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"Picking up the Pieces" - Adapting to change in museums and archaeology

Edited by: Edmund Southworth
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Objects from the Bateman Collection in Sheffield City Museum – engraved by F. W. Lock in 1855.
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Foreword.

The management of change is the most difficult thing for an organisation to achieve. To use the analogy of evolution,organisations can only survive in a changing world if they adapt to change faster than their environment changes around them. During the 1991 conference the word "crisis" was used to describe some of the situations being encountered by archaeologists and museum curators across the country. In the public sector massive upheavals were being caused by the Poll-Tax, compulsory competitive tendering and moves to re-organise local government; in the private sector market forces combined with recession to cause chaos - particularly in London.

The papers delivered at the conference and subsequently collected in this volume could have been very pessimistic in the face of circumstances beyond the control of the profession. Instead they reflect some of the most positive and innovative thinking currently taking place in museums. Looking back at the conference after a period of reflection I am struck by the quality of analysis of problems and practicality of solutions offered. The Poll-Tax and Prime Minister of the day have since gone - SMA is still here and evolving faster than ever!

The 1991 SMA conference was hosted by the Sheffield City Museum. Our formal thanks must go to the Sheffield Metropolitan District Council for their kind hospitality, and to Pauline Beswick, Principal keeper Human History, for organising the programme and the adminstrative arrangements. We thank also all the contributors, session chairs and members who helped to make the conference a success.

My personal thanks are due to Pauline for her assistance in assembling the papers for me. On behalf of the Society I would like to thank all the contributors to this volume for their work and forebearance.

Edmund Southworth
Liverpool Museum
November 1993

Contents

1 **Plaiting Fog: The Search for Quality**
Tim Schadla-Hall

6 **Archives and Publication in the Real World**
Peter Hinton, Museum of London

10 **The Use of Collections: The Need for a Positive Approach**
Nick Merriman, Museum of London

18 **The Winchester Experience: A Case Study in the Use of Collections**
Geoffrey T. Denford, Winchester Museums Service

22 **Treasure Trove: New Approaches to Antiquities Legislation**
Lady Rosamund Hanworth

25 **The Problems of a Treasure-hunting Initiative**
Richard Warner, The Ulster Museum

30 **Sitting Comfortably? Museums and the Antiquities Market**
David R. M. Gaimster, British Museum

33 **Temporarily Removed? Museums, Archaeology and the New Heritage**
Blaise Vyner

36 **Community Archaeology and Museums**
Robin Holgate, Luton Museum Service

42 **Cultural Identity and Museums**
Brian Durrans, Department of Ethnography, British Museum

56 **Towards an Integrated Approach to Archaeology at Colchester**
Mark Davies, Colchester Museum

PLAITING FOG: THE SEARCH FOR QUALITY

Tim Schadla-Hall

It is a great honour to be invited to give the keynote address to the Society of Museum Archaeologists Conference. I have to say at the outset that I am still uncertain about the role of the keynote address and as I have probably attended as many Society of Museum Archaeologists conferences as anyone, and have sat through some really quite disturbing keynote addresses in my time, (often given by people who claim considerable distinction in the archaeological, if not the museum world) I have at least the comfort of knowing that mine will not be any worse than theirs! I can honestly say that the most memorable keynote address I have every heard was that of Nicholas Thomas in Newport (Thomas 1991); when Nicholas told us that he would passionately defend the right of anybody to collect treen if they wanted to. I did not agree with him, indeed I was not too sure at the time what treen was, but I did enjoy his passionate defence of collecting!

I intend not to be portentous and I shall try to be brief. I want to discuss quality, and particularly quality with regard to the role of museums in general and museum archaeology in particular. Quality - or the idea of it is something we are being made increasingly aware of - but what about "Plaiting Fog"? well it is a local (Sheffield) term (Haigh, R, pers comm) - so it is appropriate to use, especially as it draws attention to either miracle working, or impossible solutions, as well as the existence of the fog which clouds our vision. Quality is a relatively new area of interest and concern; when stuck for the appropriate phrase references to quality of service, or product or presentation - or even management - trip off the tongue easily, but what do we mean by quality - how do we show and produce quality? What does it mean to us? In the NHS Haigh and Morris (1991) pointed out that in the White Paper Working for Patients a main goal was "a quality service - which not only provides clinical excellence but also makes patients feel valued requires a quality management and organisation". If you want to provide quality in what you do do you have to be clear about what you are trying to do, why you are trying to do it - and to whom you are trying to do it. It would be my contention today that to a large extent we have stopped thinking about issues such as these, and become side tracked into all sorts of new, "fashionable" areas.

First of all museums: those of us who work in public museums (it is difficult to consider museums can be anything but public) have recently been told by such organisations as the Office of Arts and Libraries, the Museums and Galleries Commission and now apparently by the Area Museum Councils that we need to consider how efficient, effective and economic we are at producing the services which we offer. The public sector in general has also been told, in no uncertain terms, that it must provide better service to the public, and in turn that what it must provide are quality services. I always thought we did, but I have obviously been labouring under a misapprehension for some time. We have been told that management - or even better management - is what we need. We have begun to use the word manager rather than curator - because management will apparently solve our problems; a change in title solves nothing. I am not sure that we need more managers - I should far rather see more workers, but that particular problem might be better dealt with in another address. In museums we have been warned of the possibility that our services - indeed our activities should not only be measured but also might be contracted out and/ or privatised. I would not claim to be an adherent of competitive tendering and contracting out on purely economic grounds - its unclear whether or not, in the public sector there are always significant savings to be made (Painter 1991), but at least re-examination of what we do is useful, as it will remind us of our role - our mission if you like - and the number of things we strive to do; this conference title conceals a whole group of areas of endeavour, and it underlines a desire to change our methods and approaches, as well as the range of our concerns. We do, I believe, think that we have a professional area of concern - we wish to explain where we have come from and how we got here, we wish to provide a sense of place and of history - and we wish to explain that to people. Why we wish to do that - how we come to exist as a freestanding professional group is probably best explained in the context of an industrial and post-industrial society freed of roots - free of many of the tensions which exist in other parts of Europe and the world, and yet equally cursed by a lack of relationships with the past, and with communities today.

We do have considerable talents - and we are able to do a great deal - and yet in common with much of the public sector we seem also to be wracked by uncertainty - we lack faith in our ability to tackle many of our problems - and as a result we turn to others for help; this is not a problem which only public museums suffer from; for example Humphrey and Pease (1991) recently discussing the problem of Social Services examined the story of the Wizard of Oz. They suggested that particular movie was about self reliance and that it might be renamed "The parable of the disposable crutch". They described the Wizard as...

"A benign, but devious conjuror (recall he had the face of a Kansas illusionist/fraudster). The Yellowbrick road to the wizard in the Emerald City was long and dangerous forcing Dorothy and her friends to discover their own qualities on the journey".

If I may adapt their article for Museums workers in the 1990's (the latter day Dorothy) the wizard has been easy to find:

"Indeed the wizard seeks out travellers in need. For the wizard simply read the Management Consultant. For the bogus props and tokens of esteem which the original wizard dispensed read financial information systems, cost centres, performance indicators, delegated budgets and internal markets."

Nothing to do with our job - our mission - and yet all around us. As I indicated above I find it depressing given the quality of my colleagues in museums that we have too readily accepted so many of these "bogus props". As Pease and Humphrey go on to to remark:

"much of the prestige of the consulting wizards and their financial snake oil remedies is derived from their promotion and use by Thatcher administrations to the extent that they are seen as a guaranteed good thing".

The very truisms which they show confront Social Services also confront us, for example:

"Costs are easier to measure. Consultants have real world managerial models and solutions. You cannot manage without performance indicators. Accounting is independent, objective and neutral. If you cannot quantify it, forget it. Time is a key resource. We must aim to be cheaper than alternative service providers. It is amazing how inefficient we were in the past".

I hope we can all examine the question raised by Pease and Humphrey about whether it is right that we should hide behind such artificial props or should we challenge the espousal of a new set of values and measures; what did we do before the Audit Commission and management consultancy? If museums employ professionals, can we not set our own agenda rather than let others define it for us? Should we not examine how we can set the agenda - have we suddenly thrown away everything that was done before 1989? Did we previously ignore our public? I think not; we did believe in quality, and did believe in service, and we did see our problems as being both local, and national. Sometimes we even recognise those problems, and discuss reality (Clarke 1991).

I am still surprised by the speed with which the Museums Profession (or at least some parts of it) seized on the recent Audit Commission Report (1991) on Museums and Art Galleries with such pleasure. Stuart Davies (1991) said in his review "The report will revolutionise public museum management in the 1990s" and went on to welcome the report. It was left to Victoria Duckham (1991) to show subsequently how badly the report might serve us.

Articles like Davies' presumably implicitly accept the value of the three E's; Jackson and Palmer (forthcoming) have argued eloquently that we should consider more than just the "three E's"; what about equity, equality and so on? I tried to apply this analysis to the drive towards competitive tendering in archaeology (Schadla-Hall 1991), and it is quite clear that not only have the adherents of competitive tendering failed to appreciate additions to the 3 'Es' they have even failed to consider who their customers are. We are failing to consider quality, because we are being side tracked into short term objectives, and short term solutions. I am not opposed to measuring museum performance, I believe it is essential, and I know it is impossible to measure anything - that is the problem! What we must do is make sure we measure to develop a quality approach and that we consider the alternatives (e.g. Jackson 1990).

