

# SHG NEWS

SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP

Issue 84 Spring 2020

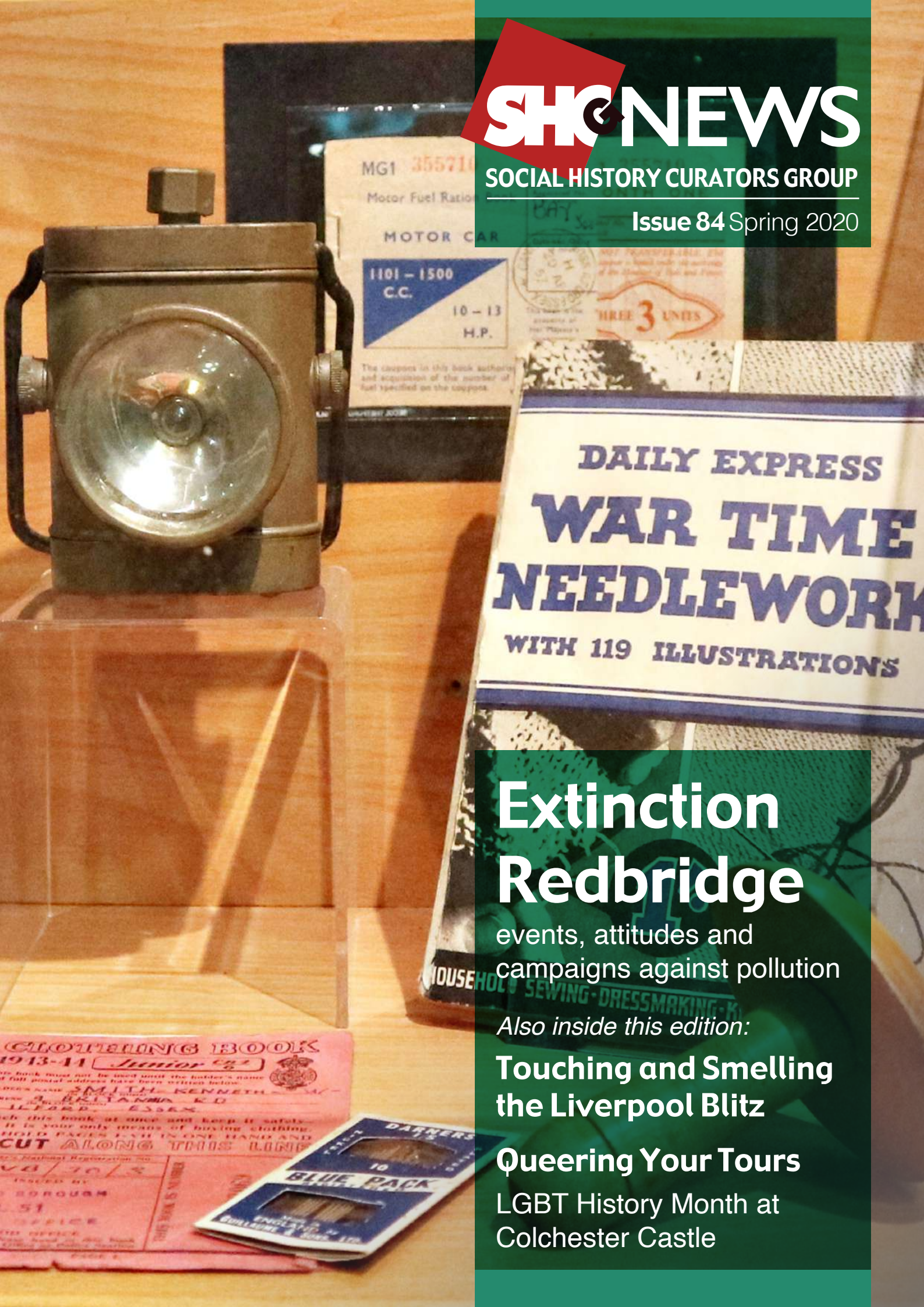
## Extinction Redbridge

events, attitudes and  
campaigns against pollution

*Also inside this edition:*

**Touching and Smelling  
the Liverpool Blitz**

**Queering Your Tours**  
LGBT History Month at  
Colchester Castle



# Welcome

## to issue 84 of SHCG News

Hello everyone, welcome to the latest edition of SHCG News. As promised in the last edition, I said I'd see you all again in the new year and here we are. It only feels like last week I was signing off the final edits of the last newsletter and I'm now writing the introduction to the next one!

We started 2020 receiving the news that the President of the USA was threatening to target 52 sites in Iran if there were repercussions following the assassination of Qassem Suleimani, expressly stating that cultural sites were included in the list of 52. We also received the news that Mary Beard, possibly Britain's foremost Classicist, had been vetoed by Downing Street becoming a trustee of the British Museum. These were two interferences by the world of politics in to the world of heritage and culture that felt a bit more concerning than usual. Perhaps one far more serious than the other but still serious and proof that museums and heritage sites are not the apolitical spaces some think of them as. Luckily with #IranianCulturalSites trending on Twitter and the British Museum circumventing the possibility of a government veto by appointing Mary Beard to trusteeship in one of their five 'free votes', the sector fought back.

