**Adrienne Wallman**

**Abstract**

Beyond the Family Tree: Genealogy and Cultural Identity

Using extracts from my interviews with people doing Jewish genealogy, I show how museums can utilise the enormous popular interest in genealogy to explore the complexity of cultural identity within various communities.

A Catholic man explains how he discovered the extent of his Jewish ancestry later in life and learnt of relatives who were murdered in the Holocaust. He describes how visiting Sobibor and Auschwitz, where his ancestors perished, resulted in his seeing the Holocaust not just as a historical event but also as a part of his own life.

An interviewee with both Jewish immigrant and non-Jewish British ancestry identifies with both the vulnerability and ‘get-up and go-ness’ of her Jewish ancestors, which led to migration to an unfamiliar land, but she also has a sense of rootedness and deep connection to a particular part of Britain. She sees this reflected in her own cultural and national identity,

Other interviewees describe how their cultural identity is rooted in an emotional identification with places from which their ancestors fled or were expelled. They describe the impact visiting these ancestral towns had on them and how these visits have enabled them to reclaim their ancestral heritage while still identifying as British.

I show that genealogy is about more than searching for documents in archives and that museums can run genealogy projects within their own communities to explore its wider social and cultural impacts, covering themes such as migration, displacement and changing and multi-faceted individual and family identities. Such work can help inform current public debates around Britishness and British values and also relates to debates and campaigns within the museum sector, such as the Museums Association’s ‘Museums Change Lives’. Finally I will outline how it can be evaluated using Inspiring Learning for All.

**Bio**

I am in the third year of a part-time PhD in the Department of History at Lancaster University, researching the impact that doing Jewish genealogy has on personal identity, and how the results can be used within museum displays and learning programmes. Prior to starting my doctoral research I had a 40 year career in museums, heritage, arts and educational television, including working as director and curator at Manchester Jewish Museum, and most recently as Heritage Manager for Allerdale Borough Council in Cumbria and Curator of Keswick Museum.

**Jack Ord**

**Abstract**

From museum managers to collections assistants, many of those who work in social history museum practice had to learn the ropes in a voluntary capacity on the way to reaching the next rung on the ladder. As senior or intermediate-level museum professionals, we have the opportunity to pass on our expertise to volunteers and Museum Studies placement students, playing a crucial part in the career development of the next generation of social history museum professionals. Challenges continue to present themselves and as the roles of curators become increasingly varied, volunteers will be more important in audience engagement and preserving our tangible heritage than ever before. “The role and development of volunteers in social history in the post-2016 landscape” will give members of the Social History Curators Group the opportunity to share different experiences of working with volunteers, discuss the potential for career progression from voluntary level following the threatened withdrawals of EU funding for the creative industries, debate how best the voluntary workforce can be enlisted to ensure cultural identity remains relevant to different communities and consider how they will help steer the ship of the social history museum on the choppy seas of the post-2016 landscape.

**Bio**

Jack studied visual arts at Northumbria University Newcastle, followed by a Masters in Art Museum & Gallery Studies at Newcastle University in 2011-2012. He did his placement at Tyne & Wear Museums, which continued as a volunteer role for a further sixteen months. He landed his first paid position in late 2014, as a Collections Assistant at the Imperial War Museum in London. This was followed by similar roles at IWM Duxford in Cambridgeshire and the Manchester branch of the Science Museum Group. In February 2017, he was appointed as a Project Assistant at the University of Oxford’s History of Science Museum.

**Lauren Ephithite**

**Abstract**

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse has recently undertaken a large redevelopment, opening new workhouse galleries last year. A main aim for these galleries was to encourage visitors to consider the issues that the workhouse addressed and how we address them today. This presentation will explore how Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse has done this through text writing, current affairs, charity leaflets and asking visitors their opinion. Delegates will learn how a museum can encourage debate and be a safe space for people to express their views without judgement.