It is at this stage that I want to examine Quality and Museum Archaeology. I firstly want to look at quality of presentation of the past in museums; there may be those of us who forget the deeper issues of what we present; John Corner and Sylvia Harvey in their recently edited work "Enterprise and Heritage" (1991) went some way to pointing out through careful analysis just how much our understanding of our past has been changed and challenged in the last twelve years. They analysed attempts to change the nature of our national identity on a considerable scale and pointed to the influence of post modernism and the new right, and what they perceived as its attempts to change controlling philosophies and even the interpretation of the past; this is something which Kevin Walsh discussed at our Hull Conference (Walsh 1993). In the same book, Hewison explores the relationship between commerce and culture and the changing values and priorities for official museum culture. Archaeologists should be more aware than most of the way in which dominating ideology can effect interpretation of the past, and even in Hewison's words its "commodification" (Hewison 1991). We have seen interpretation from both right and left from fascists and from communists, and our subject is littered with disagreements over interpretation for both cultural and nationalist reasons. We are not immune from dominating ideologies and philosophies however much we might believe that we are; for example there must be a dominating ideology which prevents this country from signing the UNESCO convention against the illicit export of cultural property.

If we need to have a quality approach how do we, as a small insignificant sector of society, present information about the past which is of quality? If Kossina's adherents (Antiquity 1990) could reinterpret European prehistory to fit a fascist nationalist culture, and consequently reduce the quality of information, how do we ensure that we too do not lose integrity?

How do archaeologists - and more especially museum archaeologists define quality in the many fields in which they work? Is it important to define quality? Well, we are told today (and I have to confess that I find quality is now

becoming as over-used as heritage in the vocabulary that we are increasingly persuaded to adopt) that museums like other organisations need to provide a quality service. I wonder what we were providing before? And anyway, how do you define quality? There are the simple minded (I regret to say even among museum workers) who think that quality can be defined by a series of competencies - the much loved BS5750 which gives Quality Assurance. Of course BS5750 gives you a series of ticked boxes - it is an attempt at ensuring quality through detection but I do not believe it solves our problem. I was recently told of a company not far from this city which was given its BS5750 (Quality Management) Award the day it went into liquidation. Is quality therefore something which it is safe to suggest we can provide in the field of museums through ticked boxes? I doubt it.

Miles Kington recently wrote "... one of the first things you find out is that museums are not run for the public, but for the people who work there. Another thing you find out is that behind the placid facade of the museum world lies a jungle of jealousy, competitiveness and vendettas:..." (Independent 20.8.91). He did us no favours, we may find it amusing, but it detracts from the fact that a majority of museum employees are committed to their subjects, and believe passionately in what they do; and try to do their best to provide quality. We undoubtedly provide quality service but do we tell people about it, and is it what they want?

How do we define quality in museums and how might we define it in museum archaeology? In any case who defines in archaeology what quality is?

Let me turn now to the search for quality in museum archaeology: first of all, the range of our roles in society as a whole and our current problems. We follow a tradition of attempting to ensure that we present and maintain a complete archive of the past (and in this sense archive means artefacts and written records); without those archives we have no role to play. We have striven to argue for standards of maintenance for those archives. We have always been concerned to ensure public access as we are agreed that it is not enough to preserve archives and that we must ensure we involve the public in the use of those archives, not just researchers. The effective management not only of additions to those archives, but also the use of those archives must be a key feature in what we do.

This Society has many times voiced its concern about contract archaeology; (Schadla-Hall 1991) museum archaeologists are not only involved in caring for archives they are also concerned with their acquisition and their subsequent use. It is vital that we ensure that quality of archive is maintained and that quality of recovery of archive is also maintained. Contract archaeology is an area in which there are no standards. We need to ensure that quality is there especially if our role is a social and public one. Our job is not to satisfy developers - or to tick boxes (not that there are many of recognised quality or standards anyway) - it is to ensure the quality of archaeology for this and future generations.

It is worth reflecting that much 19th century and even 20th century archaeology was little more than treasure hunting. Our predecessors did not always worry about the quality of our information; often the quality of the finds - "the goodies" was what counted. We should by now have got away from treasure hunting, and yet some of us still seem to find treasure hunting at least semi-acceptable. At one stage museum archaeologists believed that they should lead the crusade against treasure hunting, that they should lead a crusade for a better law or series of laws to protect the nation's past, and yet we still do not seem to be clear about what we should do today. Maybe we should compare the quality of legislation protecting portable antiquities (Cleere 1991); for example, why is it illegal to possess a bird egg collection (which is after all, part of our natural environmental heritage) but it is not illegal to possess vast quantities of artefacts (representing part of the historic environment)? What sort of quality of legislation does this country have when we rely on a medieval law with origins in the 12th century to protect (at least in England and Wales) only a small part of that historic environment? Have we failed to provide the right quality of information to legislators to actually make a real impact? Should we be concerned about the quality of legislation? The Scots undoubtedly have a better system, but even that needs review (Sheridan 1992). Now that we do have in place a measure of quality - registered museums - could we not use registered museums as a key point in new legislation to ensure reporting of all portable antiquities?

At the end of the day when we talk about quality we must consider the quality of service that we provide; the vast majority of museum archaeologists are paid directly or indirectly by the public purse. What quality of service do we provide to that public in return? We are going to hear a great deal about that in subsequent papers. At our last conference in Hull we devoted a great deal of time examining the ways in which we should provide a service to the public and the sort of service that it should be. Again returning to Corner and Harvey (1991), they argue very cogently that the last ten years has seen "an emphatic projection of new perspective upon the national past and future, involving new ways of relating imaginatively to continuity whilst admitting new principles of economic and cultural change", in other words a reinterpretation of the past - admittedly the most recent past - but what is good for the recent past is also good for the distant past. I argued recently about the power we have to manipulate images and the care we need to take in manipulating such images

(Schadla-Hall forthcoming) and also the way in which we deal with complex ideas and information. One of our key qualities should be the quality of honesty. The quality of honesty means that we need to stand up some times and say "we don't know" or "there are several alternatives", and explain why. Interpretation of the past does have an impact on interpretation of the present; we should not allow ourselves to join the disorganised but developed process of de-intellectualising interpretation; even if we need to look at new methods of presentation. Whilst I would not want to see museum archaeologists cast in the role of guardians of the heritage - mystical high priests - (Prince 1988) we have to strive for honesty, not certainty, if our product is to be effective. A single interpretation is a lot easier than multiple interpretation and is much more economic. But is the quality of what we have to say, in terms of honesty of the product, improved by that? Are we now being swept away by new approaches to quality presentation into being less honest about the quality of the information we give people? I am not sure what Brian Durrans will say about cultural identity and museums (Durrans this volume) but I become increasingly convinced that the nature of English, if not British Society since 1970s, has resulted in the failure to accept roots, or recognise roots and that our culture is less recognisable in terms of society or community and more recognisable in terms of artefacts, buildings and monuments, and here we do have a vital role.

So back to plaiting fog - I am not sure that the changes that take place around us, and for us are greater than they every have been. I suspect that we have always been fairly adaptive, but we are more aware and conscious of what we might contribute to society - and at the same time more frustrated by our inability to deal with all those potential contributions because of a lack of resources. We feel that we can recognise a series of problems that need to be faced and answered, whilst at the same time we have lost some direction as we have been sidetracked into new (and often spurious) issues. We resemble the proverbial group of "blind indians" trying to work out what an elephant is - the first blind indian feels the elephants leg and says its a tree, the second its tail and says its a snake - and so on - what we need is a clarity of sight and a reaffirmation about what we are trying to do, and secondly, we need to approach our clarified tasks with a commitment to quality. I would suggest that our task is to preserve, maintain, and use our information to benefit society, (and that we are thrust increasingly into the role of providing something, however, that our customers do not want). If we are clear about these points, then even if we cannot plait the fog we might at least be able to part it a little - but it is not enough to do that alone - we must also strive for quality of preservation, of argument, of protection and, above all, for quality of service, not to ourselves, not to special interest groups, but to society (our customers) as a whole.

We are forever picking up the pieces, and we need to be able to change (change is, after all, a key to quality), but we must, if we are to be able to make a contribution to the society in which we live, and which we serve, not get lost in the fog of peripheral ideas, but state our purpose, clearly define our aims, make sure that our customers are given what they want, not just what we think they should get, and build quality into everything which we do.

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ARCHIVES AND PUBLICATION IN THE REAL WORLD

Peter Hinton, Museum of London

An introduction to the archive

Over the past year or so the archaeological and museums professions have witnessed a growing debate over what we have come to call "the archive", the data and materials resulting from archaeological fieldwork.

The growth of interest in this subject in the museum profession has resulted in part because by inventing "the archive", the archaeological profession has renamed and thus rehabilitated what used to be called "the unpublished backlog". This use of Newspeak has unfortunately allowed the all-too-real problem of a large backlog of archaeological data meriting publication to become obscured by the debate on the purpose, creation and maintenance of the archive. Of course, some parts of many archives have been synthesised and published - nevertheless, a school of thought persists that the creation of an archive is the end product of the rescue archaeological process.

In this paper I intend to look at the current realities of archaeological funding, and against this background examine the possibilities for combining the processes of creating archives and of producing publications, the problems of storage, and the scope for discarding material.

