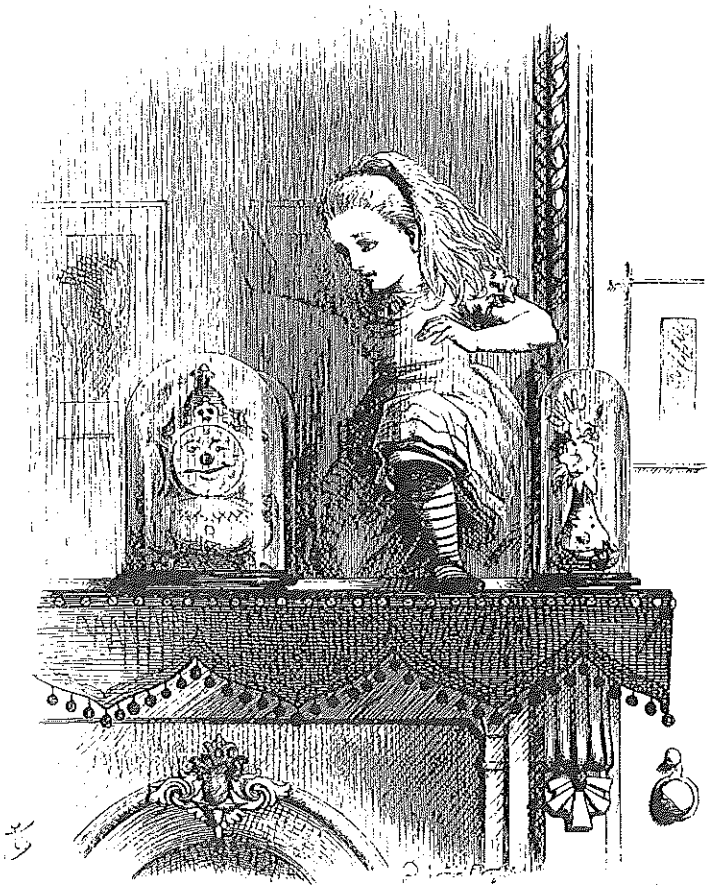
Social History Curators Group



Journal 16 (1988-89)

THE SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP

SHCG is the largest of the specialist museum groups. Founded in the mid-1970s as the Group for Regional Studies in Museums, the diversity of interests of its membership was clearly recognised in 1982 by the Group's change in name, and its subsequent growth.

In common with other specialist groups, SHCG's primary role is helping to raise standards of curatorship. A *News* is issued three times a year. This includes reviews of meetings and exhibitions, opinions on current issues, and items of news. *SHCG Journal* is issued annually, and features articles on various aspects of social history, on research, collecting, recording and interpretation. As well as the regular publications the Group has also produced, free to members, the proceedings of the Women, Heritage and Museums conference (organised by SHCG), out of which sprang the WHAM specialist group. Another special publication produced by SHCG, in association with the Society for the Study of Labour History, is the proceedings of a meeting on Labour History held at Congress House. A special edition of the *Museums Journal* (June 1985) was produced at the Group's urging, and featured articles arising out of an SHCG meeting, with others, on twentieth century collecting. Currently in preparation is a *Manual of Social History Curatorship.*

The Group organises several meetings a year which cover a wide range of subjects and themes, from practical seminars on materials such as iron, glass and plastics, to major discussions on Twentieth Century Collecting and the Disposal of Museum Collections. A programme of training seminars is currently in progress. In addition, the annual study weekend provides a forum for fuller analysis of major subjects such as Museums and the Media, or Interpretation in Social History.

SHCG is a point of contact for other organisations as well as its own members. It has a voice in Museums Association affairs, and represents the interests and concerns of members by liaising with Area Councils, Federations, the Museums and Galleries Commission and other bodies. Its role will continue to reflect those interests and concerns as the importance of museums, and the relevance of social history, grow.

Backnumbers of the *SHCG Journal* are available from the Editor.

COVER ILLUSTRATION: Contrasting images of childhood in the nineteenth century: 'Alice in the Looking-glass room' by John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) and 'William York, aged Ten Years, murdering Susan Mahew, aged Five Years' from the account of William York's conviction for murder in Andrew Knapp & William Baldwin, *The Newgate Calendar*, vol. 2 (1825), p. 17.

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The Editor welcomes articles and notes of work in progress for inclusion in the next issue of *SHCG Journal*. The copy date is the end of December, 1989. Contributions should be typed, double spaced, on one side of A4 paper and may be accompanied by line or monochrome illustrations (no slides). All reviews should give full details of cost, postage and packing, date and place of publication. All contributions should be addressed to the Editor, Steph Mastoris, The Harborough Museum, Council Offices, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7LT, (0858-32468).

For my dear Lynne,
- the proof-reader
& my love,
28-4-1989.

Social History Curators Group

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SOCIAL HISTORY IN WONDERLAND

Elizabeth Frostick

The idea for the 1988 Annual Study Weekend of the Social History Curators Group was prompted really by a meeting of WHAM delegates in Dewsbury held to discuss 'Perspectives on Childhood'. An important conference was held at Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood looking at recent research on childhood history; an *Oral History Journal* devoted to Childhood, a Folklore Society Meeting on children's folklore and various museum displays and initiatives seemed to suggest that there was a lot of 'childhood' about! All this in addition to lengthy discussion with colleagues at the 1987 ASW.

However, I departed from the WHAM seminar concerned that the subject of the child in history and the concept of childhood needed clarification. The main confusion - at least to my mind - seemed to be between adults in museums interpreting aspects of the child in history, for adults on the one hand, and adults attempting to penetrate the psychological world of children for children (or for adults) on the other. Childhood and children are not necessarily the same thing.

What then do we mean when we use the term childhood, as distinct from, presumably, adulthood? Are infancy and adolescence quite different concepts again? Is it possible to understand how children think once one is an adult? Can we legitimately talk about 'childhood' at all when the world in which children live as well as the intellectual definitions used to describe it are necessarily adult? The creation and use of these life-cycle labels would suggest that human life does fall into distinct packages or stages of life in which there are identifiable and shared characteristics. Perhaps it is enough that scientists and psychologists say that these stages exist. Freud, for one, had much to say on the subject.

One of the problems facing the social history curator then is to decide to what extent this time in life, say for example, the years 5-16, can be deemed to be and represented as a common experience. I found myself thinking at this point about an analogy with the period room setting in which a decade is represented by a household interior, all furnishings and fittings being 'typical' and 'representative' of their period. It is not that the period room setting is wrong, merely that we all know of the complexity and diversity hidden beneath the surface.

But why this current interest in the time of one's life spent as a child? It is not an interest confined to museums, or the *Hull Daily Mail*, which has at least one child abuse main headline a day! The Cleveland child abuse scandal filled the papers yesterday. Are we dealing simply with societal and individual nostalgia, which, manifest in individuals, takes one back to the psychological state of being a child? Having been involved in a Schooldays exhibition myself - I couldn't help noticing the very considerable number of museum displays and temporary exhibitions about schooldays. Are we really interpreting history for present day children? I think not. Are we recreating twentieth century schoolrooms so that children can learn about schooling in 'the past' - or because we want to remember and be reminded of a time in life which we have, by definition, at least survived. As 'Biff' says, to the history teacher playing favourite records from his youth, 'here we go again, nostalgia posing as social history'.

Are children, on the other hand, the latest target for the consumer society, where children are fashionably dressed to reflect the needs and will of parents, I am amazed at the emphasis on 'back to school' fashions in Hull, for example, with children posing like professional models. Perhaps I'd just not noticed them before. It has been said that the market place created 'the teenager' in the 1950s and 1960s (in the UK).

Mark Abrams' pamphlet of 1959, *The Teenage Consumer*, estimated that in 1959 the average young man is left with about £5 a week to spend as he chooses . . . the average young woman is left with about £3 . . . If 'teenager' was to include unmarried people under 25, here was available a total of £900 million per year to be spent by teenagers at their own discretion. Children are, now, biologically mature at a younger age than even a generation ago - is there then an identifiable child market of 9-16 year olds spending parents' money, parents under pressure to present their children as fashionably as the Jones'?

Fortunately, it did not fall upon me to offer answers to all these and many other questions. It was rather my task to draw delegates' attention to some of the issues that I hoped would be addressed this ASW. As my title suggests I saw the subject of the 1988 ASW falling into three broad areas, childhood, children and curatorship.

Firstly, then, *childhood*, by which I mean the social historical study of the child. This study must include the changing perception that society has of this time in life called 'childhood'. It is not possible to understand children and the role they are to play in isolation from the rest of society (ie. from the economic, social and political circumstances). Demands made upon children reflect demands made upon adults. Class and gender have of course affected and created childhood experiences. For example the need to earn money has meant that children have had to work. At the Big Pit, Blaenavon, we were reminded that 10 year olds used to work in coalmines. Girls have had different experiences from boys; at the beginning of the twentieth century in Hull, for example, fewer girls were encouraged to stay at school after 14 years as they were not considered 'bread-winners' like their brothers; more often they were expected to help with domestic chores and to look after other members of the family.

A second consideration must be *children*: children as visitors to our museums. But should children be treated as a distinct group, as essentially different from adults? How do we create museum displays for visitors aged between 5 and 85? Should all our displays, or certain displays, be targeted at children as, for example, in Dewsbury Museum? During this century, educational theorists have suggested that the fundamentals of any subject may be taught to anybody at any age in some form. Perhaps there is a serious lesson for curators here.

Education has been closely associated with children and childhood, although of course children have not always gone to school. But as people have regarded museums as tremendous educational resources, curators and museums do need to concern themselves with this. But how, why and to what extent? Do we develop children's museums, where children can learn by discovery where it is hoped intellectual development is affected by interaction. What role do museums have with GCSE? What source resources should be allocated to just *one* sector of the population? Does it also, therefore, make sense to worry about multiculturalism and children? What justification is there for this? What do we actually know about the effectiveness of learning in this way?

Finally, and most importantly, *curatorship*: that omnipresent problem of relating theoretical social history to those physical and material collections. It is not enough to make judgements about human values without relating them to the practice of social history curatorship. By definition, social history curatorship means a drawing together and interpretation of evidence, including arguably the most powerful evidence of all, the three-dimensional. A museum can present ideas in a vivid and direct way through objects.

There will probably never be agreement about the relative merit of things and ideas . . . The world of material culture studies in the field of social history means, however, that curators have an intellectual stake in mainstream history, because they are asking questions that bring the man-made material world into the centre stage. Artefacts can both illustrate ideas and can be the sources of ideas. Collections of things, however, without ideas and any attempt to make sense of them *as history* relegates them to curiosities or at best to obsolete technology. For better or worse, historians are the keepers of society's collective memory. Social history is about looking at society as a working organisation, a community of individuals and groups, all mutually dependant. Family history and childhood history is a fundamental part of that and, therefore, a very important subject for our museums.

How then are we to tackle our displays. can we do childhood history effectively in a museum? There is a temptation to represent the childhood years with the inevitable middle class Edwardian nursery, amply filled with toys and dolls or the uncritical social history 'in wonderland'. I am convinced that once aware of a problem, it becomes at least possible to overcome it. I hope that this ASW raised problems and prompted discussion on ways to seek solutions to them.

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD:

PLANNING NEW GALLERIES AT THE BETHNAL GREEN MUSEUM OF CHILDHOOD

Anthony Burton

Introduction

Like many introductions, this has been written last: indeed, after the paper which it introduces was given. Retrospection suggests that I probably got the thrust of the paper about right. I had supposed that I had been invited to give a paper because I might be expected to present myself as a rather old-style curator in favour of 'objects'. I was glad to do so because that is what I am; and in the event it seemed to be what was required. But retrospection also suggests that I should have made three introductory points.

One is that this paper is not a systematic, analytical exposition. This much must already be apparent from the backwards way in which I am beginning. If I were setting up social history galleries from scratch on a virgin site, I might be able to produce a plan which was an absolutely systematic intellectual construct. But I am trying to communicate ideas in an existing setting which has many practical constraints. So the planning process is more like doing a jigsaw than preparing a measured drawing.

A second point needs emphasizing because, perhaps, of the audience I was addressing. Many social history curators, working within a brief to interpret the history of a particular area, find themselves relying heavily on 'living memory', and, where visual material is concerned, on photography. Quite right in the circumstances. But at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood we are hoping to be able to exploit our position as part of a major national museum in order to take a pretty broad sweep in our survey of the social history of childhood. We intend to cover European (and North American) childhood from the Middle Ages to the present. One fact in favour of giving the subject these dimensions is that there is already a substantial and coherent body of work covering this field. In justification for missing out childhood in the East and the Third World, we would say, first, that we have only limited space, and, second, that much less historical research (as distinct from contemporary sociological and anthropological observation) has been done in these fields (see also below Section 6.) At the study weekend it was suggested that in view of our location, it would be a pity if we did not make some allusion to childhood as an aspect of local history in the East End of London, since so much work has been done on London local history. This seems a good point. Although, on our present thinking, evidence of Bethnal Green's history is likely to be intermingled in our galleries with evidence from Paris, Florence or Nuremberg, no doubt we shall find a way to indicate to the visitor that a thread of local history runs through the displays.

The third point is of the kind that has to be made once in order to avoid a clumsy phrase in almost every subsequent paragraph. 'The history of childhood' has to mean 'the history of childhood and family life'. This is not an ideological point: the increasingly fierce controversy surrounding family issues in the politics of Britain and North America will present us with a problem we would much prefer to avoid in our pursuit of objectivity. It is unavoidable, however, that the history of childhood has to be situated within the history of the social unit in which the child grows up. 'Family life' is the most convenient term for this, but, of course, 'household', 'kindred' and other terms are used by historians as necessary. As will be clear from the bibliography at the end of this paper, most of the important work on the history of childhood has in fact appeared in the context of the history of the family. It is significant that the book by Philippe Ariès which started it all off was originally titled in French *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime*, and the title of the English translation, *Centuries of childhood*, obscured its true coverage.

These points having been made, we can now embark on the somewhat revised, but still discursive, text of the paper: my ideas on how to construct a museum display on the social history of childhood.

The Museum

The Bethnal Green Museum opened in 1872, as a branch of the South Kensington Museum which was later to become the Victoria & Albert. The then Director of the South Kensington Museum, Henry Cole, did not really intend to acquire a branch; rather, to get rid of a building. His first temporary galleries on the South Kensington site, erected in 1856, were in a prefabricated industrial building, with an iron framework. When Cole, after ten years at South Kensington, had acquired more permanent buildings, he set about getting rid of the temporary one. His idea was that portions of it could be re-erected in other parts of London, to accommodate other, new museums.

There had already been various attempts to get a trade museum for East London. Now a group of local philanthropists succeeded in buying a site in Bethnal Green on which a museum building could be placed. About two thirds of the iron building at South Kensington was taken down and re-erected at Bethnal Green within a new, sturdy brick shell. South Kensington would have preferred to bow out at this point, leaving the locals to run the new museum as they liked. But the locals were unequal to this task. So South Kensington was persuaded to stock and to administer the museum.

When it opened, it contained two popular science collections: of Food, and Animal Products. Art was present in the form of Sir Richard Wallace's collection, on loan and displayed in the upper galleries which are now to house the social history of childhood. Until it closed in the First World War, the Bethnal Green Museum was a miscellaneous, indeed incoherent collection, embracing at various times art, science, natural history, ethnography.

Of course the South Kensington Museum was similarly miscellaneous. But in 1899 it was re-organised as a specialist museum of applied arts, and after the First World War, Bethnal Green was re-organised to match. The curator between the Wars who effected the transformation, Arthur Sabin, also began work with local children and set up a Children's Section. In this country he was a real, though little recognized, pioneer in bringing museums to children. In the '30s others seized the initiative in museum work with children, especially the L.C.C. which was developing the Geffrye and Horniman museums in this direction; Bethnal Green was shut again for ten years around the Second World War. So Sabin's work was overtaken but it did not fade away.

Work with children and the Children's Section continued to grow in a corner of the Bethnal Green Museum and eventually became the tail that wagged the dog. When Sir Roy Strong became Director of the V&A in 1974, he and his Advisory Council looked at Bethnal Green Museum and concluded that this was the part of it that mattered, and that the museum should henceforth be devoted to childhood.

The first task in re-shaping the museum as a Museum of Childhood was to re-display the very large and growing Toy Collections: toys, dolls, dolls' houses, games, puppets. Gallery refurbishment was begun in 1976-78 under my predecessor, Elizabeth Aslin, with the rebuilding of the Toy Gallery, one of the five galleries which make up the museum. Two more galleries, accommodating dolls, dolls' houses, games and puppets, together with a shop and special exhibition area, have been rebuilt during my time. The re-arrangement of exhibits was an exercise in taxonomy. Or rather, to be less pretentious, it was a matter of re-organizing an extremely large and rather muddled collection so as to introduce some rudimentary classification. And while what you see in the galleries now has some sort of structure, there is much work to be done behind the scenes on ordering and documenting the rest of the collection. So the Toy Galleries, though a great improvement on what they were, are museologically very conservative, and can be criticized on that account. They have been described (by the journal *Libertarian Education* last year) as 'elitist and academic', as 'represent[ing] middle/upper class children, not the experiences of the lower order'. 'The . . . grouping of exhibits does nothing at all to help understand their social role . . . . This whole decontextualised, cataloguing-type display serves only the academic . . . .' This is all true, and I could have written a paper on how I would like to address these problems in the future. That, however, will be my fourth or perhaps fifth task in re-shaping the museum.

Meanwhile, I have to get on with the second task, which is rehousing and organizing our collection of 70,000 historic and contemporary children's books, and the third task, which is the subject of this paper: namely, re-arranging our two remaining galleries to give a picture of the social history of childhood.

I should explain that the Bethnal Green building consists of three long structures side by side. You could compare it to a church with nave and side aisles, but actually it is more like three train sheds. Each is about 42ft wide and 180ft long. The middle one is open from floor to the ceiling, about 40ft above. The side sheds each have two floors, the lower about five feet above the central space, the upper floor a storey higher. These side floors are separated from the centre space only by balustrades. Wherever you are you can see the entire free-flowing space of the museum interior. The three galleries that have been recently refitted are the central space and the lower galleries on each side. The upper galleries on each side, with the narrow bridges linking them at each end are what we are now concerned with. These galleries are to be devoted to the social history of childhood.

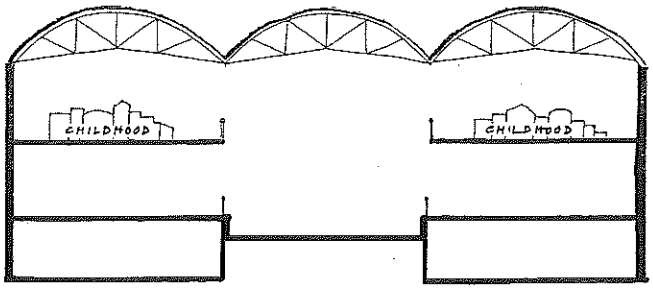

Figure 1: Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood; cross section, showing the location of the 'History of Childhood' galleries.

Collections

How, we have asked ourselves, are we going to tackle our task? If we start on a practical rather than a theoretical level, we find ourselves with a space to fill. So we ask ourselves: what shall we put here? What shall we display? The circumstances of museum life can often supply an immediate and pressing answer to this: namely, we will fill the space with what we've got, with our 'permanent collections'. We all know how often in the past museological thinking ceased at this point, and rooms were just filled up with whatever came to hand. As a temporary measure, we are proceeding along these lines at Bethnal Green, but this will not do for the longer term.

We have things we can display. We have a good collection of children's dress. We have a very large library of children's books. We have a rather patchy collection of cradles, high chairs, feeding bottles and other such artefacts of childhood. Clearly these can be used in displays devoted to the social history of childhood; and the collections of children's dress and children's books are so significant compared to other collections in the same field, that they deserve to be given some prominence. Yet these collections by themselves will not provide an adequate coverage of our subject.

So our thoughts may turn to the prospect of going out and collecting some more staff, some different stuff. Perhaps we had better ask ourselves, however, whether the course our thoughts are taking is being set for us by a museological automatic pilot. Museum people are always inclined to go out and gather some more stuff. Is this right?

I must say that I take the view that the fundamental job of museums is to collect material objects. There are other sorts of institutions whose job it is to collect information in other forms, whether documentary or mediated through machines. Similarly, it is almost as fundamental a job of museums to interpret their objects; but there are other sorts of institutions whose job it is to supply interpretation in ways that are not dependent on collections of objects. So I cleave to a sort of plain man's view that museums are about objects. But we all know that collecting objects without some kind of rationale is silly.

The magpie instinct is strong in all of us, and we have to keep reminding ourselves that it is far from being a sufficient justification of curatorial activity. Our collecting practice has to be governed by an idea, a concept, a purpose. It is, indeed, generally conducted in relation to an intellectual discipline. Art curators are especially prone to forget this. For art objects generally seem self-sufficient, self-explanatory. They are designed to convey their own meaning, and seem not to need explanation or justification in terms of anything outside themselves. The intellectual discipline of the art curator, art history, may well seem dependent on the inherent significance of the objects themselves. Art history and its institutions may seem, as Adrian Rifkin says, to 'signal . . . one series of valued objects, objects whose culturally ascribed value demands that they have their own history'. Art historians, as Stephen Bann says, may well justify their discipline 'on the basis of a prior right to a certain kind of object'.

These quotations are from a book of essays called *The New Art History* (1986), one theme of which is to oppose the idea that art history must be object-based, to reject the idea of 'a dominant paradigm or canon of art and the fundamental values on which it rests'.[1] Art and its history may be redefined in various ways, but there is certainly a growing disbelief in the magic of objects.

This may seem obvious enough, but as a curator in one of the world's major art museums (the V&A) I have to digest this point before I can find myself on a level with curators of history, science, natural history or ethnography. For all of us objects are a part, but not the dominant part, of our discipline.

Perhaps the point hardly needs labouring: there is no shortage of warnings to curators to avoid becoming myopically focussed on objects. For example, it seems appropriate in Cardiff to quote Geraint Jenkins on folk life:

> . . . the student of folk life is not concerned merely with the tangible but inadequate remnants of the past. Sociology, oral tradition, custom and belief are as important as material objects.[2]

And here is Sir John Hale on history:

> History is not 'seeing' the past in terms of chairs and tables and stomachers and looms, but understanding the multifarious interconnexions between public events, private circumstances and shared emotions and aspirations that influenced the quality of life at a particular period. Thoughts, feelings, actions: these are the stuff of history, not sticks, stones and bombasine.[3]

We may begin to feel - rightly - that in our collecting activity we should amass not only objects but a great deal of contextual information: that our collections of stuff should be matched by archives of information. In some circumstances this may seem inevitable. I think, for instance, that in the field of local history the archive-or-library and the museum are often interdependent or indeed identical. In general, there is no doubt that the man in the street often assumes that a museum is a data-bank as well as a collection of material objects.

We may even begin to lose confidence in our mission to collect objects altogether. In this connection there are some worrying portents. The pressure on the V&A to give up collecting has been growing for some years. It was first seriously applied through the Rayner Scrutiny of 1982. The scrutineer deployed the concept of 'acquisition' only in tandem with the concept of 'disposal'. In the rhetoric deployed by the OAL today, the concept of 'collection management' gives equal weight to acquisition and disposal. The Rayner Scrutiny said that to ensure the future viability of museums 'the inflow and outflow of objects must somehow be brought into greater equilibrium'. This idea had already hit research libraries in the form of the concept of the 'self-renewing library' invented by the Atkinson Committee on University Libraries which reported in 1976.[4] The idea was that every time you bought a new book you threw an old one away, so you never needed to spend money on new library buildings. I hardly need review the more recent developments in the debate, notably the National Audit Office Report, since they are summarized in the 'President's View' column of the *Museums Bulletin* for June 1988. Up till now the pressure has been mostly on the national museums, but the new study commissioned by the Arts Minister in association with the Museums Association on 'the real costs of collecting' is obviously intended to put the brakes on all the other museums as well.

This rapid consideration of the purposes and practicalities of collecting objects is intended to lend some support to my decision that at Bethnal Green we are going to have a very restrained collecting policy in relation to the social history of childhood. We will continue to build up the collections of children's dress and children's books. We will not try to build up a documentary and pictorial archive of the social history of childhood, even though a lot of people expect that a place called 'Museum of Childhood' will already have such archives, and it is rather humiliating to explain that we haven't. But, for the moment at any rate, we just do not have the resources to embark on such an enterprise. And we will not try to build up extensive collections of material objects (apart from dress and books) relating to the social history of childhood. There are some small fields, as I shall mention, where it may be worth collecting exhaustively but on the whole we shall try to assemble only the material that will be on view in the galleries, and some of that no doubt will be borrowed. In other words, what we intend to assemble is a permanent special exhibition, not an archive. Our galleries will not be the tip of an iceberg: the visible part of a large research collection. Rather they will be a message, a self-sufficient exposition.

Messages: Means of Communication

How will the message be communicated? My answer is: through objects. This needs justification. Let us begin again at the 'Plain Man' level. It has been well said that 'after twenty years' barrage with the flat image it is likely that the museum visitor is craving to see something real and round . . . We are tactile three-dimensional creatures. It cannot be satisfactory to sit in the man-made twilight of television and then to make the brave step outside and through the door of a museum to see yet more of the same thing.'[5] Actually that was written by a designer, Giles Velarde. And here is another designer, Margaret Hall, who prophesies that what Velarde decries may come to pass:

> If we look at the museum of the future we may not be able to find any objects in it; they will be conserved and studied in conditions of maximum security elsewhere. Their images will have been made available to all people, anywhere, called up by infinitely branching programmes.[6]

I can't say I fancy this, and am glad that Miss Hall concedes: 'This will satisfy many, but not those who want to walk around the objects at their own pace, at an angle and distance of their own choice'.

As long as museums have objects to offer and some people want to look at objects, we have a minimal justification for communicating our message through objects. But we must try to find a stronger justification. Let us first consider some alternative methods.

One school of exhibition planners, while conceding that it is proper that some exhibitions offer pleasure or uplift, will insist that exhibitions with a message, exhibitions in which the visitors are meant to learn something, should be scientifically planned so that the message is unambiguously rammed home. They will call the techniques they use 'programmed learning', or 'instructional design' or 'educational technology'. They will have clear objectives before they start, they will construct a sort of teaching machine in which the visitor is compelled to interact with the exhibition, and if possible 'evaluation' will take place at the end to ensure that the visitor has passed the test.

I instinctively dislike this sort of thing. Striving to remain objective however, I conclude that it is not a very apt method of expounding history. Here is a programmed learning expert, Chandler Screven, talking about 'exhibit objectives'. He says that the formulation 'this exhibit will help visitors to understand the important place of plants in their personal lives' is *not* an acceptable instructional objective . . . Such terms as 'understand', 'discover', 'know', 'grasp the meaning of', etc., are *not* suitable. They are too vague and do not refer to behaviour that can be directly observed. In contrast, observable behaviour would be: 'name', 'arrange', 'compare', 'order', 'list', 'solve', 'distinguishable', 'identify', 'reject' and so on.[7]

It is not surprising that this sort of teaching strategy works better for scientific than for humane subjects. There are, nonetheless, aspects of the history of childhood that could be conveyed by such a method. If one took this approach, I think the exhibition that one produced would probably be very heavily weighted with sociology. I fancy that the resulting assemblage of graphs, tables, diagrams, isotypes, etc., would probably look pretty much like a good social sciences school text book. None the worse for that, perhaps, but too much would be left out. I find it hard to conceive of an exhibition on the history of childhood in which sympathetic understanding was discounted in favour of rational problem-solving.

At the other extreme, one might elect to offer one's visitors a simulated experience of the history of childhood: the waxwork or Jorvik approach. Most ordinary people expect that this is what we at Bethnal Green will do. The history of childhood easily takes shape in their mind's eye as a Victorian schoolroom or Edwardian nursery. Perhaps this is because they have seen so many Victorian school-rooms and Edwardian nurseries in social history museums up and down the country. I feel it would be boring to produce yet more reconstructions of this sort at Bethnal Green, and the building makes it impossible to do so. Beyond that, though, I feel that reconstructing history is now seen as 'manufacturing the heritage', and is regarded as intellectually suspect. I dare say that most of us have read the recent series of influential books, beginning with Patrick Wright's *On living in an Old Country* (1985), or perhaps before that with Martin Wiener's *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* (1981), and including Donald Horne's *The Great Museum* (1984), David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), and Robert Hewison's *The Heritage Industry* (1987), and have felt pretty uncomfortable at the way history is being used. Two very recent contributions, attacks on Ironbridge and Beamish in *The Museum Time-Machine* (1988), argue that these museums present the past from the point of view of the ruling élitê, the professional/managerial classes. For my part I find it hard to get clear how the 'heritage' correlates with political attitudes. Anyway, 'heritage', whatever its political colour, seems suspect, and I feel it behoves me to steer clear of it.

Having dismissed programmed learning and heritage fakery as exhibition strategies, we have yet to demonstrate that an object-based strategy will be any better. To do so, we must consider how we expect object-based exhibitions to work. We must (to borrow a phrase of Jacques Barzun) 'investigate the penetrative power of the contrivances that we use'.

I have been helped by a pair of essays on 'The Museum as a Communications System'. One is by Duncan Cameron and appeared in *Curator* in 1968. Cameron accepts that 'real things' are the media of communication in a museum. The curator transmits a message through 'real things' and it is received by museum visitors. What I found helpful here was the idea that the language of the museum is non-linear. Cameron says:

> Speech, writing and print, our verbal media, have a linear form that is structured by the rules of syntax and grammar. Messages are communicated by means of discrete units of information that are presented sequentially within the limits of the structured linear form. The exhibit, on the other hand, presents information organized only by the pattern or *gestalt* of the whole to which the individual is exposed at any given time . . . . The three-dimensional 'in the round' form of the exhibit makes it impossible to control the visitor-exhibit relationship for a sequential or linear input of discrete units of information, even if one wished to do so.[8]

I needed to hear this because it helps me cope with one of the physical difficulties of the Bethnal Green galleries. Of course you *can* devise exhibitions with a linear story line and designers call them 'tunnel shows'. I cannot see how one could easily build tunnels into the Bethnal Green Galleries. As I have said, there are two long galleries, each 42ft wide and 180ft long. Each has a floor, and an outer wall. There are no inner walls, just balustrades overlooking empty space. The roof is curved, and broken up by iron tie-braces, so there is no ceiling, only a rather indefinite space. In other words, these galleries are extraordinarily unenclosed. A tunnel needs enclosure. So we can't have a tunnel show. How can we make that apparent disadvantage into a positive virtue? Cameron's notions seem to give us a rationale.

A further problem with the Bethnal Green galleries is that you enter from below by four different staircases. My plan will indicate that visitor circulation must inevitably take the form of four whirlpools. How do we deal with this? I found some helpful ideas in another article called 'The Museum as a Communication system', by Harley W. Parker, in *Curator*, 1963. Like Cameron, Parker, influenced by Marshall McCluhan, rejects sequential presentation. At the entrance, he says, 'we must not be tripped up by the idea that here the story starts! Rather, here our story is. As we go along we will enrich it, but always it will be the same story . . . In the galleries I postulate, one is at the beginning when one is at the end, at the end in the middle. At any given moment the structure is complete.' This may seem little more than vague rhetoric - though he does give a few practical suggestions - but it seemed to fit my problem of four whirlpools of visitors.

Another piece that helped me was published by Jacques Barzun in *Museum News*, 1968. He too, in considering museum communication, tells us to 'give up trying to sort out a single line of meaning'. He thinks that modern media present us with an 'overload of stimuli'. Whether or not we agree with this, we may perhaps agree that because we receive so many messages we have adopted the habit of 'tuning in and out'. So when we come to a museum we 'discard consecutiveness' in favour of 'exposure to simple shape and pattern and the practice of tuning in and out'.[10] This seemed to me a realistic description of what my whirlpool visitors might be doing.

You may think all this is a very high-falutin way of describing the aimless, abstracted wandering that usually goes on in museums. But let us continue to pursue the matter. Here are our visitors, engaging with objects in a non-linear, non-sequential way. What is actually happening when they look at objects?

We now have a whole new science concerned with how meaning is

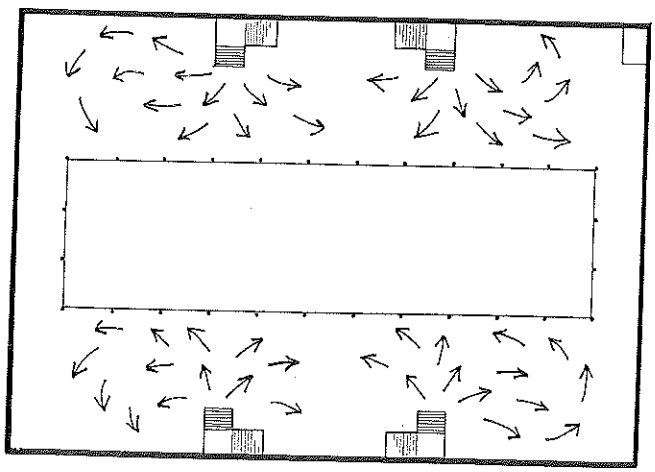

Figure 2:Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood; plan of the 'History of Childhood' galleries, showing access points and visitor movement.

mediated through objects. It is called 'material culture studies'.[11] I do not want to go into its methodology, but to address the prior question: why bother to try and elicit meaning from objects? The answer is that objects can reach parts that other means of communication can not: parts of the past, and parts of us. Here are two quotations from a seminal article by Jules Prown:

> . . . only a small percentage of the world's population is and has been literate . . . Objects are used by a much broader cross section of the population and are therefore potentially a more wide-ranging, more representative source than words. They offer the possibility of a way to understand the mind of the great majority of non-literate people, past and present, who remain otherwise inaccessible except through impersonal records and the distorting view of a contemporary literary elite.[12]

If you reflect that the history of childhood and family life is precisely one of those areas that is largely inaccessible through words, this offers a very attractive way in.

Furthermore, objects can get round some of our cultural biases, can by-pass the established structure of our attitudes.

> By undertaking cultural interpretation through artefacts, we can engage the other culture in the first instance not with our minds, the seat of our cultural biases, but with our senses This affective mode of apprehension through the senses that allows us to put ourselves, figuratively speaking, inside the skins of the individuals who commissioned, made, used or enjoyed these objects, to see with their eyes and touch with their hands, to identify with them empathetically, is clearly a different way of engaging the past than abstractly through the written word. Instead of our minds making intellectual contact with the minds of the past, our senses make affective contact with senses of the past.[13]

This idea that objects can get their impact past the guard of our normal preconception is an attractive one, though it is rather hard to work out how the theory is realized in practice. What I have just quoted may also suggest that objects will speak with great directness to people not accustomed to intellectual discourse, and that too is attractive. Actually, however, when you try to apply the methodology of material culture studies, usually called 'object analysis', you find that it is complex, cerebral and slow. So far as I can see, it is mostly practised by graduate seminars in American universities, who can take a long time analysing a single object. Obviously this procedure is useful to the curator, and will help us in coding the messages we want to convey through objects. But it won't help the visitor much in decoding the messages.