The first few months of the year also saw huge fires rage in Australia and the return of climate activist Greta Thunburg to the UK. I am very pleased that in this edition of SHCG News we are able to carry a piece showing how museums can tell the historic and contemporary story of climate activism in the UK.



Lastly, I feel like I'd be remiss if I didn't dwell at least cursorily over the latest news story to break in 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19, commonly referred to as Coronavirus. This outbreak has already begun to effect the way we are working. Foreign loans are being extended, research trips abroad are being cancelled, and our workplaces have had to temporarily close to help contain the spread of the virus. As curators of social history many of us will be familiar with narratives around epidemics and pandemics (usually historic ones). It certainly poses interesting questions on how this outbreak could be seen through the lens of social history.

I realise that has been a rather dark welcome to a newsletter but please enjoy this edition and in the words of D'ream from 1993, things can only get better!

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**Front cover image**  
Extinction Redbridge, a small temporary display at Redbridge Museum in Ilford, East London.

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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](mailto: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 WILL BE CIRCULATED CLOSER TO THE TIME

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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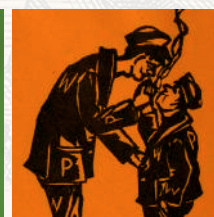
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Background image: The Perfect Blend: Coffee Exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum

# Eikon Basilike: The Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings

*Eikon Basilike: The Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings*, or “The King’s Book”, was available in booksellers a mere ten days after the execution of King Charles I on 30 January 1649.

This piece of literature was believed to have been penned by the King himself, though it is likely that much of the work was actually written by one of his chaplains. It was at once a defence of the Divine Right of Kings, a justification of Charles’ actions during the British and Irish Civil Wars (1641-1653) and a book of prayer. The first edition largely contained first-person prose reflecting on recent events, from the calling of the Long Parliament in 1640 to the Vote of No Addresses in 1648, which officially ceased negotiations between Parliament and the King. Psalm-like prayers and Charles’ meditations whilst captive in Holmby House, Northamptonshire, were also included. It finally served as a book of advice, containing a letter to the King’s eldest son who would be restored to the throne in 1660 as King Charles II.

*Eikon Basilike* was a piece of blatant pro-Royalist propaganda. William Marshall’s frontispiece, a portrait of Charles I at prayer, is full of leaden Royalist symbolism. On the right-hand side of the image the troubled King is depicted kneeling before an altar gazing at the crown of immortal glory. His earthly crown has been set aside on the floor while he holds a new crown of thorns. In this part of the image Charles is being likened to Jesus Christ, forsaking earthly power to rescue his people from their sufferings. On the altar is a bible open to the words “In verbo tuo spes mea” (“My hope is in your word”), emphasising the personal piety of the King. On the left-hand side of the image are two emblematic scenes: at the top of the page, a rock stands firm surrounded by a raging storm; at the bottom of the page, a palm tree is pictured with weights hanging from the branches. The weights bear the motto “Crescit sub pndere virtus” (“Virtue increases under oppression”). The rock and the tree are symbols of monarchy and show how Charles stood firm in the face of adversity and oppression.

The imagery and language of the book would have deeply resonated with contemporaries. The message was clear, the King was a martyr for the people. By



imbuing Charles I with the attributes of martyrdom they encouraged readers to see their individual sufferings as those of the King. This image endured beyond 1649. In 1660 the Convocations of Canterbury and York added Charles the Martyr Day (30 January) to the Church of England’s liturgical calendar. In 1859 the day was removed by the Anniversary Days Observance Act, but Charles I remains the only official saint in the Church of England.

The impact of *Eikon Basilike* was immediate and long-lasting. The book was designed to place Charles I firmly in the memories of his loyal subjects as an emblem of hope for the Royalist cause. In this way it helped to plant the seed for the restoration of the monarchy. Charles I was portrayed as a gentle, spiritual man who was killed for his principles, an image which even influenced the minds of Parliamentarians. William Sedgwick, an Independent and Parliamentarian, confessed that “his sufferings make me a Royalist that never cared for him” [*Justice upon the Armie Remonstrance* (London, 1649), p. 31]. For Hugh Trevor-Roper, “in their tragic mood” the people “were willing to romanticise as their martyr” the King whom they had once reviled as their “tyrant”. [*Historical Essays* (London, 1957), pp. 211-12].

The new Commonwealth government understood the seditious nature of the book and sought to prevent its production and discredit its contents. *Eikon Basilike* created a memory of the deceased King and the recent Civil Wars which Parliament were keen to eliminate. By questioning the legitimacy of the trial and execution of the King, the power and authority of the new republican government was also being challenged. The book therefore became dangerous to print and dangerous to own. William Dugard was arrested and questioned on 16 March 1649 by the Committee for Scandalous Pamphlets for printing two editions of the book on his private press. Richard Royston, who had first published the work in February, was also arrested multiple times. In October, the Council of State further commissioned John Milton to write a refutation of the book’s ideas,

entitled *Eikonoklastes*. *Eikon Basilike* however, remained a popular and influential publication. It ran through 35 English editions before the end of 1649 and in 1650 the work was clandestinely printed by Roger Norton under the title *Reliquiae sacrae Carolinae*, or *The Works of that Great Monarch and Glorious Martyr King Charles the I.*

*Eikon Basilike* remains an important source for historians. It provides an insight into the mind of the defeated King and is a fascinating example of shrewd historical revisionism, revealing how Royalists wished to remember

their defeat. Whilst several copies of the work still survive, the National Civil War Centre in Newark, Nottinghamshire, holds King Charles II's personal copy of his father's last days. It is currently on display at the museum in *The World Turned Upside Down* exhibition.