Archaeological funding and the recession

There can be no doubt that this is not a particularly good time for archaeological funding.

A recent survey by RESCUE, the British Archaeological Trust (Spoerry 1992) shows that grants from English Heritage, Cadw and Historic Scotland for archaeological projects have increased by 14% in real terms over the last five years. This figure is better than many archaeologists might have expected, though it may be that the shortcomings of funding for some nations have been masked by figures provided by Historic Scotland, showing that organisation to have spent £1.5m on archaeology in 1990/1. Whether archaeological funding for England and Wales has seen a small increase or a small decrease over the last half decade is less important than the fact the total is very small in contrast to the requirement - the national heritage bodies have very limited resources, and certainly do not seem to be very vocal in campaigning for increased funds.

Five years ago the Manpower Services Commission provided a quarter of the money spent on archaeological projects in Britain. MSC schemes are over, and their successor, Employment Training, has proved to have only very limited application to archaeology.

Local authorities, surprisingly, seem to have maintained the same level of of funding over the last five years, in spite of struggling with poll tax capping. Local authority contributions are mainly to core costs, normally funding projects only where the local authority is acting as the developer.

The biggest change to archaeological finances over the past five years is the growth in developer funding. Nationally, the proportion of archaeological funds deriving from developers has grown from 1% five years ago to 48% in 1990/1. In London, the increase has been more dramatic: following the deregulation of the stock exchange, the Big Bang brought development to London on a scale massive even by the capital's standards. In 1990/1, developers contributed 76% of the archaeological funds for London. For most English regions in the same year, the proportion of grants raised from developers fell between 35 and 40%; in Wales the figure was 14%; and in Scotland developers contributed less than 1% of archaeological monies (Spoerry 1992).

But late in 1990 the recession struck. Development in London came to a virtual standstill, and as a result, the Museum of London declared about 250 archaeologists redundant. Not only did fieldwork projects suffer: there was a knock-on to archives and publication. Problems with cashflow and the overall financial well-being of the organisation dictated that over half the staff engaged on research and publication were lost.

Lack of money in the development and construction industries not only reduces the need for archaeological work, but also encourages the growth of competition for that work still required. In the absence of proper regulation, competition is already having an effect on the briefs and specifications for archaeological work, largely because an organisation's fear of losing contracts encourages reduction in the scope of tenders for individual projects. Post-excavation analysis and publication - especially in the case of a PPG16-style (DoE 1990) evaluation exercise - are normally the first victims of cost-cutting, and there is a great danger that the effects of the new approach to awarding archaeological contracts will be visible in inferior archives and a growing backlog.

Much hand-wringing will undoubtedly ensue, but as a profession we need to face up to the new circumstances. The way in which archaeological work is commissioned has changed, and opinions on the duration of the recession are, at the time of writing, party-political as much as economic in origin: whatever the true story, it will some time before recovery is perceptible in the archaeological world. The Thatcher boom years are over for archaeology, and archaeological employment - a good barometer for the development industry seems set to remain in recession.

Not only are there less archaeologists employed now than last year, but less than there were five years ago (Spoerry forthcoming).

There is obviously a temptation to apply harsh measures in order to become "lean and mean" effective tenderers, to short-change the creation and curation of archives, to abandon research programmes leading to publication, and to axe training and the development of new archaeological strategies. I believe that economies can be made in a more constructive way: undoubtedly the archive of comprehensive analyses of all data can no longer be sustained, but with the application of selectivity good quality archives can be produced in parallel with useful archaeological publications.

The growth of the backlog

In the 1970s it was thought that by the end of the century most of the country's archaeological sites would have been destroyed. In the race to record sites in advance of their destruction, funding policy has dictated that most records and finds were laid aside for later study. Fortunately, better management of the archaeological resource, as evidenced by the emphasis on preservation and stronger planning conditions, means that total archaeological destruction is not likely in the timescale envisaged. Nevertheless, during the 1970s and 1980s, before and during the Big Bang, a large body of data and material developed. This presents two problems: first the data require study and dissemination; secondly the records and finds require storage. The argument that development pressures are great enough and resources scarce enough to justify not tackling post-excavation immediately is no longer defensible. Neither is a disorganised onslaught on the mass of stored data and material. The size of the backlog does not permit exhaustive, undirected study: in this way the backlog of unpublished - and largely unknown - material will grow faster than we can erode it.

Publishing the backlog

The removal of a large backlog and the creation of good quality archives and reports is now being tackled by the Museum of London's Department of Greater London Archaeology (see end-note). The DGLA follows the model outlined in Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991), and therefore accepts the responsibility to demonstrate that any studies proposed have good academic foundation, and that the material selected for study is worthy of it. In practical terms, the DGLA is currently preparing a document assessing the current state of knowledge of London's archaeology, identifying discoveries pertinent to regional and national research questions, and highlighting lacunae in local knowledge. At the same time, the backlog is being tackled by making accessible site archives for the finds and the site records. This involves cleaning and sorting the finds, ordering the finds records, ordering and microfiching the site records, producing a site matrix and summary site narrative, and devising broad, provisional phases - which normally requires the artefacts recovered to be dated. In addition, an Archive Guide is being prepared for publication, which will provide site summaries and indices of data contained in the archive.

This description of the work programme perhaps exaggerates the minimalist approach, but the philosophy has been to start with a broad-brush approach which can be refined later, rather than to start with the perfect approach and never get past a small proportion of sites. A lack of resources dictates that even sophistications such as acid-free packaging will have to wait until the basic run through the archive has been completed. Once this initial ordering and cataloguing of the archive has been completed, an assessment will be carried out of the potential and extent of the data held in each site archive, considered in the light of local and national research questions identified by the document referred to above.

It is at the assessment stage of the archaeological process that the approach to the data can be refined. The assessment establishes the academic potential of the results of a project, devises methodologies to realise that potential, and selects the material and records to which those methodologies are applied. The assessment results in the establishment of a programme defining the most efficient interaction of stratigraphic, artefactual, ecofactual and documentary analyses. This "ideal" programme is then adjusted until it fits the available resources.

Disseminating the data

This rigorous regime of selectivity should result in a carefully structured line of research which will make a significant contribution to Britain's archaeology. How do we present the results?

I think that the answer to this question is a simple one: publish them. If a topic is worth researching, it is surely worth making the results available. Publication costs are indeed considerable, but as a proportion of research costs they are small.

For aficionados of the jargon, the London experience suggests that we should work out the details of what it is essential to do to produce a good Cunliffe research archive and publication, rather than listing everything we can do to produce a Frere level III archive. This should prove to be a more interesting, more useful, and certainly cheaper exercise than counting, measuring, weighing, sorting , cataloguing, computerising and illustrating material that doesn't fit into the research design, in the hope that the archived results of such analyses will answer as yet unposed questions.

There are other methods of dissemination, and all require exploration. Archaeologists are increasingly willing to consider alternative means of publicising information, but have yet to persuade the consumers to forsake conventional publications. Consultation of single-copy archives certainly seems to be unpopular.

Nick Merriman (this volume) discusses the use of archives and museum collections in some detail, and provides some fascinating insights. There is no doubt that even the well-ordered, well-publicised Department of Urban Archaeology (DUA) archive does not bring people flooding into London to consult it, with the annual total of external enquiries around the three-figure mark. Stratigraphic records are regularly consulted internally, and at present the majority of external enquiries (about 12-20 per year) are of an academic nature rather than of commercial origin, although with the expansion of archaeological consultancy this may well change. Even more worrying is the suggestion that the computer archive is more consulted by people wanting to duplicate the system than enquire of the data it holds. The finds archive is under fairly constant consultation by DUA staff, and receives eight or nine external enquiries each month.

These consultation figures are very low in view of wealth of data in the archive, and the amount of funding sunk into its creation. To calculate the per-capita cost of creating and maintaining the archive in terms of enquirers would be facile and unfair - but sooner or later someone will.

Under-use of the archive may be partly due to a natural reluctance to travel further for information than one's own bookshelves, and partly because even the best project archives are frequently seen as repositories of records of finds too boring to keep, of retained artefacts too tedious to record, and of research results too dull to publish. The latter point is the most worrying of all: that archaeological archives have acquired the reputation of being exhaustively researched archives full of data resulting from analyses that didn't prove interesting enough to make it through to publication. Although many argue that archaeological archives are veritable treasure houses, most archaeologists seem only too aware that the Greek name for such a treasure house, thesaurus, has now come to mean a catalogue of the maximum number of ways of saying the same thing.

Ian Hodder (1991) has raised the problem of an archive which remains unused because it is thought to be dull, an assumption based largely on the lack of people using it. There is no easy way of breaking this circle, but it would help to make people aware that much of the site archive is unexplored territory, where exciting discoveries are to be made, because of a deliberate policy ensuring that the research archive contains the results of only those analyses conducted as part of a programme of research aimed at publication.

Accepting that large amounts of the site archive remain to be studied in detail, and being happy with that situation, should mean that limited resources can be devoted to publication and, of course, to ordering and indexing the material and records, providing a summary of results and an index allowing people a way in to the original data. In addition, the archive's existence should be better advertised.

Storing the archive

As discussed above, a large archive also presents storage problems. At the time of writing the Museum of London has two archaeological departments, one of which is the Department of Greater London Archaeology (DGLA) (see end-note). The DGLA holds records for approximately 1050 sites, of which approximately one third require further research and publication. In physical terms, this amounts to at least 120m of shelved site records, nearly 300,000 photographic images, and about 18,000 square feet of stored finds. This growing body of material is en route for accession to museum collections.