I shall say more about the visitor's response later, but perhaps this is the point to say that it seems to me that we are all in business on the assumption that visitors do respond in a direct way to what we put in front of them. How they respond is difficult to describe. One sympathizes with people like Screven when they try to compel visitors to perform measurable mental acts like comparing, solving and identifying, because 'understanding' and 'discovery' are experiences too subtle for the information scientist to describe. But it is precisely such vague mental events that seem to be at the heart of visitors' responses to what they meet in museums. If we pursue this further, we shall enter upon the psychology of perception and the philosophy of aesthetics. Let us accept that when a person stands before a museum exhibit (whether it is a Rembrandt or a Dinky car) he has a response which is instantaneous and intuitive, and which contains elements that have to be described in words like 'revelation', 'shock', 'discovery'.

Messages: Content and Structure

What enables us to push on now, without pausing to analyse this experience further, is that we are trying to deal with ways of forming many such responses into a pattern so that a message can be conveyed.

One way of imposing a pattern on the responses is to impose a pattern on the stimuli. This brings us to the curator's constant preoccupations: how to arrange a lot of objects so that they somehow make sense.

When we confront a heap of objects, we may decide just to leave them alone. Many people still like museums to be muddles. But we can normally start to sort them on the basis of their inherent properties: size, material, shape. Some kind of series will soon become evident, often based on a notion of development or chronology. In the V&A, where we struggle to control huge quantities of objects, we have in recent years given a lot of thought to how to organise them, and have reassessed the methods which we and other applied art museums have used in the past. In the nineteenth century it was customary to categorise objects and arrange them in galleries according to the material of which they were made. All the metalwork together, all the textiles together, and so on. This arrangement was based on Gottfried Semper's theories. At the end of the century the rise of culture history and the influence of the 'Vienna School' of art history led to a new method by which objects of various media but of the same period were arranged together on the assumption that they were all somehow expressive of the spirit of their age. Thus there would be a Medieval gallery, a Renaissance gallery, and so on. Roughly speaking you can say that the earlier method of arrangement was by technique, the later by style.[14]

There are other ways in which you can sort objects and set them in series that relate to time: see George Kubler's dense and difficult book *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (1962). On the whole, museums have not succeeded in turning Kubler's models into methods of exhibition display on the floor of a gallery.

I don't want to linger over these methods of organising objects. They are to do with organising recognisable categories of similar objects, and are of limited application in the history of childhood because there are not all that many categories of such objects that relate to childhood. Toys, of course, are just a category of objects and I have already said that we have tried to organise them taxonomically. Children's dress is such a category, and at present we have it displayed on a straightforward chronological principle. The number of childhood artefacts which can be arranged in a long series over time is remarkably small: cradles, baby-walkers, high chairs, rattles, feeding vessels, baby-carriages are the principal categories. Some taxonomic work has been done on some of these, notable on cradles, in a massive book by Friedrich von Zglinicki.[15] More work is needed to document the development of these types of objects.[16] We have this on our list of jobs to be done. Insofar as we can assemble comprehensive series of these objects, we could lay them out in our galleries, and present them as the history of childhood. What we would really be offering in that case, however, would be the history of some designed objects intended for the use of children. As I've said, that leaves out too much about the history of childhood, so we must do better. But you will see, in due course, that the scheme I have worked out will leave room in our galleries for sub-sections on the taxonomy of the rattle, or the cradle, or whatever.

What I have just spoken about could be called 'the history of things'. What we need to consider, in devising our childhood galleries, is 'things in history'. The history of childhood, like all history, has been built up with many kinds of evidence. To borrow some phrases from Lawrence Stone, social history's desirable range of sources should include 'statistical data, contemporary comments, legal enactments and enforcements, institutional arrangements, private diaries and correspondence, public speeches, moral theology and didactic writings, creative literature, artistic products, and symbolic acts and rituals'.[17] If we use all of this evidence to build up a historical picture, how can we then convey that picture through a small selection of one kind of evidence: objects. Here are a few thoughts.

An obvious distinction that we can draw is between objects as evidence and objects as illustration. An example. Direct evidence of mothers' feelings for their children is very difficult to find in the Middle Ages. But something can be deduced from the representation of the Virgin Mary and the Infant Christ. A significant shift of feeling - the arrival of a new tenderness - took place in the fourteenth century. This is documented in Dorothy C. Shorr's book *The Christ Child in devotional images in Italy during the XIV century* (1954). Shorr bases her conclusion on an examination of thousands of paintings, all reproduced in the book. If we wished to make the point in a museum, we could try to borrow all those paintings and exhibit them. But in fact, one would do, and we would exhibit it as an illustration of a point otherwise evidenced, though it would happen to be a piece of evidence as well as an illustration. It is important, I think, for the curator always to be clear whether he is dealing with evidence or illustration, but I doubt whether it matters to the visitor, who very often is in no position to tell whether an exhibit is offered as evidence or illustration.

In the arrangement of objects in patterns a useful distinction, somewhat similar to the distinction just made, is drawn by Stephen Bann, in his book *The Clothing of Clio: a study of the representation of history in nineteenth-century Britain and France* (1984). Bann compares two nineteenth century French museums, the Musée des Monuments Français of Alexandre Lenoir and the Musée de Cluny created by Alexandre du Commerard. Both used material evidence to represent history. In the former, objects were treated as 'fragments', organised in terms of a concept, the 'century'. The way the specimens thus stood for the larger historical concept is described by Bann as 'metonymy', 'the reductive rhetorical strategy whereby the part does duty for the whole in a

purely mechanistic way, without implying reference to any organic totality'. In the Musée de Cluny, objects were combined together in an illusionistic, impressionistic way to form just such an organic totality, a 'reality' effect', which Bann describes as 'synecdoche'. This, like metonymy, is a figure of speech in which the part stands for the whole, but in a somewhat different way. The distinction is interesting, but what I find more helpful is the general point that in a historical gallery in a museum, the strategy must be to make the part stand for the whole. That, I think, the visitor can be expected to grasp. It is implicit in every historical exhibition, and should perhaps be made more explicit.

Using the part for the whole is a kind of symbolism, and the more I think about object-based exhibitions, the more important does the matter of symbolic meaning seem. Many objects have associations or connotations which can be exploited. As you turn a corner in a museum you catch sight of a red coat. So you know that war is coming up. This is a very simple strategy. Much more complicated are the symbolic meanings investigated by semiotics and structuralism, and (as these disciplines would tell us) underlying all external appearances. For the curator, devising an object-based exhibition, symbolic meaning will be a crucial consideration. It is one thing to put an object *en valeur* visually, placing it on a nice perspex stand under a spotlight; quite another to deploy its symbolic meaning.

As one considers how objects represent history, one is constantly brought up against the problem of time. History is about change over time. How do you deal with time in a museum which is a spatial experience? It is clear that whatever you do you can easily be wrong. The new book *The Museum Time-Machine* criticises the 'model of time as "progress" or "evolution", moving from lower to higher forms'. This is said to 'underpin . . . the philosophy of the late Victorian museum', and is thus associated with imperialism and nationalism. On the other hand, the same book condemns the kind of museum which presents artefacts 'as belonging to the same essential and unified time', as building up 'a fictive totality called the Past'.[18]

One museum which adopts the latter course is the Musee des Arts et Traditions Populaires in Paris. This is the museum I most admire in the world, I think, but as an example I find I cannot follow it. It deals with traditional French peasant society, and presents it as a static, unchanging structure. In doing so, it no doubt reflects the normal approach of anthropologists. Nowadays, perhaps, they are coming to terms with the fact that societies change all the time; but they used to work on the basis that primitive societies were frozen in time.

I can't copy the ATP in Paris for two reasons: one, because in Bethnal Green it is not possible to show all exhibits hanging on nylon threads against a matt black background; and two, because the history of childhood has change-through-time absolutely at the centre of its concern. When in 1960, Philippe Ariés wrote *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime*, the book which opened up the history of childhood and set the agenda for later students of the subject, the basis of his approach was that 'once was different from now'. What made the study of the history of childhood and the family so fascinating was, according to Ariès, that the way we think of childhood and treat our children today is not an unchanging fact of life. Once things were startlingly different, and they have changed. Despite differences of opinion about the pace or extent of change the big question for all historians of childhood has remained: how did childhood change over time?

Two Schemes

That being so, surely we must adopt a chronological approach in our new galleries? I have already explained how the conditions of the site make a 'tunnel-show' impossible. The structure of the site, as four 'pools' in which visitors circulate at random, requires a division of the subject into four parts. This could be done chronologically, I think. I have adapted a scheme from John E. Goldthorpe's *Family Life in Western Societies: a historical sociology* (1987):

A. The origins of the family, and kinship in primitive cultures.

B. The Christian shaping of Western European family life.

C. Family life in the pre-industrial economy and society.

D. Family life after the industrial revolution.

('Christian' in B does not imply any ideological *parti pris*; it is simply a recognition of who was in power in the Middle Ages.)

There are two main difficulties with this scheme. One is a matter of institutional policy. The field which the V&A covers is, primarily, European applied arts from the Middle Ages onwards. Even allowing for all the qualifications that have to be made to justify the V&A's holdings of oriental art, it remains clear that the V&A is not a museum of antiquities and archaeology, nor a museum of ethnography and anthropology. The scheme I have just outlined for the history of childhood does venture into those areas; and I fear it could therefore be judged illegitimate for a V&A branch.

A more significant problem about the scheme is that most of the material exhibits that we have or are likely to find would end up in section D. A scheme which permitted a more even spread of objects, and which enabled us to feature prominently our existing collections of children's dress and children's books, would be preferable - at any rate, preferable to me now that I have committed myself to object-based displays.

To devise such a scheme one has to chop up the history of childhood in a different way. I suggest, therefore, a four-part display on these lines:–

A. Marriage and family

B. Birth and infancy

C. Nurture

D. Leaving home.

This follows the stages of the life cycle. One virtue of this concept is that it is bred in everyone's bone. So visitors entering the galleries at any point will find something to which their own experience responds, whereas, if they were to start with the early parts of a historical scheme, they might find themselves confronted with such remote topics as 'Coming of age in Samoa' or 'Canon Law and marriage at the Fourth Lateran Council'. Furthermore, the concept, just because it is bred in everyone's bone, is deeply rooted in European thought. Not only is it in current use, under van Gennep's formulation 'rites of passage', as an accepted tool in anthropology and sociology, but it has an intellectual history and a visual history (at all levels from philisophy and high art to popular culture) going back to Antiquity.[19]

On a practical level, the life-cycle scheme would enable our dress collection to be spread out fairly evenly. As the plan shows, I am proposing, because of the practical difficulties of exhibiting textiles, that they should be segregated and displayed together, but in four sections relating to the four sections of the scheme. For similar reasons, and partly in consequence of our obligations to donors, I propose that children's books also be displayed in four separate groups relating to the sections of the scheme:

A. Fairy tales

B. Nursery rhymes and lullabies

C. From pictured world to secret garden: a survey of the rise of imaginative literature for children.

D. School stories, adventure, comics.

It may seem that this scheme loses sight of the question of change-through-time - unless a chronological system is built into each of the four sections. I do not propose to arrange exhibits chronologically in each section; I propose to group them topic by topic. In the first section for instance, there might be topics such as: courtship and betrothal, wedding dresses, religious ceremonies, wedding feasts, the family tree, family portraits, the family house. All these topics can easily be represented through material culture; there are, of course, topics like contraception, divorce and property law, that cannot. Weighing up what can and cannot be represented in object-based displays is one of the principal planning problems; but in the end one cannot do everything.

If it is objected that this topic-based display will indeed obscure change-through-time, my answer is that I hope to project the understanding of change-through-time back into the response of the visitor. As I've said, Philippe Ariès's strategy in *L'enfant et la vie familiale* was really very simple: he showed that 'once was different from now'. (Actually Ariès's strategy was slightly more complicated because it involved paradox: the 'sense of family', 'which was said to be very old and to be threatened by modern life, was, in fact, recent and was associated with a specific phase of modern life'. To what extent the paradox is true, and whether Ariès was right about when and how things changed, has been the subject of much subsequent debate. But fundamentally Ariès pointed out that 'once was different from now'.) This may seem trite, but in relation to the history of childhood and the family it is an argument which has a strong purchase upon us. We have all experienced childhood and family life, so we all have a view on the 'now' side of the debate. The once/now debate is like an old-fashioned pair of scales. The historian puts something into the 'once' pan, and the balance tilts one way or the other depending on what we put in the 'now' pan. We feel the balance tilting to and fro. There are few historical questions in which every ordinary person can be involved in this way. But this is how it happens with

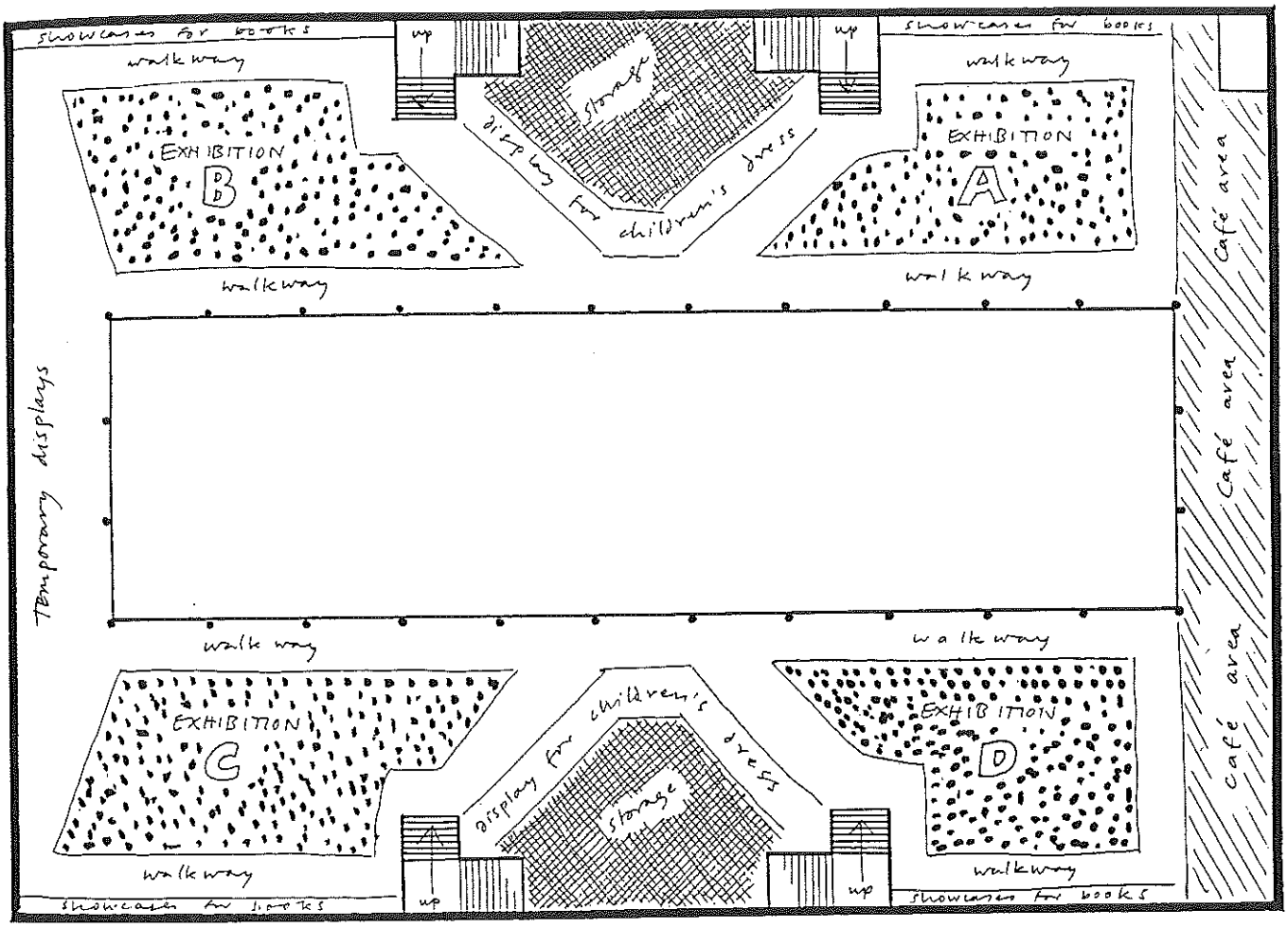

Figure 3: Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood: Diagrammatic plan of a projected layout for the 'History of Childhood' galleries.

the history of childhood.

To academics, striving for objectivity, this can be a problem. John Goldthorpe writes:

> Everybody is somebody's daughter or son. Many if not most of us are sisters or brothers; nearly all of us marry, and most of us become parents . . . Family life is a well-nigh universal part of human experience . . . (so) in a sense everybody is a sociologist of family life, for everybody has some idea, some cognitive map, of what family life is like, by which to orient his or her own actions in relation to other family members. In this field more than most, therefore, sociologists have a challenging task to show that they are doing more than state what everybody knows . . .[20]

Similarly, Martine Segalen asks:

> Can there be such a thing as sociology of the family? Unlike other areas in which we may admit that we have no special competence this particular field is, naturally enough, one we all feel we know well - we were all born into a family and, perhaps, have started one. This empirical, felt knowledge of the family makes it one of the most ideologically loaded of topics.[21]

To the American historian John Demos, however, who is not only a university historian but has been involved in American public policy on childhood and the family, this interaction of 'past, present and personal' (to borrow the title of his recent book) is precisely what makes the history of childhood and the family so interesting.

And I think this is what makes it a particularly interesting subject of museum display. We curators provide the past. The visitor brings the present. And the visitor's personal involvement in the subject provokes an interaction which gives a sense of change-through-time. The visitor response I am seeking can be summed up in the phrase 'how different from us', which can end, of course, with an exclamation mark or a question mark.

I think that one can almost rely on this response happening automatically. The visitor will respond to an object or image in the intuitive, instantaneous way that usually occurs. As he then focuses on the content of the image, the 'how different from us' process will begin. But, no doubt, it will be necessary to stimulate it with some sort of statement at the four opening points of the exhibition. A brief statement in words can doubtless be drafted. To help the disorientation process which must happen at the start of an exhibition, one will maybe seek a gimmick. Perhaps the rather shopsoiled idea of seeing oneself in a mirror as Exhibit One is peculiarly appropriate in this context. We shall see.

That, then, is an exposition of the theory which may or may not be realised in practice in the new galleries at Bethnal Green. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

I want to make three last points about why all this is worth doing. First, why is it worth it to the visitor? It is hard to prove that history is any use. I generally satisfy myself with the thought that a knowledge of history can console us for our plight at the present. We see that things were different and could be different. I hope that visitors to our new galleries will realise that whatever are the social and cultural norms prevailing at the time, there have been different forms of family life in the past and no doubt things will continue to change. I hope that will be a consoling experience for most, but I don't mind if it is disturbing to some.

Why will the project be worthwhile from the point of view of the curator and the historian? First, because work still needs to be done on material and pictorial evidence for the history of childhood. Ariès was unusual among historians in depending very largely on this kind of evidence, not only in his book on childhood but in his later work on death. Historians of childhood and family life who followed him, almost to a man, distrusted this kind of evidence, and turned, generally, to demographic sources, which seemed more reliable. But someone has to follow where Ariès left off, as I have argued in a paper to be published in *Continuity and Change*, and I hope it will be us.

Second, there is, I believe, something of a reaction at present from quantitative history to qualitative history. Demography was the favoured approach in the 1970s. It helped you to chart behaviour patterns. Now cultural norms, belief systems and webs of meaning are attracting the interest of historians: systems of symbols that structure people's understanding of their world. These symbolic systems are being explored with the help of semiotics and structuralism. Material culture, which is rarely quantifiable, can serve as a key to belief systems.

Further, the history of childhood will respond especially well to this new method. It has been pointed out that many historians of

childhood proceed on the 'assumption that childhood is a concept that is socially and culturally constructed'. They are not so much concerned with 'actual past childhoods' as with 'adult attitudes towards children and childhood'. If objects, with their freight of symbolic meaning, are especially suited to conveying cultural norms and beliefs, then the history of childhood should be a good subject for object-based display.

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A READING LIST OF RECENT LITERATURE ON THE HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY LIFE

Anthony Burton

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BEYOND ENID BLYTON AND THE FAMOUS FIVE:
THE CHANGING MEANINGS OF CHILDHOOD

Peter Jenkinson

The history of Childhood in museums is still at a formative stage or (if you like) in its infancy! Since the 1960s the new social history has begun to excavate, explore and re-present previously hidden, marginalised and unvalued areas of life experience - Women's History, Labour History and more recently Black History - with exciting and often unexpected results. These are useful in the long-term, and increasingly uphill struggle to break down the rigid monolithic History bequeathed to us and reveal the histories of the majority of people in Britain.

Yet the presence of children in history is still unrecognised, their voice silenced, their lives and histories still unexplored. This is strange when we consider that in many periods, and especially in the nineteenth century, children constituted a major proportion (often well over a third) of the population.

In terms of age-structure Britain is set to become the oldest nation in Europe by the year 2000. This increasing preponderance to senility, whilst an important area of discovery for future social historians, should not allow us to forget that Britain was once a young nation (one of the youngest) and that it was the sheer number of children that played a major role in fuelling the engines of industrialisation and capital development, colonial expansion and imperialism, militarism and war. Children, then, have played a major, strategic role in history.

But who could guess this from museum representations of childhood? Buoyed up with romantic well-remembered images from Victorian and later popular children's literature. Pantomime and television costume dramas - sooty faced boys up chimneys, sore-kneed girls down mines, 'Oliver Twistish' bootless and ragged orphans always asking for more, wicked step-sisters, and Enid Blyton 'heroes' - we construct children not as vital participants in history but as the innocent, passive victims of a corrupt and corrupting adult world.

Thus children in museums are consigned forever to inhabit the Edwardian nursery, liberally strewn with china-faced dolls, teddy bears, rocking horses and musical boxes (and any other whimsy from the museum's toy cupboard), where they are guarded by trusty women servants, and far removed from the streets of shame below.

Presenting children's lives as a perennial teddy bears' picnic undoubtedly has its attractions for curator and visitor alike, yet as we all know most children did not spend their lives in a room reminiscent of Father Christmas' Lapland Grotto. Further, the experience of these children who did was not always pleasant. The derivative Victorian and Edwardian middle-class nursery was often a cold and frightening place, amplifying the customary estrangement of children from parents, family and friends, a place of cruelty rather than comfort and joy.

In this paper I want to explore, if only briefly and superficially, the changing meaning of childhood and to begin to trace the roots of our present attitudes to and definitions of children and the state of childhood.

Childhood as a concept has no fixed meaning. Every generation creates its own meaning to serve its own purposes and ours is no different. The idea of childhood innocence, and of children inhabiting a separate world from adults, is essentially an invention of the last 100 years, shaped by campaigning educationists, moralists and social reformers from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and given final legitimation in the Childrens Act of 1908 - the so-called 'Children's Charter' - which set the general rules for the way children are seen today.

It was not too long ago that children could be bought and sold, prostituted, flogged, imprisoned and hanged, transposed to distant lands, forced into fighting wars, apprenticed for life, worked literally to death. In other words, treated like adults in an adult world.

The Middle Ages had no conception whatsoever of the transition of child to adult. Children passed into adult life almost as soon as they were weaned - they were 'little adults'. Families existed primarily as an agency for transmitting life and property, rather than as an agency for the physical, moral and spiritual care and nurturing of the young. It was not until the sixteenth century that there was the beginning of the development of a new sensibility towards children as the concept of children spread and the concept of the modern family as the moral and spiritual guardian of the young came into being. New emotional attitudes towards children, new feelings, gradually evolved as attempts were made to moralise society. Children were seen as different from older members of society and attributed a discrete period or stage in life that we call childhood. The sanctity of children was recognised as something worth protecting.

It was however several centuries before moral urging about the sanctity of children became enshrined in law. Indeed it can come as no surprise that in this country, with its long history of aggression and brutality below its urban civilised surface, which currently spends more on pet food than on aid to feed the dying children of the Third World, laws were passed to prevent cruelty to animals 60 years before the first laws to prevent cruelty to children in the 1880s.

The cloying sentimentalism that now attaches to, and confines the way we see children today is essentially an invention of the Victorian middle-class which went to great efforts - through its law, government, church, state schools, workhouses and voluntary societies - to impose its view of childhood and family on the working class from the 1850s onwards.

In this period we see children being forced into a moralising state education system; increasing intervention by state and private bodies in the monitoring and powering of working class communities; the establishment of rights of access, and powers of removal of children from their families; the increasingly sophisticated collection of statistics on child health, welfare and behaviour; the creation of societies, such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Dr Barnardos, specifically concerned with children and the designation of increasing numbers of children, who failed to meet the moral standards expected of a child, as delinquent. By the late nineteenth century, children, once an unrecognised group in society, were collectively an important part of the social and political agenda, a cause for concern, leading to the Childrens Act of 1908 which heralded great changes in the treatment of children. These included improvements in ante-natal and post-natal care, the greater protection of children from cruelty and neglect, the end to child imprisonment and the establishment of a justice system, with juvenile courts and detention centres, more attuned to the needs of juveniles than of adults. By 1914 most aspects of childhood - from birth and infancy, to education, labour, leisure and sexuality - were being controlled by some state agency or officially-sanctioned private body.

It is commonly argued that this increased state intervention in the lives of children was one element in the foundation of a far more comprehensive system of national provision and protection, that became popularly known as the 'Welfare State'. In consequence, particular administrative or legislative actions are explained in terms of a perennial reformism, or the extension of children's rights; or in other words - in terms of 'progress'.

Such an argument, however, fails to come to terms with the fact that there was more than a concern for the 'welfare' and 'interests' of children lying behind the new approaches made to the juvenile population in this period. Rising state interference took place against a background of deep social anxiety, in which the administrators and reformers shaping, and manipulating, the policy concerning the young were increasingly alarmed at the seemingly 'anti-social' behavioural patterns of working-class family life, as revealed to them in official social enquiry, and reports from penal institutions and state elementary schools. They were determined to direct the refractory working - class family towards the attainment of a more 'civilised' condition, by dealing first with the youngest, perhaps most easily influenced, members of the working class community - the children. So the interest in children, and the children's measures passed, stemmed not only from attempts to protect and nurture the young, and support their welfare; but also from an overt attempt to coerce and control working class youth, in order to reduce social unease and manufacture some form of communal consensus. In the increasing official and public discussion of the problem of children between 1880 and 1914, the question of class - of the intention to change the behaviour of working class youth - was never very far away. The disciplining and moralisation of the children of the poor was a constant motivation.

The new attention given to the conditions of children by the middle classes in the 1880s was part of the growing attention given to social conditions in general. Concern at apparent social degeneration led to a search for new methods of social reform. Treating children better - educating and moralising them - was, it was felt, one way of trying to avoid the 'social crisis' that loomed ever larger, in the public and official imagination, from the 1880s.

The 1880s were difficult years. The return of hard winters, a severe downturn in the trade cycle (1884-87), and the long-term structural decline of certain older industries brought unemployment, rural depopulation, a critical housing shortage in London, and social

discontent more 'grave' than anything in the past two decades. There was great anxiety about Britain's declining industrial supremacy, about the growth of cities, about the emergence of a socialist or collectivist alternative to traditional liberal idealogy, and about the future political role of the working classes. From 1883 with the publication of Mearn's *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, the press demonstrated to an anxious public the nature and extent of the decay to be found in the darker corners of English cities. Amongst the middle-classes there was fear rather than guilt at the discovery that there could be so much distress in the midst of so much plenty, and Parliament designated enquiries into the areas of greatest concern. The reports of these enquiries however served only to increase rather than allay the fears of impending social chaos, and surprised even the politicians in the degree of chronic poverty they had exposed. The scale of the problem seemed to challenge the usefulness of all existing strategies for the alleviation of social ills.

There had, furthermore, been created in the public and official consciousness a class of degenerate families - the 'casual residuum' - incapable of work, and ever dependent upon public support or criminal activity in order to live - which threatened to overburden the existing structure of provision, and so bring social collapse. It was said that this dangerous class 'bred' faster than any other, and thus it was believed and feared, despite the protests of men such as Booth to the contrary, that this class was gaining in number proportionately to the respectable working class and to all other classes. 'One of the gloomiest elements in the whole case,' stated the philanthropist Sam Smith, 'is the extraordinary rapidity with which the degraded population multiplies; the birth rate is far higher in these low slums than in respectable neighbourhoods.'

With around one third of the total population of England and Wales in this period aged fourteen or under, the sheer pressure of the numbers of youth on the social structure was impossible to ignore, and it was reasonable to assume it was constituted increasingly of the working classes - for whereas upper and middle class families were shrinking through conscious family limitation to two or three children, working class families - without the same control over their more limited resources, and faced with the likelihood that many of their children would die very young (within the first year) - continued to be large, perhaps with as many as ten or twelve children. This made children increasingly children of the streets, with a dramatic physical presence, as any commentary on urban conditions since the mid-century indicates.

Despite the accelerated programme of slum clearance, and consequent provision of alternative open spaces for children's recreation, children continued to be the inhabitants of the streets, even sleeping in the streets due to the overcrowding of their homes. In such a situation many children succumbed to the temptations of 'petty crime' such as pilfering from market stalls, shops and delivery vans; playing truant from school; playing near railway lines and on rivers and ponds; pickpocketing, or fell into other evils, ruffianism, drink, or prostitution. To the middle classes the street was merely a place of contamination and potential danger, and that so many children were it appeared 'forced' to spend much of their day on the street was nothing but threatening and had to be changed. The rules of school attendance should be more strictly enforced by the school inspectors, but more than this there should be efforts either to improve the individual circumstances of a 'deserving' family, or else failing this, to remove the child altogether from its dangerous surroundings and irredeemable family.

The 'inadequacy' of the working class home and family was a major concern. There was little in Victorian and Edwardian society that was regarded with greater veneration. The home was deified - given spiritual or religious properties, and the vocabulary used to describe home and family life was therefore studded with semi-religious-terms 'sacrosanct', 'sanctity' and 'purity'. The home represented the foundation of the social order, if not of their civilisation.

Within the secluded refuge of the middle-class family the patriarchal sexual order was consolidated. Woman and children were subordinated to the supreme authority of the father as the head of the household, and their dependence upon him in almost all matters was enforced. 'At home the principles of subordination are first implanted and the man is trained to be a good citizen.' The rights, and especially the sexuality, of both women and children were denied them, and a domestic form of paternalistic coercion in which they were both protected and controlled was operated and enshrined in family law.

The working class family home was almost completely different to the middle class version. Far from sacrosanct, the working class home appeared to them as noisy, dirty, brutal, overcrowded places, lacking in any privacy or comfort, where criminality was acceptable and incest - although it was never admitted in public for being too shocking a disclosure - was very common. Here the father could not be relied upon to be in employment, or to bring in an income, whilst women and children, casting aside middle class notions of innocence, dependence, and fragility, showed an alarming and quite unacceptable degree of wilfulness and independence in the fact that they worked, and moved, with relatively unrestricted mobility in the outside world, and in their supposed 'sexual licence'.

Sex was as always of particular interest to the child campaigners. Contemporary surveys, and reports to the Home Office, revealed large numbers of children, both boys and girls, as young as 7 or 8 working as casual or regular prostitutes. With a consistently high incidence of venereal disease, particularly in London and the seaports, the late Victorian sexual economy placed a high premium on the virginity of the boys and girls it used. Since the age of consent was 12 until 1871, and after that only 14, this inevitably meant younger and younger children fell into prostituting themselves. Press scandals exposed the large market for child pornography and for children themselves, dwelling on how easy it was, armed with a chloroform soaked handkerchief, for a man to abuse children.

Child campaigners also revealed many cases of cruelty to children. The horror stories of the misuse of 'innocent' children issuing from Barnados, the NSPCC and the Salvation Army in the late 1880s, whilst somewhat exaggerated to arouse the attention of both public and administrators, suggest the desperation of the position of many children. Thus 'Case One': 'A girl of 11 in bed, found to be covered with scabs and running sores, infested with lice, under one scab a maggot. The child was never washed and lay in her own excrement.' Or, 'Case Five': 'Stepson, aged six, kept chiefly in a wash house, where he had to sleep. He cried to the neighbours about rats and he said he had to get on a shelf . . . There was only a stone or brick floor for his sleeping place.' Many children were found to have been shut up alone for days on end, 'with permanent bad consequences which are not at once apparent', being burnt on the fire for example. Many others were shut out so often that they left home permanently, and were then committed to an industrial home without 'the advantages of a natural home life . . .' Some children, however, the NSPCC claimed, were so badly beaten, crippled, blinded, or permanently injured that industrial schools refused to take them or else they were too young to go into an industrial school leaving no other place of safety than the workhouse.

There were many cases reported of children being exposed, or being carried about by drunken parents for hours on end - about which very little could be done. A woman selling a basket of buttons exposed her child at every door in order to sell them. 'Though the child was being killed, until it was killed there was no power to touch it. Everybody sees such cases where sufferings are being inflicted and which are likely to have grievious, permanent, perhaps fatal consequence, with no power to interfere.'

In the first decade of this century, the debate over children shifted markedly from considerations solely of the moral defects of the juvenile population, to an intense, and ever-expanding, investigation of the accelerating physical and mental degeneration of infants and children, who were now classified, collectively, as the 'rising race', or the rising generation on whom the nation's future, and therefore that of the Empire, depended. '. . . each of our youth is a brick - an integral, and important, part of the State's assets.' In the Home Office, as in society at large, there was a great readiness in the early 1900s, to take notice of the doctors and eugenic thought, and to heed the warnings that the deterioration in the health of the nation's children - 'the stunted growth, the debilitated frames, the weakened intellects,' would lead to social ruin in England.

Besides the arguments of the medical and military men, widespread fear of 'genetic inadequacies', were heightened by a series of official enquiries into the subject, all of which recommended that 'robust legislation' be passed very soon 'for the welfare of the living generation.' A Select Committee of the House of Lords; a Standing Committee of the House of Commons; a Royal Commission on Physical Training; and the Interdepartmental Committees on Physical Deterioration and on the Model Course of Physical Exercise - all tackled the problem of physical and mental health, and offered uncompromising evidence of decay.

At a more public level there were events drawing the attention of the public to specific problems - the 'Isitt Crusade' against juvenile drinking of 1901; the Public Conference on Juvenile Smoking in Bolton, 1904; the international congresses on 'Reformation' in Liege and Budapest in 1905; the Infantile Mortality Conference which met, under the patronage of the King and Queen, in Leeds in 1906; and the Destitution Conference of 1911.

New movements and organisations were established to bring about an improvement in the physical conditions of working class youth. Just as the 'social crisis' of the 1880s with its insipient moral decay, had inspired the formation of organisations like the NSPCC and the

National Vigilance Association, and youth movements like the Boys' Brigades, so the pre-occupation with degeneration in the Edwardian period inspired organisations like the Children's Protection League; and youth movements like Baden Powell's 'Boy Scouts' and numerous patriotic youth leagues - the National Service League, the Boys' League of Honour - promoting Lord Portland's 3ms - Morality, Manliness and Manners.