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## Liver Phaeton, 1900

Built by William Lea in 1900 this car is the only known model of its type to survive. It is based on the design of a horse drawn carriage, hence the name 'phaeton.'

Lea was a fascinating man and publicity surrounding our purchase of the car in 1998 enabled us to make contact with his descendants, from whom we learned a lot about William and his family.

Currently on display in The Great Port gallery of the Museum of Liverpool, it is exhibited in our warehouse of objects that have been imported or exported through Liverpool docks. Although Lea made most of the other components for the car the engine was imported from Benz in Germany.

Lea was a pioneer of the motor industry in the Northwest. In the 1890s, the infancy of the motor car industry, he was the sole agent for Benz cars in the area and established the Liver Motor Car Depot at the entrance to Birkenhead Park. He also had premises at various locations in Liverpool.

The depot at Birkenhead Park was huge, capable of manipulating up to fifty cars at any one time around a track inside the building. The *Autocar* magazine of June 1st 1901 reported that "Mr Lea has grasped the vast possibilities of the autocar industry, with one of the largest, if not the largest, establishments of its kind in Great Britain."

He only produced his own cars between 1900 and 1901 and they were in brisk demand because of their 'elegance, ease of handling and reasonable prices.' He was also skilled at marketing, employing whimsical window displays to draw in customers and displaying customers letters to support his business and after sales services.

Lea is believed to have opened the first driving school in the country in tandem with his Motor Car Depot in 1901. The School of Automobilism offered courses for 'the



training of intending purchasers, gentlemen awaiting the arrival of their cars, and professional men in the art of managing and driving a modern motor car.'

The Motor Postal Instruction Bureau was another first, available for pupils without the time for the practical course! Terms were £1 plus 3s/3d for the accompanying textbook. Obviously there were very few cars on the roads so a non-practical driving test might not have been as strange or terrifying an idea as it would be now.

In December, 1890 William Lea wrote a letter to the *Motor-Car Journal* pointing out the benefits of driving a car rather than a horse and carriage. He said a horse could not be trusted to wait outside a house while you were visiting friends but was likely to bolt or become unsettled. He continued that nobody, as yet, was likely to run off with your car, but "perhaps some day when everyone has a motor instead of a horse, we shall have to keep a private padlock on the wheel when we go visiting or shopping." So it seems he was a visionary as well as an entrepreneur!

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# Blitzed

## LIVERPOOL LIVES

The Port of Liverpool and surrounding areas were key targets for German bombers during the Second World War (1939-45). In Merseyside more than 4,000 people died, 10,000 homes were destroyed and 70,000 people made homeless during air raids which peaked in May 1941.

The devastation, and resilience of local people was captured in these striking images taken by Liverpool City Police 1940-41. They are just a

small selection from over 300 and form a record of the destruction and human tragedy in the city centre, dockland areas and residential suburbs.

Liverpool suffered the second highest number of civilian deaths in air raids in the country. Due to censorship, press reports often did not tell the whole story. Photographs of some of the worst attacks were not published until years after.

## Touching and smelling the Liverpool Blitz

Kay Jones, lead curator of community history at Museum of Liverpool, reveals how simple accessible and sensory elements in the *Blitzed: Liverpool lives* exhibition help people to engage with and 'experience' the Liverpool Blitz.

### About the exhibition

The exhibition, which opened in June 2019, reveals the devastation the Blitz brought to the lives and city of Liverpool in photographs taken by Liverpool City Police between 1940 and 1941. Oral history interviews bring to life the impact of the war through the eyes of those directly affected by the bombings.

The port city of Liverpool and surrounding areas were key targets for German bombers during the Second World War (1939-45). In Merseyside more than 4,000 civilians were killed, 10,000 homes were destroyed and 70,000 people made homeless during air raids, which peaked in the May Blitz, 1941.

### A range of sensory experiences

Right from the start of developing the content of the exhibition I was very keen to include tactile versions of some of the photographs featured and to use smells to evoke memories.

Many of the photographs show a range of terrible bomb damage to homes, shelters, shops, docks, railways and ships. In the dramatic scenes of burning rubble and raging infernos you can almost feel the heat and smell and taste the acrid burning. Whilst I included these evocative descriptions in the written labels, I also wanted a wide range of people to experience this, bringing the images to life.

## Smells

Like many museums we have used aromas to evoke feeling, memories and atmosphere. An online search showed that we could source a range of wartime smells and I opted for 1930s street, street bomb and wartime underground. We housed them in a repurposed multimedia unit.

A range of visitors, young and old are certainly enjoying exploring the very pungent smells! They act as a discussion point between visitors, encouraging debate and memory sharing. They are especially useful as part of our House of Memories programme for people living with dementia.

## Tactile images

In previous exhibitions, and in various permanent parts of the Museum, we have used tactile images and models. Most recently tactile plans of the Liverpool Royal School for the Blind were used in the temporary exhibition, 'Blind School: Pioneering People and Places', produced in partnership with History of Place. These plans were made by Tactile Studios so I approached them again regarding potentially reproducing some of the Blitz photographs.