The museum storage costs for such a vast volume of material are enormous: the Museum of London has calculated that it costs £125 per year to store 1 cubic metre of material (Merriman, this volume), and is now seeking endowment grants from developers of £3500/m^3 for storage of archaeological finds in perpetuity.

There are strong arguments for never throwing anything away: it is a risky process which has led to disasters in the past, and will no doubt do so again, but there isn't really any choice.

The criteria for discarding material should be based on its academic - and other - potential, but must of necessity take account of how big it is. Five tons of ceramic building material may contain more information than a petrie dish of desiccated beetle gonads, but they are a lot more expensive to keep. Bags of unprocessed soil samples contain unknown potential, but left unprocessed they'll turn into grow-bags within five or ten years, so decisions need to be made about them at an early stage. Conservation of timber is extremely expensive, thus selection for retention needs to be very carefully thought out.

Subject to legal considerations, some material can be recorded and discarded. Much needs to be retained, for until it is assessed and the project's research aims thus updated, it is not known which variables require recording. What is absolutely clear is that we can no longer afford to record finds and retain them.

In the case of archaeological sites, "preservation by record" is a less satisfactory solution than "preservation in situ". But there is an important difference in the case of the archive: preservation of the site means retention of the totality of information, whereas the archive preserved in the store and in the library is a reflection of retention and recording policy already exercised on site, coloured by the research objectives and methods of the day. It is not, as some claim, a complete and objective record of the site: the most it can ever be is a complete and subjective record of the excavation - and I would doubt that any such record can truthfully be described as complete.

So although a valuable resource, the archive should not become so sacred that no finds can ever be discarded. The material was certainly not afforded that level of respect during excavation. And those seeking moral support for discarding archaeological material should be aware that the DGLA negotiated English Heritage funding for skip hire as part of a grant for assessing its archives.

The future of the archive

In conclusion, then, there is a shortage of money in British archaeology and museums. This shortage, however, provides the much-needed stimulus to re-examine the aims of our post-excavation work, and particularly of archive creation.

The profession could serve the general public, and itself, a more interesting dish if it were to take the following steps:

1. Ensuring that projects have a well-defined, justified research design from desk-top study through to synthesised, thematic publication
2. Recognising the limitations of archives as a means of reaching the public, and avoiding undertaking work which merely results in more records left on the archive shelf
3. Targeting our limited resources to well-defined, properly integrated research programmes leading to publication
4. Examining more vigorously alternative means of disseminating data
5. Ensuring that the public is aware of the the potential of the archives.

End-note: Since this paper was delivered, the Museum of London Archaeology Service has been established, superseding the Department of Urban Archaeology and the Department of Greater London Archaeology. The programme of study of data from sites in Greater London outlined above continues as part of the work of the new service.

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THE USE OF COLLECTIONS: THE NEED FOR A POSITIVE APPROACH

Nick Merriman, Museum of London

One of the key themes running through this conference is the feeling that museum archaeology is undergoing a period in which, due to financial stringency, museums are having to face a 'new realism' in contrast to what is assumed to have been a period of expansion in the 1970s and 1980s. What this paper does is to try to gauge first, in very general terms, the extent of the financial problems besetting museum archaeology across the country, and then focus specifically on the storage and use of archaeological collections as this is an issue that has been causing concern for some funding authorities.

The reason for this concern is that a number of reports published in recent years, including the National Audit Office's Report on the Management of the Collections of the English National Museums and Galleries, the Audit Commission's Report on Local Authority Museums, and the OAL-sponsored report on The Cost of Collecting, have highlighted the great costs that museums bear in housing and managing collections of all kinds. These reports themselves have been generated in a political climate which placed a great deal of emphasis on increased accountability for the activities of publicly-funded bodies. The search for accountability has led to a desire to measure as many aspects of a museum's performance as can be measured. One of these - and one that has become crucial for many museums - is the ratio between the amount of money spent on the storage and care of collections, and the public use that is made of them. Archaeological collections are generally felt to suffer more greatly than many other disciplines from this comparison, as much of the primary archive material consists of seemingly repetitive, visually unexciting, often broken, pottery, flint, bone, tile etc. In talking to colleagues in museums across the country, it has become clear that the issue of the use of archaeological collections is of great concern, both to curators and their funding authorities, and it is an issue which arouses strong feelings.

This is because when we examine the question of the space taken up by archaeological collections, and the use made of them, we strike right to the heart of what museums are for, and the dilemma that is caused by the tension between preservation and interpretation. One function of archaeological museums is to preserve archaeological material and associated information for some future time called posterity. Ultimately, we may feel that this is the most important function of a museum because without preserving the collections, eventually we would no longer have a museum. Archaeological collections differ from social history collections in this respect because, for many periods they provide virtually the only evidence for the early history of an area and in the case of excavation archives museums are the repository for primary information, acting much as the way in which a Record Office acts for documents.

This role as the preserver of what is essentially the raw materials with which a community can construct its history, is a fundamental one and in years gone by, many museums were content to fulfil primarily this role, and make the collections available to the few specialists who could track down the material.

However, simply preserving the collections for the future has little meaning if they are never used and interpreted in order to produce some vision of the past. A minority may be content to envisage their main use as being some time in several generations' time, but I would estimate that most curators would wish the archaeological collections under their care to be seen and used by the public.

Conventionally, museums used to display a great deal of their collections in their showcases. This however was alienating to all except specialists: confronted by rows and rows of dusty pots, most visitors didn't stay very long. One of the most important trends in post-war museum development has been the thinning out of encyclopaedic displays and their positioning into some sort of interpretive framework, which has made the displays more appealing to the non-specialist. While museums haven't yet succeeded in being all things to all people, they certainly attract a much more varied range of visitors than they ever did.

Having then accepted the challenge to open up museum displays to a wider range of visitors, the next great challenge for museum archaeologists is to open up the stored collections to greater use. Hitherto, most effort has been expended on making front of house displays accessible and the reserve collections have been largely unknown. The logic behind this seems to have been that it is really only the specialists who will be interested in the bulk of the collections. The rather arrogant implication of this is that the stored collections are really only being curated, at great expense, for a handful of researchers. However, as already discussed, these collections are held on behalf of the whole community and, as shown in an earlier survey, there is a huge interest in the past in Britain, especially when it is focused on the familiar and the local. Archaeology is fundamentally rooted in places, and is thus ideally placed to stimulate this interest through promoting access to archaeological collections. For this reason, we should welcome all moves to increase access to collections. However, this is of course easier said than done. It has already been shown that people do not really like to see rows and rows of similar material in displays, and now

these have mostly been removed to the stores, we are faced with the problem all over again. To borrow a phrase, how do we make the mute stones speak, especially when there are lots of them, in broken pieces, in miscellaneous cardboard boxes?

One of the difficulties of tackling this problem has been that up till now there has been no information on current practices and the current level of use of archaeological collections. To provide this information, a survey was recently undertaken by the SMA and funded mostly by the MGC which attempted, for the first time, to put some figures on the size of collections of British archaeology across the country, and to gauge the level of use made of them. I will first present some of the results of this survey, and then draw on the answers given by respondents to the survey to suggest ways in which we can tackle the problem of the **perceived** undervaluation of archaeological collections by those who provide our funds.

The survey which is the basis of the work consisted of a 4-page questionnaire which will be familiar to the majority of readers who filled it in. 221 questionnaires were sent out to museums in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland which, from their entries in the Museums Yearbook, had archaeological collections of some sort. If, by chance, your museum was missed out, this was because your entry in the Year-book didn't give this information. (The Museums Database which should have been able to provide a fairly comprehensive list of museums with archaeological collections, is totally unoperational and cannot respond to these sorts of enquiries, which is a great shame. The author now, however, has a computerised list of museums with archaeological collections, which can be made available to SMA members.)

145 responses were received to the survey, which makes a return rate of 66% - quite respectable for this sort of enterprise, and sufficiently large for the figures to give a broad indication of the state of museum archaeology across Britain in 1991. However, it is important to bear in mind when presenting these statistics that they are not absolute figures, because we do not know how the 34% who did not reply to the survey might have responded to the questions.

Fig. 1 **'HAS THE MUSEUM SUFFERED FROM A DECLINE IN BUDGETS'?**

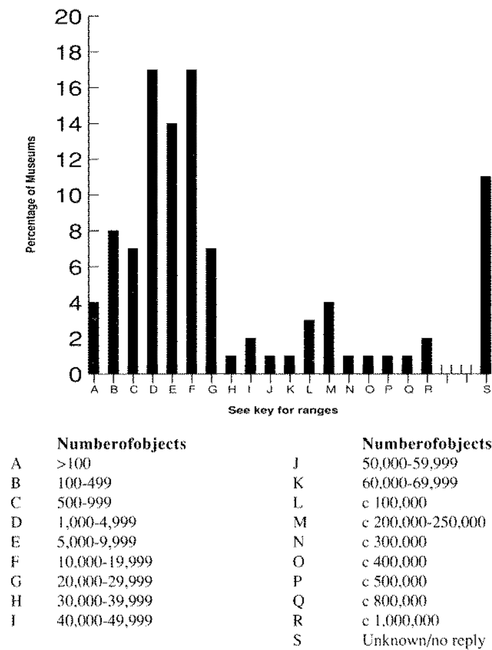
	%
Yes	38
No	62

Of those answering 'Yes':

82% had suffered a cut in revenue budgets
52% had suffered a cut in capital budgets
38% felt that poll tax capping, or the threat of it, had been a factor in the decline of their budgets

To begin with the broad picture, that of museum finances. Only 38% of the museums replying felt that they had in fact suffered from a decline in budgets in recent years. Like many survey data, this raises more questions than it answers because we don't know whether those museums not replying have all suffered from a decline in budgets, but it does in fact indicate that by no means all museums feel themselves to be suffering at the moment. Of those museums whose budgets have declined, 82% had suffered a cut in revenue funding, and 52% a cut in capital funding. However, only 38% felt that poll tax capping, or the threat of it, had been a factor in the decline of budgets.