Visitors have responded to the opportunity to debate issues such as poverty, homelessness and hunger. They are asked to think about ‘Who needs our help? What is the best way to support each other? How should we look after poor and vulnerable people?’ Comments have included ‘Are we really better off in terms of homelessness? At least in times of the workhouse people had somewhere to go… unlike today’ ‘Don’t think leaving the EU will help poverty’ and ‘We should stop giving millions to in aid to India who have a space programme.’

The speaker, Lauren Ephithite, Assistant Curator, has become a champion for contemporary relevance at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse. Visitor comments are being recorded and summarised in an annual report. Lauren is making connections with charities locally and nationally to empower visitors to make a difference. Delegates will be encouraged to consider their own work and think about how they can incorporate contemporary themes and discussions in their own museums.

**Bio**

Lauren Ephithite is Assistant Curator at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, part of Norfolk Museums Service. This family friendly site includes the Museum of Norfolk Life, a traditional working farm and an adventure playground. Lauren has been a key member of the Voices from the Workhouse project team which redeveloped the workhouse galleries. Lauren has worked for Norfolk Museums Service for 8 years, being in post at Gressenhall for 4 and a half years. She has a Masters in Museums Studies from the University of East Anglia and has recently completed her AMA.

**Rebecca Odell**

**Abstract**

In Summer 2016, the LD50 gallery located within the multi-cultural and left-leaning community of Dalston in East London held a programme of ‘Neo-reaction’ events, claiming that this was to create “a dialogue between two different and contrasting ideologies.” Following Brexit, the election of Donald Trump and widespread concerns of the rise of the so-called ‘Alt-right’ movement, the gallery became the focus of a targeted campaign accusing it of being “an organising space for racists.” As of writing, it appears the campaign has been successful in shutting down the gallery.

The unique position museums hold as one the most trusted sources of information is now more important than ever, with widespread lack of trust in organisations such as the government and media, and social media ‘filter bubbles’ sheltering people from opposing viewpoints. This case study looks at how the LD50 controversy unfolded, whether this impacts museums looking to engage with controversial or increasingly nationalistic viewpoints, and the issues raised for the staff of Hackney Museum in how to respond to a currently unfolding event.

**Bio**

Museum Officer, Hackney Museum

**Jude Holland**

**Abstract**

Doncaster 1914-18’s Welcome to a Foreign Shore project (working title) encourages asylum seekers and refugees to share their stories, comparing their experiences of living in Doncaster in 2017 with those of Belgian refugees arriving in the town 100 years ago through a series of creative workshops. The outcomes of the project will be displayed in an exhibition in 2018. Against a backdrop of Brexit and industrial decline, the project encourages the wider Doncaster community to find out about refugees lives with the aim of fostering greater understanding and tolerance among the local population. The project will encourage Doncaster Museum to be used as a safe space for sharing ideas and welcoming people from all backgrounds.

As political events unravelled through 2016, project staff felt strongly that exploring how Doncaster had welcomed refugees in the past, had the potential to bring together a transitory refugee community with a largely white British community who had voted overwhelmingly for Brexit, in the spirit of Jo Cox’s words that ‘we are far more united than the things that divide us'. The project has improved the resilience of Doncaster 1914-18 and Doncaster Heritage Services, leading to lasting partnerships with local networks providing support for refugees. Doncaster Museums are now looking to develop an ESOL curriculum and volunteer opportunities for refugees. Training offered by the Northern Refugee Council allowed refugees to gain support with sharing their stories, and staff and volunteers from Doncaster Museums to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing refugees, improving the individual resilience of participants.

Doncaster 1914-18 will talk honestly about the opportunities and barriers of the project, and how the project has helped to create a new direction for the delivery of community heritage projects in Doncaster, allowing delegates to learn how to deliver a similar project in their area.