They advised which images would work best from the selection I provided; essentially not too busy and to be easily interpreted by touch. One image is of a couple standing in their back garden of Score Lane, south Liverpool next to a huge unexploded parachute mine. A person-sized scale needed to be added to this to aid understanding. Descriptive text accompanying the photograph is also provided in Braille.

### Score Lane, Childwall. 28 November, 1940

A huge unexploded bomb lies in the garden of a house in Childwall, south Liverpool. A man and woman stand close behind it.

Mines like this were dropped from aircraft by parachute.

The second image is of Walton Jail, Liverpool

### H.M. Prison, Walton. 18 September 1940

A large hole has been blasted through the brick exterior wall of Walton Jail by a bomb. The inside of the prison has been exposed. Feel the cell doors through the hole. Some inmates were trapped in the debris. 22 people were believed to have been killed'.

## Audio description

An audio point at the start of the exhibition describes the exhibition content and physical space for orientation proposes. This is available for all visitors and particularly may assist visitors with visual impairments. There are also transcripts of the audio interviews of people who experienced the Blitz.



Smell panel in the exhibition. 1930s Street smell, Street Bomb smell, and Wartime Underground smell.



The tactile panels of Score Lane and H.M. Prison Walton in place in the exhibition.

**Blitzed: Liverpool Lives runs until summer 2021.**  
Free entry

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# Queering Your Tours – LGBT History Month at Colchester Castle

Some museums are lucky enough to have objects on display that have direct links to LGBT+ people from the past. Sometimes this is recorded in documentation or even (in rare instances) mentioned on the object labels in the galleries. More often, those connections are not recorded and some extra work is needed.

## Direct links

There are many publications that highlight key historical figures who had same sex relationships or presented as a different gender to their biological sex at birth. These books are a good starting point to find objects on display in your own museums that might have links to LGBT+ history. For me, I started with R. B. Parkinson's 'A Little Gay History'. It has a lot of colourful images that guide the reader to the sorts of objects that might be in museums relating to known LGBT+ figures and themes.

For Social History Museums you may be able to go the extra mile and find local historic figures that would today be identified as LGBT+. This will take some additional time and research. The best approach I have found is to speak with local LGBT+ people, particularly those who have lived in the local area for a long time. I tied my research in with the work of artist Ian Giles. As part of the New Geographies project, he developed LGBT walking tours of four towns in the East of England, one of which was Colchester. Working together, we consulted LGBT+ people in Colchester who shared their stories and knowledge of people and venues in the town who might well have been forgotten.



Itaglio of Gannymede and Zeus as an Eagle. In many traditions the two became lovers. Image courtesy of Doug Atfield. © Colchester Museums

Once you have found some themes and people you want to highlight on your tour, you can then look at your own displays to identify any objects relating to them. For example, there are a pair of cufflinks with the bust of Queen Anne on them, which I use to discuss her relationship with two 'favourites' at court. The release of the film in 2019 means this story is still fresh in people's minds and watching the movie can be considered as research.





## But we don't have the collections!

One of the most common reasons for people not talking about LGBT+ history in museums and galleries is that they feel they do not have the collections to reflect those stories. Quite often, this will be the case. Fortunately, Colchester Castle does have objects directly linked to LGBT+ themes, such as the Roman Emperor Hadrian and Medieval knights. However, once you know more about wider LGBT+ culture, it is possible to use your displays to great effect.

One approach is to explore aspects of modern LGBT+ culture using historical material. "Rainbows", "bears", "pride", "hankies" and "clocking" are words that can be used when talking about modern LGBT+ culture. They are also objects or specimens found within many museums across the country (for "clocking" use clocks). On the tour of Colchester Castle I use a display of a human skull and long bones to discuss the practice of matelotage, a form of civil union between male pirates. Many other museums across the country have used this technique to great effect, so I would suggest going on a few to get some ideas (The V&A and the Fitzwilliam being particularly good).

The most important thing is to not be afraid to include things on display that do not have a direct link to LGBT+ history. It is much better to use different objects to stimulate these conversations than to just ignore those histories.

## But I'm not LGBT, how can I talk about it?

Yes, OK, I am a gay man talking about LGBT history. However, I am only one part of a very broad spectrum and would never presume to be representative of anyone else in the community (not even other gay men). Our life experiences are all individual and we shouldn't ever be put off talking about histories that are not our own. For most museum professionals, this is something we do on a daily basis anyway. We talk about the lives of kings and queens, but never have the experience of royal privilege. Therefore, why should this put us off talking about histories of other minority groups in the past.

If your organisation does not contain anyone who is part of the LGBT+ community, or you are afraid of asking, there will likely be a society or group in the local area, if not within the county, that would be more than happy to be consulted on the content going into your tours. Another great approach would be to have some of these individuals running those tours, as happens at many other museums across the country.

## Running the tours

Marketing will be vital to getting your tours up and running. At Colchester we have a wide range of approaches to publicise the event. Whether you have a comms and marketing team or not, there will be ways in which you regularly publicise events already, so use them to your advantage.