These new organisations aimed to reduce the debilitating 'habits of self indulgence' of undisciplined youth - smoking, drinking, gambling, and masturbation - by keeping them away from the places of temptation, and by directing youth into conformity via youth clubs and mass boys' movements, where the values of physical exercise, *espirit de corps*, discipline and self-control - the leading principles of the public schools - were stressed, and hopefully absorbed by working class children.

In summary then, the period from the 1880s to the First World War were years of frantic campaigning and activity organised around issues affecting children. The campaigners led to legislation that forms the basis of the systems that we have today to deal with the regulation of children's lives. We can see in these years clear attempts to change the behaviour of recalcitrant working class children and working class families. The period also made more rigid ideas of childhood that were evolving throughout the nineteenth century. By 1908 it was accepted that children were the responsibility of their parents, but also that the state had a role to play in the care and disciplining of children which could at times override the wishes of the parents.

We should see therefore that the idea of childhood is a very fluid, changeable concept and that in the past, as today, it is certain groups who are defining childhood and imposing it on others. We have to remember that all the so-called afflictions of today's youth-seized by the tabloids precisely because they offend against contemporary notions of what a child should be - existed a century and more ago and are nothing new. Football hooliganism, alcohol abuse, incest and child sexual abuse, abortion and prostitution, mugging and petty crime, homelessness, truancy, malnutrition and starvation existed as much in the 1780s and 1880s as in the 1980s. Children's history, far from being a simple area of museum work is in effect very complex and highly emotionally charged.

Plate 1: Children at play in London East End street, 1905 (Springboard Educational Trust).

CLASS, AND CHILDREN'S WORK AND PLAY IN LONDON IN THE 1890s AND 1900s

Anna Davin

Conflicting views of childhood

Historians of childhood have been hampered by bias in the available sources, whether documentary, representational, or material. The surviving evidence for most times and places tends to deal with the children of a minority - the relatively well-to-do and influential. For nineteenth century Britain, for instance, autobiographical accounts of poor childhoods (especially women's) are far rarer than those of the better-off; portraits and even photographs of poor children are few; while improvised toys are less likely to have survived than bought ones. The sources which do deal with working class children mostly embody the assumptions and concerns of another class. The records of schools and educational administrations, of police and courts, of reformers and philanthropists are relevant to the history of working class childhood, but their version is one-sided.

A further problem lies in the bias of our own views. We historians bring to our study of the past preconceptions about what is natural in childhood; so do museum curators and visitors, hence the emphasis on toys and games. Historians' examinations of children's work, again, has started with the assumption that work is inappropriate in childhood: identifying with the reformers, historians have focussed on progress made in eliminating 'child labour'. In my research on children in the London working class between 1870 and 1914 I have tried to understand the complexity of their world and the meanings in it of work, play, home, neighbourhood and school. I have also explored the differences in class perceptions of childhood, and their implications for poor children. Here my chief concern is with work and play.

In late nineteenth century Britain the extreme differences between the childhoods of rich and poor, and the lesser but still important differences for all those on the spectrum between, resulted from variations not only in material circumstance, but also in attitudes and expectations. The generally held view amongst the prosperous and well-to-do was that children should be free from responsibility and supported by adults; that they were naturally innocent and happy to be kept that way; should be largely segregated from adults and protected from knowledge of 'adult' things (especially money concerns, trouble of any kind, and sex); and that they should always defer to adult authority. In the course of the nineteenth century (with variations, according to income level, location, size of family and so on) middle class practice was increasingly based on such ideas. Children were more segregated, more 'protected', and more supervised by adults - parents (especially mothers) and other relatives, servants, and teachers. More was spent on them, and products for nursery and schoolroom children proliferated: books and magazines, toys and games, specialized clothes and furniture. The years of dependence were extended: girls remained girls until marriage; and more and more boys spent their adolescent years in school rather than starting work at twelve or soon after.

Working class childhood was different, both in practice and in expectations. The circumstances of most people's daily lives made it impossible to segregate children or to 'protect' them from adult concerns, even if this had been desired. Many households lived, worked and slept in a single room. The composition and limits of the domestic budget were no adult secret; and when unemployment, injury or illness reduced income, even the youngest children knew at once, because it meant they had less to eat; their shoes could not be mended; they might have to move. Children worked for the household, from as young as possible. Nor was this just from necessity: their help was taken for granted as normal, seen as a good thing. It kept them out of mischief, and it was part of necessary learning, both in specific tasks and in the need for them to pull their weight. Even a three or four-year-old could take on small responsibilities - distract a baby for a while, run messages, pod peas, mind the mother's little front-room shop while she was in the kitchen, or fold cardboard for matchboxes. An older child would do more and heavier chores (cleaning or fetching water, for instance); take charge of a baby or toddler for hours at a time; go further afield with messages; earn the occasional copper from a neighbour. A child of nine or ten could earn through casual errands and services; or might have a steady job after school or on Saturdays. Such work was not restricted to the poor: respectable artisans' children, if they did not help in a domestic workshop, often took part-time work as baby-minders and in shops and workshops.

So work and responsibility were common and accepted for children in households throughout the working class, from the family with a sober artisan father and several employed teenagers, to the mother and children only one step from the workhouse. Such children also spent much time in the street.

Street and children

The street was the children's world. They used it as resource, workplace, and leisure centre. Mid-nineteenth century ragamuffins had begged, performed, guided, stolen and slept in it. Poor children in general still in the 1890s brought home supplements to food and fuel which they found there: coal fallen from a delivery cart (possibly with encouragement) specked fruit or ageing vegetables picked out from market refuse, broken boxes to burn. And when it came to play, the street was playground and resource for most children, even for those of clerks, artisans or small shopkeepers.

For many games, the first need was space, to run, jump, sing, and dance with others - clearly impossible in crowded homes. For games and amusements which needed props, children pretended, improvised and foraged. They used discarded tins, bones, shells, buttons, cherry stones, shards of china or glass, stone which would chalk, string and rope: 'all the impossible combinations left by the street-cleaner' (Paterson, *Across the Bridges*, 1912, p. 60). Carts were made from soap-boxes and old wheels; a rusty old teatray pulled with string became a toboggan; dolls were created from rags, paper, bones, unravelled wool, and devotion; string and torn-up newspaper held the makings of a kite; and scrumpled newspaper bound tightly with string furnished a ball.

On smooth paving stones or asphalt they played marbles and hopscotch or drove hoops. Walls were used for bouncing ball games and for chalked cricket stumps and goalposts; or, along with hoardings, for drawings and messages. With a length of rope they skipped, individually or in a line across the street; or fixed a swing from post to railing; or they twisted two ropes together from the lamp-post bar and played 'string-twist-'em', clinging dangerously as the ropes untwined. Rainwater flow in the gutter had them sailing improvised boats; in icy weather they made long pavement slides; and mud and snow provided plasticine, building material, or ammunition.

The street was also their theatre. There were the comings and goings of neighbours and the passing of street vendors and performers, especially the organ-grinders to whose music they danced. Horse and donkey traffic permitted stolen rides at the back of carts, and provided excitement: a stubborn donkey exasperating its master, a runaway horse, an overturned van, a collision, or a row between drivers. The work of navvies or of steam rollers fascinated them. Fire engines were pied pipers. Funeral processions might be joined by curious or impressed children, and they followed (and sometimes parodied) Salvation Army marches and other processions and demonstrations.

Street entertainments and activities were mostly compatible with child care, which was a major responsibility for children of six or seven onwards. Toddlers were plonked on step and kerb to watch or play, or pulled into a ring game. Babies were carried, wrapped in a big shawl, or perched on a small hip; or perhaps a home-made pram or a box would hold one or more babies while their young elders were busy. Without small charges it was possible to move faster and range further. Wandering children made seesaws in timber-yards; played hide-and-seek amongst gravestones; explored empty houses or building sites; beachcombed along the Thames when the tide was out; fished and swam (if boys) in canal or river; made dens and forts; and played hunting, chasing and hiding games around a larger radius from home.

Teaching through play

But to the late-nineteenth century middle class these children seemed neglected and undisciplined. Their responsibilities and freedoms were alike inappropriate to childhood. Since the 1850s, philanthropic and legislative reform energies had been directed towards reshaping the experience of childhood in the labouring classes. In particular, as children 'belonged' at home or in school, in the charge of adults, the swarms of ragged street children caused indignation and dismay: the street was dangerous and corrupting - the last place children should be. 'Vagrant' children were rounded up into orphanages and Homes, and some were exported to the colonies. More and more schools were built, and children's attendance was made compulsory. This served the double purpose of removing them from places of employment or the street, both inappropriate for children, into the proper environment of school, and of countering the improper influences of home and street. By the end of the century all working class children started school at five, and many started at three; most spent at least six years in school, in London leaving only on their fourteenth birthday. Protective legislation also postponed and limited their full-time employment; and by the late 1880s set sixteen as the 'age of consent' for sexual activity by girls, and authorised removal of children to Homes if parents were judged to have ill-treated or neglected them.

In the 1890s reforming energies opened up a new front in the

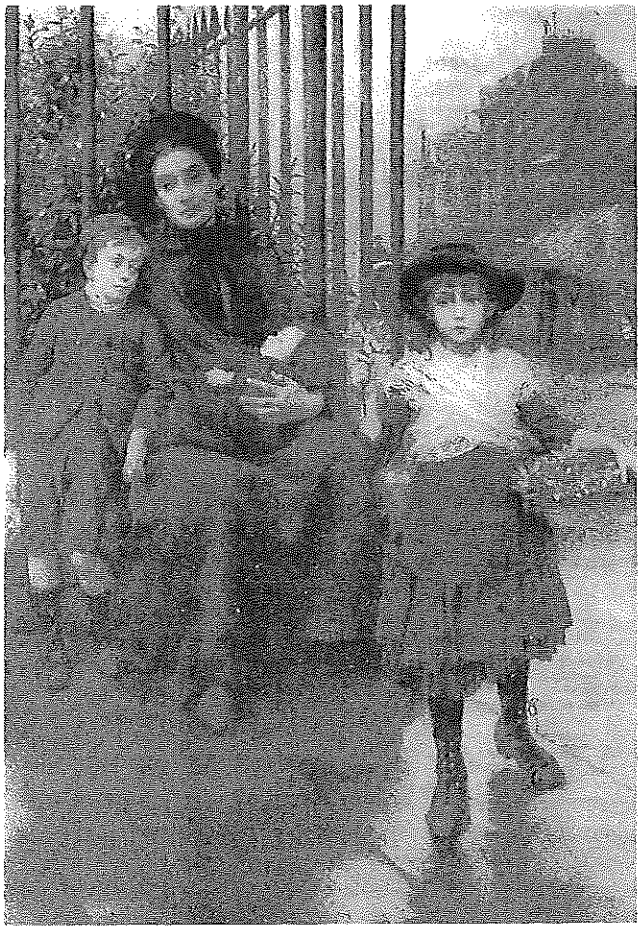


Plate 2: Detail from 'A Pinch of Poverty' by T.B. Kennington, 1889 (Art Gallery of South Australia).

childhood campaign; that of street life and play. Outside school hours, and even after dark, the streets still swarmed with children, and nobody seemed to be keeping them in order (of course many people might be keeping an eye on them in a general kind of way, but this did not count). Their street life included work and responsibility, which were inappropriate for children. And when they did play, their games were unsatisfactory: they were dangerous and obstructed adult use of the streets; they were mischievous or noisy and a nuisance; or the content was unsuitable - they acted out murders or imitated drunks, or they gambled. Even the girls' singing games were about courtship and marriage, or about death, and these were not childish subjects.

With much rhetoric about 'little adults', 'old before their time' and 'deprived of childhood', a new movement to restore childhood by teaching play got under way. 'Happy Evening' clubs and 'Guilds of Play' were set up by settlement and mission workers, where children whose play was 'painfully unimaginative' and 'of the coarsest' were to rediscover childish joys and pleasures. Here and in the infant schools a major influence was that of the Froebel movement. Older children (especially in girls' clubs) were to learn to appreciate beauty through the collections of traditional songs and dances just being published by folklorists - their 'national heritage'. The protagonists of this movement were humane and sympathetic in many ways, and some children no doubt welcomed certain aspects of what was provided - the warmth of a play centre in winter; the chance to draw and read in relative quiet (at least in the better equipped centres, such as the Mary Ward); the contrast with school discipline; the singing and dancing and performances; or in playgrounds the swings and slides.

But teaching play and providing clubs and playgrounds did not just result from a humanitarian urge to give children respite from work and responsibility. Class-based assumptions, about childhood, as we have seen, and about society in general, determined what was offered, and political motives were often overt. For instance, when Reginald Brabazon (Lord Meath) campaigned for public playgrounds in 1893, he recommended them because children would be 'unconsciously strengthening their limbs and constitutions' (which would benefit the nation) and because attendance officers would know where to look for truant children. He also wanted them segregated, at least for children over ten. The children were being taught through play, not being taught to play. Thus in Millwall in the 1890s a progressive clergyman, Richard Free, used to set up

WITH OLD WHEELS.

TOPS.

PICKABACK WRESTLING.

SOME LONDON STREET AMUSEMENTS.

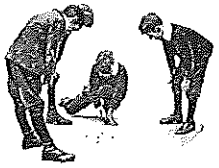
By EDWIN PUGH.

STILTS.

IT is Saturday and all the streets in this mixed neighbourhood are a riot of children. "Are you out?" says one boy to another; and it seems a superfluous question. Translated, however, it means: "Are you on some vexatious errand for your mother? or are you at liberty to join in any fun that may crop up?" The boy replies that he is out, and joins the noisy, moving crowd.

Men must work and women must weep, says the song: it might be added that children must play. Even the ill-used, half-starved child of the London slums can find surcease from the horrors of its lot in a world of make-believe. Rag dolls and paper balls serve the purpose just as well as the more elaborate toys of richer children; and perhaps there is compensation for the lack of such luxuries in an inevitable quickening of the imagination. Of course there are things to be enjoyed in the streets of London that are, comparatively speaking, quite aristocratic of their kind and out of the reach of the very poorest. I refer to such subtle delights as riding in goat-shays, and flying kites and air-balloons; even marbles, balls, tops, and skipping-ropes are not to be acquired without some small outlay. But effective substitutes for these things can often be made at home by means of a little ingenuity and some miscellaneous lumber. Carts and toboggans can be constructed out of soap-boxes and the wheels of disused perambulators. It is just as easy to be happy with a rusty iron tyre, a hoop off a butter-tub, a kite made out of a bit of cane and a page from a copy-book, a tin lid with a piece of string passed through a hole in the centre that revolves merrily on its edge as you run, a lump of soft clay and a catapault or a rhubarb-blind, as with a genuine shop-made article.

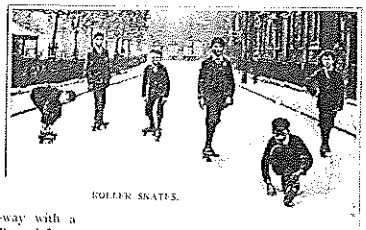
In a few years the sport will be out of these children. They will be playing "pitch and toss," and "banker" with a penny pack of cards; they will, on high days, do their best to make the town hideous with painted horns, and "ticklers" and "tormentors"; they will have money in their pockets and "fags" between their lips; but they will not be as happy as they are now.



MARBLES.

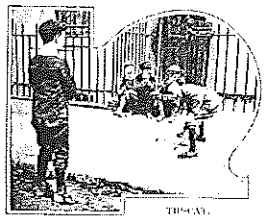
It is mostly in the better streets that children play alone. Here is one whipping a top; another is trundling a hoop; a girl is skipping; a boy on a pair of stilts seems anxious to achieve something complicated in the way of a broken nose; a very superior young person is engaged in the prehistoric pastime of battledore and shuttlecock. A man has lately passed through this by-way with a barrow laden with paper windmills and flags; these he has offered in exchange for old jars and bottles and has emphasised his offer with flourishes on a bugle. Now the street is gay with his wares. Yet this clean, tidy boy, for instance, who has both a flag and a windmill, and who occupies his time between bouncing a very handsome ball and counting his "alley taws," has an air of aimless boredom. Another boy is skating on rollers; he, too, appears dissatisfied. Suddenly he takes off one skate, lends it to the first boy, and in an instant both are happy, for here is companionship to stimulate healthy rivalry. It is this spirit which animates the children of the London streets and enables them to play with an earnestness which seems to denote that, knowing their childhood will be but a short one, they are bent on making the most of it.

Some of their games seem to be of a rather spiteful nature. Here is a party playing "Ugly Bear." One boy crawls on the pavement and the rest belabour him with



ROLLER SKATES.

caps attached to lengths of string. Here are others playing "Egg Cap" and "Mondays and Tuesdays." If you are a muff at this you will have to lay your open hand against a wall and allow a boy to shy a ball at it. "King of the Castle" and "No Man Standing" are just red savagery set to rules; "Release" is plain fighting with the anger left out; whilst "Leading the Blind Horse" is merely an elaborate practical joke, the point of which is to blindfold a trusting innocent and then to maltreat him in any handy way that his defencelessness suggests. Better games than these, though dangerous still, are in progress. Notable among them is tip-cat, but this is perilous only to onlookers.



TIP-CAT.

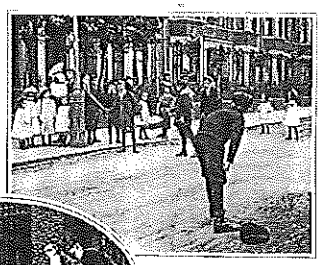
These urchins who are engaged in throwing pieces of the roadway at other pieces of the roadway are playing "Gully" or "Duck"; they have just been playing "Castles," a game in which loose stones also play a big, shin-shattering part. "Horny Winkle's Horses," in which one set of boys stoops down and makes a bridge of backs against a wall, and other boys ride them to a thrice-repeated chorus of "Charley Knackers—one, two, three!" or, until they collapse, is another boisterous game. In this category come also "Rounders," a game resembling baseball:

Plate 3: Pages from 'Some London Street Amusements' by Edwin Pugh, published in George Sims (ed), Living London *(1901-3).*

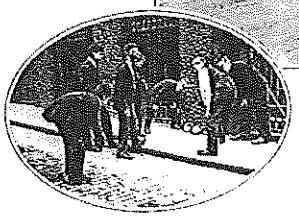
"Chevy Chace," a form of prisoners' base in which one unit of a "side" is captured and held to ransom until a comrade rescues him; "I-spy-I," or hide and seek; "Tom Tiddler's Ground," "Red Rover," and "Puss-puss," which resemble one another in that one player is prominent above all the rest.

This is also the case in "Follow-my-Leader" and the various sorts of Leap-frog—inch-it, foot-it, "Fly-the-Garter," and Spanish—with the difference that whilst in "Follow-my-Leader" the prominent figure is rather heroic, in leap-frog he is the butt. This butt or sport of fortune is known as *He*, and appears in many games. In the various forms of "Touch"—"Touch Wood" and "Touch Iron," "French Touch," "Cross Touch," and "Widdy-widdy-warny"—it is invariably *He* who has to catch the others; it is *He* who comes in for all the indignities. The insane-looking urchin holding his knee is playing "French Touch"; he was touched on the knee by the last *He*, and must not remove his hand until he touches somebody else. This band of six or seven, all clasping hands and stretched across the road, are at "Widdy-widdy-warny." "Kick-pot" and "Strike Up

HORSES.



ROUNDERS



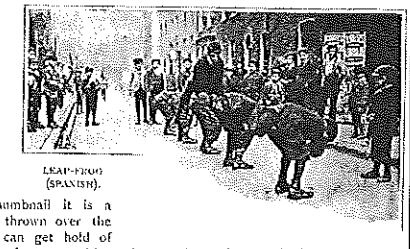
EGG CAP.

and Lay Down" are games in which one player opposes all the rest. The last-named is a rough form of trap, bat, and ball; but the trap is dispensed with and the ball merely bounced on the ground. The fielder of the ball endeavours to hit the bat (usually a rough piece of wood) which the striker places flat on the ground. "Straights," cries the fielder; and, if the striker has omitted to shout "No straights," he is at liberty to stand in a line with the bat.

Other robust games, but which belong—either properly or of necessity—to the winter, are "Chalk Corners," which is "Hare and Hounds" (only the hares blaze a trail by drawing arrows on the pavement instead of by dropping paper), and snowballing, and sliding. The fashions of street cricket and football overlap at one period of the year, and both are being played. An amusement for the boys that is an exasperation for the girls will crop up when two blithe spirits snatch a skipping-rope and run down the street, entangling all the indignant petticoats within their sphere of influence.

In the midst of the prevalent turmoil there are boys at games that might be called "quiet," if only the players would refrain from argument. "Buttons" can be played without any adjuncts at all, or in

conjunction with a ball, a peg-top, or a knicker—the last a heavy, leaden disc. There are some curious conventions connected with these games that are religiously observed. You may not, for example, use iron buttons or buttons below the regulation size; and if the peg of your top measures less than an average thumbnail it is a "mounter" and may be thrown over the house by any boy who can get hold of it. Other "quiet" games of a competitive sort are "Buck, buck! how many fingers do I hold up?" and, in their season, "Cherry-bobs," and "Conquers," *i.e.*, horse-chestnuts. A fascinating toy for solitaries is a disc of wet leather on the end of a piece of string which will adhere fast to the ground or, by adhesion, raise a cellar-plate. This is known as a "sucker."



LEAP-FROG (SPANISH).

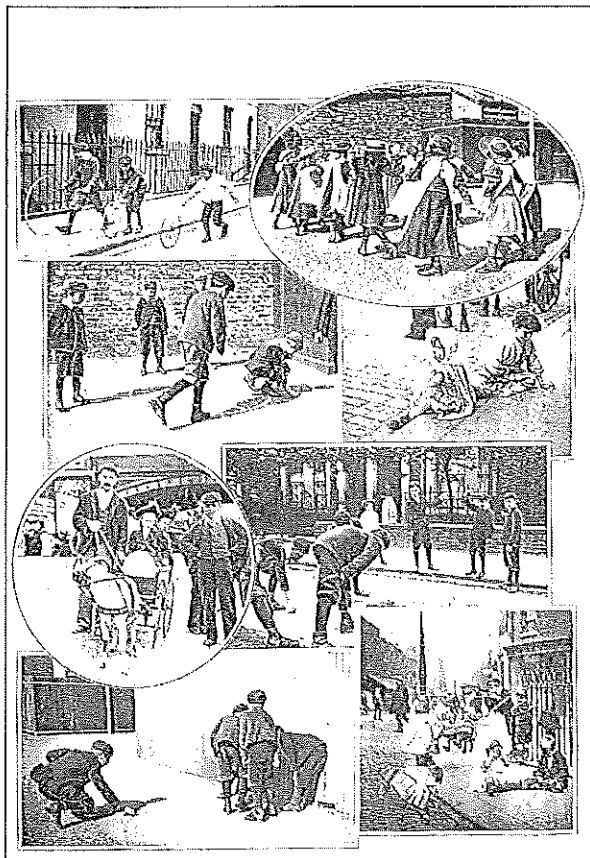
SOLDIERS.

Besides all these regulation games there are others which owe their origin to some passing London show or predominant public interest. War always fires the boys. A military exhibition may inspire them to a pickaback wrestling tournament. But, as a rule, such games have a brief vogue, the genius of organisation not being common in children. A notable exception to this *dictum*, however, was to be found during the Boer campaign in the wonderfully drilled regiments of juvenile soldiers that paraded the London streets. It was a memorable spectacle to see these bands of little ones, to whom some tiny *réveillères* were usually attached, marching along in perfect step through the mire or dust of the road, wearing their helmets and tunics, carrying their weapons, also an "ambulance," beating their drums and blowing their toy trumpets, with that dignified gravity of which only children know the secret.

But, generally speaking, the best games of make-believe are either rooted in tradition or founded on the every-day life of the participants.

HOPSCOTCH.

Plate 4: Pages from 'Some London Street Amusements' by Edwin Pugh, published in George Sims (ed), Living London *(1901-3).*



I. MARBLES AND HOOP. II. KISS-IN-THE-RING. III. SCHOOL'S WEB. IV. FIVE STONES.
V. GOAT-SHAW. VI. GULLY. VII. CHERRY-DODS. VIII. SWINGING.

Boys are not so fond of these games of make-believe as girls are: but you will find them playing at "Horses" with reins of rainbow wool which they weave on a machine constructed of a cotton reel and four pins; or, with lanterns, puffing and steaming along in imitation of a train. A thunder-shower will set them to floating paper-boats in the flooded gutters. Mud, at all times, will move the younger fry to make pies. Sometimes, if they are of a gentle disposition, they will join the girls in a mimic domestic drama of "Mothers and Fathers," or "Schools," or "Shops." They will reel about the pavement in dreadful pantomime as "father"; they will buy imaginary wares with imaginary coin; or submit to be cross-questioned or cuffed as the pupils of a small but imperious mistress. They will take part in "Kiss-in-the-Ring" and the other innumerable love-making games: "Ring o' Roses," "Poor Jenny is a-Weeping," "Bingo," "London Bridge is Broken Down," "Wallflowers," and many others. Their name is legion, and a recital of the rhymes that are chanted in a sing-song accompaniment to them would fill many pages. The ruling principle is invariably that a boy or girl shall choose one of the opposite sex, kiss, and then leave the other to pursue a similar policy of selection. These little ones seem to play at love for practice: they blush, and are tremulous and constrained; the boys cut awkward capers to show how terribly they are at ease; the girls are fiercely competitive for the favour of their particular sweethearts.

There are games in which the sexes mingle that are not love-making games: "Oranges and Lemons," "Here We Come Gathering Nuts and May," "Several Men Come to Work," and "Honey-pots." The first two of these games resolve themselves into a tug-of-war. "Several Men Come to Work" is a game in which trades are represented by dumb show. In "Honey-pots" you are trussed up, with your hands clasped under your legs, and swung to and fro by two other players. These things are shrouded in a mystery impenetrable to the mere masculine intelligence, even among juveniles.

No boy ever really arrives at the true inwardness of Hopscotch, for instance. It is as baffling as feminine human nature itself whether it be of the variety that depends on a series of circles and numbers, or on a drawing known as "Spider's Web" which rather resembles a periwinkle-shell in outline and has initials written on it in set spaces. The tiny maids, hopping on one leg, kick at a piece of china or a flat stone; and if they fail in their incomprehensible endeavours they seem to go on just the same, and if they succeed they are as pleased as a cat in the fender, though it seems to make no difference either way. Then there is "Five Stones," better known as "Gobs," at which they will play for hours without tiring, though the game consists merely in sitting on a doorstep and bouncing a big marble and picking up stones and catching them dexterously on the back of the hand. They will nurse a doll, too, in an abstracted way, all by themselves; or swing on a rope attached to a lamp-post or the railings, monotonously, backward and forward with pathetically intent faces, showing no sign of pleasure. When they play together they are noisier; but you rarely see them smile. At the game of "Higher and Higher," which begins and ends in jumping over a rope, they display an amazing agility, whisking their bodies into the air by a revolving action and clearing almost their own height.

And all the while, in many cases, they have to play another part of little mother to younger brothers and sisters. They ape, with a cruel fidelity, the methods of stern parents, sometimes covering their charges with abuse, slapping, shaking, tousling them; but they are very solicitous for the little ones' safety all the same. In short, they are serving their apprenticeship to life. Whilst the boys are being Red Indians and pirates, and yearning to run amuck through the Ten Commandments with a cardboard sword, the girls are learning how to be mothers. For, though she plays, the poor little girl of the London streets is never quite a child.

Plate 5: Pages from 'Some London Street Amusements' by Edwin Pugh, published in George Sims (ed), Living London *(1901-3).*

little competitions in which each child would sing a song or do a dance or recite, then all together would vote a winner, who would receive a few pence as a reward. He had great difficulty in making the children accept that the principle for selecting the winner should be that of the best performance, rather than the greatest need of the prize (for working-class women's sharing of resources at this time, see Ellen Ross, 'Survival Networks', *History Workshop Journal* 15, Spring 1983.). As Sister Grace, of the Bermondsey Guild of Play, remarked in 1901, it was not that the children had no ideas: 'The only fault that we find is that their ideas clash with ours'. These children were to be 'the men and women of the future'; and must be taught 'as much as they can through play'. From the Guilds of Play they were to progress to the Girls' Club: 'We never lose sight of them: they are ours for ever'.

The initiatives and writings of these reformers make clear that they saw certain separations as essential to social order: between street and home, adult and child, male and female, one class and another. Their views are still part of the dominant ideology today, but if we are to develop historical understanding of children's lives, in their contemporary context and variety, we have to explore and present other evidence. We have to challenge accepted notions of a universal common childhood norm from which these were deplorable and pitiful deviations, to show that class difference was also cultural difference, and that diversity does not require ranking of correct and incorrect or superior and inferior. This is hard enough for those who write history; but it is even harder for those in charge of presenting the past through its material remains, since the work and play of children in the past has often left little trace.

One starting point is to recognize that the children of nursery and schoolroom, whose traces are more visible, were a minority. Many other children lived lives much more integrated with the adult world. The cradles in our museums were rocked by children as well as mothers (and other adults), and the tools and implements of work, both domestic and workshop, were handled by young as well as old. At the same time, there was a common children's culture which is easily forgotten if we stick to the objects which survive. For all the school desks and books and charts on display, much learning took place outside the classroom, at home and in the street, from other children as well as from elders. The printed song collections teachers used do not tell us how children changed the words, or what they sang away from school. The challenge is to find ways of showing missing and obscured aspects of children's past, so that museum visitors will understand how diverse their experiences were, how they varied with context and changed over time, how they were not just undifferentiated 'children in the old days'.

THE CITY CHILDREN PROJECT AT BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Michael Glasson

Any museum worker researching the field of early twentieth century working class childhood rapidly faces a challenge: how can museums, which as we all know are here to 'collect, document, exhibit and preserve material evidence' of the past, record and portray an aspect of society which leaves only a handful of material remains? If indeed so little survives, are museums really the right place for such research? And how can we as museum curators make the results of our research accessible to the local community without recourse to three dimensional evidence?

In October 1984 I was appointed to a six month post of field researcher within the Department of Local History at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. The department had been managing the 'Change in the Inner City' project since February 1983, as a project jointly funded by central and local government through the Inner City Partnership Programme. A number of imaginative projects had already been undertaken focusing on aspects of life in Birmingham's inner city.[1] The projects had all involved extensive fieldwork in the form of oral history recording and photographic surveys, and had resulted in exhibitions, published articles and pamphlets and some imaginative educational work, outlined by Stuart Davies in *S.H.C.G. Journal* 11.[2]

The subject of childhood seemed an obvious choice for research, since everybody has been a child, and it is an area of human experience common to people from all cultures and classes. This was an important consideration given that one of the chief aims of 'Change in the Inner City' was to make the results of all research accessible to the modern day inhabitants of Birmingham inner city. The history of childhood was also an area well suited to educational work with children of today, even if their own experiences have been very different. The remarkably comprehensive rebuilding of most of central Birmingham since the last war coupled with major demographic changes has meant that a new generation of children is growing up knowing tower blocks and ring roads, but nothing of back-to-backs, brewhouses and public washing baths. Within the subject of childhood I decided to concentrate on the themes of children at work and at play, two areas which appeared to reflect the changing experience of childhood between then and now.

It was clear from an early stage that this was a subject area where surviving material culture was extremely limited. The toys of the urban working classes of the period were largely home made and disposable, scavenged and adapted from the 'rubbish' of adult civilization. A length of washing line or rope from an orange box would serve as a skipping rope, marbles would be glass stoppers from lemonade 'codd' bottles and a football would consist of a block of wood or an old tin can. Tip cats, tops and diabolos would be fashioned from scrap wood. Toys were simply hardly ever bought.

In contrast to the more sturdy and often expensive toys of middle class children (which now fill our 'childhood' museums) such items were not likely to survive for long. Space was often at a premium in working class households and these 'toys' which had no intrinsic value and were easily replaceable were rarely preserved for sentimental reasons. Birmingham Museum's own collection of 'street toys' numbered fewer than half a dozen items, and this total was not significantly increased during my six months of fieldwork for the project. Likewise material evidence of children at work was found to be extremely limited. A rare group of children's employment badges survived in the Birmingham collection and related armbands are known from other museum collections. Cards of buttons, probably stitched by Birmingham child outworkers were also found. The dozen or so artefacts thus brought together, however, scarcely formed an adequate record of the experience of working class childhood in the city during this period, and hardly support Anthony Burton's statement 'that communication through objects is especially appropriate for the history of childhood'. To have approached the subject through its surviving material evidence and that alone, would have been to trivialise it.

Fortunately my predecessors on the 'Change in the Inner City' project had not been so restricted in their outlook, and had drawn upon a wide range of sources, including surviving photographic evidence, documentary sources such as school records, the reports of the Royal Commissions and autobiographies, and especially significant, the evidence of oral testimony. Each one of these potential sources of information has its own limitations. Each has to be used critically by the historian. Taken together they nevertheless enable us to give context and meaning to the few surviving artefacts, and can help us to present the history of this subject in an accessible way.

The limitations of oral history are too well known to need a lengthy resumé here. One disadvantage is that it can be a time-consuming method of acquiring historical information and used uncritically it may also be misleading. It is all too easy for the interviewer simply to confirm preconceived ideas by asking leading questions, and there is always the problem of judging how representative any one individual's testimony may be of their class and generation. The dubious 'benefit' of hindsight also requires caution when sixty years or more may separate actual events from the date of their recollection. In the intervening years an interviewee's memory of their childhood may be reshaped in the light of new experiences and attitudes.

These various problems or challenges should not be allowed to obscure the strengths of oral history as a potential source, but should ensure that we exercise the same critical judgement that the historian applies to any other primary source. Without the information supplied by interviewees the 'City Children' project would have been impossible. The casual play of children in the streets of the city was of little interest to the authorities (unless it threatened the safety of property) and although the role of children as workers was causing increasing concern in this period, many child workers went about their jobs with little or no public intervention. The subject of children as workers within the home, undertaking domestic chores such as baby minding, is hardly recorded in any documentary sources for the period. Much of the information which emerged during interviews for the project was therefore unique.

Furthermore tape recording is able to capture the memories of people in their own words and phrases. The immediacy and spontaneity of language often used by interviewees is a great asset in helping to make history accessible to a wider audience. Most of those interviewed during the project did not consider their childhood experiences to be of great interest. The idea of writing some of their memories down was clearly a novel one which few would have attempted, yet in most cases they were extremely confident talkers whose speech was full of sharp imagery and wit. Distinctive local terms, regional songs such as those used in skipping and dancing and of course local accents can all be captured on tape.

The second major source of information for the 'City Children' project was a less widely appreciated one. The family photograph survives more commonly than perhaps any other family record yet it remains massively under-represented in museum and library collections.[3] When family photographs are collected by museums it is often purely for their value as a record of costume, and all too often the photographs have become detached from the related information which makes them useful historical documents. In Birmingham fieldwork unearthed a considerable number of surviving family photographs which helped to place the children of the period in their familiar environments - on doorsteps, in back yards and even playing in a stream, as well as in the photographer's studio. In most cases these were treasured family possessions which often provided a useful subject for discussion with interviewees.

