The family history tied the cane to a man who would have been respectable enough to carry a cane as part of his Sunday best but still would not have held the right to vote. While the inscribed 'Peterloo' sentence could have been the boast of a victor, the inclusion of his surname alongside Hunt's and the symbols of radicalism drawn onto the cane suggest instead a satirical comment on the claims that the protestors had been armed. Here was our social history gold – an object from the crowd at Peterloo.

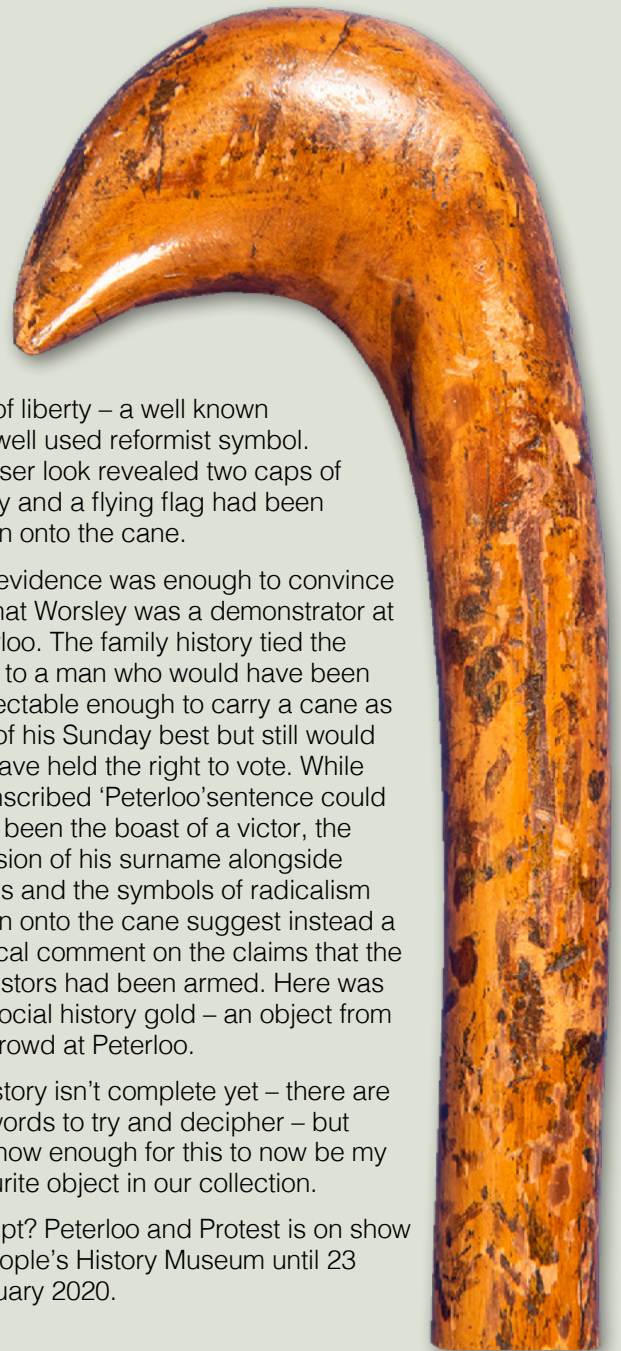
The story isn't complete yet – there are still words to try and decipher – but we know enough for this to now be my favourite object in our collection.

Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest is on show at People's History Museum until 23 February 2020.

 **Sam Jenkins**

Collections Officer, People's History Museum

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Full steam ahead to research an untraced toy carousel

As the Teaching Museum's Collections Management Trainee, I come across many wonderful things across the ten Norfolk Museums Service sites. With collections spanning from early hominin archaeology, all through social history and into contemporary collecting, there are very few gaps in the Norfolk human history that we get to witness.

Part of my time is spent at the beautiful Strangers' Hall in Norwich, a Tudor house which has been added to over the centuries by merchants and mayors, with an undercroft dating back to 1320. My role here is auditing the toy collections and I have found some incredible things in the boxes that I have opened.

One such object that caught my eye was a very beautiful, tin carousel with a clockwork mechanism, measuring upwards of four-hundred-and-fifty millimetres. Our database knew very little about the toy, least of all an up-to-date location, so once the documentation was completed and the box labelled with our (very satisfying) barcode system, I decided to put a little more focus on the carousel. From the object record I could only find that it was donated to us in 1972 and that it was from the early twentieth century... possibly. I turned to books to attempt to track down a manufacturer, and in the background searched the internet for clockwork, tin carousel toys. The books in front of me focused on British toys, but I wasn't convinced – a part of me was chorusing "Germany" until my online searches pulled up an image of a very similar, but not identical toy. Further probing of the source led me to "Günthermann" toys, and after scouring all of the auctions and collectors', I settled on the likelihood that this was in fact, a Siegfried Günthermann product. Operating from Nuremberg from 1877 to 1965, they produced numerous tin toys, and many carousels.