**Bio**

Jude Holland is Project Manager of Doncaster 1914-18, and before this was Interpretation Manager at the ss Great Britain in Bristol. She started her career as Exhibitions Curator at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Jude served as a Trustee for SHCG between 2012-16 as Conference Organiser and Marketing and Fundraising Officer. Twitter: @juderholland

Victoria Ryves is Volunteer and Community Engagement Officer for Doncaster Heritage Services and prior to this worked for Doncaster 1914-18. Victoria has been creating engagement projects and education programmes for Museums since 2012. She began her career in museums in Canmore, Alberta, Canada. Twitter: @vickyryves.

**Jen Kavanagh**

**Abstract**

Risk affects contemporary collecting decision making, and can be enough of a barrier, stopping some museums from acquiring new material. Remaining neutral and therefore not alienating communities, while at the same time feeling confident about their stance on political change is complex and risky in many ways, and could result in less creative collecting approaches being adopted.

This paper will explore the theme of ‘Representing the people’, by presenting arguments, ideas and examples of how museums could be more risk-willing in their method of documenting what is taking place within their communities. Included in this will be suggestions of how collecting strategies should be inclusive and open, to avoid alienating those with alternative viewpoints.

The public has been very vocal and active in the months since the Brexit vote, using social media to voice their views, taking to the streets in mass protest, launching and signing petitions. Creatives have produced illustrations, prose has been written, placards are full of thoughtful and powerful satire. This material should be documented, but how do museums approach such collecting when it poses so many risks? I will explore what these risks are, and discuss how we might be able to overcome them in order to capture this important period of history.

This paper will be presented from the perspective of a social history curator and oral historian, who also took a risk and produced a zine about Brexit, called The 48%; not getting copyright permission or worrying about the consequences!

**Bio**

Jen Kavanagh is a freelance curator and oral historian. Jen currently works as Oral History Project Manager for the charity Kingston Centre for Independent Living on a HLF funded collecting programme about the disability rights movement in the borough, alongside other work with museums including London Transport Museum, British Museum and the Wellcome Trust. She recently curated ‘Tattoo London’ and ‘Punks’ at Museum of London. She is a member of SHCG, a mentor for the AMA programme, and a newbie zine creator.

**Claire Frampton**

**Abstract**

I will be presenting about two museum projects as part of my research exploring how do live events in museums and galleries deal with contemporary issues? What are the unique ways live theatre keeps museums in touch with current issues? To fit with this conference I have chosen to study projects which deal with migration and cultural identity.

As part of Linguamania LiveFriday at the Ashmolean I witnessed the performance of a theatre project Mappa Mundi Mother Tongue. The evening involved presentations of projects at the Ashmolean organised by the creative multilingualism project at Oxford University with the theme of linguistic creativity. The Mother Tongue project involved performers including migrants presenting stories and songs from around the world in the atrium of Ashmolean with a giant map of the world. I wanted to present about my observations and interviews of participants of the project about their experience performing about contemporary themes in the museum.

I have arranged to document Mandala Theatre residency at Modern Art Oxford Spring 2017. Participants will create their own monologues in response to the exhibition Lubaina Himid: Invisible Strategies based around themes of identity. At college the title of my undergraduate dissertation was ‘How did perceptions of black British people change in the 1980s ? What were the shifts in perceptions of images of this group and what caused these transformations? –A study through visual culture and artworks’, this included a study of Himid’s work. I wanted to present on my observations on the Mandala project, exploring questions i.e. what are the unique ways participants of the project learn about the artworks and reflect on their own identity through theatre? What did participants and audience gain from the theatre project rather than just visiting the retrospective exhibition?

What the future of this kind of project ?

**Bio**

I work at the Ashmolean as a gallery attendant, since 2011 and currently study for Associateship of the Museums Association. I enjoy going to the theatre, interviewing actors and producers, writing project proposals and writing theatre reviews as part of developing my professional portfolio. I play double bass in university music societies such as the Keble String Orchestra, and aim to incorporate this into my museum studies, with an interest in music in museums. In 2013 I finished MA Arts Policy and Management at Birkbeck College University of London taking modules specialising in Heritage Management.