Other photographs of children at work and at play emerged from contacting various charitable organisations in the city. The C.O.P.E.C. housing association (founded with Cadbury assistance in the 1920s) for example recorded 'before' and 'after' views of back-to-back housing and courtyards which the association improved at this date. The City of Birmingham itself had made an extensive photographic record of slum housing conditions at the turn of the century, and careful examination reveals children at work as incidental features in many of the photographs. In many views of the period 1900 - 1914, young boys can be seen wheeling three wheeled basket carriages round the city streets, or standing on corners in their working aprons. Girls can be seen at work chopping and bundling firewood.

The 'Change in the Inner City' project had a stated aim of making the results of all research accessible to the people of Birmingham. Having brought together artefacts, oral history recordings, photographs and documentary evidence it was decided to concentrate efforts on two productions, a small booklet of 24 pages and an associated exhibition. The booklet was aimed at a popular audience and therefore price was an important consideration, the finished project retailing at 95 pence. The exhibition was likewise aimed at a general audience and was toured round inner city libraries in Birmingham over a period of two months.

In retrospect this tour could have extended to working class 'suburban' areas of the city such as Weoley Castle where many of those who grew up in the inner city before 1930 were rehoused and now live. The exhibition was also shown at the City Museum and Art Gallery. The effectiveness of the exhibition is hard to judge, since no visitor surveys were undertaken but the booklet

has certainly sold well and has been particularly well used by the city's educational department. Had there been more time available it would have been desirable to produce an edited tape of extracts from the thirty or so recordings made during the project. There would have undoubtedly been considerable interest in this from local workers with the elderly, as part of reminiscence therapy schemes and such tapes could have been used in conjunction with replica street toys of the period. All recordings were placed in the Museum's sound archive in the central library, along with copies of all photographs unearthed during the project. Local radio featured extracts from the booklet and had there been more time available it would have been possible to have a produced radio programme based on extracts from the tape.

To conclude with some of the questions posed at the start of this paper, I would argue that the subject of working class childhood in this period is too important to be ignored by museums simply because it has left so little material evidence. Through combining all available evidence the 'City Children' project produced a publication and an exhibition which were well received by the local community. Similar projects can help to reduce the imbalance in our activities and can reflect the lives of whole sections of the local population whose material possessions were always few, and whose lives still remain poorly represented in our museums.

References

1. Wilkins, R., 'The Birmingham Baths Project', *S.H.C.G. Journal* 11 (1983).
2. Davies, S., 'Change in the Inner City', *S.H.C.G. Journal* 11 (1983).
3. Warhurst, C. and Linkman, A., *Family Albums*, Manchester Studies, 1982 (An excellent introduction to the subject of the family photograph).

NOT JUST A LOAD OF OLD BABYCLOTHES: SOME ISSUES RAISED BY CHILDREN'S CLOTHES

Clare Rose

Children's clothes in museums suffer from a double disability; in them, the frilly and feminine associations of costume in general (see Levitt, *SHCG Journal* 15 pp. 6-10) are intensified by the sentiment surrounding the 'christening gown'. As a result, many curators, when they think of children's clothes at all, envisage them as a sea of frothy white on which float a few old school caps and perhaps a boot, only relic of a child drowned in a canal. This attitude is unfortunate, since it prevents us from revaluing an area which highlights many of the major changes of the last two centuries, from new ideas of childhood and shifting definitions of masculinity and femininity, to the development of mass-produced clothing and the effects of the 'servant problem'.

In this paper, I will outline briefly some of the issues raised by the study of children's clothes, before going on to examine boys' clothing in more detail. These issues, still relevant today, include parental control of children, the nature of child sexuality, gender determination and the education of the child within society. The concept of control, both physical and moral, was much more dominant in eighteenth century and nineteenth century childrearing than it is today. It was particularly important in the upbringing of young girls; girls' clothing usually became tighter and more restrictive as they approached puberty.

Physical control of girls was enforced by dresses with stiff corsets, off-the-shoulder necklines which restricted arm movements, and short but wide skirts which needed careful handling to remain 'modest'. Similar but less constricting dresses were worn by young boys for the first few years of life; both sexes' clothing exposed much larger areas of the child's body (specifically chest, arms and legs) than would have been permitted to adults. This over-exposure of children's bodies began in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, when children's clothes anticipated the 'nude' effects of Regency fashions by at least 20 years. This change in standards for children came at the same time as the gradual acceptance of the ideal of Innocence in childhood (see Blake). While contemporaries would have argued that children's bodies could be exposed precisely because they *were* innocent and devoid of sexuality, there is an underlying ambiguity in this attitude which surfaces in such nineteenth century documents as Lewis Carroll's photographs of half-naked girls.

Plate 1: A boy's breeches suit of printed linen, 1770s (Gallery of English Costume, Manchester City Art Galleries).

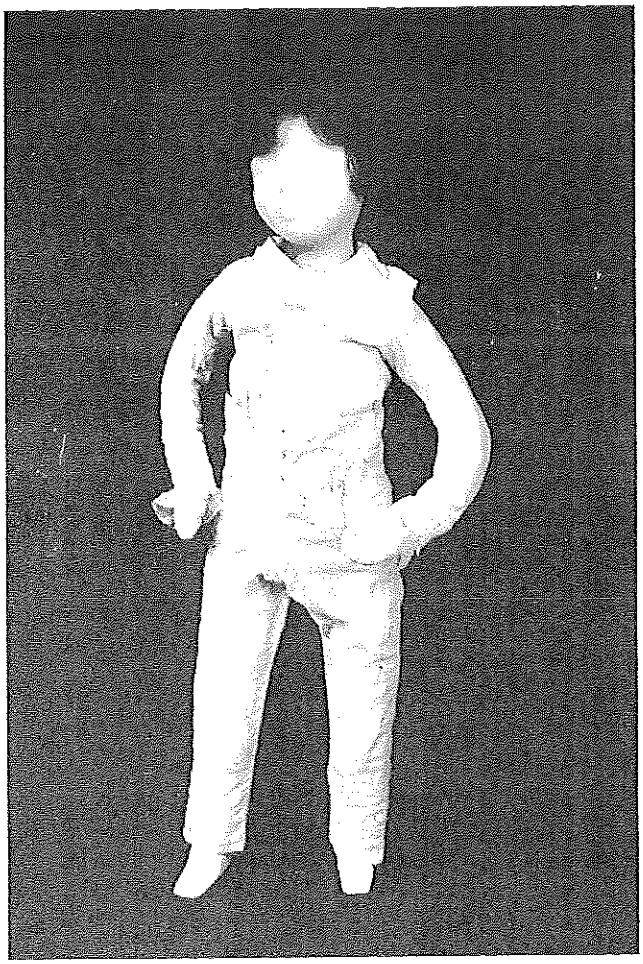


Plate 2: An early 'skeleton suit', 1780s (York Castle Museum).

The skimpy and lightweight clothes of late-eighteenth century aristocratic children also revealed a changing attitude to class distinctions. The earlier way of indicating class and status was quite simple: rich children wore rich clothes, carefully tailored from silk and velvet. The new use of clothing was subtler, but still served the same purpose. Dresses of expensive and fragile muslin and fine linen proclaimed the wearer's unfitness for hard work, and the existence of an army of servants to wash and mend the white garments. Poorer children's clothes in this period were made of printed cotton or linen, which was stronger and showed less dirt.

It is only a short step from children as indicators of family status to children as the focus of conspicuous consumption. The late nineteenth century saw a boom in items produced or marketed specifically for children. There was even some targeting of different social groups, shown by the production of small items such as bibs with working-class mottoes or imagery.[1] By the 1920s children's clothing and accessories were decorated with pictures of popular cartoon characters, a development which we tend to associate with the onslaught of American popular culture in the 1950s.

Perhaps the most important function of children's clothes is to distinguish between the sexes, especially in the first few years of life before the child has learnt 'appropriate' behaviour. For at least 200 years there have been clear codes to indicate the sex of the youngest infant. Unfortunately these codes can be very difficult to read with the partial information available to use, and are also subject to frequent change. For instance, the now sacred choice of 'Pink for a little girl, Blue for a boy' was only developed in the 1930s. The older practice was to use blue for girls and pink or red for boys; this was still being recommended in childcare books as late as 1921.[2] The differences between the sexes became more marked with age, culminating in the ceremony of 'breeching'.

'Breeching' marked the transition between babyhood and boyhood, symbolised by the putting on of trousers and jacket instead of a dress or tunic and drawers. This might be followed by a further transition from short to long trousers, depending on the period and the age of breeching. Even in the twentieth century the importance of this occasion was recognised and was the cause for some celebration.

> It was the usual thing to make a fuss [for breeching] and I was no exception. I remember standing up on the table all dressed up in white blouse, white ankle socks, patent black shoes and bow tie. My word, I did look posh, and I felt posh. All the folk in the terrace came in to inspect and wish me all happiness in life . . . I think my age would be two to three years . . . (Samuel Mountford, born 1907)[3]

The comparable rite of passage for girls was the fitting of the first adult corset around the age of puberty, but this was not such a case for rejoicing (see Gwen Raverat's account of her first corset, in *Period Piece*.

The change from dress to trousers was partly dictated by hygiene; skirted toddlers were easier to keep clean. But it also had a symbolic importance, which becomes apparent when we realise that the age of 'breeching' varied from two to eight years in the course of the nineteenth century. Now it has dropped to birth, with the virtual disappearance of dresses for boy babies.

In the mid-eighteenth century boys were 'breeched' at four to six years old, graduating immediately into suits cut like their fathers'. A distinction was maintained through greater simplicity of material and ornamentation. As long trousers were worn only by sailors at this period, there was no further progression to 'longs'. (Ill 1). By the 1780s, a special outfit for young boys had been devised, marking a transitional phase between babyhood and full adulthood. This was the 'skeleton suit', so called because of its extremely tight fit. (Ill 2). These differed in several respects from contemporary menswear; they had tight ankle-length trousers instead of baggy kneebreeches, and the jacket was cut short at the waist and buttoned onto the trousers. They were also made of plain cotton or linen, instead of the coloured silk and wool of mens' clothes. This outfit was supposedly 'liberating' because of its lack of decoration and its washable fabric, but was not necessarily comfortable to wear:

> a skeleton suit, one of those straight blue cloth cases in which small boys used to be confined . . . . [giving] his legs the appearance of being hooked on just under the armpits.[4]

As well as being uncomfortably tight, 'skeleton suits' were very easily soiled by contact with their wearer's bodies and with the outside world. The normal male undergarment was a voluminous thigh-length shirt, with drawers as an optional extra. As the new suits were too tight for either of these, they were often made with a detachable lining for the trousers. Hygiene was probably one of the motives behind an odd combination garment which was briefly

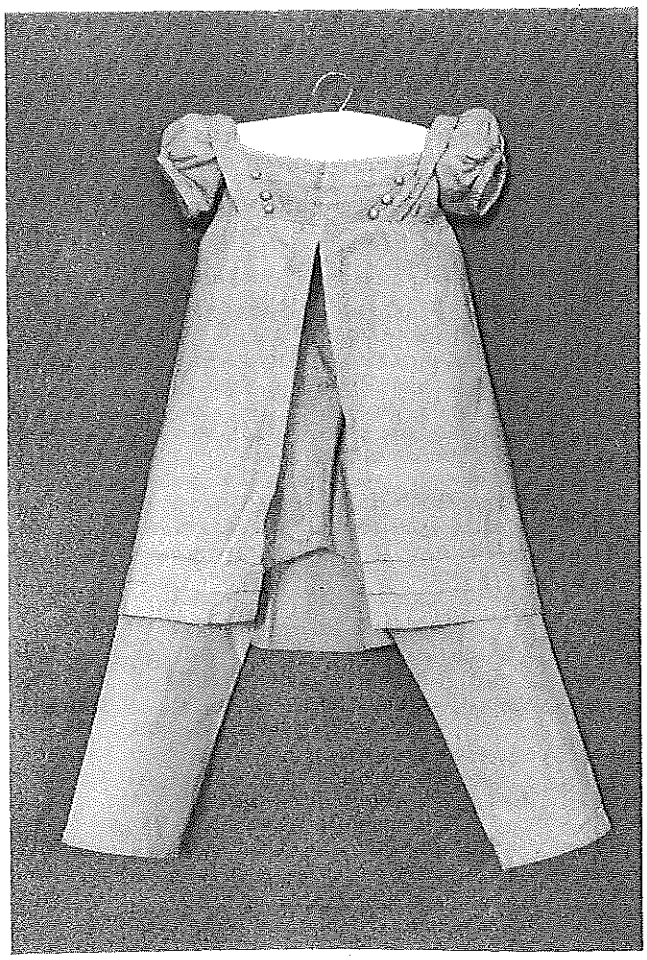


Plate 3: A boy's tunic suit, 1820s (Gallery of English Costume, Manchester City Art Galleries).

Plate 4: A boy toddler's dress with distinctive diagonal trim, 1870-90 (Museum of Costume, Bath).

fashionable around 1810. This was a miniature 'boiler suit', made with a short-sleeved dress bodice attached at the waist to a pair of trousers. There were usually made with a back flap as well as the front fly, suggesting that they were intended for boys who were not yet fully toilet-trained.

A more usual alternative, which might be worn by boys between two and six years old, was a short-sleeved dress with the front seam left open to show a pair of matching trousers (Ill 3). These were often made like contemporary women's drawers, with an open centre seam. During the 1820s these dresses, often decorated with braid in imitation of military uniforms, became the normal choice for young boys. The skeleton suit had fallen out of favour, and boys' suits were now made of dark-coloured wool. These more tailored styles were not suited to young boys, and so the age of 'breeching' rose to between four and six years.

Several compromises were invented to fill the gap between toddlers' dresses and older boys' suits allowing a boy to pass from dresses worn alone, to shorter dresses and long drawers, to coat-like 'tunics' with cotton drawers or trousers until he finally reached a tailored suit. In some cases the short dresses may have been remodelled to become hip-length tunics.

By the mid-nineteenth century boys were wearing some form of skirted garment for their first eight years. A great many ways of differentiating between boys' 'tunics' and girls' 'dresses' had evolved. These involved the choice of fabric, which was likely to be heavier, stiffer, and less patterned than girls'; the colours, which were often stronger, with bright red a particular favourite; the trimming, which was usually bold (eg black velvet on red wool) and sometimes had a military influence; and the cut. Boys' tunics were more loosely cut at the waist than girls' dresses, tended to have pleated rather than gathered skirts, and often had a distinctive diagonal opening which is rare in contemporary female garments (Ill 4). From 1860 onward's boys' tunics were often made in tartan, with the skirt cut like a kilt.

The very high age for 'breeching' mid-nineteenth century boys was related to middle-class educational practice, with boys educated at home or in small groups until they were sent away to boarding school around the age of eight. The change from home to school could be seen as the passage from a female-dominated to a male-dominated environment, an antithesis which was reflected in the change from 'childish' clothes made by the mother or a (female) dressmaker to 'masculine' suits produced by a (male) tailor. The very high age of breeching may have been a semi-conscious attempt to prolong the era of female control. For poorer children, there was less money and time to spare for carefully differentiated outfits. They started school much earlier, often as young as three or four, and finished by the age of ten. In these circumstances, boys might start school while still wearing dresses or tunics, and their first suit would probably be a miniature version of their father's working clothes.[5]

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the conventions had changed again, influenced by the growth of mass tailoring firms. Some of these, such as Barran's of Leeds, specialised in the juvenile market, recognising that individually-tailored suits for growing children were extremely expensive. The introduction of mass-produced clothing resulted in a greater standardisation, with the manufacturers deciding which garments were appropriate for which age-group. Some manufacturers developed the idea of a range of similar styles, from sailor tunics for the toddler through sailor suits with shorts or knickerbockers for the young boy to formal suits modelled on naval full-dress for the older boy (Ill 5). Naval and Highland motifs were popular for all age groups, adding a little dignity to the two-year-old's blue dress. Shirts had now been added to the juvenile wardrobe; they were a development of the knicker-bockers popular for boys' and men's casual wear since the 1860s.

The late-nineteenth century hierarchy of tunic and shorts - shorts suits - trouser suits remained in place in the early years of the twentieth century. By 1920, however, two alternative outfits for young boys had appeared. One was a set of shirt and shorts, the shorts held up either by braces or by buttoning onto the shirt. The other was the knitted jersey, often worn with knitted shorts. Both of these outfits proved extremely adaptable, and formed the basis for boyswear up to the 1950s. Braces or 'buster' suits could easily be made at home, from washable fabrics, and could be trimmed to look more or less masculine, depending on the age of the wearer. They are the direct ancestor of the 'romper suits', cut to go over nappies, which are now standard for babies and toddlers. Jerseys had the advantage of fitting well without restricting movement. They could also be passed on to sisters or to very young boys to wear with knitted skirts. By the end of the 1920s home-made or machine-made jerseys and shorts were worn by a large proportion of toddlers and schoolboys.

All of the recent developments in toddlers' clothes have followed on from the new ideas of the 1920s. Wool jersey has been replaced by cotton sweatshirt fabric, and the age of wearing shorts or trousers has descended into the cradle. There have recently been signs that the pink/blue dichotomy is breaking down, with parents offered a choice of all-purpose pastels or primary colours. But the difference between the sexes is maintained by the choice of motifs and trimming (trains and stripes against bunnies and frills). Our methods of distinguishing the sex of small children will probably seem as arbitrary and confusing in 200 years' time as those of the eighteenth century do to us now. The forces that determine children's clothing are less subject to change than we might assume, even though they are manifest in different ways. We may find 'Rambo' suits for two-year-olds distasteful; but what can we say about the scaled-down Military Overall (just like Daddy's) marketed by Harrods' throughout World War I?

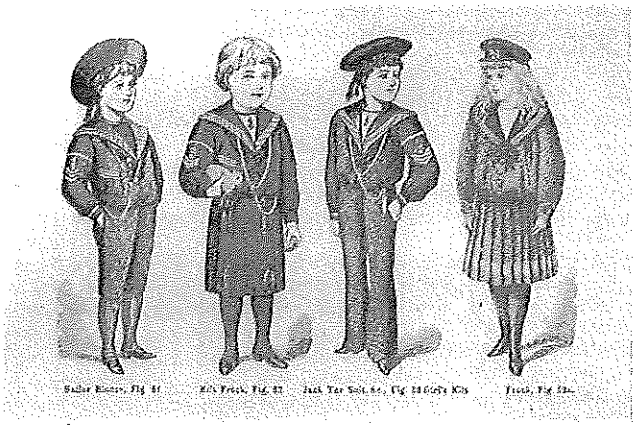


Plate 5: Four sailor suits for boys of different ages and a girl, 1900 (from 'The Cutter's Practical Guide').

Notes

1. York Castle Museum has two cheaply-produced bibs woven with popular mottoes, 'Don't talk too loud' and 'Our Pet'.
2. 'Pink for boys and blue for girls' was recommended in a babyclothes booklet published in 1921 by the Women's Institute of Domestic Science, Pennsylvania. The song 'Pink for a Little Girl . . .' dates from the 1950s (information from the Joicey Museum, Newcastle).
3. From J. Burnett (ed) *Destiny Obscure*, Allen Lane 1982, p. 25.
4. Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, 1836; 'Meditations in Monmouth Street'.
5. Both of these options can be seen in nineteenth-century genre paintings such as Webster's *A Dame's School*, 1845, in the Tate Gallery.

TIPCATS, TOPS AND OTHER STREET TOYS FROM SEVENTEENTH CENTURY MARKET HARBOROUGH

Steph Mastoris

The most obvious type of artefact in the material culture of childhood is the toy, whether manufactured, home made by adults or created by the child itself. This last group, the street toy, has received the scantest attention from curators and collectors. The reasons for this are not hard to find. For the connoisseur, street toys were crudely made (often from another artefact), from poor quality materials, and were considered expendable even by their originators.[1] For the curator this very ephemeral quality has militated against many street toys surviving to be put into museum collections. At least one major museum wishing to acquire examples of these toys, has had to resort to 'facsimiles' made by adults who can remember their design and use.[2] It was therefore most surprising (and very fortunate) that in the summer of 1988 the Harborough Museum was given over 200 street toys which could be dated by circumstantial evidence to the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

These toys came to light amongst a cache of miscellaneous items found while reopening the rood loft stairwell at the east end of the south aisle of Market Harborough's parish church (St Dionysius). This cache consisted of over 400 items, including over 20 fragments of mediaeval window glass and some window leading; 70 sherds of post mediaeval pottery; quantities of animal bone and shell; a broken pewter spoon (early to mid seventeenth century) and 17 Nuremburg jettons (late sixteenth to early seventeenth century). As well as this dateable material were the toys which consisted of 96 tipcats, 68 whipping tops, 7 balls, 33 partially whittled sticks and 32 hollowed bovine horn tips.

It seems probable that most of this material was swept into the stairwell in 1752, when the church's mediaeval rood screen was demolished and the entrance to the stairs walled up.[3] It is more difficult to ascertain when this material got onto the rood loft and how. The large quantity of items does not suggest accidental deposit. Also, considering the large number of toys present, and the 'portable' size of the other artefacts, it seems reasonable to suggest that this cache represents the confiscations from the pockets of several generations of Market Harborough children. This theory is strengthened by the fact that from 1614 a small grammar school existed immediately to the south of the parish church.

Although it seems possible that most of the material found in the stairwell were playthings, the rest of this paper will concentrate on those items which seem to have originated as toys. These can be divided into four main categories: tipcats, whipping tops, balls and miscellaneous items.

The 96 tipcats constituted the largest portion of the cache.[4] Generally, they can be divided into two types; those with pointed ends and those with wedge-shaped ends. In addition there are six cut lengths of stick. These seem long enough to have been used for propelling the tipcats. They measure between 14cms to 19.5cms, with an average diameter of 2.25cms. The 53 tipcats with pointed ends vary in size from 4.5cms to 16.4cms (with most being 10cms). All are made from twigs and branches (of diameter between 1.5cms and 2cms) crudely whittled at both ends. Only three show signs of further ornamentation; one having slightly recessed points and two with deeply cut notches around the body. The 43 wedge-end tipcats vary in length from 5.5cms to 14cms (with most 10cms). Again all are made from fragments of twigs and branches with whittled ends, although some have flat sides created by longitudinal stripping.

The 68 whipping tops vary greatly in size, but are generally conical in shape. They can be divided into the few which have been turned and the majority which have been shaped by hand. In all, there are 10 tops which have been turned on a lathe and show several signs of

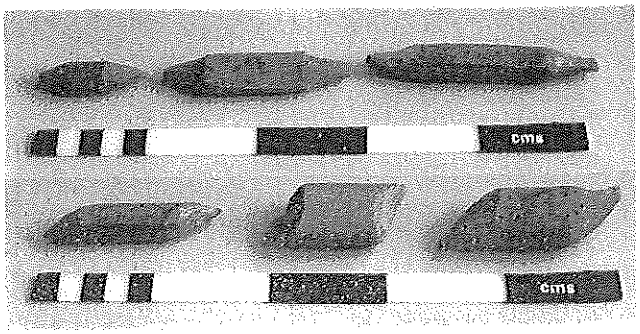


Plate 1: Tipcats, with pointed ends and wedge ends.

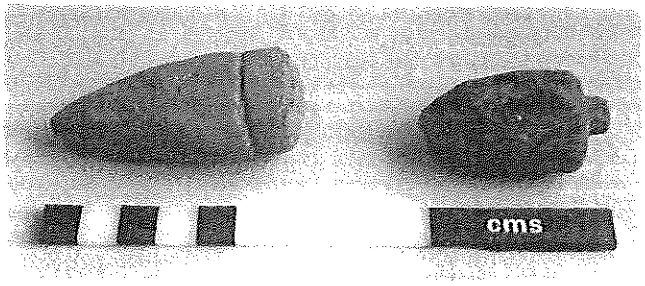


Plate 2: Hand-made spinning tops.

being 'professionally' made. Six are the standard conical shape, varying in length from 5.5cms to 8.5cms and in diameter from 3.5cms to 4.5cms, and four are oddities consisting of one bulbous top, one made from the foot of a chess piece; and two squat tops. Three of the six conical tops have remains of a metal point in the foot and one has fragments of some form of metal attachment at the top. All six have one or more incised rings around the upper portion of the body (to facilitate winding on a whipcord). Four also have a shallow stump of wood remaining on the head.

The remaining 58 tops were made by hand and are rougher in construction and seem to be of poorer quality wood. They vary in length from 3cms to 9cms, with most being 5.5cms. Most use the full diameter of the branches from which they were cut (between 1.5cms and 5cms); and were crudely pointed by whittling. In fact several smaller tops bore a close resemblance to one end of a tipcat. Again, several had rings for whipcords, but crudely incised, and three have crosses cut into the head. Most of the larger tops have metal tips set into their feet. In two cases these can be seen to be made from the heads of pins. One has a thin column of wood in the top, and another a less pronounced lug, both perhaps used as grips for spinning between the fingers. Another has a hole of square section cut through its length and a third is almost lozenge shaped.

There were seven balls in the cache. Two are naturally rounded flint pebbles, but the rest have been manufactured. Three consist of a fibrous material gummed together tightly. In two instances these were covered with course red cloth while in the third, four thickish segments of sewn leather were used. The fourth is a roughly compacted ball of blue-grey clay. All seven items are approximately 8cms in diameter.

Several other groups of items suggest other types of playthings. The first are two thin sticks, 6.5 and 10cms long, pointed at one end and having a squared notch in the centre or towards the blunt end. Are these some form of missile to be bound around with cord and propelled from the hand by the force of the whiplash?

The second group are 12 hollowed sticks varying in length between 5.5cms and 18cms (most being 10cms). In eight, one end has been deliberately reblocked, and in three of these the other is champhered to a fine edge. Four others are unblocked and square cut at both ends. It seems possible that these are some very basic form of whistle, although there are no finger holes cut along the stem.

The third group consists of 32 bovine horn tips. These range from 4cms to 8cms in length, with most being 6cms. Almost all have been cleanly cut off from the main part of the horn and have been hollowed out. At least two have been tapered further to form spinning tops, and it seems very likely that the rest could be used as spinning tops or tipcats.

These toys are a fascinating and possibly unique survival which require further detailed study, and this short account is only an interim report. Many of the toys are badly decayed, making identification of the wood very difficult. Furthermore, although most of the whipping tops and all the tipcats were probably made

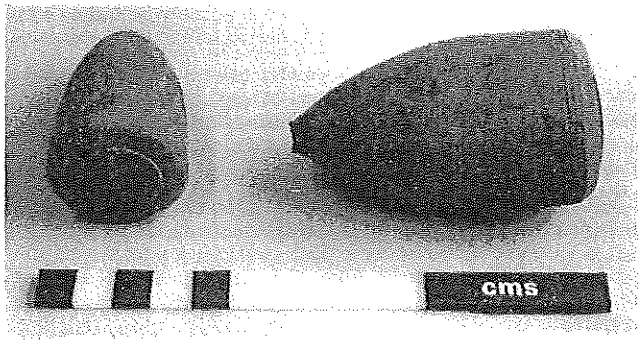


Plate 3: Lathe-turned spinning tops.

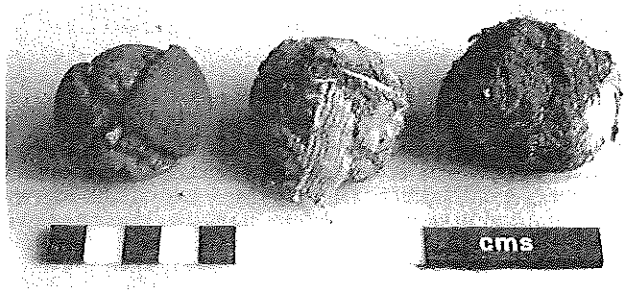


Plate 4: Balls with fibre centres.

by children themselves, it would be interesting to compare them with similar artefacts in other collections and attempt some typological analysis. The staff of the Harborough Museum would therefore be most interested to learn of similar street toys of a comparable date.[5]

References

1. Pinto, for example, considered tipcat sticks as 'expendable crudities that . . . never attain antiquity or merit a collector's attention'; Edward H. Pinto, *Treen and other Wooden Bygones* (Bell & Hyman, 1969), p.234.
2. *Ex inf.* Tecwyn Vaughan Jones, Department of Cultural Life, Welsh Folk Museum, Cardiff.
3. Rowland Rouse, *The History of Harborough*, MS [c.1764], original in the possession of Market Harborough Town Estate, photocopy at Harborough Museum.
4. For a brief description of the Leicestershire version of the game, see Michael Green, *The Boy who shot down an Airship* (Heinemann, 1988), p.59.; the Opies reprint a hostile comment on the game from *Punch* (23 April 1853) in *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (Oxford, 1969), p. 11.
5. Several other staff members of Leicestershire Museums have helped in analysing material from the cache. Robert Rutland identified the jettons and expressed a keen interest in the whole collection; Deborah Sawday identified the pottery, John Lucas the tile and Patrick Clay the glass. Thanks are especially due to Theo Sturge for conserving all the artefacts so quickly, and to Nora Kavanagh for helping to sort, and classify the toys.

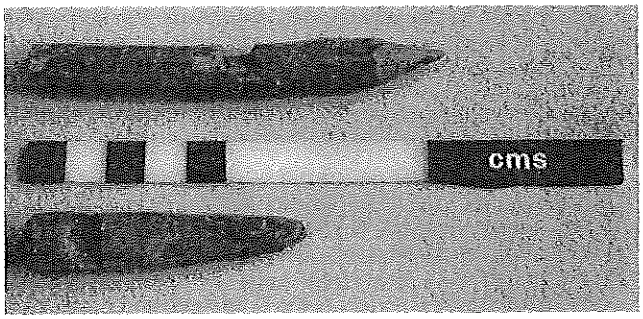


Plate 5: Notched sticks.

GETTING STARTED: EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

Gail Durbin

This article is intended principally for social history curators in small services where there are no education staff and where the provision of some kind of education service falls to the curatorial staff. It may also be useful to curators in larger services who want to become involved in or want to inform themselves about activities for children.

The children you are likely to cater for fall into two major categories: school parties mainly visiting on weekdays during term-time, and informal, especially family, groups normally visiting during holidays and weekends.

WORKING WITH SCHOOL PARTIES

You will have to decide where the priorities of your museum lie and how much time you want to devote to working with school parties. There is a steady demand for provision and once you establish a reputation for a good service then demand will rise. If you do not have a great deal of time to devote to education you may find it more profitable to help teachers rather than children. This is the route that many education services are taking now.

Contacting your Local Education Authority

If you are going to run formal educational sessions you will need the support of and benefit from the advice of your Local Education Authority (LEA). Try to identify an active and sympathetic person in your LEA who will either work with you or who can find a group of active teachers who would be prepared to involve themselves. The most likely people are Advisers (called Inspectors in some authorities), Advisory Teachers (generally on secondment from schools to the advisory section for one or two years) or Wardens of teachers' centres. In all but the smallest LEAs Advisers are either responsible for a subject area (eg. history, humanities, drama, etc) or a phase (eg. primary, middle school, secondary). Not all authorities have a History Adviser and your best ally could be in another discipline. Teachers' centre Wardens are normally concerned with in-service training for all subjects and phases.

How to make contact
Either phone the advisory section of your LEA or phone the teachers' centre (if there still is one). The names and responsibilities of the Advisers and a full list of teachers' centres can be found in: *Education Year Book*, Longman (annual), or *The Education Authorities Directory*, The School Government Publishing Company (annual).

Other useful contacts

Teacher Training Courses
University education departments, institutes or colleges of higher education and some polytechnics run teacher training courses. Subjects covered are listed in the *Education Year Book* or the *Education Authorities Directory*. You may be able to find a tutor interested in developing a joint project. This would have the benefit of introducing teachers to the value of museums in their initial training in a practical way.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools
There is a group of HMIs with regional responsibility for museum education who can advise and report on good museum practice in schools. They run a joint annual course with English Heritage for school and museum staff called 'Learning from the Past'. The chair of the group is:

Hazel Moffat HMI.
Department of Education and Science,
Turret House,
Jenner Road,
Guildford,
Surrey, GU1 3PH.

Group for Education in Museums
GEM has almost 650 members. Most come from museums whilst others are in teaching and teacher training. There are regional co-ordinators who will be able to put you in touch with local members. Meetings are held regionally throughout the year. There is an annual four day course held in late August, a quarterly *Newsletter* and the annual *Journal of Education in Museums*. All members receive a membership list. A bibliography with over 1000 entries is available; sections include, for example, pre-school children, educational materials, working with volunteers, heritage education and family groups. Contact:

George Lamb.
Secretary, GEM,
Buckinghamshire Museum,
Church Street,
Aylesbury,
Buckinghamshire, HP20 2QP.
(Tel: 0296 82158).

Area Museum Services
Your area museum service may be able to offer help. AMSSEE has a well established education panel with a publications policy and NEMS have produced guidelines on GCSE.

Teachers' courses

There is a huge need for courses for teachers but responses to them varys. If you have difficulty recruiting for courses review your publicity, the timing, and the content of your courses. Take advice from your LEA.

a. Try a teachers' course related to a subject of current educational television series. 'How we used to live' (now covering the period 1953-1970) (IBA), 'Watch' and 'Zig-Zag' (BBC) are seen in huge numbers of schools. Annual plans are issued in about May for the following academic year. The ITV companies and the BBC have regional education officers who will sometimes preview programmes with teachers and contribute to courses held in museums. Contact:

David Lee (IBA).
Education Liaison Officer,
IBA,
70 Brompton Road,
London, SW3 1EY.
(Tel: 01-584 7011).

Brian Wright (BBC).
Chief Education Officer,
BBC Education,
Villiers House,
Ealing,
London, W5 2PA.
(Tel: 01-911 8053).

b. Run courses at or through your local teachers' centre. Benefit from their publicity and organisation and the good will of teachers towards the centre. Contact the warden and find out how far in advance they plan. It may be at least a term and it could be a lot longer. Find out if they set a minimum recruitment level before a course can run. If the course is at the centre take plenty of objects with you to capture attention and interest immediately.

c. Hold previews of a new exhibition/gallery specially for teachers, at 4.15 pm or in the evening, with an introduction to the subject and/or facilities.

d. 'Baker Days'. When the government imposed a contract on teachers they increased the number of working days from 190 a year to 195. The children were still only to attend on 190 days leaving five 'Baker Days' for in-service training. In most LEAs the LEA has chosen to nominate two days for their own purposes. It is up to the governors and the heads to decide when the other days will be and what to do with them. Some schools are looking for inspiration and have devoted a day to museum education. Try circulating your local schools and offering to run a 'Baker Day' for them. You could offer a specific programme (eg. introducing your facilities), but you would be better off discussing the needs of the school closely with the head first. You are more likely to attract primary schools staffs than secondary ones. Try to find out where their own current priorities lie. Are they concerned with language or equal opportunities for example? Try to think of ways in which your collection could be used to further their aims. The benefits are that you are likely to see a whole staff including the un-converted. The difficulties are that you will possibly be dealing with some people who feel they have been coerced into being there.

e. The National Curriculum. Consider courses showing teachers how the needs of the national curriculum can be met through museums. This is an area where a shared approach by a curator and someone from education could come up with ideas of real use to schools. (See below.)

f. Run a teachers' course on a Saturday or at half-term and put on events to occupy the rest of the family. Some of the activities (eg., guided tour or watching a film) could be joint ones, or you could ask teachers to devise some activities for children and test them on the assembled families. Some sessions will need to be run separately.

g. Consider subjects other than history. English teachers may be interested in objects to provide background to a set book; home

economics and child care teachers are often very amenable to the idea of visits on domestic life in the past and may never have thought of the museum as a resource. Craft, design and technology (CDT) - previously wood work, metal work and technical drawing - teachers are interested at looking at how design problems have been solved.

h. You may want to put across some particular points (eg. what objects can and cannot tell you, or the importance of careful preparation). Teachers may not perceive courses on these as high priority needs. Deal with this by identifying a topic that is of current interest. (eg. in 1988 the Armada would have been the obvious one). Run a course on this topic and, at the same time as offering the content that teachers want, use the material to make the more general points.