The only thing that didn't sit well with me was the mechanism by which the horses were attached to the base. Most of the pictures I could find showed two side supports holding the horse from the shoulder to the base, whereas the one in front of me had a single, thin support from the base to the horses' underbelly. More pictures, more searching, and I came to the conclusion that the model in front of me was an older design, from the late 1800s, before the two-armed structure was introduced in the 1900s. Now, I am no expert on historic, German, tin, clockwork toys, but I hope that my research has shown me a reasonably clear answer, which can then be supported by further study or expert advice.



Toy carousel during and after conservation. Images courtesy of Wednesday Batchelor



Tin toys date back to the arrival of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, when availability of a wide variety of materials increased and the general standard of living rose also. The Great Exhibition of 1851 saw the first exposition of tinplate toys, but Nuremberg in Bavaria, Germany was a hotspot for tin toy engineering and this later spread to other countries, such as Britain, France and Japan. Germany remained world leaders in toy production, with high quality engineered examples. Well known manufacturers of tin toys include Hornby, Chad Valley, Meccano and Dinky toys, with examples ranging from trains, animals, construction kits and diecasts. Tin toys are still produced to this day, though in far smaller numbers; the demand for tinplate toys seemed to taper off around the mid 1900s.

With the upcoming "Full Steam Ahead" exhibition on steam power at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, the carousel toy will be travelling along with other steam toys from the collection to make up part of the displays. These include a 1920s toy steam-powered submarine, a 1968 Meccano/Dinky Toys steam road roller toy, a 1912 Foden toy steam lorry and fourteen steam-powered ships from the 1920s. This has meant cleaning and packing for travel and ready for show.

In the meantime, I plan to feature the Günthermann carousel in the Strangers' Hall "Object of the Month" case, so that the visitors to the museum have a chance to see it displayed before it leaves for the temporary exhibition.

The 'Full Steam Ahead' exhibition at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum of Norfolk Life will be opening in 2020 and ties in to the Farmer's Foundry steam engine restoration project, which is funded through Arts Council England, with a fully operational steam engine returning to the museum; this will provide a platform to train a new, diverse team of volunteers. The exhibition itself will investigate what steam power is and its uses throughout history, as well as how it is used in the modern world; it will be a family-friendly, hands-on display, which will embrace the visually stunning steampunk style.

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The O'Connor Family reunited by their family's wagon. Image courtesy of Amber Druce.

The Power of Museum Objects

The Romany wagon is one of the most popular objects at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. For some people, it's particularly special because it evokes memories from the time it was lived in.

When the wagon, known as a vardo, was bought by the museum in 1953 it was displayed outside Blaise Museum, at that time a folk museum. It came to Bristol Museum in 1957. We didn't have any information about original owners, just the people connected to it from 1950 onwards.

Over the last 10 years or so, we've been able to piece together its earlier history thanks to several people related to Noah and Annie O'Connor, some of the first people to live in it. There's an 'A' on some of the windows; A is for Annie. The couple lived in the wagon with their family from about 1916 until Noah was killed in a road accident in 1925. At that time Annie sold the wagon and the family lived in a smaller wagon. Thanks to recent information, we now understand that the wagon was in Bristol after that, at Lock's Yard (aka Dorney's Yard) in Bedminster. One of our visitors was born there, in the caravan, in 1943, and her Grandmother was Annie O'Connor! She's just donated Annie's woollen blanket and some photos to the museum.

Another branch of the family has visited several times over the past few years, bringing in different family members each time and donating material for the wagon. A Grandson of Noah and Annie has donated a horse whip, a neckerchief, family photos, and some cooking pots. The personal connection has been really helpful for understanding the wagon's history and the people who lived there.

It was a huge honour to be able to connect the family and to host a gathering for them at the wagon. It was also the lady who was born there's 85th birthday. We had about 14 people, and the atmosphere was amazing. Stories were swapped, the family tree was shared, and happy tears were shed.

A shared love of the wagon was what brought everybody together and it's a powerful reminder of how public museum collections can be so special, and why visitor information is so crucial. We're hoping to record some oral histories next, to share some of the stories even wider.

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Curating Digging Deep: Coal Miners of African Caribbean Heritage Exhibition

Digging Deep: Coal Miners of African Caribbean Heritage Exhibition opens at the National Coal Mining Museum for England, Wakefield, Yorkshire UK, from September 2019 until March 2020. The exhibition presents newly unearthed narratives and perspectives from former coal miners of African Caribbean heritage, black miners who worked British coal mines.

Up until recently, very little was known, documented or displayed in mining museums about the existence of former coal miners of African Caribbean heritage, black British miners who toiled through rock, water and dust to dig deep for coal. Since the nationalization of the British coal industry in 1947 and the demise and total eradication of deep coal mining in the United Kingdom, the voices and narratives of former black coal miners, have remained largely silent, until now. The sacrifices and contributions made by black miners and all former miners in the UK, in general, is significant and I believe, in warrant of formal acknowledgement and celebration.