A woodcut of two Prisoner's of War at the Berechurch Camp near Colchester. Produced by Kurt Stichling, prisoner at the camp. Image courtesy of Ben Paites. © Colchester Museums

With brand new tours, it is probably useful to do some targeted advertising. Tying into local LGBT+ events is a good way to get started. My first tours were run during Colchester Pride in 2019. Visitors to Colchester Pride, held at Firstsite Art Gallery, could be directed to Colchester Castle by those on the museums stall. Since then we have contacted various LGBT+ groups/networks and have had much greater uptake for the tours running during LGBT History Month 2020.

## In summary

When considering developing LGBT tours at your venues, the key things to remember are:

1. If you don't have LGBT+ collections it doesn't mean you can't run LGBT+ tours
2. Don't be afraid of talking about histories for communities you are not a part of.
3. Involve members of the LGBT community at all stages if you can, from planning to delivery.
4. Enjoy it! These should be fun tours. Although some of the content can be serious, it is important for those attending to enjoy the experience.



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Lilly, one of the participants of the project, with her 'adopted prisoner' from the record. Image courtesy of Leah Mellors.

## Prisoners on Prisoners: A new contemporary art installation at Ripon Prison and Police Museum

As part of our National Portfolio Organisation status, Ripon Museum Trust (RMT) has funding from Arts Council England (ACE) to commission four contemporary art works over four years.

These art commissions are intended to offer a fresh perspective on our historic buildings and collections, whilst offering opportunities for a wide range of people to participate in or experience contemporary art, in line with ACE's Creative Case for Diversity.

In 2019, we appointed Faye Claridge, a contemporary artist who often responds to museum collections or archives in her work, to create the second of these four artworks. The artist brief was deliberately non-prescriptive – we asked Faye to create an artwork for our Prison & Police Museum, connected to our 2020 theme of Women, and to work collaboratively with both internal

volunteers and external groups. Over the space of a year, Faye responded to that brief and created Prisoners on Prisoners, which opened to the public on Saturday 8 February 2020.

Prisoners on Prisoners explores the comparative experiences of historic and contemporary female prisoners. It provides an opportunity for current residents at HMP Askham Grange to offer their unique and personal perspective on the prison system, in their own words, whilst reflecting on the stories of historic prisoners. Using case studies from criminal record books in RMT's collections, Faye, along with the Curator and a volunteer from RMT, ran workshops with residents at HMP Askham Grange, asking them to 'adopt' a prisoner from the collections who they felt a connection with. Those who were willing were recorded speaking about the connection they felt, the comparison of their experiences and the way they felt when they looked at the collections.

This audio forms the main part of the installation, which is housed in an original Victorian prison cell at the museum. Historic and contemporary 'mugshot' style photographs of prisoners are projected onto the wall, accompanied by the audio of the participants. Large fabric wall hangings, combining historic and contemporary photographs presented with evidence of photographic decay, hang on two walls – these hangings make the cell feel claustrophobic, whilst exploring the idea of time and decay as a theme. Benches are printed with images from the museum collections, emphasising that this artwork is rooted in collections-based research.

The installation is moving, thought-provoking and honest. The participants speak eloquently and perceptively about their chosen historic prisoner and through reflecting on the historic stories, they reveal much about their own crimes, their experiences of prison, and the effect it has had on



Artist Faye Claridge inside the installation she created at Ripon Prison and Police Museum. Image courtesy of Leah Mellors

their lives and families. The women all praise the support they have received at HMP Askham Grange, which is an open prison designed to prepare women for their release from prison, through health and wellbeing support, education, skills development and work experience. Three of the women used the same phrase to describe this support: “prison saved my life”.

The final artwork is receiving fantastic praise from visitors to the museum. Visitors have described it as “fascinating”; a “surprisingly stark, honest and unfettered account” that “haunts the museum”; and “heartbreaking”. This feedback supports RMT’s new approach to interpretation and curatorial work, which places greater emphasis on comparisons between past and present, and the increasing participation of people who are still directly affected by our themes of poverty, crime and punishment, and social justice.

This participatory practice is just as important as the final work and the process of working with the residents and staff at HMP Askham Grange has been incredibly rewarding. Any nervousness that was felt at working in a prison disappeared as soon as our Victorian criminal record books were shown to the participants. Many of the women spent hours reading through the books and sharing their fascination, and their sadness, as they made strong and immediate links between their own experiences and those of women over 100 years ago. Their evaluation of the workshops was positive, without exception.



Ripon Prison and Police Museum.  
Image courtesy of Ripon Prison and Police Museum.

To accompany the installation, we have created a temporary display exploring the history of HMP Askham Grange, with archive material on loan from the prison, and we will be delivering an evening talk about the process involved in the project in March.

**Prisoners on Prisoners is on display at Ripon Prison & Police Museum until 6 September 2020.**



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# Shaped by Industry, Shared with Pride

Visitors at Whitehead Railway Museum.  
Image courtesy of Donald Bell

Shaped by Industry, Shared with Pride (SBI-SWP) project delivered innovative and authentic immersive theatre performances to audiences at four industrial heritage sites, on the iconic tourism route that is the Causeway Coastal Route in 2019.

SBI-SWP was delivered by a partnership led by Mid and East Antrim Museum & Heritage Service with Big Telly Theatre Company and Carrickfergus Enterprise. Funding came from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Mid and East Antrim Council with support from Tourism-NI, the Department of Communities and the Historic Environment Division, to mark 2018 as European Year of Cultural Heritage.