Fig. 2 **NUMBER OF OBJECTS AND COLLECTIONS**



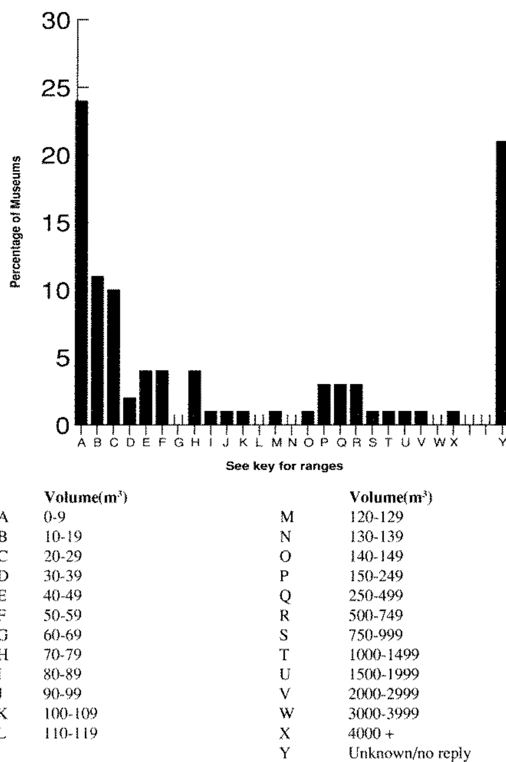
	Numberofobjects		Numberofobjects
A	>100	J	50,000-59,999
B	100-499	K	60,000-69,999
C	500-999	L	c 100,000
D	1,000-4,999	M	c 200,000-250,000
E	5,000-9,999	N	c 300,000
F	10,000-19,999	O	c 400,000
G	20,000-29,999	P	c 500,000
H	30,000-39,999	Q	c 800,000
I	40,000-49,999	R	c 1,000,000
		S	Unknown/no reply

When we turn to the question of the use of archaeological collections, we have to begin by looking at the size of archaeological collections across Britain: These vary hugely, from those museums having tiny collections of less than 100 objects (mostly collections that are not being added to) - these constitute about 4% of museums, to those with massive collections of a million objects or more - these constitute about 2%. As fig. 2 shows, the largest cluster of museum collections (48%) is those having between 1,000 and 20,000 archaeological objects. This itself is going to be inaccurate because of the problems involved in defining what an object is. The questionnaire made a distinction between objects as small finds in the first question, and bulk material such as sherds in the second question, but some respondents unfortunately included bulk sherds in the first category, as small finds. Nevertheless, one or two useful conclusions can be drawn

from these figures. The first is that 90% of respondents felt they could actually attempt an answer on the size of their collections. Although many cheerfully admitted that their figures were 'guesstimates', it does suggest that curators are beginning to get to grips with their documentation problems. The second conclusion - perhaps a little more contentious - is that the majority of museums have manageable archaeological collections in terms of size. It should be stressed, of course, that this should be qualified by noting that the collections of many museums would swell enormously if material excavated and held by archaeological units were transferred to them. This, however, is a different problem and not one to be dealt with here, as the survey is concerned with collections which are actually the responsibility of museums at the moment.

The same is more or less true of museums' holdings of bulk archaeological material.

Fig. 3 **VOLUME OF BULK MATERIAL**



	Volume(m^3)		Volume(m^3)
A	0-9	M	120-129
B	10-19	N	130-139
C	20-29	O	140-149
D	30-39	P	150-249
E	40-49	Q	250-499
F	50-59	R	500-749
G	60-69	S	750-999
H	70-79	T	1000-1499
I	80-89	U	1500-1999
J	90-99	V	2000-2999
K	100-109	W	3000-3999
L	110-119	X	4000 +
		Y	Unknown/no reply

Collections of bulk pottery, tile, bone etc. also vary widely, with the majority of museums (45%) having to deal with relatively small volumes of 1-30m^3 - although one museum claims to have to store over 4000m^3 of material. This time, however, a fifth of museums did not know the volume taken up by their bulk finds and so could not provide a figure.

These, then, are the basic patterns in the size of archaeology collections. What has become of increasing concern, however, is that there is an annual cost implication for museum budgets in the continued storage of this material. After the Lord and Lord Report on the Cost of Collecting, it became clear that on average two thirds of all museums' operating costs are subsumed under the management and care of collections. The report also provided a formula for calculating the 'real' storage costs of a box of material taking up a certain amount of storage space. The figures are only very approximate, but they have had the effect of concentrating the minds of both curators, managers and funding bodies on the costs of storage. In the Museum of London, for example, it has been calculated that it costs around £125 a year to store material occupying one square metre of storage space.

The SMA review of the HBMC storage grant scheme has shown that it does not cover realistic storage costs, and a gap in funding provision has opened up. This has prompted both museum directors not familiar with archaeology, and funding bodies themselves, to question why so much money is committed to storing, year after year, broken pottery and old bones which no-one wants to see. The results have been that many museums have been seeking to divest themselves slowly of this responsibility. I have heard, for example, of one borough museum being instructed by its council not to store material from another borough. The reason given for this was that the costs for storing the material from the other borough should be borne by the other borough's council.

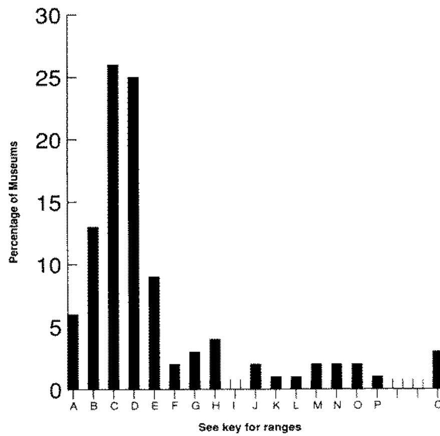
This sort of invidious attitude is one that may occur with greater frequency as we move towards a cost-centred approach to museum work. We must convince our funding bodies, and even occasionally unsympathetic museum management, of the community benefit of storing archaeology collections. Now, to convince people of the community benefit of collections, we must draw upon the great public interest in the past - particularly the local past - and encourage this interest to express itself by using archaeological collections more actively.

At the moment, there is a common feeling that excavation is dynamic, exciting, controversial and socially-involved, while archaeological collections or archives in museums are uninteresting, lifeless, and of no consequence. This may be as much to do with the adverse popular image of museums in general as with a perception of archaeological collections, but the accusation is a real one.

In an attempt to give some more concrete background to general impressions, the collections survey tried to gain a picture of the level and variety of use to which museum archaeology collections are currently put. In order to avoid unnecessary questions, it was taken for granted that

museums undertook temporary displays, loans, and allowed researchers to inspect the collections by appointment. In retrospect, this was perhaps too bold a generalisation. It was also taken for granted that museums display material, although as fig. 4 shows, not all museums holding archaeological material put it on display (6% have no material exhibited).

Fig. 4. **PERCENTAGE OF MATERIAL ON DISPLAY**

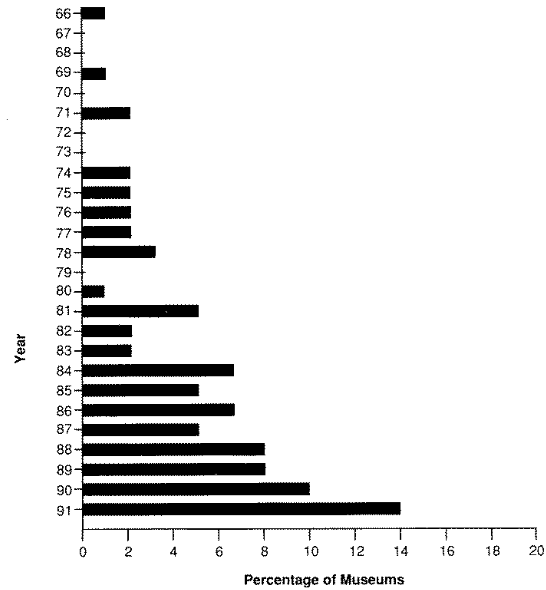


	PercentageonDisplay		PercentageonDisplay
A	0	I	30
B	< 1	J	40
C	1-4	K	50
D	5-9	L	60
E	10-14	M	75
F	15-19	N	80
G	20-24	O	90
H	25-29	P	100
		Q	unknown/no reply

Certainly, only a small percentage of holdings are generally exhibited in the permanent displays: 64% of museums have less than 10% of their archaeological material on display. Many of those replying also pointed out that they pursued a regular programme of temporary exhibitions in which archaeological material from the study collections was displayed.