For ideas on the organisation of courses see Durbin, G. 'Practical courses for teachers', *Journal of Education in Museums*, 8, 1987.

Advertising teachers' courses

State clearly who your course is intended for. It is easier not to mix primary and secondary teachers as their needs are very different. Primary and middle school teachers can be mixed. For secondary teachers, say for which subject areas the course will be appropriate. If you plan straight lectures or if there is a high element of practical activity make that clear and do whatever you can to provide cups of tea!

The National Curriculum

This will require all pupils from 5 to 16 years to study 3 core subjects - English, maths and science - and 7 other foundation subjects - technology, geography, music, art, PE, history and, from 11, a foreign language. Working parties are being set up to make proposals for attainment targets and programmes of study in each of these areas. The working party for history has not yet (December 1988) been appointed. The interim or final reports for maths, English and science are available free from:

National Curriculum Council.
Room 608,
Newcombe House,
45 Notting Hill Gate,
London, W11 3JB.
(Tel: 01-229 1234 ext. 231).

The technology report is available from:

Department of Education and Science.
Government Buildings,
Honeypot Lane,
Stanmore,
Middlesex, HA7 1AZ.

Other foundation subject reports will probably be available from the same address. Your response to the needs of the national curriculum will, in future, be vital to your ability to attract school parties. Many areas of the curriculum can be resourced by museums. For example, the data handling section of the maths curriculum requires children at Level 1 to sort objects and at Level 2 to be able to classify objects and use a simple data collection sheet. These activities could be done with prehistoric tools or with your collection of kitchen gadgets. As more reports come out it will be possible to show how a single visit could serve the needs of several core or foundation subjects.

GCSE

The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is administered by six examining groups. Schools can choose which group's papers they sit although some LEAs put pressure on for them to take the papers of the local group. Syllabuses and specimen papers can be obtained from:

London and East Anglian Group,
University of London School Examination Board,
Stewart House,
32 Russell Square,
London, WC1B 5DN.
(Tel: 01-636 8000).

Midland Examining Group,
University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate,
Syndicate Buildings,
1 Hills Road,
Cambridge, CB1 2EU.
(Tel: 0223 61111).

Northern Examining Association,
Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Examinations Board,
31/33 Springfield Avenue,
Harrogate, HG1 2HW.
(Tel: 0423 66991).

Southern Examining Group,
Associated Examining Board,
Stag Hill House,
Guildford,
Surrey, GU2 5XJ.
(Tel: 0483 506506).

Welsh Joint Education Committee,
245 Western Avenue,
Cardiff, CF5 2YX.
(Tel: 0222 561231).

Northern Ireland Schools Examination Council,
Beechill House,
42 Beechill Road,
Belfast, BT8 4RS.
(Tel: 0232 704666).

In Scotland Standard Grade Examinations have been introduced:

Scottish Examinations Board,
Ironmills Road,
Dalkeith,
Midlothian, EH22 1LE.
(Tel: 031-663 6601).

For ideas on how to help provide support for GCSE see *Museums Journal* 87 (1), 1987, which was devoted to the exam. One article includes a breakdown of all the topics to be found on the history papers. The two most useful books are: Goodhew, E., (ed), *Museums and the new exams*, Area Museum Service for South East England, 1987, price £1 and Ironbridge Gorge Museum, *The GCSE and museums: a handbook for teachers*, nd. price £1.95. It is more about Ironbridge than museums in general as claimed in the title but ideas can be adapted.

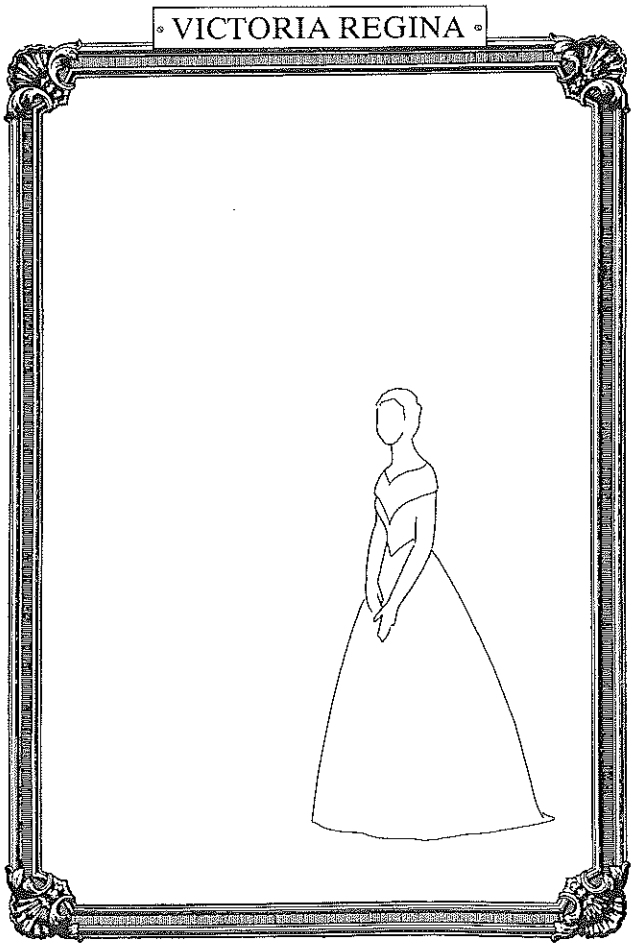


Plate 1: A children's worksheet based on the 'problem solving' approach, from a D.O.E. teachers' pack on Queen Victoria at Kensington Palace.

GCSE in Museum Studies

For several years the National Portrait Gallery has been involved with a Mode 3 (teacher assessed) CSE in Museum Studies. This has recently been adapted to a GCSE and is accredited by the London Regional Examining Board. For a copy of the course contact:

National Portrait Gallery Education Department.
St Martin's Place,
London, WC2H 0HE.

See Morris, S., 'Museum studies: a Mode 3 CSE course at the National Portrait Gallery', *Journal of Education in Museums* 6, 1985, pp. 37-40.

Museum Studies

Some of the new exams allow for the study of museums as working institutions rather than looking at an aspect of their content. Many of the Design and Communications GCSE syllabuses would allow pupils to research and plan a means of providing information on a given site or on a particular display. The Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) is deliberately flexible. It requires some work experience which museums could provide and it requires a number of skills and general areas (eg. leisure) to be looked at.

Activities for schools

There are more active ways of learning than a guided tour. Here are a couple of ideas that would not commit a lot of your time:

Problem solving activities give children the opportunity to look at a display as a whole, assess them and draw conclusions that they can support. Put children in a role (contemporary or historical) and set a task, for example 'You have been asked to produce four postcards that illustrate the most important things about this museum/period room/collection of craft tools. Working in pairs discuss an appropriate selection, make sketches to illustrate your choice and write a sentence to go on the back of each.' *See* Roberts, B. 'How do you clean a chandelier?', *Journal of Education in Museums*, 9, 1988, pp. 9-11, for a more detailed description of this approach.

Historical evidence. You could provide a general sheet on any given topic and children could be asked to record what they had discovered from the objects under the headings 'What we know for certain', 'What may be true' and 'What more we need to know'.

Sponsorship

If local firms have no policy of making lump sum donations try asking for things in kind. The Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (ABSA) keeps a register of firms interested in sponsorship. They publish guidance on putting together proposals and their annual report lists all the projects that have been supported by their members over the course of the year. Contact:

Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts.
2 Chester Street,
London, SW1X 7BB.
(Tel: 01-235 9781).

A large retail chain are prepared to make small grants (up to about £500) for projects in museum education in areas of interest to their firm (clothes, food, cosmetics and some household items). Applications are made through the Group for Education in Museums. Contact:

Elizabeth Goodhew.
Keeper of Education,
Horniman Museum,
London Road,
Forest Hill,
London, SE23 3PQ.
(Tel: 01-699 1872).

Publications

Longman Resources Unit in York offer a service producing activity books for museums. Beamish, Ironbridge, Beaulieu, the Museum of London, the Banqueting House, Whitehall all have examples. They are A4 and 28 pages plus full colour cover. The site or museum provides the illustrations and the text (although Longman will also provide an author if required) and Longman designs and prints the book. The museum must sell the book at a price fixed by Longman (currently 95p). Museums get a 33% discount on the cover price and there is no minimum order. Production may take up to eighteen months from receipt of illustrations and manuscript and there may be a waiting list. Contact:

Duncan Beal.
Longman Group Resources Unit,
62 Hallfield Road,
Layerthorpe,
York, YO3 7XQ.
(Tel: 0904 425444).

The Department of the Environment and English Heritage (although I say it myself) have produced some of the most developed teachers packs. Contact:

English Heritage Education Service,
Keysign House,
429 Oxford Street,
London, W1R 2HD.
(Tel: 01-355 1303 for a catalogue).

Bill Addison.
Department of the Environment,
Room C11/07,
2 Marsham Street,
London, SW1P 3EB.
(Tel: 01-276 3745).

ACTIVITIES FOR INFORMAL VISITORS

Events for informal groups are easier for the non-teacher to organise and can range from the simple provision of facilities for drawing and painting through to much more complex events. You may not have thought of the following resources:

a. Work with regional arts associations. (Addresses in back of *Museums Yearbook*.) Many have writers, artists or craftspeople in the community schemes that might be put to use in the school/museum context.

b. Theatre in Education groups may be interested in working in your museum but may need help with working with objects. Contact your local teachers centre or arts centre.

The Family Group

Recent research especially in the USA and in science museums has shown that the family group has great potential as a learning environment in museums. The better you know the people you go with the more you will feel free from social obligations and are therefore able to concentrate on the displays. When there are children in the group it is likely that there will be more discussion of displays than when there are only adults in the group. Parents welcome an opportunity to go somewhere like a museum where they can share an experience with their children. This has implications for events we run in museums. Traditionally we have thought of running events for adults *or* children. Often when events have been for children, their parents have joined in but seldom have the activities been designed to involve all the family. You might consider running events where adult and child are allotted specific roles. The obvious ones might be reader, scribe or artist but it may be better to allocate roles that can easily be reversed eg. guide and guided. There are not as yet many published case studies of this kind of approach to activity design.

See:

Cone, C.A. and Kendall, K., 'Space, time and interaction: visitor behaviour at the Science Museum of Minnesota', *Curator* 21 (3), 1978, pp. 245-258,

McManus, P., 'It's the company you keep . . . the social determination of learning-related behaviour in a science museum', *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*, 6 (3), 1987, pp. 263-270,

McManus, P., 'Good companions: more on the social determination of learning-related behaviour in a science museum', *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*, 7 (1), 1988, pp. 37-44,

Morgan, M.J. and Sebolt, A.P., 'Integrating the family', *Museum News* 56 (5), 1978, (USA), pp. 29-31,

Newbery, E., 'Something for all the family' [family packs], *Journal of Museum Education*, 8, 1987, pp. 9-10,

Roundtable Reports, 7 (1), 1982. Issue devoted to 'Educating family audiences',

Zien, J., 'Beyond the generation gap', *Museum News*, 58 (2), 1979, (USA), pp. 26-31.

Family Packs

Elizabeth Newbery, at the Weald and Downland Museum has developed the concept of the family pack. Cards give different members or groups tasks like making rubbings, taking photographs or observational activities. A wallchart to be completed at home and embellished with those photos and rubbings, plus other ideas, allows interest developed at the site to be followed up. For examples of family packs contact:

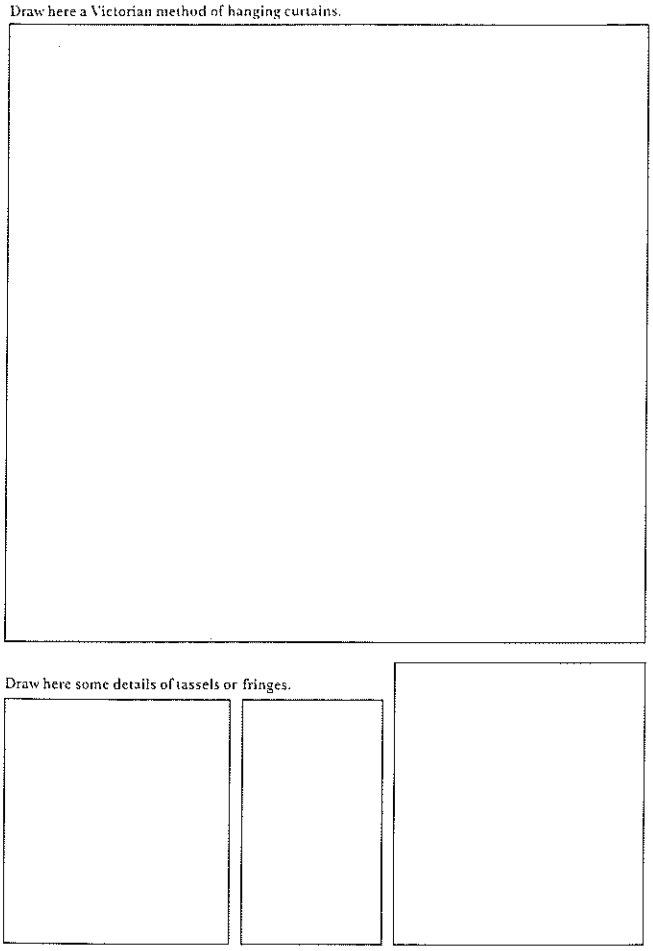


Plate 2: A children's worksheet based on the 'problem solving' approach, from a D.O.E. teachers' pack on Queen Victoria at Kensington Palace.

Weald and Downland Open Air Museum,
Singleton,
Chichester,
West Sussex, PO18 0EU.
(Tel: 024363 348).
(For pack on Wood price £1.25 inclusive of p. & p.).

English Heritage Postal Sales,
PO Box 43,
Ruislip,
Middlesex, HA4 0XW.
(For pack on Rievaulx Abbey price £1.75 inclusive of p. & p.).

PUBLICITY

Getting information to schools

Your LEA will have a system of circulating information to schools. The efficiency varies depending whether they choose to use the dinner van, the Post Office or the boots of advisers' cars. Make contact with an adviser for permission to use the system, and to find out how it works and whether you will have to bundle things up in specific quantities for different areas or types of school. Any material you send in this way will have to be of clear educational value and non-commercial in nature otherwise it may be rejected. Allow up to four weeks for material to be delivered. Try to avoid the first delivery of term. Try also to address material to specific post holders (eg. Head of History in a secondary school, Head-teacher in a primary school).

If you prefer direct mail then your LEA will have a booklet with the names and addresses and names of headteachers of all state schools in their authority. They may charge you for this. They should also have a list of all private schools in their authority that are recognised as competent.

Press coverage

You will probably already have good links with your local press. The *Education Year Book* lists the education correspondents of the national press. The *Times Educational Supplement* has good regional coverage and doesn't just send photographers to events in London. There is a new monthly museum education column and occasional supplements on school visits and specific subject areas.

Contact:

Victoria Neumark.
Times Educational Supplement,
Priory House,
St John's Lane,
London, EC1 4BX.
(Tel: 01-253 3000).

Junior Education and *Child Education* (both at the same address) are widely read by teachers and have news columns which cover museums. Contact:

Terry Saunders.
Editor,
Junior Education,
Scholastic Publications Ltd.,
Marlborough House,
Holly Walk,
Leamington Spa,
Warwickshire, CV32 4LS.

Sallie Purkis. editor of *Teaching History*, one of the journals of the Historical Association, is keen to encourage the use of museums. Articles, publications for review and news items are all appropriate. The journal is published three times yearly and the lead in can be several months. Contact:

Sallie Purkis.
Homerton College,
Cambridge, CB2 2PH.
(Tel: 0223 411141).

A carefully planned strategy for improving the educational use of your museum will benefit both the museum and the local community. You will bring important educational experiences to the child at the same time as increasing your visitor numbers and raising your public profile. If you need any further help contact GEM.

WHY BOTHER WITH CHILDREN?

Nick Winterbotham

I am indebted to Liz Frostick for setting me this question and for giving me an opportunity to air a few ideas on the rationale of making special provision for children. Gail Durbin's paper has made a very comprehensive and definitive statement as to the activities which social history curators might consider. This has left me free to discuss some reasons for making children a focus for display strategy, a target for promotions and the beneficiaries of free or reduced-cost access.

The Brief

In an attempt to elicit a forthright response from me, Ms Frostick sent me the following guidelines:

> Why bother with children? Let's face it, kids can be noisy, dirty, unrefined, cruel and selfish, . . . and they break things. Why should museums be concerned with them at all? What can an 'average' museum offer a child? Should museums treat adults and children differently when adults have such wide-ranging abilities? Should museums act as 'surrogate' schools? (PS - be as controversial as you like).

It's not really fair to publish private correspondence like this, but I do so because it touches on many of the doubts and apprehensions that the social history curator has to overcome when deciding to make a particular effort on behalf of children. I intend to argue that it is an effort which is always rewarded by positive outcome and that any effort at all can have far reaching consequences . . . and not just for children.

What do we Know about Children?

They represent 50% of museum visitors. Schoolchildren attending in organised parties are representative of the full spectrum of our society - more so than any other visitor group. Surveys of school parties coming to museums show that 60% of schoolchildren are attending for the first time. For them, the museum visit is therefore not a repeated activity, but may be what Elaine Gurian describes as a pivotal experience . . . one which will remain with them for the rest of their lives and which will colour all subsequent contact with museums and their like.[1] Therefore, children are potentially our most receptive clientèle. They are the world's future adults.

Children and Parents

Most children visit museums in family groups. There are some museums in the country where school visits outnumber those by families, but these are very few and tend to be specialised institutions such as Clarke Hall in Wakefield.[2] We can say that children bring their parents to museums. Many family visits are prompted by the perceived need on the parent's part to keep young hands, eyes and minds occupied. If museums are sufficiently absorbing or amusing, children themselves will actively compel parents to visit.

Dr Paulette McManus has observed interaction between visitors in the British Museum (Natural History) in London and her conclusions are that the company you keep during a museum visit has a dramatic effect on the way in which you observe exhibits and that conversation is a significant stimulus to the process of learning in a museum gallery.[3] In particular, she points to the way in which adults accompanied by children react more to displayed artefacts and observe features which might otherwise be ignored. This is partly due to the wish to point things out to a child, but is also a reaction to the child's own observation of artefacts and a response to the child's questioning and conversation. The conclusion is that parents accompanying children may well become more receptive themselves.

Any museum that can elicit an enthusiastic response from a child will probably succeed also with adults.

An Era of Change

Education policy-makers and curriculum developers acknowledge the need to equip children for the changing and developing environment in which they are growing up. To fail to do so is to abdicate a responsibility - and particularly so since the rate of social change is showing no signs of slackening.

History teaching addresses itself to the acquisition of learning skills and in particular to grasping the concept of the passage of time and to understanding time-lines, industrial and technological development, problem-solving through design and so on. The GCSE History syllabus even promotes (but doesn't fund) the study of artefacts and primary evidence.

Museums are uniquely placed to offer a source of such materials and Museum Education Officers have seen this as an opportunity for greater involvement with the formal education process for some time.[4] An attempt to identify levels of empathetic understanding in History learning, resulted in the following objectives (in ascending order):

Children should be able to grasp –

- first, that the past is *different* from the present and that activities and situations were different
- second, that people in the past *thought* differently from us and had different pre-suppositions from our own
- third, that they thought differently *from each other*
- fourth, that to *judge* them is merely to compare one set of values against another and that this process should shed as much light on our own predicaments and values as it does on anybody else's.

These objectives may well become adopted for empathetic teaching exercises but they could also serve as guidelines for display strategy, especially since it is a system intended to lead the youth and the adult alike towards a real notion of objectivity.

The precise implications of the National Curriculum for the museum-visiting schoolteacher is yet to become apparent but much effort is being applied in many museum services to the promotion of teacher training in order to raise the standard of out-of-classroom education and to make more constructive the expectations of teachers bringing school parties to museums.

How Children Learn

John Holt's famous analysis of young children in New York took as its starting point children's failures and the reasons for their failure - indeed the book is entitled *How Children Fail*.[5] Much apparent failure can stem from the unrealistic and unequal expectations which our environment and our education system places upon us. Teachers within my experience have categorised children according to their abilities in order to get to grips with specific learning needs. But their terms of reference, apart from being generally unflattering, often underline the child's abilities and aptitudes to tasks *on paper*. To wit -

> – High-flyers, white list, stars, bright kids, smart . . .
>
> i.e. those who have always been able to turn in written work when it is required of them, are confident and affable, are not going through some sort of family or social turmoil at present . . . (have a similar middle class upbringing to that of the teacher?)
>
> – Copers, adequate learners, solid, gregarious-and-get-by-but-nothing-more . . .
>
> i.e. . . . and I don't mind teaching these either.
>
> – Passengers, noddies, sleepers, vacant possession, 'the Lights are on, but there's no-one at home', trouble-makers, Wasters, . . . Hooligans . . .
>
> i.e. . . . it's never gone right with these kids and the further we've come the more disenchanted we are with each other.

Much of this style of critique, I believe, stems from the fact that formal education requires an ever-increasing standard of verbal-reasoning and presentation of this on paper. We might usefully pause for thought to identify which of these categories most readily applied to us in our schooling. By contrast, 95% of our clientèle were probably relegated to the latter two categories.

The work of Dr Tony Gibson in his initiative entitled *Education for Neighbourhood Change* has worked on the premise that other forms of representation can assist children to develop skills in learning and co-operation where they have failed in conventional education terms.[6] In particular, he found that work with artefacts and graphics can liberate the otherwise underachieving child and help them to contribute to a learning predicament on equal terms with other children for the first time.

Liam Hudson identified two contrary imaginations –

> those of the 'Convergent' - one who prefers the process of learning and discovery to be organised and to comprise clearly defined steps in one direction and who is well adapted to the single-minded process of taking examinations.
>
> and of the 'Divergent' - the 'butterflies' who find concentration on any one task for great lengths of time a strain and who prefer to pick and choose what to study. They are better at

lateral thinking, at taking in an overall view of the subject matter, are more imaginative but not so good at in-depth studies.[7]

As with the rest of Humanity, the museum visitor is probably drawn from either of these in equal measure. However, the museum environment probably favours the 'divergent' more than the 'convergent' since most galleries do not permit an in-depth investigation of any subject area and are intended to draw the eye and attention to a plethora of different experiences and subject areas. Whatever the case, teacher/curator collaboration can address these issues and will find observation and object-based exercises well-suited to the majority of visitors.

Object-based Learning

By now, one of the most celebrated instances of the in-depth interpretation of a social history artefact, is that of a Big Mac box by John Hennigar-Shuh a Canadian museum educationalist. In his '50 ways to look at a Big Mac box' he invites us all to take a fresh look at an object which the present generation will dismiss as rubbish.[8]

My experience of running the same exercise with children and teachers is that, with a little prompting, the state of the world itself and many of its institutions can be gleaned from this one object. For example, a group will surmise that it is produced so cheaply, Macdonalds can afford to treat it like fish and chip paper. From the 'TM' sign on the box another child will deduce the existence of the legal profession. The chemically inclined will tell me that without the petro-chemical industry the box wouldn't exist at all. The *Guardian*-reading primary school teacher tells us all that if the manufacturer of this pernicious item had not used chloro-fluoro-carbons, the ozone shield around the world would be a little healthier. In fact, we regularly extract about 30 minutes of work and concentration from this one item during teacher training exercises. The students' work is oral, intuitive, inspirational, co-operative and non-threatening . . . and, best of all, it comprises learning skills and techniques which are entirely transferable.

In a Nottingham Museums' recent survey of Nottinghamshire schoolteachers, the notion of learning from artefacts proved to be high in the list of preferred outcomes of school/museum co-operation.[9] There are many skills which handling objects can promote: observational, discursive, comparative, empathetic, imaginative, narrative, social and co-operative; there are also those of object and image literacy, manual dexterity, cognition and reasoning, and so on. On the other hand, it is not essential to handle objects and many teaching techniques can be developed in museum galleries where the opportunity to handle is not presented.

Object-based teaching can provide a most powerful method of experiential learning and it is the recognition of this fact which has led to the development of many teacher training initiatives by museums across the country. New methods are constantly under review. The Group for Education in Museums exists to promote these and many thousands of teachers each year are coming to value links between their schools and museums on an informal basis and between LEAs and Museum Services on a more formal footing. In the meantime, the museum world is becoming more skilled at addressing the different needs, skills and expectations of its clientèle and is perceived by teachers as an extension to the classroom and not just as providing destinations for end-of-term outings.

Context, Narrative and Myth-making

What museums have to offer the community in abundance is *the real thing*. How to present it is as much a matter of debate today as it ever has been in the past. The difference is that today we have more competition . . . especially in the story-telling business. In my mind the skill of the story-teller lies in the quality of the message, the clarity of the presentation and the degree to which the teller captivates the told. The quality of the message is in no doubt; the clarity of the presentation depends on the skills of the museum interpretation department; but captivation is an elusive quality which depends to a large extent on the predisposition of the audience and is claimed as their exclusive stock-in-trade by the new Heritage industry.

Present generations of children are growing up in a post-Jorvik world of Rhondda Valley Heritage parks, Robin Hood centres, Glasgow Arks and American Adventure theme parks. Finance seems to be no object for these castles of the imagination. The question for me is 'Whose imagination?' After all, if someone has created a 3D image of a Canterbury tale for me, what stimulus is there for me to do it for myself? It may be pretty, but it doesn't challenge. Just because a modern myth is laid before me doesn't mean I'm taking it on board (this very problem is the constant issue for TV advertisers). What amazes me is that so little notice is taken of this issue when these multi-million pound extravanganzas are set up. £70,000 will buy you a sophisticated talking head but most of the public will probably be too interested in how it works to worry about what it's saying.

Twenty-First Century People

Against such developments, museum budgets seem small beer. The good news for the curator is that formal education is addressing itself not only to the task of opening doors to the imagination but, just as importantly, to promoting in children the abilities

- to see, observe and enquire for themselves,
- to discriminate between what is real and what isn't,
- to acquire an objective sense of value,
- and to identify bias.

In short, teachers prefer children to think for themselves and to use *their own* imaginations. This is not mere rhetoric. The National Curriculum and the National Criteria for GCSE courses both identify the importance of the acquisition of learning and interpretation skills.[10]

Children visiting museums should not have pre-digested facts and interpreted history presented to them as a *fait accompli*. The child should have some opportunity to choose his or her own version of the story as it unfolds in its many facets. The curator should be a fellow-traveller with the pupil in discovery and not the 'Thought Police'. Subjected to someone else's interpretation which leaves nothing to the imagination, the pupil either gets bored and looks elsewhere for a challenge, or becomes a passive perambulator (as with Jorvik), or becomes the rabbit in the headlights - dazzled and not sure which way to jump next. So the fun palaces may inadvertently help future generations of visitors to find their way to museums. Weary of a diet of unsubstantiated enthusiasm, they will develop a taste for reality. Enquiries at Nottingham Castle Museum for information and work schemes based on Robin Hood sprang in many cases from children's response to Harlech TV's *Robin of Sherwood*.

Museums should enter the forum of audio-visual presentation and the technological appeal to the imagination, but this does not have to water down the museum cocktail of discoveries. Rather it will serve to concentrate the curatorial mind on what messages are being presented. The clarity of all messages will help adult and child alike. The collaboration of teacher and curator may shed much light on how to promote museum learning. An opportunity will be created for the pupil to compare historical concepts with personal experience; to develop learning skills; to empathise; to change his or her mind without loss of face; and to challenge attitudes about the world and its history. A child brought up on objectivity, possessing an open mind and capable of distinguishing between reality and unreality will one day become an adult capable of securing a future for the purveyors of the real thing.

Faced with this opportunity, can we afford not to bother with children?

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CATCHING THEM YOUNG:

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AT MILL GREEN MUSEUM, HATFIELD

Sue Kirby

Activities specially for children need careful planning, but, as the Women, Heritage and Museums Open Day at Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery showed, there is a great need for them. Special children's events will establish museums as fun and interesting places to visit and re-visit. What follows is a brief description of a special exhibition and an associated event aimed specifically at children, which was held at the Mill Green Museum, Hatfield, in the summer of 1988.

Mill Green Museum is a small local history museum in the former miller's house of the adjacent Mill Green Mill, a fully restored and operational water mill sited just north of Hatfield in Hertfordshire. A small gallery is used for regularly changing temporary exhibitions but nothing had ever been aimed expressly at children. With a high proportion of young families in the area it was felt a special exhibition would fulfill a need.

Coincidentally, two local women, Brenda Jobling and Maggie Norman, who had just set up their own business, the Potters Bear Company, had approached Welwyn Hatfield District Council with the idea of establishing a centre for young children. Brenda was shortly to publish a children's book featuring the adventures of a group of locally-based bears, 'Potters Bear and Friends.' It was agreed that the museum would host an exhibition with a teddy bear theme to be held during summer 1988 and called 'Teddies at the Mill'. There was careful liaison between the museum and the Potters Bear Company at the planning stage and it was agreed that the Company would pay a modest fee in view of the fact that the exhibition would act as a launch for the book. The museum would also take a commission on sales of the book and souvenirs.

The central attractions of the exhibition were a number of tableaux featuring scenes from the book skillfully and lovingly put together by Brenda and Maggie with help from various friends. There was also information on the history of the teddy bear and on famous fictional bears - Rupert, Paddington *et al.* The Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood kindly loaned two very early (1905 and 1910) German bears, far more realistic than their modern counterparts. Various local worthies, including Lady Salisbury and George Burton, landlord of the local pub, looked out their childhood companions for display. One case was reserved for the teddies of local children (extended to local adults immediately the exhibition opened) who were asked to write their own label, giving the bear's name and history. Many were accompanied by photographs, stories and drawings, all of which were added to the display. Very young children appreciated a cuddle with the giant bear seated outside and toddler steps ensured they could see the displays comfortably.

The exhibition attracted almost 8,500 visitors in ten weeks and was very much appreciated by both old and young alike if noise levels are anything to go by.

Space at Mill Green is very limited so it was not possible to arrange related activities over the time 'Teddies at the Mill' was showing. However, the annual cheese and wine party for which a marquee is hired gave the opportunity to hold an activity afternoon with a teddy theme in June as a taster for the exhibition. A local collector gave an illustrated talk for children on the history of the teddy. Badge making, finger puppet making, face-painting, bagatelle and skittles formed the attractions. Facilities provided included a lost child point, refreshments and a baby change area. Four hundred children and adults and almost as many teddy bears enjoyed the day. A swarm of bees were not such welcome guests but caused more excitement than difficulty.

Checklist: Planning an event for young children.

a. Brief volunteers or staff to help carry pushchairs if there are steps in front of your museum.

b. For a large-scale event organise a buggy park and cloakroom.

c. Provide clear sign-posting for all events and facilities.

d. Provide Lost Child and Lost Property points.

e. Give children labels for identification of items brought with them, (eg. family treasures, teddy bears), in case they are mislaid.

f. Provide a baby-changing room or area with table, nappies, baby-wipes, cotton wool, warm water (in thermos if there is no running water), waste bin.

g. A room set aside for nursing mothers is also appreciated.

h. Try local Junior Mixed Infants schools if you need small-size furniture.

i. Museums should always have toddler steps available to enable small children to see displays.

j. Keep any refreshments simple and additive-free.

k. Remember to brief all volunteers and staff on the position of the First Aid Box, identity of First Aider if provided, location of telephone and lavatories, and procedure in event of a fire or other emergency.

See *Women, Heritage and Museums Newsletter* 8, (June 1988), and 9 (September 1988), for reports on the Open House for Carers and Under-Fives held at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery 25th March 1988.

Plate 1: Case from 'Teddies at the Mill' Mill Green Museum, Hatfield, summer 1988.

SOCIAL HISTORY IN WONDERLAND:

A REVIEW OF THE S.H.C.G. ANNUAL STUDY WEEKEND OF 1988

David Fleming

In this summary of the SHCG 1988 Annual Study Weekend proceedings I first of all reminded delegates why we had gathered; gave some observations on the papers I had heard; and offered some summary thoughts arising out of the foregoing.[1]

The way in which this Conference theme was arrived at is quite germaine to a consideration of its significance. Liz Frostick's suggestion in 1987 that we at Hull Museums should host a one-day SHCG meeting on Childhood was superceded as a result of discussions at the 1987 weekend in Nottingham, where time and again children and childhood were raised by speakers and in debate on interpretation in social history museums. In looking at Empire, race, religion, politics, children emerged constantly as a special 'problem' area, and so the subject of the 1988 Conference seemed obvious.

The title itself - about which, naturally, there was no little argument! - was proposed because it encapsulated two very important concepts relating to museums and children. Firstly, there is the wonderland of childhood imagination and fantastic imagery - of magic and mystery, of delight and discovery: the potential of childhood, if not always the actuality. Secondly, there is the wonderland entered into by the unwary curator, her/himself overwhelmed by this seductive imagery, content with portraying the childhood of the Edwardian nursery, the innocence of the gingham dress and the sailor suit, the Meccano set, the teddy bear, the doll's pram.

The conference had two main threads running through it: children/childhood as interpreted by museums (and others) in displays or by other means; and children in our museums as visitors, as consumers or as receivers of our messages. In considering papers given by the speakers I shall give my own interpretation of what I felt was being said, as well as drawing attention to points which particularly interested me. I am not summarising so much as relating thoughts provoked by what I heard.

In her introduction Liz Frostick set the scene by posing a number of questions, some of which were partially answered, while others were overlooked. She wondered what we mean by 'childhood', and to what extent this time of life can be represented as a 'common experience'. Can adults understand how children think? How can we re-create aspects of childhood in a museum if we have no more than a distorted adult perception of what childhood is or was? Beyond this there is a nostalgic interest in childhood which has much to do with a longing for the 'psychological state of being a child'. The re-creation of long-gone schoolroom environments, perhaps, is to be seen at least as much in the context of adult nostalgia as in their perceived educational value for children. 'Childhood', 'children' and 'curatorship' were identified by Frostick as the key themes in the weekend's deliberations.