This immersive theatre experience was authentically local. It provided visitors with a real sense of place and created memories and associations which are specific to Northern Ireland. Bespoke audience participative theatre performances unique to the four sites were developed by using professional and volunteer-led research, to uncover the hidden-history of the coastal villages of Carnlough and Glenarm, Whitehead Railway Museum and Flame! Gasworks Museum, Carrickfergus.

Authenticity was further enhanced by the high standard of volunteer contributions to give a distinctive Mid and East Antrim flavour. Volunteers shared their local knowledge of a site, carried out archival research and made possible access to usually non-public areas,



Visitors participating in the immersive theatrical experience at Whitehead Railway Museum. Image courtesy of Donald Bell

linked to the storyline, so a fuller sense of place could be created to enhance the audience's experience.

Local culture was intertwined in the four performances closely related to historical events during the industrial revolution in the Glens of Antrim. Audience comments after the Carnlough play show a greater awareness of the harsh conditions of a quarry worker's life in the 19th Century, the 'tragedy and hard times', the difference between 'industry now and then'. A 1930s dining-carriage at Whitehead Museum, a variety of locations at Glenarm such as a Pub and the gatehouse of a 19th Century dwelling, plus the exhibits, and Gasholder at Flame! were all utilised by actors to actively involve the audience directly with choices as each drama unfolded. The result was an engaging way of increasing dwell time and potential repeat visits that left a tangible sense of visitors' new understanding of place and time.

The immersive experience provided visitors with the opportunity to engage with our landscapes, heritage and culture in Mid and East Antrim. During the performances, audiences were gently encouraged to perform a range of activities by the actors which contributed to carrying the immersive experience forward. At Carnlough, audiences were invited to haul trolleys with coal to fuel the Lime Kiln. At Whitehead the audience were 'diners' in a railway carriage choosing from a menu, the next sequence in the drama. At Flame! Gas Works Museum audience members volunteered for a 'Housewife's Challenge' to use gas cookers from different eras. At Glenarm visitors from young children to older adults, took part in an imaginary auction to buy parts of the Causeway Coastal Route, each for enormous sums of money. Audience comments reveal that many became emotionally absorbed in the drama's storyline:



Imaginary auction to buy parts of the Causeway Coastal Route at Glenarm. Image courtesy of Donald Bell

*"I thought it was fun and vibrant, but still informative"*

Carnlough participant

*"The performance got me intrigued and curious to find out more about industrial heritage."*

Carnlough participant

Audiences were engaged in a holistic and dynamic way by this experimental pilot project, facilitating them to develop a deeper, more memorable and lasting insight into local heritage sites and culture, distinctive from other presentations of heritage interpretation.

The known needs of visitors in the tourism categories 'Culturally Curious' and 'Independent Travellers' were being targeted by the SBI-SWP project. The four immersive theatre plays were promoted for Industrial Heritage Month during May and early June 2019, as 38 twenty-minute performances, each with an audience maximum of fifteen people to allow for a quality experience. The attendance-rate across all performances was 68%. Dates and timings enabled the audience to attend more than one performance. As the performances were carried by shared activity rather than prolonged dialogue, a basic understanding of English by international visitors proved adequate.

#### **Feedback from an external evaluation revealed:**

- Average of 10 participants per performance achieved;
- Staff and volunteers all had very positive feedback.

The immersive theatre experience has been proven to have regional and international appeal and is saleable, sustainable and repeatable.


#### **External evaluation:**

- 96% of participants in Phase 1 wanted to find out more about industrial heritage.
- 98% would take part in a similar performance again.
- 54% of participants from outside Borough, 30% travelled more than 30 miles.

International tourism buyers enjoyed a pop-up performance of the Whitehead Railway Museum play in April 2019. Their response was exceptionally positive.

The project showed how creative techniques could improve the tourism appeal of under-exploited industrial heritage, and increase collaboration between small, isolated volunteer-run heritage sites to build tourism engagement capacity and know-how. Sites also learned how the skills of local storytellers could be used for creative animation to sustain their enhanced engagement for visitors.

To promote replication of immersive theatre practice in the heritage and tourism industries, an online toolkit of resources was produced, developed from the learning achieved by delivering the project. The toolkit can be accessed from Mid and East Antrim Council's website at [www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/ShapedByIndustry](http://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/ShapedByIndustry).

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## The Perfect Blend: Coffee Exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum

An exhibition at Oxford University's flagship museum has told the story of the introduction of coffee to Britain's shores and how it came to be embedded in our culture.

*From Istanbul to Oxford – The Origins of Coffee Drinking in England* aimed to highlight the indebtedness of Ottoman culture to one of our most frequent daily activities. Through a selection of coffee-related objects from both the Ottoman world and England, the exhibition addressed the political connections between early encounters with coffee during diplomatic visits to the Ottoman Empire and the importation of the beverage at a time of heightened friction between the two powers.