Pleasingly, archaeological displays seem to be being updated quite regularly:

Fig. 5 **UPDATING OF DISPLAYS**



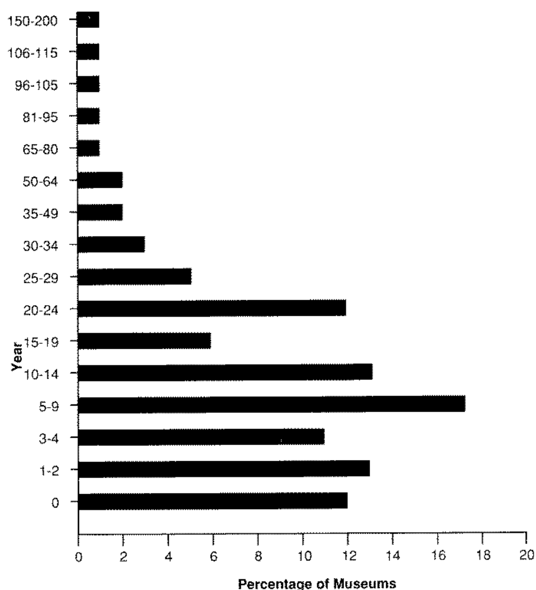
14% of the museums responding have substantially changed their archaeology displays this year (1991); if these are included, 52% have done so in the last five years, and 73% have in the last ten years.

Clearly, then, museum archaeologists are being very active in displaying collections to the public in galleries and exhibitions, and this is probably the way in which most people encounter archaeology collections.

What about, though, the generally much larger percentage of perhaps less visually attractive material that is not on display? It is the use of this - or apparent lack of it - that has been causing most concern.

The first thing to examine, then, is the number of enquiries received to view the stored collections in the year.

Fig. 6 **REQUESTS TO VIEW COLLECTIONS**



These are disappointingly small. 12% of museums - mostly those with very small archaeological collections, often not displayed - received no requests to view the collections. The majority of museums (53%) receive between 0 and 10 requests to view the archaeological collections in the course of the year. Only three museums received over 100 enquiries - and this figure may be doubtful because some museums did not distinguish between archaeological and non-archaeological requests. It should also be borne in mind, of course, that these figures also mask what might be the quite extensive study of a large part of the collections by a single specialist. What is clear, however, is that individual requests to examine the collections are few, and most likely to be restricted to specialist researchers.

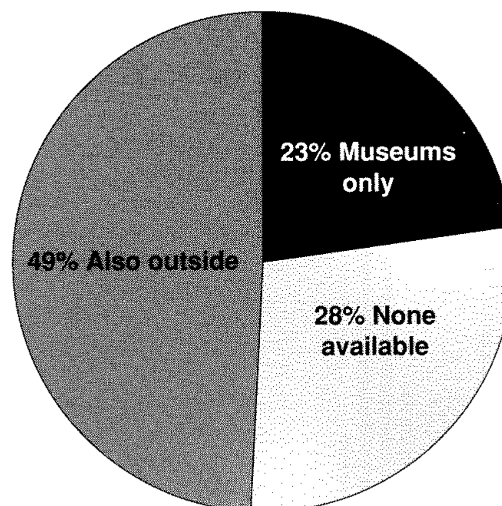
If we take stock so far, what we have is a picture of archaeological collections of varying size, with fairly modern displays, but relatively little put on display and relatively few enquiries to visit the non-displayed material.

Museums do seem to be catering for the needs of specialists, but how else are the collections used by the non-specialist public?

One of the ways in which collections are brought to the tangible attention of the public is through handling collections.

Gratifyingly, 72% of the museums replying have handling collections.

Fig. 7 **PERCENTAGE WITH HANDLING COLLECTIONS**



Of these, a third use the handling collection in the museum alone, while two thirds also manage to send out the handling collection to schools groups. This is important, because devolving the stored collections out of the building and encouraging active use of them is one way of demonstrating their value as a community educational resource, and this is already being done by a great deal of museums.

However, other than this, the methods used by museums to open up their collections to the public are relatively limited. A catch-all question asked what other ways the study collections are made available to the public.

Fig. 8
OTHER WAYS WHICH COLLECTIONS ARE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC

	%
For Examination by Appointment	23
At Evening Classes, Study Days, Lectures, etc	19
At Open Days and on Guided Tours	14
In Handling Sessions for Schools, The Blind etc	12
Loans to Local Archeaological Groups	5
Liasion with Local ArchaelogicalGroups	3
Study Centre or Teaching Gallery	2
School Visits	2
Road Shows	2
Teachers Courses	1
Volunteers	1
Handlists of Objects	1
Little Demand To View Collections	9
No Response	8

Nearly a quarter of museums could only say that the collections were available to researchers by appointment, although I assume this is a service provided by all museums. 18% said their collections were regularly made available in lectures, seminars, evening classes and study days. These again, tend to be attended by those who are already fairly committed to the subject. 14% of museums replying hold open days and guided tours of the stores where the undisplayed riches of the collections can be viewed, and 12% specifically mentioned that they provide handling sessions for schoolchildren or the visually impaired. Only 5% said they undertook loans to libraries or to local societies (as opposed to other museums); 3% regularly involved local archaeological groups in handling or processing material; 2% had some sort of study centre or teaching gallery, and only 1% undertook teachers courses or roadshows. 8% made no reply to the question, and 9% said there was very little demand from the public to see the collections.

This, then, is what actually happens. Use of the collections tends to be relatively conventional, and those more imaginative initiatives are inevitably constrained by staffing resources, time and money. All museum archaeologists realise they could do more in a less pressured and better-funded world, and a follow-up question was designed to gain suggestions as to how curators themselves feel that collections could be made available to the public.

Fig. 9. **SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING PUBLIC USE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS**

	%
Greater opportunities for handling material	18
Greater publicity of all kinds	16
Better schools service, tied in to National Curriculum	12
Practical demonstrations, workshops, day schools	10
Devaluation of collections: site museums, loans	
Travelling Exhibitions	9
Greater number of open days	9
Computer databases giving information on study collections	7
Open storage	6
Closer liaison with adult education groups	6
Provision of study rooms	3
Closer liaison with universities: attract student projects	2
Incorporate archaeological objects into social history displays	2

The question was 'What other suggestions do you have for increasing public use of archaeological collections?' 18% of respondents felt that much could be achieved by promoting greater opportunities for handling objects, whether by increasing the number and range of handling collections, by introducing handling areas into the museum, or fully-equipped resource centres. The Archaeological Resource Centre in York is frequently mentioned in this connection, and clearly has had a substantial impact on curators' thinking about how reserve collections might be used.

Almost as great an emphasis was placed on generating greater publicity about the collections themselves, through published catalogues or handlists; information about them published in leaflets; publicity on radio and television, and by linking in with the interest generated by excavations or archaeological television programmes.

Linked to this, 7% specifically mentioned the use of computer databases, possibly with images available, which give information on the collections not on display - ideally through a terminal in the galleries.

Communicating about the existence and contents of museum archaeological collections is clearly seen as one of the keys to promoting greater appreciation of them and thus greater use.

The devolution of collections out of stores to other sites is something already mentioned, and finds favour with a good proportion of curators. Some felt that a strong emphasis should be placed on the provision of a better schools service. In particular, we now know across the country what children are going to be taught at particular stages. Curators felt that this offers a great opportunity for tying in closely our loans service and school teaching into the needs of the national curriculum, using archaeological material.

Almost as frequently mentioned was the suggestion of devolving collections to non-museum venues such as banks or libraries, through a greater use of travelling exhibitions, and to site museums where objects can be seen more in context.

The next best thing to devolution is perhaps opening up the reserve collections more frequently to the casual visitor. A number of respondents felt that it would be useful for museums to put on greater numbers of open days which would include tours behind the scenes and opportunities to see people at work. Not only does this open up the collections to scrutiny to a greater extent, but it also helps to dispel the image of the museum as just comprising a display space populated by somnolent warders.

Taking this a step further, others argued for a much greater use of open storage - something that does seem increasingly to be happening - and some felt that greater opportunities should be taken to use collections in practical demonstrations, workshops, and day schools.

The other suggestions made were greater liaison with adult education groups, for such things as processing material; the provision of separate study rooms; attempts to attract student research projects by liaising more closely with university departments, and by incorporating archaeological objects more into social history displays.

The picture gleaned from this survey of the state of museum archaeology across the country with regard to overall funding and the use of collections, is, I would argue, not half as gloomy as we might convince ourselves in our darker moments. Financial constraints are undeniably there, and they hit hard the individual museums suffering from them. The good news is that not every museum is suffering. The other optimistic generalisation that can be made is that a great deal of effort is being put into some services to promote greater use of museums' archaeological collections. Within the constraints of staffing and budgets, most museums seem to be making efforts to open up their archaeological collections to a wider, non-specialist audience, and some of them have been doing this rather imaginatively.

One of the useful things about undertaking a nation-wide survey is that it becomes possible to draw one or two threads together and build on the experiences of others. I would like to suggest ways in which museum archaeologists might begin to promote wider use of the collections in their care. Some of these will be expensive and have staffing implications; others will be achievable within a progressive policy of general curatorial work; each museum can pick the approach which fits in best with its own particular circumstances.