My role as a historian, educator (former school mentor, secondary school teacher and college tutor) and curator of mining heritage, in relation to preserving and sharing black miners' history, has taken many years of active research on my part, with the kind support of funders (our main support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Midlands & East and Lottery Players and the Sandford Cascade Project), partner organisations (the National Coal Mining Museum and Communities Inc. Nottingham) and the multitude of volunteer participants in the form of former miners, historians, family members, plus willing (and long-

suffering) friends and associates. I felt that black miners' heritage was at risk of being lost and undocumented/ not archived so I saw the need to address this national challenge, whilst developing professional leadership skills within the heritage sector in museum / exhibition curatorial, project management, volunteer and staff recruitment and audience development. A busy few years but an extremely rewarding and inspiring experience.



Locating and interviewing black miners took the greatest amount of time and consideration, not forgetting the time transcribing the audio recordings (thanks to the efficient and thorough service of Elaine Gillespie, elaine@emtranscriptionservices.com). Conducting curator talks, community groups/schools' presentations, maximising on creating and utilising broadcast media (e.g. print,



Colliery, Teamwork & Camaraderie, Discrimination, Miners' Strike & the Struggle for Industrial Survival, Legacy & Life after Mining. The panels include embedded QR codes audio recordings of their voices and memories to encourage people (young and more senior) to engage with museum exhibitions through mobile technology. Visitors can view original archive and contemporary photographs by mining heritage photographers such as: David Severn, Charles Sagoe, Martin Jenkinson, Chris Upton and Howard Sooley featuring black miners in contexts above and below ground.

The Digging Deep documentary film is available to watch in the museum film booth and was produced by project volunteers with the support of the BBC, original artwork such as a mix-media painting (1120mm x 950mm) by leading artist and activist Honey Williams, poetry by Arthur Cole, Delroy Brown, Munnya Usuwana, coal art sculpture and decorative artistic creations such as coal jewellery design and household product prototypes using coal by artist Winnie Kwok, plus charcoal artwork titled, Lady Miner (me!) by Durham based artist, Karen Thompson. Visitors can also get an understanding of the miners' home lives, seeing the kind of clothes Windrush migrants wore coming to England in the 1950s/60s and the ornaments, keepsakes, textiles, foods and music from their homelands to remind them of their history, culture and to educate future generations too.

broadcast, podcast and social media) to share news and events, plus partnership work with freelance artists, scientists and designers, to support our developmental work creating new products, jewellery pieces and artworks incorporating coal. These fresh interpretations and usage of mining heritage has now become a rich collection of pictorial, audio, video and artistic exhibition content, translated into a unique touring exhibition to be proud of. With the launch of our online Black Miners Museum Project by Nottingham News Centre CIC, we aim to ensure accessibility for all to this branch of diverse mining heritage and a chance for the public to submit new contributions in the form of archive photos and objects, contemporary images and graphics and new oral histories recordings.

Visitors to the exhibition can interact with a set of eight, colourful wall panels (2000mm x 850mm) as a trail, telling a narrative of key themes and experiences relating to former black miners such as: Migration to the UK, Finding Work & Being a Miner, Accident, Injury & Death at the

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Stepan Bandera Museum

One of the oddest museums in London must be the Stepan Bandera Museum, housed in one large room of a former Victorian pub in Islington.

Stepan Bandera (1909 – 1959) was (according to the views which still divide Ukraine today) either a selfless patriot who devoted his life to the struggle for the freedom of Ukraine from a succession of occupying powers, or a Nazi collaborator largely responsible for the genocide of some 100,000 Polish civilians, and heavily involved with the Holocaust in Ukraine.

For the Ukrainian Information Service and the group of volunteers who run the museum, the latter view is just a survival of Soviet propaganda. Bandera was assassinated by the KGB in Munich in 1959; the museum displays the suit he was wearing when he died.

Just three years after his death members of the then large Ukrainian community in Nottingham founded a museum to his memory; it moved to London in the 1970s. Today the museum room has three principal displays: personal possessions of Bandera, including his office furniture and clothes given by his family; photographs

and leaflets from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army who carried out guerrilla warfare against Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and Poland, and numerous pictures of Bandera and his colleagues; and such relevant objects as embroideries done by Ukrainian inmates of Soviet concentration camps, and a series of original watercolours of scenes in a German camp.

There are six Bandera museums (including one in Kyiv, Ukraine), but only the London one has his personalia. The London one, too, is understandably very security conscious. You can't just turn up – the building has no signs outside. Instead, you need to go online and buy a ticket for a tour through Eventbrite, giving your name and address. My tour had some fifteen people, mostly Ukrainian, and we were treated to a detailed hour-and-a-half tour, all translated into English. The atmosphere was open, welcoming and friendly, and everyone was invited to the pub afterwards.

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