In so many ways 'childhood' cannot be represented as a common experience, because the immense gulf between different classes gives an immediate lie to any supposed identity of childhood experience. I shall return to the adult perception of children when recalling Michael Glasson's paper. It is linked closely with the current interest in children and childhood, although I suspect that the obsession with child abuse has more to do with a perennial interest in sex than in children as such. What price, meanwhile, among adult nostalgia has the success of mail-order firms specialising in baby clothes and accoutrements for adults, and what do museums do about representing this particular childhood-centred fetish? Assuredly, the vast market for children's fashions (for children) is a phenomenon of adult psychology and role-play by proxy: children are not the real target for the marketing - their parents are. Children as people in society underpinned everything we speculated upon, and children as visitors to museums at the same time, were in our minds throughout. Crucially, for a curator, is the challenge of interpretation *deriving* from, but by no means related exclusively to, material culture. The meeting of material evidence with, if you like, Frostick's 'theoretical social history' is the aim of all of us. Childhood is merely another battle in this eternal museum campaign.

And so to Anthony Burton and his uncompromising view of museum display. Burton's task is to set up 'social history of childhood' displays. Bethnal Green's existing galleries are conservative, with no social history content, and Burton referred to their 'elitist and academic' nature, representing 'middle- and upper-class children'. There are physical problems with the building into which new displays are to be built, which in themselves are dictating the possible range of approaches to the redressing of these failings.

Burton rejects the 'programmed learning' approach, and shies away from too scientific an ordering of information. Similarly, the 'heritage fakery' of the simulated experience will not do. No, the plan is to assemble an exhibition in which messages must come through the objects selected for display: it is very important to present the real and the round. Moreover, as the natural language of the museum is non-linear, so must the interpretive approach be non-linear. Happily, the physical layout of the Bethnal Green building lends itself to this scheme. I found myself reflecting at this point that this 'non-lineation' is precisely the technique we are adopting in Hull to focus on aspects of social history in the Old Grammar School, although we do plan to have a 'linear' (or broadly chronological) audio-visual introduction to provide points of reference for those visitors who do not hold Chairs in History.

Objects, says Burton, reach the parts other media cannot. They are potentially more wide-ranging than words, and in any case they refer more accurately to our non-literate ancestors. They can overcome cultural biases and appeal to the senses, beyond the minds of visitors. They can, crucially, speak to people who are not used to intellectual discourse. Burton distinguishes between objects as evidence, and as illustration. What is really important, he says, is the *symbolic meaning* of the object - its role as the part standing for the whole.

This is further justifiable in the present historiographical atmosphere of movement away from quantitative to qualitative history. In this Burton evinces an almost *impressionistic* approach to the display and interpretation of objects in a museum, with a perceivable lack of enthusiasm for supporting media. This, I have to conclude, sounds intriguing, but surely it cannot be a successful mechanism for reaching the widest audience.

The last point I wish to comment upon in Burton's most thoughtful paper is that of curators providing the past, visitors bringing the present. He wants his visitor to exclaim 'how different from us!', to become aware of *once* and *now*. At Bethnal Green, visitors will be subjected to a 'disorientation process' at the start of the exhibition! This strikes me as expecting a great deal of the visitor, in that it assumes a comprehension of the present: disorientation from what, I ask? If a modern visitor, fed on a diet of *Blackadder, Eastenders* and *Bread* does not very often contemplate the mysteries of rites of passage, can we really expect he or she to cope with Elizabethan concepts of infancy without clear and obvious linkages? Perhaps we can. We shall see.

Peter Jenkinson is aghast at the continuing museum failure to portray the realities of children and childhood. As a subject in museums, 'childhood' is still quite new. Museums have certainly, since the 1960s, been looking more and more at marginalised sections of society, but children are still largely an unexplored area. When they do anything at all, museums restrict themselves to a Tinkerbell version of childhood which is pleasing to the eye and imagination, but which is also a profound historical distortion. Even the cosy Edwardian nursery - beloved of so many curators - could often be a cruel and frightening place. Childhood is not all about innocence and sweetness; it is also about power and exploitation. All the problems of youth today - which are contrasted implicitly in many museum displays with the cosiness and security of bygone days - of course existed long ago.

Jenkinson illustrated the current obsession with the wellbeing (moral, physical, sexual) of 'our' children with an appeal featuring a half-starved four-year old girl placed in the *Observer* - a grotesque juxtaposition designed to shock V.W. Golf owners out of their creamy Sunday morning complacency and peel off a few notes in support of those less fortunate than themselves. Usually, of course, the unfortunates are foreign and black. This one was English and white; the appeal was placed by the NSPCC.

The separation of 'child' from 'adult' is a recent phenomenon, and laws to protect the sanctity of children are only about 100 years old. The motives for this were not simply a desire for social reform, but for control and discipline of working-class families whose numbers were exerting worrying pressure on the Victorian social structure. To the Victorian bourgeoisie (only the Victorian?) the working-class family was brutal, criminal, and incestuous, and contained dangerously wilful women and children. Organisations such as the Boy Scouts were socially corrective, created to help curb degenerate working-class activities.

Jenkinson's important and salutary message is simply that museums must awaken from their bourgeois slumbers and portray the complexities of childhood. They should not avoid its unpleasantness because this is difficult to achieve, or because curators are too intellectually indolent to realise what gross misconceptions they are helping to perpetuate.

After Burton and Jenkinson's papers I tried to gather my thoughts. Uppermost in my mind was more agonising about the role of museums, about material culture and its interpretation. Burton takes a purist line, but museums addressing childhood *must* go further than the surviving material evidence, and they must use the available disparate sources. Imbalances have to be redressed: behind Tinkerbell is the shadow of the child prostitute; behind Peter Pan is the street pimp. Peter Jenkinson was accused of having no practical solutions to the problems of how to portray childhood in a museum. Hardly fair! Childhood is not the only 'subject' for which the surviving material evidence is representative or thin, which returns us to an acknowledgement of the inadequacy of such evidence as a communication device in itself. Museum displays have to be syntheses, and much more than cased material culture: we need activities, moving images, sounds, reconstructions, replicas, living history. The inadequacy of material evidence must not be allowed to overwhelm historical balance and veracity.

Anna Davin considered children at play, and immediately returned to the theme of the limitations of the surviving material evidence. Curators (and others) need to go beyond material survivals. This may not be easy, but we must try. Thus we would find ourselves in a world of improvisation and scavenging, where work, play and childcare combine to make up childhood experience. One has therefore to ask again, in the absence of material evidence does the museum ignore a subject? Do we let material evidence, or the lack of it, dictate our messages? This seems very like a case of the tail wagging the dog, and becomes the ultimate museum copout: we cannot 'interpret' the working-classes (or child abuse) because we do not have the material evidence - so much for social history in museums! Let us give the public the Edwardian nursery by all means, but let us give them *more*.

Photographs, school records, maps and plans, autobiographies and above all oral testimony supplemented the scanty material evidence in Michael Glasson's Children in the Inner City project, as the theory of seeing around material survivals was put into practice in Birmingham. People have very clear memories of childhood even when senile, he says. Which raises a fundamental point about our understanding and interpretation of childhood. Everyone claims to have such good recall of childhood (or, more accurately, childhood incidents), which even in middle-age can be much clearer than memories of the more recent past. The problem is that our reminiscing public, and we ourselves, are adults looking back on the minds of children. We are into the realms of complex psychology, a world which includes those mail-order baby clothes for adults, and paedophilia, as well as the more familiar syndrome of adults behaving 'childishly' by playing games, sulking, driving along the motorway at 90 mph, drinking themselves silly at SHCG weekends . . . Children and childhood are all around us and within all of us - what price the Edwardian nursery?

In her paper on stereotyping, Clare Rose considered images of childhood derived from costume, though rounded-out by reference to other sources. Specifically she looked at little boys' clothing, noting how clothes can reveal the way in which parental control is exercised over children. The middle-class rituals of clothing changes and fantasy in children's clothes were other themes pursued. We have here a classic illustration of childhood through the eyes and minds of adults, more specifically middle- and upper-class adults, which emphasises the constant need for scepticism in approaching and interpreting material evidence. We are looking here at *adult* material culture, adult perception, adult social and intellectual contexts, not those of children. The need for synthesis of information is very evident from the study of children's clothing. How else would we understand the sailor suit/Rambo link? In passing, it seems plain to me that there is a great difference between the middle-class, imperialist and expansionist generation of the sailor-suit cult, and the (largely working-class) Rambo tee-shirt phenomenon created by capitalist marketing moguls, even though jingoism may be at the root of both. In any case, it is still the adult world we are considering.

The papers by Nick Winterbotham and Stephen Faber, and the discussion group on museum design for children led by Jon Hall, together addressed children as visitors to our museums as opposed to subjects of displays or other forms of interpretation. Hall concluded that there is little real difference between displays which are successful for adults and those which work for children. Both can find concepts such as time difficult to grasp, and simple vocabulary, sounds and images are popular with all age groups. He laid stress on the role of the family group, in that adults act as interpreters for children, and suggested that museums should do much more in providing facilities to encourage family visits. Winterbotham made similar observations about museums' potential for communicating in a non-literary way, which may enable the less able at school to benefit most. Problem-solving is important (cf. Burton) with the discovery of 'answers' being better than their mere

relation. He made the point that while there are obvious dangers in the 'Hovis history' syndrome, such 'heritage experiences' can have the effect of opening the doors of the imagination of the public. Active involvement by children (and adults) is also sought by Faber. While the Eureka! project does not sound like a museum as such, the methodology of presentation is significant to curators because it is attempting to impart learning through pleasure. In posing the questions, 'what is the central purpose, and does it work' Faber reminds us of the need to provide something people *want*, at the same time as having some aim in mind. He describes Eureka! as a 'discovery sheet in three dimensions', although curators should appreciate that this project does not (it appears) intend to present material evidence as we understand it, so its methods and aims are not identical to those of a museum.

In conclusion, the 1988 A.S.W. ranged over the functions of museum interpretation, and some of the ways of achieving these ends, while realising, not for the first time, that interpretation is fraught with difficulty! Childhood happens to be a particularly huge subject, usually tackled particularly badly, because the nature of the material evidence is so limited. If we content ourselves with the presentation of this evidence we find ourselves well down the path of intellectual and historical dishonesty, the price payable for putting on admittedly popular displays. If we do go beyond this evidence we are confronted with a host of logistic problems to solve. It is easy to see how tempting is the sugar candy approach so beloved of our forebears.

As for coping with child visitors, let us take a leaf from Boots PLC, in whose 'Childrens World' (no apostrophe): 'Everything is designed to provide a safe, friendly environment to make shopping for children with children a genuine pleasure'.[2] With their giant mobiles and clocks, gingerbread men, high chairs, videos, competitions, hairdressers and mother and baby rooms, Childrens World, like Eureka!, has important messages for us. A free Rambo tee-shirt for every 1000th child through the museum's door?

Notes

1. This is a written version of a summary delivered to delegates at the end of the formal sessions, and it refers exclusively to papers given by speakers at the conference, not to their subsequent written papers. Quotations are from these oral deliveries, not from other papers published in this *Journal*.
2. Information panel, 'Childrens World', Team Valley, Gateshead.

RE-ERECTION, RESTORATION AND INTERPRETATION: THE RHYD-Y-CAR HOUSES AT THE WELSH FOLK MUSEUM

Eurwyn Wiliam

The Social History Curators Group held its 1988 Annual Study Weekend in Cardiff. Amongst other venues members visited the Welsh Folk Museum and there had an opportunity to examine the Rhyd-y-car terrace of mineworkers' houses displayed to six different periods of their history. This is the first terrace in Britain to have both contents and building fabric displayed in such a diachronic and evolutionary fashion, and has been a source of great comment amongst visitors to the Museum. In the first year after its re-erection the terrace won the Welsh Folk Museum two awards, namely one of the British Tourist Authority's 'Come to Britain' Awards and a Carnegie 'Interpret Britain' Award. This article examines the concepts behind the decision to interpret the terrace in this fashion and the way it was carried out.

By the late 1970s much of the housing stock of Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council in Mid Glamorgan desperately required updating. The Welsh Valleys generally had fewer bathrooms and more external toilets than any other area in England and Wales, and the early capital of the Welsh iron industry was as poorly provided with modern amenities as any. The Council's approach was large-scale area clearance and erection of new housing, in the course of which much of historic value was destroyed. Some old properties had been condemned for decades but were still occupied whilst the authority awaited sufficient funds to replace them, and such was the case with 29 houses at Rhyd-y-car near the old town centre of Merthyr.

The co-existence of ironstone, woodlands for charcoal and later coal had brought the great English ironmasters, the Guests, Bacons, Crawshays, Homfrays and Hills flocking to the area to seek further fortunes at the end of the eighteenth century, in the process turning the small towns and villages of Blaenafon, Beaufort, Sirhywi, Hirwaun, Aberdare and Merthyr itself into world leaders in the production of iron and the mining of coal. Richard Crawshay opened his Cyfarthfa works in 1765 and a new plant at Ynys-fach in 1801. It was to supply the raw material to this latter site that an iron-ore drift-mine was opened at Rhyd-y-car, and it made sense to house the miners in close proximity to their place of work.

Crawshay erected two rows of houses at right angles to each other on the fields of Rhyd-y-car farm, in three stages. The first six are the ones now re-erected at the Folk Museum. They were followed by a row of 16 houses at right angles, shown on a map of 1814; and finally seven houses were added to the south end of the first six about 1815, at a slightly different alignment caused by a curve in the Glamorgan Canal which ran from Cyfarthfa down to Cardiff. It was this canal which was to seal the fate of the inhabitants of Rhyd-y-car. In December 1979 it flooded, drowning elderly inhabitants and driving the rest from their homes. The houses were boarded up but thieves and vandals broke through, stealing anything of value that remained including the floorboards, joists and stone flags from the ground floors together with the roof slates.

Against this background, Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council felt unable to preserve any of the houses *in situ* but in its discussions with the Welsh Office a compromise suggestion was put forward that one or two of the houses might be donated to the Welsh Folk Museum as that part of the National Museum of Wales, *inter alia*, concerned with the built environment. It was immediately realised that one or two houses would in no way convey any sense of a terrace, and a request was made initially for four and later six houses, to which the Borough Council agreed. Dismantling took place in August 1982 and re-erection began in spring 1984. The rebuilding took three years, for other buildings were dismantled by the museum team of three masons, two carpenters and two labourers during the same time, and a saddler's shop and a bake-house re-erected.

The Rhyd-y-car houses were all of a particular type associated with the Crawshay family. The main structure consisted of two storeys with a single room on each floor, 4m by 3.8m in size, with a small single-storey extension to the back where there was a pantry and the main bedroom built under a continuation of the roof. The Rhyd-y-car houses were all built as mirror-image pairs, so that the last house in the row had its fireplace and chimney-stack in the gable while it was separated by a thin timber-and-brick partition from the next house. That in turn had its fireplace backing on to that of the third house, so that there was a double-thickness fireplace wall and double chimney stack every two houses. The stacks were also of brick though the houses were stone. The roofs were of local stone slates. Circular stairs located in the thickness of the fireplace gable led to the loft: in these houses they are of timber, though the company reverted to the tried and trusted traditional

Plate 1: The row of houses from Rhyd-y-car being re-erected at the Welsh Folk Museum. Note the different building materials used for each house (National Museum of Wales, Welsh Folk Museum).

stone staircase in the remaining houses at Rhyd-y-car.

Nearly 400 such houses are known to have existed in the valleys, most and probably all connected in some way with the various Crawshay ironworks at Merthyr itself, Aberdare, Hirwaun, and Rhymney and the associated Bailey works at Nantyglo. The Rhyd-y-car houses are the smallest of all the examples built in the area in the period 1795-1830, and so represent the minimum standard acceptable to the relatively enlightened Crawshay family. The houses had to be good enough to attract workers to serve the company, for many dwellings in Merthyr were of extremely poor quality.

Several possible options of re-erection and interpretation presented themselves at this early stage. The six houses could be reconstructed so as to present their original appearance, an approach that might have met with favour in the early days of the museum; but it was immediately apparent that this answer was extremely limited in the scope it provided for interpretation, and would have been, frankly, boring. Another possibility was to accept the finished terrace as streetscape (as the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum have and will be doing with certain of their terraces) and open one or two of the houses to the public, utilising the others for toilets, cleaners' depots or other services. Yet another option considered was to proceed as a museum of buildings might have done, by exhibiting the various houses at different stages of completion leading penultimately to a fully-furnished example and finally one in the condition of total decay the row had attained by the time of its acquisition.

This approach, although limited to exhibiting building construction, had the merit of showing historical development, and it was another way of illustrating this phenomenon that finally proved most appealing. Furnishing a row of houses or cottages to different periods has been done elsewhere, as at Beamish and the Gloddfa Ganol Slate Museum in north Wales, but no museum had also shown the changes that the fabric of such buildings had seen over the years. The Department decided to opt for showing the development of both content and fabric, and study of early and derelict buildings in Merthyr Tydfil and the area, and the collection of materials from them, enabled techniques not represented in the houses themselves to be accurately re-created. Periods significant to the history of the area were chosen for the first five houses, namely 1805, 1855, 1895, 1925 and 1955.

The Rhyd-y-car houses had been abandoned in 1980 after years of neglect: because they had been condemned as unfit for human habitation as long ago as 1935 and were largely inhabited by elderly people little building work had been carried out after the 1960s. They were therefore in no way typical of other terraces in Merthyr, which by the mid 1980s had seen very considerable changes. Bathrooms had been added or inserted, while the very colour of the Valleys roofspace had changed forever from that of wet slate to the red, brown and green of composition tile. Cast-iron guttering had been replaced by grey plastic; many wooden windows had been replaced by larger metal-framed ones; while uniform terrace doors had given way to individual feature doors of Taiwanese teak (with integral fanlights) purchased from local DIY supermarkets. As the buildings at the Welsh Folk Museum are expected to be typical and represent a type as well as themselves, the period chosen for the last house was brought forward to 1985 and the scope widened from the terrace itself to include developments typical of Merthyr and the industrial valleys of south-east Wales in general.

Such developments and their historical background were identified as part of the research process which was put in motion side by side with the physical acquisition. Former inhabitants and their families were identified, contacted and, where appropriate, recorded for posterity and the contents of their homes examined: these researches and recollections were summarised in a 10,000-word illustrated booklet and a tape casette released at the opening (July 1988). Similar terraces, still inhabited, were also examined and cases were found where the main bedroom remained under the rear roof-slope on the ground floor, a remarkable survival of a practice clearly usual when Rhyd-y-car was built. Appeals for both information and material to furnish the houses were made, and a competition for the best series of recollections of daily life in such a terrace drew over fifty valuable entries. Documentary research into the history of Merthyr placed the terrace into its historical and social context, and census returns and wills identified early inhabitants and showed how stable the population had been (28% of the population of the two rows in 1851 had been born in Rhyd-y-car and a further 41% in Merthyr). Considerable press coverage was engineered, proving to be of great help.

Prior to the census returns of 1841 very little detailed information is available regarding the employment of the workers who lived at Rhyd-y-car or of the total number of persons who lived there. A retrospective view based on the census returns of 1841 and 1851 coupled with the location next to the iron-ore mine nevertheless suggests that almost all of the first working occupants would have been employed as ironstone miners or in some other related occupation. The ironstone miners were the cream of the Merthyr working-class, the only workers in the town able to afford gold watches. Many of them were originally immigrants to the new boom town, the majority of them from Glamorgan but with others from west and mid Wales. The Rhyd-y-car houses were of good quality compared to many in Merthyr and were certainly a vast improvement on the farmworkers' cottages that many of the first inhabitants had been used to. Lack of ventilation and no toilets would have been nothing new to them: they had chosen to come to Merthyr and earn wages unheard-of in the countryside.

The re-erection and reconstruction of the first house was conditioned by these facts. The house was rebuilt to its presumed appearance in 1805, stone-tiled and with whitewashed walls. Its inhabitants were taken to have been a young couple who had migrated from west Wales to the proto-Klondyke that Merthyr was then, bringing their furniture with them. Historical accuracy poses its own problems and opportunities of interpretation and a case in point arose here. Although the items of furniture in this house are few - a two-piece cupboard, a table, a bed, a linen chest and a few chairs - they are of oak and are highly collectable today. Surely a couple such as the museum envisages living in the house would not have had such substantial items so early in their marriage, and certainly not such expensive ones? But the oak furniture that is so sought after today was the normal product of the country carpenter before softwoods became fashionable, and it was the custom in Wales for the bride's dowry to be augmented by gifts of furniture (or money to pay for such items) so that the young couple could start their married life adequately provided for.

The 1841 census records that 69% of Rhyd-y-car's working population of 70 were employed as ironstone miners and 11% as colliers. At least three boys under 12 were employed as miners and two girls worked as labourers. By 1850 the iron boom was past its peak and the number of iron miners dropped to 40% whilst colliers rose to 25%. The population of Merthyr continued to increase at a rate of 50% every decade, however, and because of inadequate sanitation and over-crowding cholera struck in 1849, killing 1,432. Five years later cholera struck again killing 424. Five persons died of cholera at Rhyd-y-car in 1849 and one in 1854. Typhus was also endemic. As a result of these deaths several inquiries were commissioned to look into the causes of the outbreaks and much journalistic attention was also focused on the area. The numerous resulting reports include detailed comments on the housing situation and provided our prime source of information in furnishing the 1855 house. The following excerpt is from the *Morning Chronicle* and illustrates the detailed nature of these pieces:

> The house was literally crammed with furniture. In the kitchen were two mahogany chests of drawers, each of which supported a looking-glass, a tea-tray, a bread-basket, tea-caddies and some books amongst which I observed 'Burhitt on the New Testament', folio, and Bagster's 'Comprehensive Bible'. There was also a well-polished eight-day clock, and a set of good mahogany chairs. On the walls were a quantity of prints in gold frames. Between 2 pieces of needlework was a portrait of Our Saviour upon one of the walls. Another has a good looking-glass, a coloured portrait of the Duke of

> Wellington, and a large print of the Battle of Waterloo. From the rafters of the floor above hung a canary bird in his cage, a lanthorn, and a quantity of jugs enough to have supplied a harvest-home supper. Over the fireplace there was displayed a bottle-jack, and small bellows, and Italian iron and flat-irons, extra tongs, poker and shovel, and a variety of useful little articles, all kept bright as silver. The window was filled with a large myrtle. (Here I may remark upon the habit of cultivating flowers indoors, which is universal amongst the labouring classes. I have seen everywhere an abundance of arums, geranium, cinerarias, myrtles, and the like, which thrive most luxuriantly, owing I presume, to the warmth of their apartments, which have always a large blazing fire.) In the parlour there was a good four-post bedstead, a French-polished chest of drawers, covered with a profusion of glass and other articles, including a cruet stand and decanters, with small figures of the Queen and Prince Albert in china-ware, a neat work-box, and some ornamental shells. In a corner was a glass-fronted cupboard, filled with china and glass, and displaying ostentatiously silver sugar tongs and a set of spoons. There was also a mahogany table with a bright copper tea-kettle reposing on it. On the walls were framed prints of St. John and St. Luke, with a portrait of King George IV between them. Behind the door hung a quantity of male and female wearing apparel, and beside it were some shelves loaded with books amongst which were Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress', the 'Complete Works of Flavious Josephus' (in Welsh), 'Haver Bedyddwyr' (History of the Baptists), M'Donald's 'Family Cook', 'The Evangelical Rambler', a Welsh Bible, 'Cyndymarth-y-bibl' (Bible-class book), and an English 'Book of Common Prayer. A slate, a hat, a bonnet, and a pair of child's boots, completed the inventory of this room.

Our 1855 house, however, No. 18 Rhyd-y-car, was then lived in by a 48-year old widow, Margaret Rosser, who had been born in west Wales. In the 1841 census she is recorded as the wife of William Rosser, ironstone miner, but he had died (possibly of cholera, or been killed). By 1851 - Mrs. Rosser earned her living as a milk-woman, delivering fresh milk around the nearby area. Her son John, aged 19, worked as a coal-miner, coincidentally illustrating the way that coal-mining was taking over from iron-working as Merthyr's prime industry. Mrs. Rosser also had a daughter of 14 and a son of 12 and so had no room to keep lodgers although a few of her neighbours did. We furnished our house in keeping with Mrs. Rosser's social standing, and considerably below the level of near-affluence testified to by the *Morning Chronicle's* correspondent in that particular excerpt.

By 1895 the Rhyd-y-car houses were surrounded by railway and tram lines. The Vale of Neath railway came up the valley and crossed to the Taff Vale station, while a branch line ran to an iron-stone driftmine near the old Ynys-fach ironworks. Other lines ran to cinder heaps and mine tips. It is not surprising, therefore, that the inhabitant of No. 19 in 1895 was William Richards, a railway signal-man, originally from Pembrokeshire. His wife, however, had been born in Merthyr as had their daughter. Their home by now had acquired sliding-sash windows and an outside toilet in the garden, shared with neighbours. The interior of the house is typically Victorian in its cluttered appearance. The bare walls are enlivened by pictures and souvenirs, while the blackleaded hearth with its many polished brass knick-knacks serves as both the functional and visual focus of the main room. The table-legs are protected from knocks and scratches by having stockings rolled over them.

William Richards apart, most of the Rhyd-y-car menfolk continued to be employed in the coal mines until the 1960s. This long period saw many fluctuations. Unemployment in Merthyr was only 1.4% in 1914 but the world-wide economic slump of 1926 hit the area particularly hard, for the original benefits of Merthyr's location now meant that it was far from both its raw materials and its markets. Twelve thousand jobs were lost between 1921 and 1931, and 17,000 left the town in the same decade followed by a further 10,000 up to 1939. The human cost of this was summarised by the correspondent of *The Times* in 1928:

> The effects of two or three years without work on a man and his family are worth thinking over. He will have been receiving unemployment benefit, 23s. a week for husband and wife, and 2s. for each child. He will scarcely have been paying less than 6s.6d. a week in rent for two rooms. If he is unfortunate in his dwelling, the second room may be an unventilated cellar, for in some parts under-houses were built on that system into the hillside. Otherwise, the actual houses are mostly satisfactory, but past prosperity has left high rents as its legacy. Still a family of five can be kept in food on 22s. 6d., if that were all the story. It is not. Debts were contracted in 1926, the summer and autumn that swallowed up all previous savings . . . As the months go by, first boots and clothing wear out and then bedclothes and cooking utensils (but) these out-of-work miners are not slum dwellers. They are cultivated people, with self-respect and an obvious pride in home cleanliness and sparkling brasses on the chimney-piece . . .

This last comment and others confirming its accuracy, caused us problems. Whereas it was obviously desirable from the viewpoint of history teaching to convey the poverty of the Depression years, equally the recorded facts make it clear that Valley homes did not themselves convey this. This aspect of the past will have to be reserved for other means of interpretation. Furthermore, because of the moral problem of re-creating the homes of persons who might still be alive or who would certainly have living relatives, the last three houses (1925-85) have been furnished as type-representatives rather than the homes of specific individuals. In this way the problem of one particular household not being 'normal' has been avoided, and an average view of the 29 houses obtained.

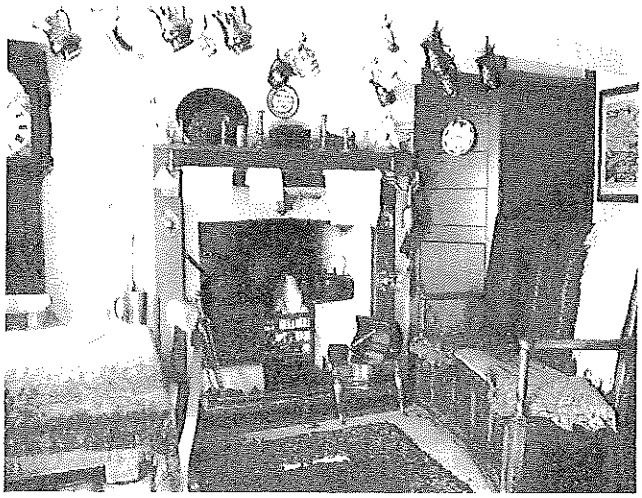

Plate 2: The interior of the '1895' house. The door behind the settle leads to the staircase (National Museum of Wales, Welsh Folk Museum).

The 1925 house illustrated a typical Valleys phenomenon of these years, namely the division of the single living room into two halves. That facing the door was furnished with better-class furniture (mahogany rather than oak and pine) than the rest of the room and had linoleum underfoot instead of simply flagstones and rag mats. This inner sanctum or 'best side' as it was known was only used on Sundays, but equally was the part displayed to the world through the open door. Water had by now been brought to the house with a tap and bowl behind the door partition. An important accessory was the clock on the chest-of-drawers used for timing racing pigeons, housed in the loft or cot at the bottom of the garden. One was recreated for the display and provided a 'flypast' at the official opening.

The houses were re-roofed with Caernarfon slates in 1935 and this is reflected in the 1955 house, which also has a kitchenette in the lean-to. The marital bed has finally been moved upstairs with a small bedroom for a child taking its place. The most noticable feature of this house, however, is the logical development of the 'best side': here the downstairs room is reserved for best use. A large shed has been built in the garden for use as a living- and work-room (an early 'utility room') and all heavy cooking, washing, ironing and so on were done here, and of course, it was to here that the men were exiled during the week. Most of the older men were still employed as miners, but young couples such as we envisaged living here, were beginning to find work in factories such as Hoovers, BSA, Thorn Electrics or O.P. Chocolates.

The 1970s and 1980s again saw depression hitting the old industrial communities, though this time it was accompanied by large-scale slum clearance and rehousing schemes. For the 1985 house we took the all-too-common senario of a middle-aged couple of whom the man has been made redundant, and who have used his redundancy payments to improve their home. Grant-aid would anyhow have enabled them to re-roof the house with the composition tiles which are literally changing the colour of the south Wales valleys, but here metal windows, plastic rainwater pipes and new doors have transformed the outside while the inside has been totally re-decorated and re-furnished within the constraints imposed by the old fabric. MFI Furniture Centres Ltd., with a large store near Merthyr, agreed to furnish the house, while Hoover, Marley Roof Tile Ltd., Norcros

plc and Sony U.K. Ltd. were amongst other companies who donated suitable material.

In presenting the 1985 house as we did we were acutely aware that we might implicitly be presenting a 'Welsh Folk Museum seal of approval' for similar changes. We deplore what is being done to many Valleys houses, but as a folk museum - a museum of social history - it is our duty to record accurately and dispassionately what is happening, whether we approve of it or not. A museum of buildings would probably have taken a different view, and quite legitimately so; but we can only hope that the contrast between the 1985 house and the earlier ones might open some people's eyes, and there are indeed indications that this could be so. People are beginning to see that restoration is as much an option as total conversion. There are some, unfortunately, who do not enter this house: it is remarkable how many visitors peer at the building, then turn aside to inform others, 'That's not part of the museum. People live there'.

Some 150,000-200,000 persons a year visit the Rhyd-y-car houses, with inevitable problems. That of having sufficient material on display to create a realistic atmosphere in a relatively free environment was solved by the creation of a different class of museum object, an approach also adopted at Beamish. This consists of objects not deemed important or in good enough condition to be accessed as museum specimens but which were offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The objects are not entered on any register and, officially, do not exist: this course of action is made clear to prospective donors and naturally enough meets with the full approval of the auditors of the museum's sponsoring department (the Welsh Office) and the National Audit Office. The existence of a reserve of such non-accessed material enables as much as is required to be put out without undue fear of loss or destruction; in fact, eighteen months on, the number of missing or broken items can literally be counted on the fingers of one hand even though many of the houses are often left temporarily unattended.

Three museum attendants is the most that can be devoted to the six houses. Three means it is possible to open all six to the public at once while less than three means a half-door has to be placed to close off two of the houses: this at least enables visitors to look inside if not actually enter. A number of attendants - regrettably uniformed - were specially briefed on the houses and act as much as interpreters as warders. At slack periods they clean the brasses and dust, and winter lunch-times are made unbearable for passers-by by the succulent smell of chickens being roasted or *cawl* bubbling in a cast-iron saucepan. Constant coal fires keep most of the houses damp- and condensation-free: the only problems have been with the 1985 house where a dehumidifier and extra heating is sometimes necessary to augment the electric fire. Wear and tear, too, has been surprisingly light, apart from the carpeted last house.

The Rhyd-y-car project has been the single most successful exercise undertaken by the Welsh Folk Museum in the first forty years of its existence. The reasons for this were obvious from the very inception of the scheme. Firstly, we were attracting a new clientele. The Folk Museum had always collected both objects and information from the industrial parts of south Wales but it had never before re-erected a building from these areas, and certainly not one such that all could identify with it. The Welsh Folk Museum was regarded as a museum interested only in the rural past of the Welsh people, and tacitly ignoring the fact that over half the population lived in industrialised areas as long ago as 1850. Secondly, bringing the terrace up to date meant that it was relevant and meaningful to all ages. Children could identify with the 1985 house, their parents with that of 1955, and their grandparents with the one of 1925. We found middle-aged and elderly people turning into family interpreters, explaining objects, and from that starting-point, concepts to their young relatives. A museum display was turning into a catalyst for an examination of family and community history, and certainly schools were literally queueing to use the terrace. The only problem is, where do we go from here?

OAKWELL: A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PROJECT IN KIRKLEE WEST YORKSHIRE

Jane Glaister and Stuart Davies

Introduction

There is an increasing tendency in some quarters to try and isolat 'history museums' as a sort of distinct culture. Whilst this may hav advantages for the museum in terms of image, projection an promotion, there are also losses. Social history treated in isolatio can reduce horizons and impede achievement. Nowhere is this mor true than in the area of historic houses. Too often they are admin istered as social history museums but divorced from their immediat surroundings, more often than not a municipal park or the remnan of their ancient estate. This is of course not simply an academi problem. In local authorities in particular the historic hous museum is cared for by one department, the park by another an support services (such as catering) by a third. Under these circum stances departmental rivalries conspire to reduce the effectiv presentation of the site as a whole and therefore its potential i never realised.

At Oakwell Hall Country Park the local authority, Kirklees Metro politan Council[1] made the conscious decision in the early 1980s t put the site under single management, through constructing mean of communication between the four departments with primary interests in the site. Perhaps rather unusually for such a project th department made responsible was the Museums Section of th Libraries, Museums and Arts Division.[2] This decision in fac reflected a strong mission statement to the effect that developmen of the site was to be based on history, conservation and inter pretation, and other activities were to be linked into this objective This article examines how that development proceeded and assesse some of the achievements.