The prerequisite is to know what is actually in your collections. This must involve computerisation of the collections, as a fundamental tool for effective collections management. The ideal would be for this computerisation to be tied in with a longer-term plan to make this information available through terminals placed in the galleries. For example, if someone could go into a gallery and use a simple terminal to call up all of the material from their parish, I am sure we would receive a great deal more requests to examine this material. If this database can include images of the material, as we can see at the new Micro Gallery at the National Gallery's Sainsbury Wing, so much the better.

This is all part of a fundamental policy which is to publicise the extent of our collections. I would estimate that one of the greatest barriers to increased use of collections is that most people do not know about their existence, and also that they are unaware of the range of services offered by the museum. Publicity about both of these areas is vital. Holding open days which achieve press coverage is a good way of gaining publicity. An orientation area at the entrance to the galleries is also an extremely good way of publicising the behind-the-scenes services that the museum can offer. Once computerisation has been achieved, it might also be possible to have catalogues of the reserve collections available as printouts in the gallery, arranged by period, object and provenance.

If we adopt a policy of computerising the collections and publicising their existence, obviously we must have systems in place which encourage and facilitate their greater use. It would probably be too costly in terms of staff time to give individual attention to every behind-the-scenes visitor, so we must organise the reserve collections so that they can be interpreted by the visitor him- or herself. The simplest solution - and one that has been adopted for many years by a number of museums - is to see the study collections as annexes of the main galleries. This sort of approach has been carried out successfully, for example, with the British Museum's collection of medieval and later ceramics, all of which are in glass cases in the departmental area, with computerised catalogue available.

A step beyond this might be to arrange the stored collections in viewable conditions and hold guided interpretive tours, perhaps on specific themes, at regular intervals. This method has been used at the Museum of London, admittedly on social history collections, and proved to be extremely popular. This approach will be fundamental tenet in the Museum's new support centre, because it has been realised that themed guided tours by knowledgeable curators of the collections are a marvellous way of allowing people to gain first-hand experience of the riches of the collections and of bringing the history of the area or period alive through its material culture. The usefulness of this approach is that once an accessible storage system is in place, the guided tours can be conducted at a frequency appropriate to demand and staff availability.

A more labour-intensive approach would be to have handling areas in galleries themselves, along the lines of the ARC or the Discovery Centre at Liverpool Museum. These sort of initiatives where visitors can undertake guided self-study really point the way in which museums should be going, because they allow the richness of the collections to be exploited, and they encourage the visitor to draw his or her own conclusions about what the past was like. By no means all museums will be able to undertake this sort of labour-intensive work, but what the survey suggests is a graded range of options for promoting greater

use of collections that museums can select according to their level of resources.

As a minimum, we must be geared up to be able to deal with greater use. This involves knowing what our collections are, where they are, being able to retrieve them, and storing them so that they can easily be made visible. We must then publicise the collections and the services we offer. The level of service itself depends upon funding and staffing, but perhaps more importantly on enthusiasm, will, and commitment. Whether the service ranges from the occasional open day and handling session to a fully operational support centre with guided tours and public access interactive computer screens, we all have something to offer to the public. The message of the survey, I would argue, is that funding may be short, but attitudes are positive and healthy, and that by drawing on the ideas and experiences of our colleagues in this way, we can open up our collections to a wider public, please our funding authorities, and most importantly, be more effective at our job of encouraging people to take an interest in the past.

THE WINCHESTER EXPERIENCE: A CASE STUDY IN THE USE OF COLLECTIONS

Geoffrey T. Denford, Winchester Museums Service

The Winchester Museums Service (WMS) is a section within the Leisure Department of the Winchester City Council. The Service operates from the Historic Resources Centre (HRC) in Hyde Street, Winchester, where curatorial and excavation staff are based and where the archives, stores, library, public study room and lecture room are located. There are three branch museums: the City Museum, the Westgate and the Guildhall Gallery each staffed with three part-time wardens working a rota system and responsible for security, cleaning and sales points.

Recently the WMS underwent a review by the District Auditor to examine the arrangements made by Winchester City Council in support of museums. This followed the Audit Commission's national review which resulted in "The Road to Wigan Pier? Managing Local Authority Museums and Art Galleries". The local review concentrated on a number of areas including collections and services provided and various recommendations were made.

The collections of the WMS have their origin in the Hampshire Museum, opened to the public in 1847 and financed entirely by private subscription. In 1851, the running of the Museum was transferred to the Corporation under the provisions of the Museums Act (1845) and its name was changed to the "City Museum". The Corporation opened its second museum, in the restored medieval Westgate, in 1898. In 1903 the City Museum moved into the purpose-built premises which it occupies today. Between 1903 and 1947 a series of part-time, honorary curators did battle with the problems of overcrowding and shortage of display space. In 1947 the post of professional curator was established and the collections "rationalised" (Lewis, forthcoming). A decision was made to develop the Museum's role as an archive of local historical and archaeological material. The well-decayed natural history collections were discarded, though foreign archaeology, including a collection of Egyptology, and geology were retained. The appointment of a professional curator also saw the start of the systematic archaeological study of the town that has continued ever since.

Up to 1961 a number of small-scale excavations were conducted by the Museum which, with limited resources, attempted to monitor development in the city. Direct involvement in archaeological excavation by the Museum virtually ceased from 1961 to 1971 when responsibility was ceded to the Winchester Excavations Committee. A series of large-scale excavations were undertaken by Martin Biddle, director of the Winchester Research Unit (WRU) which was set up to co-ordinate publication of the results. Since 1971 responsibility for the city and district's archaeological heritage, including excavation and field survey, has been the responsibility of the Archaeology Section of the Museums Service. In 1980 the Museums Section and the Archaeology Section moved into the HRC (Lewis, 1981), a complex of listed buildings repaired and restored in 1979 and planned to receive the combined excavation archives of:

1. Winchester Museums (pre-1961)
2. Winchester Research Unit (1961-1971)
3. Winchester Archaeology Section (1971-present)

For the first time the staff of the two sections were housed under one roof and were able to share resources. The overwhelming mass of new material coming into the Service and requiring storage comes from the Archaeology Section.

Storage accommodation has been, and continues to be, a problem. Prior to the move into the HRC in 1980 the Museum and the Archaeology Section maintained their own separate stores in a series of temporary and wholly inappropriate facilities. With the move into the HRC the Museum acquired three, purpose-built, environmentally controlled stores each equipped with roller-racking providing some 2 km of shelf space. The environments of two of the stores were adjusted for the storage of "bulk" material: chiefly bone and pottery. The third store was designated a "sensitive store" for metals and glass. Acceptance of responsibility for the storage of the archive resulting from the 1961-1971 excavations led to these stores being rapidly filled. A very large amount of material was involved, estimated at five times the size of the collections already held by the Museum. Continuous excavation by the Museum's own unit brought, and continues to bring, constant pressure on storage accommodation. In 1983, to relieve this pressure, the Museum built a new store, of steel portal frame construction with metal cladding, in the City Council's central depot. The store provides 3 km of shelf space on roller-racking (Denford, 1984). A further store in the depot, equipped with pallet racking and a hydraulic stacker, was acquired in 1987 to house worked stone and bulky local history items. These stores are, unfortunately, located one and a half miles from the HRC with all the inconvenience this brings, particularly for staff undertaking post-excavation work and requiring constant access to material. Planning restrictions prevented the construction of such structures at Hyde in the middle of a conservation area. These stores provided a brief breathing

space. Development in the city in the 1980's and the consequent archaeological investigations rapidly filled them. In particular, the excavations on the site of the new Brooks Shopping Centre in 1987-1988, at the time the largest site being excavated in the country, made great demands on storage space: some 650m of shelving were required. An added difficulty in coping with the archive from the Brooks was finding storage for the well-preserved timbers from the water-logged levels of the site. A temporary solution was the provision of one large collapsible and several domestic loft tanks.

The storage of the paper and photographic archives resulting from all three phases of archaeological activity (ie pre-1961, 1961-1971, post-1971) is presently being addressed. Existing accommodation for the paper archive at the HRC falls short of the expected standards in both security and environmental needs. The archive is kept in the roof area where temperature and humidity are liable to seasonal and daily fluctuation. For this reason the HRC has been pronounced provisionally eligible for HBMC grant aid. The sum of £5000 has been made available by the City Council to fund a feasibility study for a new archive store which will be an extension to one of the existing buildings at the HRC. It will be designed to meet current standards of collections care and specifically for the storage of the paper archive and photographic negatives and transparencies (as well as for prints, watercolours and oil paintings). Should the project proceed the Museum will be looking for grant aid from the MGC Capital Grants Scheme and from the Area Museums Service for equipment. Most importantly, a £48,000 storage grant has been applied for from English Heritage. This is the amount for which the Service is thought to be eligible deriving from the HBMC funded excavations undertaken by the Archaeology Section from 1972 to around 1981.

Continuing excavation by the Archaeology Section will necessitate provision of further storage accommodation. Virtually all new excavation projects in Winchester are developer funded thus the current recession has brought some respite. Politically, funds for storage can be difficult to justify. The provision of grant aid can facilitate the process by acting as a "sweetener". However, storage accommodation in the congested south-east is expensive. The Museum is already searching further and further afield within the Winchester district for possible new stores. As a corollary to this some thought has been given to acquiring storage in lower-cost areas. The idea of regional storage centres, perhaps for certain categories of material such as human or animal bone, is a possible way forward. The District Audit's review acknowledged that a problem exists.