The first Western impressions of coffee were cynical and disparaging. George Sandys remarked on visiting a Constantinople coffee house in 1610, "*There sit they chatting ... and sippe of a drink called coffa ... it is black*

*as soote and tasting not much unlike it*". This disgust was commonly felt amongst Englishmen who encountered coffee in the Ottoman lands in the early seventeenth century and yet it was little more than a few decades later that the 'black soote' arrived in Oxford. John Evelyn documented the first known coffee drinking in England in 1637, by Nathaniel Canopus, a Greek priest at Oxford's Christ Church College. By 1652 the first coffee house had opened, an unremarkable room in the Angel Inn on Oxford High Street, run by a Jewish person named Jacob. These establishments soon sprung up throughout England and while they were a healthier alternative to public houses for knowledge exchange during the English Restoration, the patrons were acutely aware they were participating in a foreign and, more explicitly, Ottoman activity.

With a particular focus on Oxford, the displays comprised coffee pots, ceramic vessels, coffee tokens and works on paper to illustrate how Eastern and Western customs



Interior of an early coffee house.  
Image © Ashmolean, University of Oxford

*Sold by C. Diney & Co. in Aldermany Church Yard.*

merged, resulting in the coffee-drinking culture of today. The addition of banners and pamphlets showed how the integration of coffee into British life was not without controversy; it first had to overcome fierce debate between its advocates and disdainers. These arguments centred on the 'Turkishness' of coffee, with those in favour seeking to replicate the splendour of the Ottoman enemy and those opposed declaring coffee-drinking a 'barbarous infidel activity'. A display of seventeenth century English coffee tokens showed that the Turkish origins of coffee were signified in the names of coffee houses, such as 'The Turk's Head' or 'Murat', and also by their signs, which often depicted sultans being served coffee.

The most attention-grabbing item in the exhibition was a 150x118cm reproduction of a 1675 map of Oxford, pinpointing the locations of the first ten coffee houses to open in the city. The popularity of the map was unprecedented, enabling crowds of visitors to not only

see where coffee trade began in Britain but also to gaze at how Oxford looked 345 years ago and how it has changed since. In this way, the exhibition succeeded in drawing the local community to the museum and connecting with them through locally-pertinent content.

The exhibition ran from November 2019 to March 2020 and was curated by Dr Federica Gigante.

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# Extinction Redbridge

Extinction Redbridge is a small temporary display at Redbridge Museum in Ilford, East London. It explores events, attitudes and campaigns against pollution, waste and climate change in the London Borough of Redbridge over the last 100 years.

This modest display was a way for the Museum to creatively use our local history collections to examine an issue facing us all and to record current local public discourse.

We hoped to show how environmental protests have been part of the borough's history, including 1930s campaigns about street litter, 1970s protests against an Ilford chemical factory and protests against the M11 Link Road in Wanstead during the 1990s which made national headlines. In light of Redbridge Council recently calling a 'Climate Emergency', we also wanted to help residents to connect to the issue at a local level and explore what we can all do to slow down climate change.



A toy car, driving licence, and a smog mask on display in a case addressing traffic fume emissions. Image courtesy of Nishat Alam

One challenge in curating the display was the lack of space to explore all the causes of global warming and to connect it better to the area's history. It meant being creative in what was displayed. A 1920s toy car, 1950s smog mask and driving licence represented traffic fume emissions; a 1950s Bakelite telephone helped to explore the issues around plastics; a 1940s bicycle lamp and darning mushroom explained how food waste and emissions reduced during World War Two. I even used rubbish from my own bin to illustrate modern recycling. I learnt a lot about the history of my home town while undertaking the research and how to turn that information into a (hopefully) appealing display.



Extinction Redbridge display at Redbridge Museum. Image courtesy of Nishat Alam

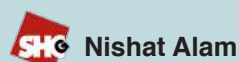
The response so far has been mostly positive, particularly from children who can enjoy making a Climate Change protest badge or a DIY environmental pamphlet. These simple activities encourage families to look at the display and think about what they can do to help at home.

We did have one email from a visitor who was unhappy with the display of an Extinction Rebellion (XR) flag, donated by a local group. He had read of counter-terrorism police labelling the group an 'extremist' organisation and was worried about the effect on his children.

In our response we sought to show how we were recognising but not necessarily endorsing the local Extinction Rebellion group and that protest movements are represented in other parts of the Museum, including former local resident Sylvia Pankhurst who spent her whole career getting up people's noses. We also pointed out that the police admitted an 'error of judgement' regarding the XR listing and have withdrawn their objections.

Protests have long been documented by museums so I was pleased to connect the borough's past to the present and create a dialogue with our visitors, particularly on one of the most pressing contemporary issues of the day.

Extinction Redbridge runs until 18 April 2020.



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# Protecting Humanity, exhibiting objects of war

**Protecting Humanity: 70 years of the Geneva Conventions, an exhibition open to the public, was installed at the British Red Cross headquarters from August 2019 to December 2019. It explored the story of the Geneva Conventions and the impact of war on people, past and present.**

12 August 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Geneva Conventions currently in force. The adoption of the original Geneva Convention in 1864 was a direct result of the early work of the Red Cross Movement. Since then, we have witnessed many instances where international humanitarian law has preserved humanity in times of war- whether that's through providing medical care to wounded soldiers and sailors, prisoners of war being allowed to receive messages from their families, and civilians receiving necessary food and medical aid.

To mark the anniversary around the world, the Red Cross highlighted the importance of the Geneva Conventions and the impact of war on civilians. It was important to explore the history of international humanitarian law, its origins in Switzerland and connections to the Red Cross movement. My approach to curating an exhibition on this topic was to focus on the objects which held memories of people impacted by war, past and present, to create an understanding of the importance of the Conventions.