Oakwell Hall

Oakwell Hall is a stone-built Elizabethan manor house, erected in 1583 by John Batt. His family were substantial Yorkshire gentry and they remained there until the early eighteenth century when it passed to a lawyer called Fairfax Fearnley. When he got into financial difficulties he had to sell Oakwell in 1789. Thereafter the Hall and estate were owned by absentee landlords and many of the tenants occupied the property for very short periods. By 1830 it had become a girls' boarding school and it was in the 1830s or 1840s that Charlotte Bronte came to know it and subsequently describe it in her novel *Shirley* (1849). It later became a boys' boarding school and then, between 1897 and 1913, the residence of Major Maggs, a Batley solicitor. By 1926 the house was empty and the absentee owners, the Ray and Fitzroy Estates, announced their intention to sell the property.[3]

Charlotte Bronte's description of Oakwell, as 'Fieldhead' gave the Hall its main claim to fame at a time when interest in the Brontes and their associations was growing enormously. She described the Hall as she remembered it. 'The sombre old vestibule was long, vast, and dark; one latticed window lit it but dimly. The wide old chimney contained no fire, for the present warm weather needed it not; it was filled instead with willow-boughs. The gallery on high, opposite the entrance, was seen but in outline, so shadowy became this hall towards its ceiling, carved stags' heads, with real antlers, looked down grotesquely from the walls. This was neither a grand nor a comfortable house; within as without it was antique, rambling and incommodious'. It was indeed, to her eyes ' . . . a gothic old barrack'.

It was soon rumoured that Americans were interested in purchasing the Hall with a view to stripping out its historic features and shipping them across the Atlantic. Fortunately two benefactors came forward in September 1927 and offered to purchase the Hall for public use. The one who took the initiative was Sir (Henry) Norman Rae, the son of a Batley Congregational minister who had grown rich in the Bradford wool trade. His companion was John Earl Sharman, a Halifax man with local business connections. They not only bought it, but paid for its restoration. The formal transfer of the Hall to Birstall Urban District Council was made on April 3rd 1928. Sadly both benefactors died before the end of that year.[4]

The problem for the Council was knowing what to do with their new acquisition. It was opened to the public but was not furnished and became neglected, and it seems, almost forgotten. During the 1930s criticism of the condition of the Hall began to appear in the local press. 'A strong feeling of disappointment was occasioned when the Hall was entered . . . a scene of almost undescribable solitude and coldness was encountered. A bare stone floor, signs of decay and need for renovation, and a balcony that one could imagine might fall at any moment . . . the labyrinthine interior was

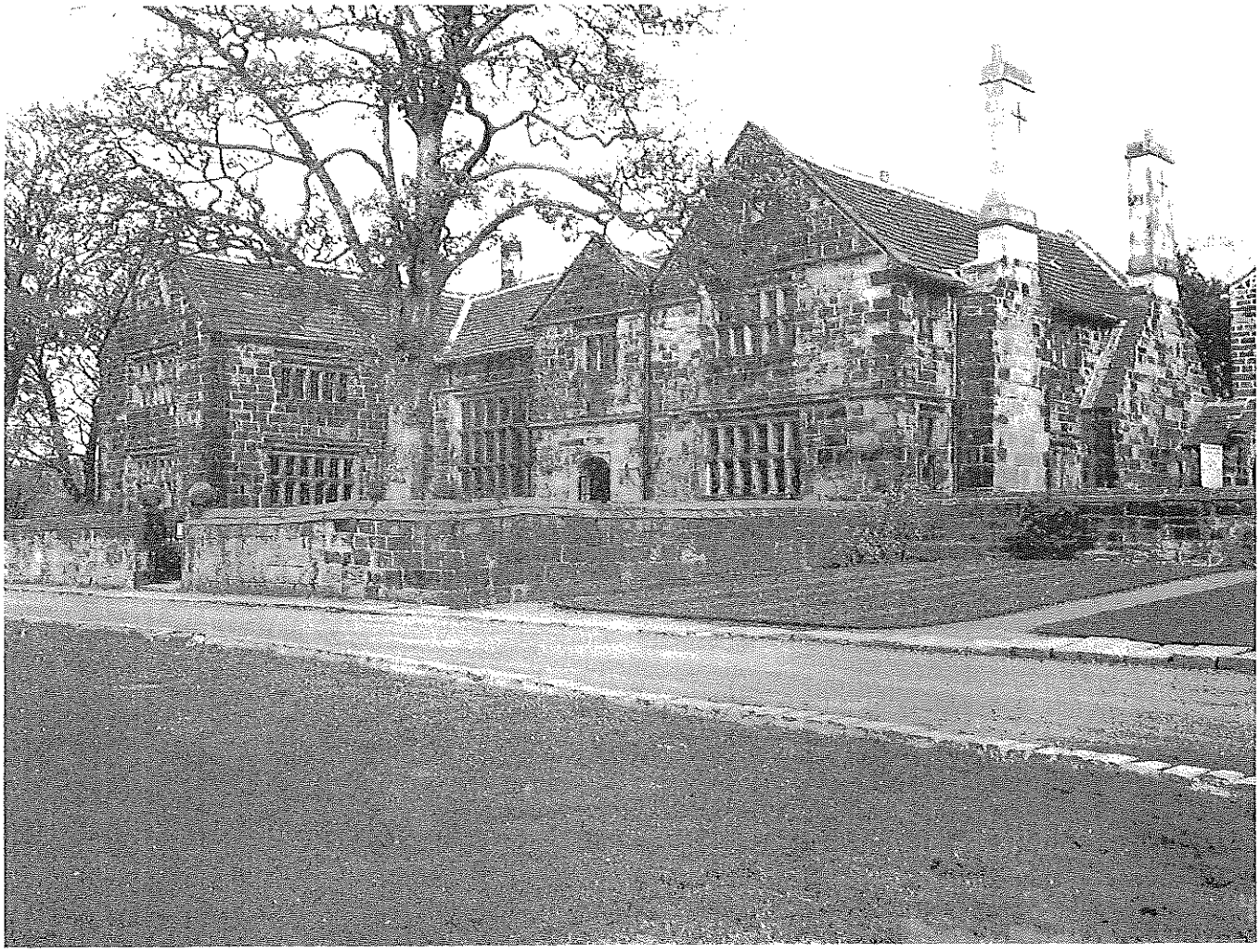

Plate 1: Oakwell Hall, Birstall, West Yorkshire. Built in 1583. Now part of Kirklees Museums Service.

cold and gloomy, and full of cobwebs', and had 'few callers to disturb or share its reveries'.[5]

In January 1939 an appeal was launched for gifts of furniture and other objects with which to fill the bare Hall. They were certainly needed. In the main hall the only article of furniture was the desk formally used by the Chairman of Birstall Council. The driving force behind this development seems to have been John Ogden, curator of the Bagshaw Museum (and since 1937 also honorary curator of Oakwell Hall). He was anxious to furnish the Hall and was grateful for any offers of objects that vaguely related to the sixteenth century or later. Thus the nucleus of a very miscellaneous collection began to form before the War brought interest in the Hall to a sudden halt again.[6] In 1955 another appeal for furniture and furnishings was launched. The Great Parlour, still painted 'pinky white', (as described by Charlotte Bronte) contained a few pieces of Victorian furniture and a few oddments. The main hall had a refectory table in it (on loan from Wakefield Corporation), a settle and a few small paintings. Only one bedroom had any furniture at all in it. The dining room (or 'schoolroom' as it was called) was completely empty, as were most of the other rooms. The rooms themselves were still referred to by the function they carried out in either the boys' school days or when Major Maggs was in residence. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s extra items were loaned, gifted or even occasionally purchased and the rooms of the Hall gradually began to fill up. Unfortunately there was little opportunity to plan what was acquired. There was no real method behind the way in which the rooms were arranged. Oakwell Hall slowly evolved from an empty house to one filling up with odds and ends which often bore little relationship to the Hall or each other.

Then, in the early 1970s a new lease of life was proposed for the site. Batley Borough Council decided to get the 87 acres surrounding the Hall designated as a Country Park. This would include landscaping the site of the Gomersal Colliery which closed down in 1973. Country Parks were being promoted as a means of not only preserving open areas on urban fringes for conservation but also to introduce educational programmes for urban populations. It was planned to restore or rebuild the old Oakwell farm buildings to create a new visitor facility on the site. The idea was accepted and established just before Batley Borough was absorbed into the new Kirklees Metropolitan Council in 1974. The Country Park idea was taken up with enthusiasm and several years of landscaping, including the creation of bridleways, footpaths and car parks followed. Meanwhile the Hall had further additions to it as suitable material from other museums was transferred across. Gradually the rooms had plenty to see in them, though the old problem of a lack of an intellectual base for the room displays remained. The 1970s continued to contain much talk of the Hall's potential but little to show for it in terms of real achievement.

The breakthrough came in the early 1980s. Educational activities were introduced into the Hall and a programme of outdoor events into the Country Park. The educational work initially focused on school parties studying various aspects of the seventeenth century whilst dressed up in appropriate replica period costume. In 1984 Jane Glaister was appointed Curator and she, with the assistance of Catherine Hall, now of Preston Museums Service began a rigorous research project, designed to establish the history of the Hall, and how it might have looked in the seventeenth century.

The Research Project

An initial assessment was made of the known history of the site and its inhabitants, the available source material, the existing collections and the availability of items on the open market. The conclusion from this was that the most feasible course of action was to aim to recreate the house as it might have been in the 1690s, when the Batt family were at the height of their power and influence. The task would also be possible from a practical (including financial) point of view. This objective thus established, the detailed research and planning could be initiated.

To begin with a group of broadly similar houses were looked at in detail. Yorkshire is fortunate in having a number of gentry houses which have become museums. Thus we were able to look at Bolling Hall (Bradford), Shibden Hall (Halifax) and Bishops House (Sheffield). Each of these are open to the public and contain fine collections of seventeenth century (and later) artefacts. They have also tried to recreate period room settings with varying degrees of success. Some are idealised visions of 'how it might have been', whilst others are based on the results of documentary research.

Furthermore, Clarke Hall (Wakefield) was also visited. This is not open to the public but is used as an educational resource being a pioneer in the field of 'costume visits' by schoolchildren. Here an attempt is made by a combination of accurate and realistic room settings, drama and 'first person interpretation' to submerge children in the seventeenth century for a day.

A large number of other houses across the country were looked at and assessed with regard to their interpretive effectiveness. These included, for example, Speke Hall (Liverpool) which had an impressive resource pack for teachers. But particularly influential was Blakesley Hall in Birmingham where Stephen Price and the Department of Local History had been meticulously reconstructing what the Hall probably looked like in 1684, based on a detailed probate inventory by Aylmer Foliot. To achieve this careful use of reproduction material (including furniture, soft furnishings, wall hangings and smaller items) had been skilfully employed.[7]

In assessing these houses we were able to clearly identify the elements which we felt were important in creating excellence in interpretation of the seventeenth century house. Firstly, the house itself needed to be returned as far as possible to its form, appearance and layout at an agreed point in time. Absolute authenticity on this was never easy but all of the more successful houses were at least not handicapped by too much intrusiveness from later features. Secondly, a good core of primary collections was necessary, especially of furniture. Thirdly, the addition of reproduction items allowed a more complete picture to be presented which in turn could substantially influence visitors' perceptions of 'what life was really like' in the seventeenth century. Fourthly, all of the display work had to be based on sound research which both examined comparable houses and looked at the evidence for the particular building in question. And finally, the house needed to be displayed not as a static exhibit but with built-in opportunities for educational work which would enable life to be breathed into a set-piece academic exercise (however excellently done).

These five objectives then formed the structural framework for the programme of research begun by Catherine Hall, upon her appointment at the end of 1984. They also acted as essential guidelines for all the other associated developments proceeding on the site at the same time. This Development Plan was vigorously (and rigorously) pursued, and indeed continued to form our philosophy with regard to the Hall's educational role.

Documentary Sources

The documentary sources available for the study of Oakwell in the seventeenth century are not exceptionally good. No probate inventories of the Batt family are known to survive and there is very little documentation at all from the second half of the seventeenth century. There is however an inventory of goods dated to 1611 (which is similar in format to a probate inventory) and steward's accounts for 1609-1611. These include references to various aspects of household life (which have useful applications in educational work) and to building work in progress.

Most important for our purposes has been the 1611 inventory. Like many probate inventories, this lists the rooms in the house, and can be largely equated with rooms in the Hall today. This has been very important in helping to identify room uses in the seventeenth century, especially when the many different uses of (and changes to) rooms in the nineteenth century had obscured their original functions. The inventory also lists contents (probably selective) of the rooms. Unfortunately the date of the inventory is far too early to be of precise assistance in our objective of redisplaying the Hall at the end of the seventeenth century. It does however help in broad terms by indicating what furniture was associated with which room functions. Furthermore it also gives clues to social status and aspirations of the Batt family which almost certainly remained true throughout the seventeenth century. Points of interest include Robert Batt's 62 books in the 'studdye' and, in the Great Parlour, ten maps, of The World, Palestine, France, Spain, Low Countries, Greece, Italy, Africa, Asia and England.

Establishing what items should be in which room in the 1690s (in the absence of a conveniently appropriate probate inventory) relied upon examining a large number of inventories relating to houses of comparable size and status in the region during the period 1670-1710. By analytical comparison we were able to eventually establish the likely contents of each room of a house like Oakwell in the 1690s. This was obviously a much more reliable method than simply following the examples of other period room settings in museums, though similarly well researched projects, such as Blakesley Hall, also helped in arriving at a 'blueprint' for developing the internal appearance of the Hall. This blueprint guided us throughout the project and continues to do so because the process of fitting out the rooms is not yet complete.

Unfortunately the study of probate inventories can only assist in identifying household goods. They do not necessarily tell us what a piece of furniture would actually look like and they do not deal with fixtures and fittings such as lighting accessories and floor coverings. To achieve identification it was necessary to turn to visual sources, and, of course, provenanced regional examples from both public and private collections. In this part of the programme we were considerably assisted by the knowledge of a number of specialists in various fields and by colleagues, notably at Blakesley Hall and Temple Newsam (Leeds), and Bolling Hall (Bradford).

One of the more interesting visual sources is Randle Holme's *Academie and Armorie* of 1649 which shows the appearance of many house furnishings in the seventeenth century and gives their names. Other contemporary pictorial sources usually show work scenes where the inclusion of identified objects is incidental but valuable. One such is J.A. Comenius *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, published and translated by C. Hoole in 1672. There are also many Dutch woodcuts which are of a sufficiently close cultural link to be of assistance. But the single most important source is of course paintings. These are not so much helpful for furniture (because of the social status of most subjects) but rather for details of hangings, fringes, oddments placed on tables, floor coverings and general 'hustlements'. Careful interpretation of this source can eventually get one nearer to 'the feel' of seventeenth century rooms than by any other means.

Drawing on these various sources allowed us to build up a detailed portfolio of what we needed for each room and what each item should look like. The first step then was obviously to relate our existing collections to that plan. Two things were immediately apparent. Firstly the lay-out of every room as it existed in 1984/5 was woefully inadequate in many respects and certainly unacceptable in detail. Secondly, the collections themselves were inadequate to carry out the objective we had set ourselves. This, of course, came as no surprise. Implementation of the plan would therefore require both the acquisition of seventeenth century items and the extensive use of reproductions since many essential household objects from the period are either so rare or so valuable as to be unobtainable. The scene was set for a major acquisition campaign.

Refurbishing the Hall

However, while all this was being planned, structural problems in the Hall itself came to light and in December 1986 it was closed to allow remedial work to be carried out. The whole of the Hall's contents were removed, most into storage but some items on loan were recalled or returned. The opportunity was taken to renew the services, which has made it easier to introduce 'historic' lighting and replace ugly radiators with more visually sympathetic types. Fireplaces and other features (such as a garderobe) were restored as near to their original condition as possible, though we were constrained by the requirements of English Heritage (Oakwell is a Scheduled Ancient Monument). Other repairs included floorboards and the staircases, which led to the finding of a number of artefacts, especially relating to the nineteenth century.

In the course of the building works some new information came to light. A very rare example of seventeenth century painted panelling was already known to exist in the 'Painted Chamber', an upstairs room which had been closed to the public for some years. Using a technique called 'scumbling', paint was applied to flat panels to make them look three-dimensional. This could turn a very ordinary room into quite a grand one. This room was completely restored by the careful removal of the battleship grey wooden paint which covered most of the room. The conservation work was grant-aided by the Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council in recognition of the rarity of this type of seventeenth century decoration.

If that was not enough, further discoveries were made when the Great Parlour was refurbished. This had been the oak panelled room described by Charlotte Bronte as painted by a 'benevolent barbarian . . . delicate pinky-white, thereby earning for himself the character of a Hun, but mightily enhancing the cheerfulness of that portion of his abode, and saving future housemaids a world of toil'. Because of the Bronte connection this room had been displayed as a vaguely early Victorian drawing room and the pink paint retained. Even the plaster busts incorporated into the window recesses (indicative of the importance of this room, the Great Parlour, in the seventeenth century) were painted over. The conservators now removed the paint and revealed further extensive areas of 'scumbling' though of a slightly different design to that upstairs. More importantly, a series of landscape paintings in panels over the fireplace also came to light, enhancing the importance of these discoveries.

Implementing the Plan

When a 'shopping list' had been drawn up it was obviously necessary

Plate 2: Dian Hall, conservator, working on the painted panelling in the West Bedroom.

to then identify as nearly as possible what were the appropriate regional style characteristics of the pieces of furniture which we needed. In this we acquired the advice and practical assistance of Victor Chinnery who is the author of the standard reference work on vernacular oak furniture.[8] Through his contacts, auction houses and private treaty sales, a number of seventeenth century items were acquired for the collections, including a long table, settle, gateleg tables, court cupboard, glass cupboard, a chest of drawers and an ark.

Some items of furniture were secured on loan, but there were nevertheless many important gaps which needed to be filled. In tackling this potentially thorny issue we decided to take a positive, not to say aggressive stance. As mentioned earlier, one of our objectives was to re-display the Hall, based on sound research but also to be mindful of the educational potential of the Hall when it was finished. We therefore decided to furnish the 'Painted Chamber' entirely with reproduction items including the bed, table, chest and chairs. This would achieve two things. First of all it would, hopefully, enable us to dispel the common notion that all oak furniture in the seventeenth century must have been black, battered and creaky. Secondly, it would give additional opportunities for educational work, unimpeded by the usual concerns and constraints when using historic collections. These two considerations, image and education, were of course also applied wherever else we used reproduction material.

One example of the techniques employed is the floor coverings. Examination of portraits and other pictures indicate that aristocratic and lesser households used a variety of floor coverings or finishes. These include bare boards, marble slabs in a chequered pattern and rush matting with rugs on them. Whilst marble slabs were probably not going to be found in a minor Yorkshire gentleman's house, rush matting almost certainly would be in the best reception rooms and in some of the bedrooms. Thus we purchased matting (produced by stitching together four inch strips as indicated in pictures and as surviving examples found at Hampton Court Palace) to lay in three rooms and substantially altered the ambience of those rooms to again more truly reflect the standard of comfort one could have expected to find in the Hall in the 1690s.

It was especially helpful to refer to colleagues where soft furnishings were concerned. The translation of documentary sources (written and visual) into reality required careful comparison with rare surviving fabrics and acceptable modern equivalents. The assistance of the Victoria and Albert Museum was particularly important as was reference to pioneering published studies in this field.[9] The introduction of soft furnishings was considered to be crucial to the success of the project. A major aim was to try and show visitors how this 'gothic old barrack' could have been, and indeed was, actually rather comfortable when the Batts lived in it in the seventeenth century. To achieve this could only be done by making sure the beds had hangings, the chairs had cushions and the tables had their carpets. In most cases reproductions were used but nineteenth and early twentieth century Turkish carpets were also found to be acceptable substitutes in many instances.

The smaller items and general domestic wares to be found around the seventeenth century house provided us with some problems, not so much in establishing which types and designs were appropriate but in actually commissioning the items. A number of approaches were employed. The pottery was made by a local slipware potter based on sherds excavated on site. Light fittings were purchased from a supplier specialising in eighteenth and nineteenth century designs, which included Victorian reproductions from seventeenth century designs. Pewter (and some other items) was acquired through 'Stuart Interiors' at Alvechurch (near Birmingham) and cutlery directly from small makers in Sheffield. Altogether a long list could be drawn up and it may almost now be possible to compile a directory of craftspeople who are able to supply museums with historic reproductions for sixteenth and seventeenth century houses.[10]

Applying the results

The Hall finally reopened to the public in June 1988. The difference in its presentation was immediately apparent as soon as visitors stepped back inside. The housebody's long table was of the correct regional type, placed along one wall (which already had a built-in bench) rather than being in the middle of the room decorated with Victorian pewter and dried flowers. The Great Parlour was now just that and not a Victorian dining room. The chambers looked as if one wouldn't mind sleeping in them; the kitchen was a workable room and the dining room was actually laid out to make eating possible.

But academic accuracy was not in itself enough to justify the project. Equally important was the educational work to be associated with it. In the 1980s the Hall began to be used more intensively by schools and between 1984 and 1986 the foundations of an educational policy were well established. The approach was twofold. General class visits were backed up with information packs

and close liaison with teachers. But a more specialised service was developed through 'costume visits'. These were initially modelled on the example of Clarke Hall but quickly assumed their own characteristics to fit the nature and objectives of Oakwell.

On most Mondays in term time a school class will dress up in mock seventeenth century costume (usually made by the children in pre-visit classroom exercises) and carry out some of the everyday tasks of the period in the house and outside. These activities might include cooking, embroidery and dry stone walling. But an interesting spin-off from this is that the use of the kitchen for cooking purposes undoubtedly helps to give the house the 'lived-in-feel' which we believe is so preferable to the stately home preciousness of many country house museums. No attempt is made to persuade the children that they are 'really' in the seventeenth century. The staff are also in costume but do not attempt to entirely converse in an archaic dialect. The emphasis is still very much on teaching by demonstration and participation, rather than by stage-managed illusion.

The Hall in Context

The work of refurbishment and re-display had not gone on in isolation. The period gardens at the rear of the Hall, for example, are laid out to a late-seventeenth century date as well. More importantly the other facilities being developed in the Country Park are in sympathy with the Hall because, as was stated at the beginning, objectives have been set for the site as a whole rather than for individual components within it.

Between 1983 and 1986 the Hall's farm buildings arranged around a courtyard, were converted into a Visitor Centre. The 1840s Barn was refurbished as a venue for indoor events (including lectures, theatre, folk clubs, barn dances, musical recitals, craft fairs and children's holiday activities) and to provide a small exhibition space. The other buildings were largely rebuilt and used to house a classroom, two craft workshops, a shop and lavatories. The space available within this complex is used for both countryside and history exhibitions and events. In 1989, for example, it will be used for exhibitions on 'Looking at the Evidence', 'The Seventeenth Century Farming Year' and '150 Years of British Food and Farming'. The Hall and its estate from the medieval period onwards forms the starting point for all these exhibitions.

The cottages adjacent to the Hall have been converted into Tea Rooms and gardens created around them. Other features in the 87-acre Country Park include nature trails, a wildlife garden, footpaths, bridleways, picnic areas, an equestrian arena, an adventure playground and a Countryside Information Centre. Apart from school visits, much effort goes into holiday activities (for both children and adults) and each year Oakwell hosts a number of major events, including, for example in 1988, a Country Fair, Historic Vehicles Rally and Farming Day. The formation of a 'Friends' group in 1988 has further extended the site's potential through the establishment of adult workshops in period cookery, embroidery and outdoor activities.

The role of the events and activities programme has been to attract new visitors and encourage community involvement without straying from the site's history and conservation objectives. The museum remains as the core activity but it is an action-orientated modern museum rather than merely a static exhibit.[11] Research standards have not been compromised to achieve this. The reverse is true. The quality of research in redisplaying the Hall has set the standards for every other activity on the site, a fact reflected not only by Oakwell receiving the Sandford Award for Heritage Education in 1988 but also by the continued and growing support in the community for this multi-disciplinary project.

Acknowledgements

A large number of people have been involved in this project and we would like to express our thanks to them all. But particular mention must be made of Catherine Hall who carried out much of the initial research work and Brian Pearson who has supported and encouraged the development of the Oakwell project throughout the 1980s.

Notes and References

1. Kirklees Metropolitan Council was created in 1974 by the amalgamation of eleven existing local authorities in West Yorkshire. The new District includes the major towns of Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Batley and Cleckheaton, as well as smaller towns and extensive rural areas.
2. Kirklees Museums Service consists of four museums, four art galleries, two historic houses, a Country Park and an Iron Age hillfort. In addition there are units providing technical and commercial support. There are nearly one hundred staff, a budget of £0.86m, and in 1988 the service attracted over 250,000 visitors.
3. C. Starkey, (now C. Hall) *Oakwell Hall 1707-1926*, (Huddersfield 1986).
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5. *Batley Reporter*, 27.10.1934; G. Bernard Wood, 'An Elizabethan Manor House', *The Lady*, 2.10.1958.
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7. S.J. Price, *Blakesley Hall; A Short History*, (Birmingham, 1982); R. de Peyer, 'Re-interpreting the Historic House', *Museums Journal*, 85 (4), 1986, 226-229.
8. V. Chinnery, *Oak Furniture: The British Tradition*, (1979).
9. P. Thornton, *Seventeenth Century Interior Decoration in England, France and Holland*, (1978); F.M. Montgomery, *Textiles in America 1650-1870*, (1984).
10. A full list of the suppliers used at Oakwell may be obtained from the Senior Curator, Oakwell Hall Country Park, Nutter Lane, Birstall, Nr. Batley, West Yorkshire, WF17 9LF.
11. We include this phrase for the benefit of Mr Tim Schadla-Hall.

Plate 3: The Great Parlour, notable for the plaster figures in the window recesses, painted panelling and landscape views over the fireplace.

COUNTRY VOICES, DIFFERENT LIVES: FARMING WIVES OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 1918-1950.

Hazel Edwards

Social historians today are preoccupied with the urban experience. Despite their increasing sensitivity to the existence of a multiplicity of human experiences which has encouraged the development of 'history from below', women's history and black history, a distinction between the rural and the urban dweller is rarely made. The urban experience is generally accepted as the norm.

This became apparent to me during research last year for my M.A. dissertation in English Local History at Leicester University. In this project I looked at the working lives of farming wives in south Leicestershire and north Northamptonshire, from 1918 to 1950. This theme developed out of my volunteer work at the Market Harborough Museum, where the current research project is examining agricultural change in the Harborough area over the past century. A search through women's history literature revealed only a few books and articles on female agricultural workers in the nineteenth century. With the notable exception of Mary Chamberlain's book, *Fen Women*, there was practically nothing for the twentieth century, except a fairly comprehensive coverage of women's contribution to agriculture during the First and Second World Wars. In turning to more general women's histories, I found that many of the experiences related to me in interviews made during my research did not conform to the accounts of women's domestic and working lives in urban areas.

This paper deals briefly with the sources used for my project and then looks at three themes which ran through the research and highlighting, I feel, this disparity.

Primary Sources

My primary source was the oral testimonies of ten women contacted through press releases, the members of two Women's Institute groups who I spoke to about my work, and through the museum's 'grape vine'. Obviously it is quite beyond the capacity of an individual historian to interview a large enough number of people in an oral history project for it to be a statistically valid sample. However, by restricting myself to a particular region, size and type of farm I believe my respondents to be fairly representative of a certain section of the farming community of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. The average size of the farms run by the women and their husbands was between 200 and 300 acres. Most of the farms can be described as mixed, perhaps with a bias towards dairy and beef cattle. All the respondents married their husbands during or after the Second World War. However, their recollections of their mothers' and elder sisters' lives, combined with Harold Cramp's sensitive autobiography, *A Yeoman Farmer's Son: A Leicestershire Childhood* (1985) (rich with detail about his mother's and sister's work on the farm in the 1920s) made possible a comparison between the farmer's wife of the inter-war period with her counterpart of the post-war era. Cramp's book and two other autobiographical works from the Harborough area allowed me to cross-reference the oral testimonies. Opportunities for further verification were found in statistical material from various sources including an invaluable book compiled by J.W. Hobson and E. Henry in 1948 called *The Rural Market: a Compilation of Facts Related to the Agricultural Industry and Rural Standards of Living and Purchasing Habits*. It includes statistics based on a special sample survey of 500 housewives from 'agricultural homes' throughout the farming regions of Britain.

Secondary Sources

Before I embarked on my primary research I reviewed the published material to discover what had already been written about women in farming and rural society (see booklist). Perhaps not surprisingly I found, as Eve Hostettler has observed, that the majority of modern historians treat 'the male villager, whether farmer, labourer or craftsman as the focal point of interest', consigning 'the labouring woman and the farmer's wife to the shadowy background'.[1] (Such a criticism can also be made of some museum displays). This partial history of rural society can have profound implications for the women who are integral to it. Mary Chamberlain found, in her conversations with women for her seminal book *Fen Women: A Portrait of Women in an English Village* (1975), that they believed

Plate 1: Flax picking by the whole family on a farm in Lubenham (south Leicestershire), c.1950.

that what their husbands had to say was of far greater interest. 'Their view of the world and their place within it is one supported by books on country life where the ploughboy and the farmer have a far more romantic and popular appeal than the ploughboy's wife.'[2]

Invention and Implementation

The lag between the invention and the implementation of domestic appliances in the home is often ignored in museum displays about domestic technology. This is especially so when advertising, magazines and catalogues are used as the primary historical source rather than the users' own experiences through oral history.[3] In rural areas the lag is even greater. Amenities such as public transport, electricity, piped water and nearby shops were taken for granted in most urban areas, but were often absent in rural areas until as late as the 1950s. The changes in domestic work patterns ascribed to the introduction of domestic sources of power and water, the acquisition of domestic appliances and the widening of the consumer market, occurred later on in the lives of rural women. For example, the 1951 Census for England and Wales reveals that the percentage of households without exclusive use of a piped water supply in the Rural Districts of Northamptonshire was 36% compared with 14% in Northampton. Rural electrification was a similarly slow process. The Ministry of Agriculture's National Farm survey of 1941 shows that 54% of the farm holdings of Leicestershire were without public or private supplies of electricity. Furthermore, oral testimonies reveal that the arrival of electricity in a household did not automatically mean that it was at the disposal of the farmer's wife. One respondent remembers that, prior to the introduction of a public supply of electricity, a generator was installed at her family's farm. It supplied power sufficient to milk the cows and light the farmhouse but the current was not strong enough to allow the use of domestic appliances. Another respondent from a different village recalled that when electricity was finally introduced into her family's house it was only installed downstairs. Candles and open-fires continued to be used in the bedrooms upstairs. Oral history, therefore, not only helps reveal the differences between the country and the city but demonstrates that the introduction and application of electricity, for example, was by no means uniform. It varied from district to district and even household to household.

The Household as a Focus of Production

In *S.H.C.G. Journal* 14 (1986/87), Mark Suggitt included in his article 'Every home should have one? The gadget revolution', lengthy quotes from Ruth Schwartz Cowan's paper 'The Domestic Revolution in the Home' (1976). In it she asserts that 'Under industrialization the family is much less important. The household is no longer the focus of production; production for the market place and production for sustenance have been removed to other locations. Families are smaller and they are urban rather than rural'.[4] The distinction Ruth Schwartz Cowan makes between urban and rural is significant. I would suggest that amongst the farming families of my respondents at least, the household, as a unit of production, survived industrialization and indeed still characterised their family farms in the first half of this century.

The removal of butter, cream and cheese production from the farmhouse dairy had more or less occurred by the First World War. None of the respondents could recall their mothers or sisters making cheese. Butter was still made but on a small scale for family consumption. Some respondents could remember that they, as children, their mothers and elder sisters all attended to the distribution of milk. This included the personal delivery of milk to customers in local villages. However, as milk increasingly came to be bottled at large, commercial dairies the farming wife's local village milk round disappeared. The farming household, as the focus of production of goods 'for the market place', declined. In contrast, the production in the home of 'sustenance' persisted. Because of their comparative remoteness from the amenities of urban centres, rural housewives had, by necessity, to practice self-sufficiency. The switch from a 'producer' to a 'consumer' of sustenance, which historians and sociologists associate with the changing role of women in industrial society, was not possible in rural areas with few retail outlets and their limited means of independent transport. As a consequence, many rural housewives and their families relied on what the sociologist Ray Pahl calls 'domestic self-provisioning'.[5] The respondents' mothers and to a lesser extent, themselves, collected wood, kept hens, made their own butter, grew vegetables and fruit, gathered wild berries, nuts and mushrooms, pickled, bottled and made jam and chutney. They reared pigs, brewed their own beer and wine and made their own clothes. Just as the introduction of domestic technology into the rural household was delayed so too was the transition amongst rural housewives from 'producer' to 'consumer'.

Plate 2: Mr. & Mrs. Barbour, going to market from their farm at Burton Overy, Leicestershire, in the late 1920s.

Separate Spheres

> Her edict ran within the house, its immediate environs and the gardens. So to escape her wrath we had only to flee across the border into father's province, the farmyard, and we were safe.[6]

In a spatial sense Harold Cramp demonstrates in his autobiography the clear sexual division of labour between his parents. His mother's contribution to the farm was home-centred whilst his father's contribution revolved around the farm. The parents of my respondents shared with Mr. & Mrs. Cramp, this traditional division of labour. The farming wife's responsibilities involved the production of meals, the care of her large family and the live-in farmhands. She only helped out on the farm during emergencies or at harvest-time. For the respondents themselves, in the years that followed the war, this arrangement began to change. Their responsibilities in the home were gradually eroded. The practice of farmhands living-in became rare. Family size declined - the average number of children that the informants had was two whilst the average number of their mothers was four. With mechanization many farms experienced a dramatic reduction in the number of farmhands employed. The farming wife increasingly provided a reserve of labour which could be drawn upon when needed. This is borne out by the comments of one respondent:

> Slot in, you know, you'd catch or you'd wind, or if there was enough staff you would do something else. Harvest time you got the cows in and the buckets together and all the bits and pieces and somebody'd want a driver, or pitching stooks or stacking or what ever 'til the combine's came or go bagging. It was often bagging on the combines, and see that they, you know, you sort of gave everybody tea then.

In addition, with the bureaucratization of farming, many farming wives assumed the vital role of 'farm-secretary'. This increasing participation of farming wives in the running of family farms suggests that separate spheres, as the traditional way of analysing the working relationships of married couples, is open to question in the farming context.

Despite the apparent homogenising features of twentieth century British society such as education, welfare, mass media, public transport and the widening of the consumer market, my project suggests that the minority of people who still lived in rural areas experienced a quite distinctive way of life. But what relevance has this to the work of the social history curator? Firstly, I hope s/he will be discouraged from assuming that features of urban life are automatically reflected in rural society. Secondly, it demonstrates the value of oral testimony. Not only can it reveal the disparity between urban and rural experience but also the differences from village to village and household to household. Finally, I suggest that the very disparities between urban and rural experience offer an opportunity to move away from both the chronological way of presenting the past in museums and the traditional division between country and town life. In the many museums, such as Harborough, which serve a town with a substantial rural hinterland, a comparative approach could be utilised to draw out the differences, similarities and indeed conflicts between urban and rural communities.

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A READING LIST ON DOMESTIC SERVICE

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SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS A RESOURCE LIST FOR AN ANTI-RACIST SOCIAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Rachel Hasted

Introduction

A booklist extending over several pages must be one of the most unappetising prospects possible to set before the busy social historian. A sense of guilt and resentment in equal measure rises at the sight of yet another exhaustive bibliography, which, it is suggested, the well-read professional should definitely have by heart. The excuse for such an infliction had better be good.

This booklist stems from my efforts to find source material that would help me to meet the multi-ethnic community in which I work with at least a minimum background knowledge of the history that has brought us all together, and which, in some ways, still divides us. Given that all social historians working in Britain are working within a multi-ethnic community (whether they choose to acknowledge this or not), it seems constructive to pool information rather than leaving each other to reinvent the wheel with varying degrees of success.

The list given here is not offered as a definitive one, it is a working list of sources relevant to my work, and does not yet include anything on important groups such as the Chinese, Vietnamese, or many of the immigrant groups from continental Europe. I would be very interested to have suggestions for further entries.

The reason that I started to take copies of this list with me to meetings, about two years ago, was that I continually heard colleagues complaining of the difficulties they faced in finding out about the ethnic make-up of their local communities now and in the past. This concerns me; what makes it so difficult to know that every area of Britain has a history intimately bound up with the rest of the world? It certainly isn't lack of information, as this list shows.

The emphasis currently placed by the government on 'British History' as something existing of and by itself, offering a simple definition of a single 'British' identity, is to be questioned by anyone who has taken more than a passing glance at the extra-ordinary variety of regional social history at all periods. This list is offered therefore, not only to colleagues working in other 'inner city areas' (who may well be able to help me with suggestions of their own), but as a source for everyone working in social history museums concerned to reflect the diversity of the past.

I would like to mention one topical example. 1989 is the bicentenary of the publication of '*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African*'. Equiano was an Ibo from what is now eastern Nigeria who was enslaved, freed, travelled widely and came to Britain to campaign for the abolition of the slave trade. Equiano visited Falmouth, Plymouth, Exeter, Sheffield, Nottingham, Manchester, Bath, Devizes, Belfast and Scotland. He married and lived in London until his death in 1797. The book, and Equiano's life in Britain, contradict every stereotype about Black people's place in British history. The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter has planned an exciting programme of events to commemorate the anniversary: how many other towns will ever know that Equiano was part of their history?

* * *

General:

Colour, Class and the Victorians. D. LORIMER. Leicester University Press, 1978.
Roots of Racism (£1.50), *Patterns of Racism* (£2.00), *How Racism Came to Britain* (£2.95), *The Fight Against Racism* (£3.50). Set of pamphlets from the Institute of Race Relations.
Strangers to England - Immigration to England 1100-1945. Colin NICHOLSON. Wayland, 1974.
Destination Bradford: A Century of Immigration - Bradford Heritage Recording Unit, 1988.
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Buy and Build - The Advertising Posters of the British Empire Marketing Board. S. CONSTANTINE. HMSO, 1986.
Propaganda and Empire. J. MacKENZIE. Manchester University Press, 1984.
'Anti-Racist Issue', *Clio* - The History & Social Sciences Teachers' Centre review. Vol. 6 No. 1, Spring 1986. ILEA.

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Staying Power - The History of Black People in Britain. Peter FRYER. Pluto Press, 1984 (ISBN 0 86104 749 4).
Under the Imperial Carpet - Essays in Black History 1780-1950.

Rainer LOTZ. (ed.) Rabbit Press Ltd., 1986 (ISBN 0 948775 01 7).
Black People in Britain 1555-1833. Folarin SHYLLON. OUP, 1977.
Black and White, the Negro in English Society 1555-1945. James WALVIN. Allen Lane, 1973.
Negroes in Britain. Kenneth LITTLE. Kegan Paul Trench Trubner, 1947.
The Black Presence. James WALVIN. Orbach & Chambers, 1971.
Black Britannia - A History of Blacks in Britain. Edward SCOBIE. Johnson Publishing Co., 1972 (Out of print).
Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art. David DABYDEEN. Manchester University Press, 1987.
A History of the Black Presence in London (exhibition catalogue). GLC, 1986 (ISBN 0 7168 1679 2).
Immigrants to England. C. NICHOLSON. Wayland, 1974.
Black Settlers in Britain 1555-1958. Nigel FILE & Chris POWER. Heinemann Educational Books, 1981.
Motherland: West Indian Women Coming to Britain in the 1950's. Elyse DODGSON. Heinemann, 1984.
The Heart of the Race - Black Women's Lives in Britain. BRYAN, DADZIE & SCAFE. Virago, 1985.
Shattering Illusions - West Indians in British Politics. Trevor CARTER. Lawrence & Wishart, 1986.
There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack - The cultural politics of race and nation. Paul GILROY. Hutchinson, 1987.
Forty Winters On: Memories of Britain's Post-War Caribbean Immigrants. - Lambeth Council 1988. Published to commemorate the arrival of the 'Empire Windrush'. Available from Lambeth Council and South London Press.
Out of the Shadows: an audio-visual history of the Black presence in Britain 1500-1950. (Excellent introductory slide-tape programme). Available from the Catholic Association for Racial Justice, St Vincent's Community Centre, Talma Rd., Brixton, London SW2 1AS.

Slavery:

The Savage Trade. Neil GRANT. Kestrel Books, 1980.
Black Slaves in Britain. Folarin SHYLLON. OUP, 1974.
Capitalism and Slavery. Eric WILLIAMS. Andre Deutsch, 1972.
Black Personalities in the Era of the Slave Trade. P. EDWARDS & J. WALVIN. Macmillan, 1983.
The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African. O. EQUIANO, 1789. Re-published as *Equiano's Travels*. Paul EDWARDS (ed.). Heinemann African Writers (To be re-issued by Longmans in 1989).
Olaudah Equiano and the Slave Trade. D. KILLINGRAY. Hulton, 1974.
Olaudah Equiano. J. MILSOME. Longman, 1975.
The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian slave, related by herself. M. PRINCE, 1831. (Reprinted Pandora Press 1987).

Asians in Britain:

Ayahs, Lascars and Princes - the story of Indians in Britain 1700-1947. Rosina VIZRAM. Pluto Press, 1986 (ISBN 0 7453 0074 X).
India in Britain. The Indian Contribution to the British Way of Life. Kusoom VADGAMA. Robert Royce, 1984.
Pakistanis in Britain. Hamya A. ALAVI. London Council for Social Services, 1963.
Indian Immigrants to Britain. Rashmi DESAI. OUP, 1963.
Finding a Voice - Asian Women in Britain. Amrit Rao WILSON. Virago, 1978.
Breaking the Silence - Writing by Asian Women. Centreprise, Hackney, 1984.
India and Pakistan - A Brief Look at the Family, Kinship, Marriage, Names. Bradford Metropolitan Council, Directorate of Social Services. (Available from Cartwright Hall.)
Asian Families and their Foods. City of Bradford, (as above).
Asian Patients in Hospital and at Home. Alix HENLEY. King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, 1979 (Excellent guide to many aspects of ASIAN cultures for westerners).
Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers: Life Stories of Pioneer Sylhetti Settlers in Britain. D. ADAMS (ed.). THAP Books, 1988 (178 Whitechapel Rd., London E1).

The British in India:

England's Quest for Eastern Trade. FOSTER. A.C. Black, 1933.
India and Britain - Pack based on historic materials in the India Office Library, produced by the Commonwealth Institute and India Office Library.
Silk Roads, China Ships. An Exhibition of East-West Trade. Catalogue: Royal Ontario Museum, 1986.
Britain & India: An Uncommon Journey - Sandwell Dept. of Education, 1987 (Excellent schools pack on interconnections of British and Indian history. Contact 021 552 3373 to order).
India Observed: India as viewed by British Artists 1760-1860. Victoria & Albert Museum, 1982.

The African and Asian Diasporas:

Our Strength Comes from Us. (Somali women refugees in London), Somali Women's Association, 1988 (16 Victoria Park Sq., London E2).
Mauritians in London. A.R. MANNICK. Dodo Books, 1987 (Mayfield College, Mayfield, Sussex).
India in the Caribbean. David DABYDEEN (ed.). Hansib Publications, 1987.
A New System of Slavery: the Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1880-1920. Hugh TINKER. OUP, 1974.
The Banyan Tree. Hugh TINKER. OUP, 1977 (a history of Asian immigrant communities around the world).

Irish in Britain:

Nothing but the Same Old Story - The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism. Liz CURTIS. Information on Ireland, 1984.
The History of the Irish in Britain - A Bibliography. Irish in Britain History Centre, 1986.

Jews in Britain:

Strangers to England. Colin NICHOLSON. Wayland, 1974.
Victorian Jews through British Eyes. A. & R. COWEN. OUP, 1986.
Point of Arrival. Chaim BERMANT. Eyre Methuen, 1975.
The Alien Invasion - The Origins of the Aliens Act, 1905. Bernard GAINER. Heinemann Educational Books, 1972.

Travellers/Gypsies:

A Gipsy Bibliography. Dennis BINNS. Binns, 1982.
The Traveller-Gipsies. Judith OKELEY. CUP, 1983.
Gipsies and Government Policy in England. ADAMS, OKELEY, MORGAN & SMITH. Heinemann, 1975.

Museum Practice (in England!):

The Black Contribution to History. P. FRASER and R. VISRAM. A report commissioned by the Geffrye Museum and ILEA on anti-racist museum service provision. 1988. (Available from the Geffrye Museum).
Yorkshire Arts-Ethnic Arts-Equal Arts. Naseem KHAN. A report for Yorkshire Arts, 1985.
'Whose History? Racism and Censorship'. Rachel HASTED. *SHCG Journal*, 15 (1987-8).

BOTT, Val. *Labour History in Museums: Papers from a Joint Seminar held at Congress House, 1985*. Society for the Study of Labour History and Social History Curators Group, 1988, £1.50.

(Copies from Publications and Sales Section, The Co-operative Union, Holyoake House, Hanover Street, Manchester M60 0AS. Cheques payable to 'The Society for the Study of Labour History')

In October 1985 the Social History Curators Group and the Society for the Study of Labour History organised a joint seminar on labour history in museums. The seminar attracted a large and varied audience of curators, librarians and archivists, trade unionists, Labour Party members, private collectors and labour historians, and representatives of many of these groups contributed during the day. This volume, edited by Val Bott with the assistance of Nick Mansfield, is a collection of most of the papers delivered together with a summary recording the main points which came out of the final plenary discussion.

The papers are diverse in nature and cover a wide range of relevant, and sometimes contentious, issues. The philosophy behind collecting labour history material and the contemporary 'State of the Art' are discussed by Derek Janes. In recent years museums have begun to make a positive contribution to the impressive growth in recording and interpreting the history of working class people, a development in which local authority initiatives to promote people's history have played a part. This vital community-based approach is being challenged by what Janes describes as the 'Thatcherite' museum, that is private or semi-private which depends on business sponsorship, admission charges and tourism. Curators are in a unique position to influence the presentation of a community's history and they should do so in a manner which makes it accessible to those whose history it is. To Janes, then, interpreting working class history is as much a question of attitudes as of collecting the artefacts of the Labour Movement.

What should be collected is examined by John Gorman, who contributes a useful guide to the vast amount of labour history material available and some of the problems associated with collecting it. It is being lost or destroyed at an alarming rate, a process which, regrettably, has been aided by the often cavalier attitude the labour movement itself adopts towards its own history. In other papers individual curators focus on how they are approaching, or have approached, labour history in their respective museums. Elspeth King gives a detailed and challenging presentation of the work the People's Palace in Glasgow is carrying out in this field whilst the purposes and efforts of the National Museum of Labour History are described by Terry McCarthy, at that time its Director. Nick Mansfield's experience of organising an exhibition on George Edwards, the farmworkers' union leader, at the Norfolk Rural Life Museum shows what can be achieved even in a non-Labour controlled local authority museum - and in a General Election year at that. The Rochdale Pioneers' Museum, discussed here by Ron Garratt, is primarily a memorial to the founders of the Co-operative Movement and as such, as well as a museum, it has become a place of pilgrimage for those involved in this movement from all over the world.

These proceedings undoubtedly reflect the flowering of museum interest and involvement in labour history but also they reveal the divergence of opinion which has accompanied it. The role of the private collector and the feasibility of curatorial 'pastoral care' to enable local organisations to keep their artefacts - here advocated by John Griffin in his account of collecting labour history material in Bristol - are only two areas of disagreement. Even more contentious is the fundamental question whether labour history should be presented separately in specialist museums or integrated into broader-based social history museums which interpret all aspects of a community's history. Most of the contributors comment on the matter either directly or implicitly and, as one might expect perhaps, their views are strongly held.

There is much in this volume to think about and discuss. Although inevitably some of the comments therein have been overtaken by subsequent events (for example the opening of the Merseyside Museum of Labour History and the National Museum of Labour History's move to Manchester), it is nevertheless essential reading for anyone interested in the subject. Congratulations to both societies for their initiatives in publishing the proceedings and organising the seminar in the first place. It's high time another was held to carry on the good work.

Bill Jones

HUMPHREYS, Steve, MACK, Joanna and PERKS, Robert. *A Century of Childhood*. Sidgwick and Jackson, 1988, £12.95.

As the content of this journal shows, childhood is an important area well worth some reassessment. Our conceptions of this period of life are often very sentimental - childhood can be regarded as a fantastic imaginative adventure of delight. Much of the existing literature on the subject concentrates on one element of the material culture of childhood, namely toys. There have been some good local studies on play, many of which are unfortunately now out of print. A wide-ranging study of childhood in this century is much needed and of relevance to many social history curators, to enable them to put childhood artefacts into context.

A Century of Childhood bills itself as 'the first ever social history of childhood in the twentieth century' and argues that it is only in this century that childhood has become a distinct period of life, enforced by institutions, organisations and legislation. The account is brought right up to date with references to childhood in the 1980s. It is worthwhile examining what age range constitutes that of a child. Does childhood end at the onset of puberty or when the adult responsibilities of earning a wage are taken on? The book usefully spans from infancy to the age of sixteen (the current school leaving age), and discusses the changes in people's perceptions of childhood. Now we also recognise the intermediate stage of the teenager, a word derived from 1940s America. All classes are covered, from the 12-year old factory worker to the upper-class boarder at Eton. Throughout, the authors maintain an awareness of the diversity of childhood. The text is divided into six chapters, dealing with the themes of a child's place in society, family, play, schools and institutions, friendships and emnities and the end of the innocence of childhood.

The introductory chapter, 'The Age of the Child', discusses the change in the work expected of children from that of waged labour to schoolwork. At the beginning of this century many children had to work due to economic necessity in mines, in factories, as messengers, in domestic service, in shops. Often help had to be given to parents doing outwork at home, such as brush-making or making streamers. In an era without modern domestic appliances housework was more time-consuming and children's help was essential, particularly in caring for younger siblings. A philanthropic concern for children had its roots in Victorian reforms, and led to the 'Children's Charter' of 1908. This Act of Parliament provided

Plate 1: A group of street urchins, c.1900. An illustration from A Century of Childhood, *reviewed here.*

protective legislation for children under 14. As the century has progressed all sorts of things specifically designed for children have become available, from toys to books to cinema to television. Specific teenage cultures have evolved. Part-time work has become a way of supplementing pocket money rather than essential to the family income.

The second chapter deals with the family and children's relationships with 'Mum and Dad'. In the early years of the century large families and the inevitable death of some of the children was the norm. Without widespread vaccination, diseases such as measles were major child killers. Despite physical closeness in overcrowded working class homes parents, particularly fathers, could be very distant figures. With so many people in such a confined space parental discipline was essential. For upper classes the nanny was often closer to the children than the parents. Attitudes to childcare and babycare are ever changing. Fathers are taking an increasing role, particularly with more women going out to work. Child sex abuse has recently hit the headlines. It is suggested that this is not a new thing, but rather that we have only recently been alerted to it.

For the working class play was most dependant on the imagination and available materials such as packing case twine for skipping ropes. The introduction of municipal playgrounds encouraged adult supervised play with swing ladies and 'parkies' to keep an eye on what was going on. Organised sports and organisations like the boy scouts were seen to be character-forming. Toy making developed and increasingly cheap toys became readily available for all classes. Today we regularly hear concern voiced about the effect of television on children, but good educational and magazine programmes do give children access to a wide range of information. The authors attribute vandalism not to violence on TV but rather to the frustrations of inner city living, where there are no play facilities. Traditional games do continue, but tend to be restricted to primary schools.

'Our Class' describes the various types of educational institutions designed 'to churn out obedient and dutiful citizens for the new industrial age'. The authoritarian regimes of orphanages were not far removed from those of reformatories designed to punish children. Strict discipline prevailed in schools and sometimes corporal punishment seemed to be doled out merely at the whim of the teacher. Residential institutions for the disabled were run very strictly, partly as a means of preparing children for a difficult life ahead - as one blind man recalls, with little welfare state provision, there were many blind beggars. Middle and upper class children were subject to character forming in boarding schools where they were being trained to be leaders. Despite an increasingly liberal approach to education which encouraged free expression it was not until 1987 that corporal punishment in schools was finally made illegal. Pupils in modern schools no longer live in such great fear of their teachers and are encouraged to learn by enquiry rather than by rote.

It is common today for children to form close individual relationships with a best friend. Earlier in the century, working class friendships were formed around the group or gang. Group loyalties were based on a common identity of class or territory or race. Children who were different through colour, language, disability or illegitimacy could be cruelly taunted and even violently attacked. Gangs were not exclusive to boys, but girls played a more peripheral and decorative role. There was a marked physical separation of middle class and working class children which has to some extent been broken down by more mixed state schools. With the increased space provided by council housing and more children having their own rooms, friendships are less street orientated and more individualistic.

Modern children are allowed much more freedom to enjoy the company of the opposite sex than their predecessors. Gone are the days when boys entered school by one gate and single sex playgrounds prevailed. Parents still worry about teenage pregnancies, but ignorance about sex is no longer seen as a way of preventing them. Ignorance made the onset of puberty quite frightening, particularly for girls who did not know what was happening to them when their first period started. Masturbation, now considered a natural activity, was warned against by parents and other authority figures as being dangerous as well as disgusting. With the popularity of Hollywood and films children were presented with adult role models as well as precocious child stars like Shirley Temple. The desire to emulate adult heroes and heroines was irresistable but met with the disapproval of parents who wanted to preserve their children's innocence. Today younger and younger children are becoming fashion and image conscious, encouraged by marketing hype directed at both children and parents. It could be argued that modern children are becoming more like miniature adults again. Yet today the freedoms of modern childhood are tempered with a strong protective framework which we have developed for children.

Plate 2: Teddy Boys in a canteen set up in south London by the Dulwich College Mission in 1955. An illustration from A Century of Childhood *reviewed here.*

This can only be a brief summary of a book which is well worth reading. The text uses living memory as a major source and vivid quotes provide excellent descriptions of childhood experiences. This makes the book valuable reading for social history curators who are increasingly integrating people's own words into their museum displays. It would have been interesting to have used not only reminisciences of adults but also to have asked modern children what they think about school games and parents. This was extremely well done in Channel 4's recent 'Citizen 2000' programme where primary school children were interviewed. The book is well illustrated with a variety of black and white photographs from formal studio shots to street scenes of children playing. The 174 pages are all too few - each chapter could be extended into a book itself.

My major criticism is on the referencing. I would like to know exactly where each quote comes from, whether from written or oral account, museum archive or letter in response to an appeal for information. A useful bibliography is provided but could be more clearly presented. These reservations aside this is a book for all social historians, whether specifically interested in childhood or not. Attitudes to children are representative of general social attitudes over the last century.

Susan Jeffrey

JENNING, Trevor S. *Bellfounding*. Shire Album 212, 1988, £1.25.

Anyone who has visited the Taylor's Bell Foundry museum in Loughborough will be pleasantly reminded of Dr Jennings, its curator, by this precise, lucid and expert book. The existing Shire album on bells, John Camp's *Discovering bells and bellringing*, first appeared in 1968 and is chiefly concerned with the history and practice of the peculiarly (and peculiar) English practice of change ringing. *Bellfounding* is firmly centered on the history and technology of the bell itself.

Jenning's book is not, and within the Shire format cannot be, a detailed source for curators on the history of the bellfounding industry; his study *Master of My Art: the Taylor Bellfoundries 1784-1987* is more useful here. However, the book summarizes, in a model of economical prose, the history of the industry from its origins - here some might dispute the contention that bellfounding shared its monastic origins with 'most other crafts' - to the growth of itinerant medieval bellfounding and the later development of the industry. The casting of a bell is then described, with an excellent series of photographs of the modern process, which, as Dr Jennings states, has changed only in detail over four hundred years. An account is then given of the techniques and equipment which have been used to tune bells, followed by a very clear description of the fittings used over the centuries to hang the finished bell.

In each of these areas *Bellfounding* is an indispensable introduction, and I challenge anybody to read it and fail to look at the next bell they come across in a different and more informed light.

Geoff Bowles

KIRKLEES SOUND ARCHIVE. *Kirklees Sound Archive Catalogue* 1988. Kirklees Sound Archive & Kirklees Metropolitan Council, 1988, £2.00 (plus p. & p.).

As the dust settles on the mixed fortunes of museum involvement with the various job creation schemes which culminated in the Community Programme, many curators retain mixed feelings. Characterised by managerial and personnel difficulties, the influx of unskilled and inexperienced labour into a museum was by no means always welcomed, putting strains on already overstretched curators and administrators. The heart of many problems lay in the requirement that the work covered by the scheme would not have otherwise been done. While this protected both participants from exploitation as cheap labour and professional staff from redundancy, it tended to produce teams by their very nature isolated from the mainstream of museum work.

The most successful applications of government employment promotion, were the schemes which highlighted areas neglected by the more traditional museum or new subject areas which curators aspired to cover but lacked the time or resources. Oral History fell particularly successfully into the latter category and this catalogue is the result of a three year Community Programme scheme in Kirklees. It is no accident that this rare example of a useable catalogue of a sound archive came from a project initiated by Stuart Davies, already notable for work in the contemporary recording and oral history field under the auspices of an Inner City Partnership Programme at Birmingham in the early 1980s.

No sound archive is ever finished and this catalogue reflects a number of projects undertaken in 1985-8; the Afro-Caribbean Community, Asian Community, Childhood, Cinema, Folk Song and Dance, Industry, Wartime and the Polish Community. Each catalogue entry consists of a short synopsis of subject areas covered by a tape, listed in order of date of interview. The information given is sufficient to choose transcripts or copy tapes for more detailed research. All such material is available from the Tolson Memorial Museum, Huddersfield (as are copies of this catalogue). The catalogue is a loose-bound xeroxed typescript.

Perhaps the only omission is a detailed index of subjects covered and places or people mentioned. Few interviews are limited to a single subject and there is doubtless much in these tapes beyond the project headings.

There is a great scope for other museums to produce such relatively cheap catalogues of their resource material and more of this type of publication would do much to gain a wider recognition for museum materials as sources for the local historian.

It is clear from the introduction to the catalogue that this was no isolated project, but was integrated into community outreach work from the museums service, children's activities, theatre work and local exhibitions. Not only does this project boast a solid end product as represented by the catalogue, it has also convinced Kirklees to create the permanent post of Sound Archivist to continue such a promising start. The fatal flaw of the Community Programme is that it trained 33 workers to do this job and few can have had any expectation of making a career of oral history.

This catalogue is a tribute to their contribution and a starting point for the many other sound archives of far longer pedigree which, as yet, offer only limited accessibility.

Sam Mullins

LEGGET, Jane. *Local Heroines - A Women's History Gazetteer to England, Scotland and Wales*. Pandora Press, 1988, £15.95 (c), £8.95 (p).

Jane Legget writes in her introduction that this gazetteer was written as 'a reaction to all those guidebooks featuring too many men and few, if any, women'. As someone with personal experience of a local 'Blue Plaque' scheme, I too have despaired of the importance placed on national (usually male) figures who may have had a very tenuous connection with a place and who have been honoured by a plaque and perpetual mentions in local publications, while local women often escape mention altogether although their work in the locality had far more effect on the history and experience of local people. This process just perpetuates the myth-making connected with a few selected national names and helps confirm the view that women did not really do much in history anyway. This is the myth that Jane Legget tackles head on ar this book helps to begin to reset the balance. This does not mea that national heroines are excluded but that some of the mar women that have until now been 'hidden from history' at la have their place recognised too in a very readable and accessib book.

The book is divided into a map section, followed by the gazettee with London having a section of its own. At the end of the gazettee is a biographical index which is not only a cross reference to th main part of the book but is also a useful source of information i itself. This is followed by a chapter on 'How to find out more.'

The gazetteer is not of course a complete index of local heroines how could it be? Women's history is still being 're-excavated' an many more names have yet to be discovered or be brought to publi attention. However, the women remembered in the book are many and various. They include Martha Gunn, the 'Bathing Woman o Brighton' also known as the 'Queen of the Dippers', Anne Blunt th Arabist and traveller, Barbara Bodichon the women's right campaigner, Agatha Christie the famous crime writer, and Lavinia Teerlinc court painter to Henry VIII and his heirs who was once more highly thought of than Hans Holbein. The gazetteer ranges from Porthcurno at the tip of Cornwall up to May in the top N.E corner of Scotland; from Corfe Castle in Dorset held successfully by Lady Bankes in 1643, to Greenham Common in Berkshire and its Women's Peace Camp. It is a book to use as a reference before you visit a place, a resource for research and as a book to browse through. The latter can be an illuminating and salutary experience for all those who think they know a place!

The book is illustrated with thirty nine rather small black and white photographs of some of the places mentioned in the gazetteer and as such are very welcome, but the photographs are of a variable quality and I should have liked a few of the local heroines themselves. The price of the book seems a little high but there are about four hundred pages and the paper is of good quality and the text is clear and easy to read.

Obviously *Local Heroines* is a starting place not a final destination. Its coverage of personalities is necessarily uneven (there is just much more information available about some women than others) and the same must be said about the places covered. But it is a book that should be welcomed by all interested in women's history or in local studies and inspire us all to discover our local heroines - for the lesson is that the women are there if we only care to look.

Sherri J. Steel

NICHOLSON, Murdoch & O'NEILL, Mark. *Glasgow: Locomotive Builder to the World*, Polygon Books, Edinburgh, 1987, £4.95.

There are a number of places in Britain to which the epithet 'railway town' may be applied as the arrival of the railway played a significant role in their economic and social development. Derby, Swindon and Crewe owed their prominence in the nineteenth century to the fact that they were chosen to become major centres in the railway network and the location for the railway operator's engineering works. Glasgow, while in the early years of its development sharing some of the characteristics of these places, was quite different. Glasgow's prominence grew not out of its close links with the domestic railway network but in its unique record in the export field which earned it the proud title used for this book: 'Locomotive Builder to the World'.

Murdoch Nicholson and Mark O'Neill trace the history of locomotive building in Glasgow from the 1830s, through its heyday at the turn of the century, to its eventual collapse in the early 1960s. They document a complex company history with its personalities like Neilson, Dubs and Reid which led to the creation of the North British Locomotive Company in 1903; the largest locomotive builder in Europe; employing 7,570 men and capable of building over 600 locomotives per year.

The focus for all this activity was the village of Springburn, east of Glasgow, adjacent to main-line railways and convenient for the docks at Finnieston. The docks were essential as from the foundation of locomotive manufacturing in Glasgow its engineers strove to develop the industry in Scotland independent of England; from this grew an emphasis on the export market. Glasgow men built for the railways of Europe, Australasia, Asia, Africa and the Americas. Meeting the needs of a vast variety of systems involved the construction not only of conventional types but also specialist variants like Fairlies, Mallets and Garratts. In producing for the massive overseas market the manufacturers were also able to make technical improvements to their products for use on Britain's railways.

Glasgow was *par exellence* a builder of steam locomotives and with the demise of steam as the principal form of motive power on the world's railways Glasgow's locomotive building fell into decline. The industry failed to adapt to the production of diesel and electric locomotives and ceased in 1962 with the liquidation of the North British Co.

The book does not simply look at the companies and their products but also includes a section on transportation and shipping with vivid images of giant locomotives being hauled through the streets of Glasgow and of cargo ships stacked high with steam locomotives. George Wyllie's straw locomotive sculpture which jogged the memories of many Glaswegians when hung from the Finnieston crane in 1987 is also recorded. There is also a short section on the company records held by the Mitchell Library from which most of the excellent illustrations are drawn, and a brief bibliography.

This publication is a welcome addition to the literature on locomotive manufacture in Britain and puts into context the importance of an industry whose relics have previously received little attention here as they were exported overseas. It also gives a brief glimpse of the human side of the industry with the female tracers employed in the drawing shops and schoolboys looking on as another export product lumbers on its way along Glasgow's streets. My only major criticism of the book is that in failing to deal at least in passing with the large volume of work done for the home market it does not illustrate the world-wide impact of Glasgow's locomotive building in its totality. However, I look forward to more publications on this subject which may perhaps deal in more detail about how this industry affected the lives of those who worked in it and those who lived in the community it dominated.

Dieter Hopkin

RICKARDS, Maurice. *Collecting Printed Ephemera*, Phaidon/ Christie's, 1988, £25.00.

Printed ephemera often forms an important part of social history museum displays and interpretive panels. Yet these artefacts are curiously under-studied and under-estimated as both historical sources and material cultural evidence in their own right. It is therefore very welcome to see the publication of this book which not only gives a good insight into the range of printed ephemera, but also provides some element of interpretation.

The book is split into two sections. The first gives a general discussion of the nature of printed ephemera, its history, collection and conservation. The second provides an informative illustrated survey of different printing processes followed by discussion of 27 categories and themes by which this material can be considered. The book concludes with a short, but useful bibliography and a list of organisations and collections of types of ephemera.

The quality of the first section of this book is a little patchy. The parts dealing with the definition of printed ephemera, its origins and collection are a little laboured, rehearsing much that has already been covered in earlier books by Rickards himself and others. However, the parts describing past collectors of printed ephemera is a fascinating and useful thumbnail sketch of the most important special collections in the U.K. and the U.S.A.. Reading about the lives of these collectors emphasises the dangers (mainly to home life) and benefits (mainly to other collectors, curators and researchers) of single-minded, obsessive acquisition.

The glory of this book (not to mention the justification of its rather high price) lies in the second section. Here about 70 double page spreads (about half in full colour) provide a fascinating selection of material - showing the limitless range of printed ephemera and the great number of themes it can illustrate. The items date from the seventeenth century to the present, although items from the past 30 years are very sparse. Most helpful are indicators of the scale of reduction or enlargement used for each group of items illustrated. As usual, there are several surprises amongst this material. For me the most memorable are the early twentieth century flagday emblems and the seventeenth and eighteenth century playing cards which had been used for a host of other purposes (as calling cards, receipts, and trade cards).

The great disappointment is the non-committal attitude taken towards contemporary ephemera. This material is almost totally absent from the section illustrating categories and themes. Also, Rickards seems uncertain about a methodology and philosophy for its collection, relying on the old maxim that 'survival of the fittest' items over a period of time is the best way to 'chose' what to collect. This not only condemns much valuable material to total destruction but also ignores the fact that comprehensive collections of contemporary ephemera from known sources can provide important statistical data on trends in the material culture. Never the less, this book makes stimulating reading for any history curator. It shows how many aspects of daily life leave material remains, albeit very fleeting ones.

Steph Mastoris

SMITH, David. *Maps and Plans for the Local Historian and Collector*. Batsford, 1988, £19.95.

Maps and plans are important historical sources and are perhaps the most accessible written or printed artefacts often displayed in museums. Not only do they give a sense of place to a topographical display, but also allow visitors to undertake their own 'research' - discovering changes or continuities in familiar territories and orientating those unaware of a landscape.

However, the great problem in the use of historic maps by historians, curators and the general public is the ease with which information can be misunderstood. Like other historical sources, maps were created for specific reasons and their successful interrogation depends on understanding these criteria. David Smith's book provides a very useful guide to understanding the origins and purpose of a great variety of maps and plans which have been produced since the sixteenth century.

After several introductory chapters on identification and authenticity, sources and decoration, the rest of the book is made up of 18 sections dealing with different types of map. These include drainage and Parliamentary deposited plans, regional, county and parish maps, marine charts, settlement, property and specialised urban plans, and military maps. Each section concludes with a select bibliography which is supplemented by useful references and a more general reading list at the back. The sections dealing with county and O.S. maps also contain considerable information about editions etc. in tabulated form. Throughout, the text is pithy but full of pertinent examples from the whole of the British Isles - it is especially useful to have information on Scottish and Irish maps included in each section. The whole book is extensively illustrated with clear examples, often accompanied by detailed interpretive captions.

This book will certainly help the users of maps towards a better understanding of their origins and meaning, and hence their interpretation. It will also give many some ideas on maps not normally encountered and provide a good introduction to the considerable literature on the subject.

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William York, aged Ten Years, murdering Susan Mahew, aged Five Years.

WILLIAM YORK,

CONVICTED OF MURDER.

THIS unhappy child was but just turned of ten years of age when he committed the dreadful crime of which he was convicted. He was a pauper in the poorhouse belonging to the parish of Eye, in Suffolk, and was committed, on the coroner's inquest, to Ipswich gaol, for the murder of Susan Mahew, another child, of five years of age, who had been his bedfellow. The following is his confession, taken and attested by a justice of the peace, and which was, in part, proved on the trial, with many corroborating circumstances of his guilt.

He said that a trifling quarrel happening between them on the 13th of May, 1748, about ten in the morning, he struck her with his open hand, and made her cry: that she going out of the house to the dunghill, opposite to the door, he followed her, with a hook in his hand, with an intent to kill her; but before he came up to her he set down the hook, and went into the house for a knife: he then came out again, took hold of the girl's left hand, and cut her wrist all round to the bone, and then threw her down, and cut her to the bone just above the elbow of the same arm. That, after this, he set his foot upon her stomach, and cut her right arm round about, and to the bone, both on the wrist and above the elbow. That he still thought she would not die, and therefore took the hook, and cut her left thigh to the bone; and, observing she was not dead yet, his next care was to conceal the murder; for which purpose he filled a pail with water at a ditch, and, washing the blood off the child's body, buried it in the dunghill, together with the blood that was spilled upon the ground, and made the dunghill as smooth as he could; afterwards he washed the knife and hook, and carried them into the house, cleaned the blood off his own clothes, hid the child's clothes in an old chamber, and then came down and got his breakfast. When he was examined he showed very little concern, and appeared easy and cheerful. All he alleged was, that the child fouled the bed in which they lay together; that she was sulky, and that he did not like her. (Judge Hales ordered a boy of the same age to be hanged, who burnt a child in a cradle.*)

This 'boy murderer' was found guilty, and sentence of death pronounced against him; but he was respited from time to time, and, on account of his tender years, was at length pardoned.

If we were not well aware of the frequent negligence of keepers of poorhouses we should say that this premeditated and deliberate murder could not have been effected. Several hours must have elapsed during the shocking transaction; where, then, was the care over the infant paupers? The overseers of the poor, in many instances, are extremely attentive to their parish dinners; but, were they to employ the time lost in this sensuality in care and attendance to the morality of the individuals placed under their control, such crimes might be avoided, and the child of charity brought up in the paths of industry and virtue.

Price: six pounds
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