The changing nature of warfare during the Second World War, including advances in technology which led to increasingly devastating weaponry, resulted in a dramatic increase in civilian suffering. The Geneva Conventions, which existed at the time, provided protection to medical personnel, wounded troops and prisoners of war. However, there were few rules which specifically protected civilians in wartime. Millions of civilians in Europe and Asia were deported, tortured, taken hostage, interned and deprived of dignity. The Second World War was therefore an important turning point, the tragedies of this war confirmed that protection for civilians was essential. In 1949, a fourth Geneva Convention was adopted to protect civilians in war and conflict.

## Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp

Shortly after Adolf Hitler came into power in Germany, the persecution of Jewish people intensified. Millions of Jewish people, as well as others such as gay people, Roma people and those with mental illnesses, were forced into concentration camps. The Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, in Germany, was liberated on 15 April 1945. When the British and Canadian troops entered the camp, they found over 13,000 unburied bodies and around 60,000

people who were mostly acutely sick and starving. On 21 April 1945, teams from the British Red Cross and the Friends Relief Service, arrived at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp to provide relief to civilians.



This doll was made by a survivor from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and given to Enid Fordham, a British Red Cross civilian relief worker. Unfortunately, the story of the maker was not recorded. The doll was most likely made for the children in the camp, it may have provided some comfort to the children living in such devastating conditions.

## Changi civilian internment

On 15 February 1942, Singapore surrendered to the invading Japanese army. This led to the internment of around 2,800 civilians in Changi Jail in the east of Singapore, a prison initially built to house 600 prisoners. In May 1944, the Changi internees were moved to a former Royal Air Force barracks a few miles from the Jail. By the end of 1944, there were around 4,000 people interned.

Women and children were separated from the men, splitting up families. The conditions in the jail were extremely harsh – the internees endured overcrowding, malnutrition and diseases such as malaria.

Many creative objects were made by the individuals in Changi. These range from purely functional objects needed for survival to objects with more aesthetic qualities, such as works of art. These objects capture a spark of the human spirit in extreme conditions and tell the stories, ideas and emotions of their makers.



The pair of baby's shoes were made for Jennefer Davidson, who was born in Changi Jail in July 1942. The shoes were made by her mother, Daphne Davidson, out of scraps of material she found. Daphne and her husband, James Davidson, were separated in the jail.

The toy rattle was made by James Davidson for his daughter Jennefer. It came with a handwritten note- 'My husband's gift to his daughter. Made in the POW. Changi Workshops, 1943. Rattle!' The rattle was perhaps a way for James to connect with his daughter who he had very little contact with in the Jail.

The card and crib board game was made in Changi Jail. Sadly, the story of the maker(s) was not documented. The game would have helped relive boredom, something the internees struggled with, and perhaps boosted morale.

### War in cities today- Contemporary collecting

The resurgence of warfare in cities in recent years can be witnessed in Syria, Yemen and Iraq. There are cities in these countries which have been left completely devastated by war. Although civilians must be protected by law, millions are killed or injured in their own homes.

In 2017, the Red Cross collected objects from two cities, Baiji and Ramadi, in Iraq to show the impact of urban warfare on civilians.

This teddy bear was found in a destroyed living room. Everything in the room was out of place, including this toy which had been abandoned by its child owner. It lay surrounded by debris, mud and dust.

This door sign hung above a door in Al-Raja's High School for Girls in Ramadi. The sign is written in Arabic and

translates 'One A', presumably referring to class 1A. The school building was found destroyed and abandoned. In many cases during war, schools and other public buildings are used as shelters for those seeking refuge from the conflict and who have often lost their own homes. However, they may also become places to store ammunition or are used as sleeping quarters for fighters.

This bicycle wheel was part of a bicycle which lay burnt and destroyed in front of a burnt-out building in a neighbourhood in Baiji which was severely damaged by war.

These everyday objects bear witness to the suffering of civilians. Each object holds a memory of its owner or user, by looking closely at these objects we wonder who they belonged to and what these individuals were doing when war forced them to abandon their possessions and flee. These objects make us aware of all the different people who are affected, from children to the elderly. They are the voices of the people affected by war and conflict and show us all the different areas of life that are disrupted.

Ordinary objects like these, especially when collected with the memories of their makers and users, are effective in creating empathy and getting across important messages. For the Red Cross, these objects played a significant role in communicating the importance of the Geneva Conventions to a range of different people.

**Extinction Redbridge runs until 18 April 2020.**

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## WARTIME RATIONING

During the Second World War, food, clothes and fuel were rationed due to shortages.

The government issued everyone with books of coupons. These fixed the amount of food and goods you could buy.

Many poorer people actually became healthier as they were able to afford more food, ate less sugar (which was rationed) and ate brown bread (white bread was removed as it wasted wheat).

Many Redbridge residents grew their own crops in gardens or allotments. Food waste was fed to animals rather than being thrown away.

As part of the 'Make Do and Mend' campaign, people repaired old clothes instead of wasting material.

- Motor fuel ration book, 1957
- Bicycle lamp, c.1940
- Wartime Needlework booklet, c.1940
- Clothing ration book, 1943
- Box of needles, c.1940
- Darning mushroom, 1939