The registration process which the museum underwent, successfully, in 1990 obliged it to put its collecting policy in writing (published in the Winchester Museums Service Annual Report for 1990-1991). This is rooted in the geographical area defined by the district's administrative boundaries. The major provider of archaeological services within the district has, thus far, been the Museum's Archaeology Section. While developer funding for finds processing, conservation and purchase of boxes has been possible for some projects, no provision for long-term storage costs has been possible. The position regarding provision of funds for the storage of archives deposited by "out-of-area" organisations excavating within the district through the process of competitive tendering is similarly ill-defined. Material arising from archaeological excavations by outside bodies will normally be accepted only where the total excavation archive has been ordered to a standard agreed beforehand between the excavator and museum staff. The WMS has issued guidelines to be followed (Denford, 1989; Qualmann, 1989).

Not all the material excavated and processed by the Archaeology Section will enter the Museum's permanent collections. A policy of "record and discard" has been implemented for certain classes of finds such as brick and tile, water-logged wood, unworked stone and environmental samples.

The position regarding the permanent collections and their documentation reflects the recent history of the material: whether acquired pre-1961, 1961-1971 or post-1971 through the work of the Archaeology Section. The collections acquired pre-1961, along with material presented by outside groups and individuals, whether excavated or not, are catalogued using MODES. This system was introduced in 1987 and three terminals are now in use, not only for archaeology and numismatics but also for pictures, local history, ethnography and for cataloguing our growing library. Recent accessions are catalogued directly on the computer. However, there is an enormous backlog in archaeology. A card catalogue exists, described by Rance (1973), which is being transferred to the computer. So far 3000 records have been entered, just under 20 per cent of the total. The approach has been to enter "usable" portions of the backlog, for example, the lithic collection, all the Bronze Age bronzes, certain "named" collections and so forth. This was felt to be more immediately useful than starting at accession number 1 and working forwards. The major problem has been finding staff time for the inputting. The Museum was fortunate in having the services of an ex-archaeology student working on an ET scheme for twelve months. Working full-time he greatly progressed the situation. Otherwise only one man-day per week, on average, can be devoted to the problem. The local review recognised that

a significant backlog exists and recommended that a timetable be drawn up and priorities set to ensure progress within a reasonably tight timescale. The possibility of a further ET employee exists in the near future.

The archives from the WRU excavations (1961-1971) and from the Archaeology Section (1971 to present) continue to be the subject of post-excavation research. The strategy will be to assign each site a museum accession number but thereafter to make as little change as possible to the existing records. This was the method recommended by the MDA when they undertook to report on our documentation procedures (Roberts, 1984). The model adopted by the Museums Service for archives deriving from post-1971 archaeological investigations is based on the requirements set out in "The management of archaeological projects" (English Heritage, 1989). It includes the construction of Project and Archive Summaries (Qualmann, 1989). These will form the basis of entries in the accessions file. However, until this is done use of this archive by outside researchers will not be easy. Site records, essentially, refer to the structural relationships of the site whereas most enquiries tend to be object-based. With time and effort enquiries can be dealt with but, as most work in the Archaeology Section is now project-funded, staff are simply not available. The production of Project and Archive Summaries and the integration of their contents into the Museum's documentation system should alleviate this. Statistics relating to the use of the archives by researchers and members of the public are published in the Service's Annual Reports. The 1990-1991 report is now available.

The publications programme of the WMS includes two series of archaeological reports: Winchester Excavations 1949-60 (two volumes published, a third imminent) and Winchester Museums Service Reports (principally excavations since 1971) of which several volumes are concurrently in preparation. Winchester Studies is produced by the Winchester Excavations Committee (covering the 1961-1971 investigations) and the latest in the series "Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester", by Martin Biddle, has just appeared. These scholarly publications provide the main entry into the collections for many researchers. A range of books, leaflets and guides caters for the general public and a newsletter, published three times a year, contains articles on recent finds, excavation news and exhibitions.

Three books recently produced in-house on the Service's DTP system have been very well received. These cover the prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods and are aimed at the non-specialist primary teacher. The demand for a schools service, which had always existed, was tackled in 1987 with the upgrading of the Assistant Keeper of Archaeology to a new post of Keeper of Education/ Antiquities. Initially, resources available to the new Keeper were limited so it was necessary to define the limits of the service that the Museum could provide. This was done geographically (in relation to the district's boundaries) and in terms of subject matter (with reference to the scope of the collections). Within these limitations a more-or-less "bespoke" service was provided with activities such as artefact handling, site visits, illustrated talks and information packs being tailored to the needs of each school's project and circumstances. The advent of the National Curriculum has made it possible to target areas that all schools are likely to be interested in and to develop resources in those areas. On the down side an Assistant Keeper of Archaeology has been lost. Statistics relating to use of the schools service are set out in the 1990-1991 Annual Report. Attendance figures for the City Museum and Westgate are published in the same place. These figures have fluctuated over the years peaking in 1986-7 (40,317 and 25,490 respectively) at the time of the Sunday Times Domesday 900 exhibition in Winchester. The removal of the entrance charge at the City Museum contributed to this rise. The previous year's figure for the City Museum was 17,868. The policy of free entry to the City Museum (a nominal charge is made at the Westgate) is likely to continue. Indeed, the local review undertaken by the District Audit states that "...it is unlikely there would be any merit in changing the existing pricing arrangements". The figures are clearly unsatisfactory, however, and point to an under-exploitation of a national cultural resource.

The City Museum, purpose-built in 1903, offers only 400m^2 of gallery space on three floors and there is no lift. A new museum/display venue is needed and the City Council has for long supported, in principle, proposals for such a project. The Service's hopes are focused on the Peninsula Barracks, vacated by the army in 1985, and in particular on the old gymnasium and Junior Ranks Club buildings. The former is envisaged as providing accommodation for new archaeological displays, the latter for local history. The advantages include not only its central location and greater space but also the interpretative benefit of occupying the site of Winchester's medieval castle. Four regimental museums already exist on the site and so there is the possibility of shared resources, for example, in the areas of catering and educational facilities. The local review suggested that the possibility of a joint arrangement with the County Council be explored.

In sum, the WMS is faced with a number of difficulties the chief of which - extra storage accommodation and staff - have resource implications and it is somewhat gratifying that the District Audit should acknowledge this in many of its recommendations. On an optimistic note, there is the

prospect of a new museum which will enable the Service to interpret its collections for the wider public more effectively than it can at present.

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TREASURE TROVE: NEW APPROACHES TO ANTIQUITIES LEGISLATION

Lady Rosamund Hanworth

As we all know, the Law of Treasure Trove goes back to Saxon times. King Richard I lost his life in a squabble trying to enforce it; in those days it was intended to preserve the king's interest in buried treasure, so that tax could not be avoided by burying one's assets. For some time now the provisions of this elderly law have become increasingly anomalous in meeting to-day's needs in an era of expanding technology and with new problems of tax avoidance added to the ancient ones.

The defects of the present legislation were highlighted for Surrey Archaeological Society by what took place at Wanborough, on a small estate lying just north of the Hogs Back, near Guildford. Here the site of a Romano-British temple was found and a large hoard of coins was discovered. Initially a few Iron Age and Roman coins had been found by responsible metal detector users who reported their find to the local museum, and the coroner was notified. It is necessary to emphasise that there are two kinds of metal detector users, and that those who act responsibly can be of very great benefit when backing up local archaeology. Unfortunately, in the course of the coroners inquest the location of the site was given out in open court and thereafter the site was raided by night. In spite of commendable police activity and later the use of surveillance equipment it was not possible to prevent the removal of an estimated £2,000,000 worth of coins, many of which later turned up on the American and European markets. When subsequently one of the perpetrators of the plunder of the Wanborough site was prosecuted for theft, his conviction was not upheld by the Court of Appeal on the basis that the Crown Court Judge had misdirected the jury. He told them all they had to be sure about was that there was a real **possibility** of the coins being found to be treasure trove. This was not so, in a criminal trial they had to be **sure beyond reasonable doubt** that the coins were treasure trove, before they could convict. In a civil case, such as an inquest, the standard is set at a lower level, on the **balance of probability**. This means if a coroners court finds that objects are Treasure Trove their decision is not binding in a criminal trial. The Wanborough case has underlined the fact that a coroner's inquest is not a tool which can be used against theft of treasure trove, thus emphasising the weakness of the law as it stands to-day.

Reports to amend the law

In 1982 the Abinger Bill was presented to the House of Lords. It was extremely short and very simple. First, it widened the categories of object deemed Treasure Trove to include "objects made of an alloy with an added proportion of gold or silver" and objects lying adjacent or in a container. Second, it sought to remove **Animus Revertendi. Animus Revertendi** is a guessing game, in which one seeks to decide the intention of the person who deposited something in antiquity. The rule is that if a thing was lost accidentally or was a votive offering to the gods, it wasn't Treasure Trove. If it had been deliberately hidden and meant to be recovered it was. Wholly artificial legal presumptions of what the intention might have been are called in in order to solve this conundrum.

The Abinger Bill made no provision against the growing evil of illegal treasure seeking, and it offered no protection to landowners. It ran out of time at the end of a parliamentary session. But it was generally understood that it had failed to win the support of the country landowners in the House of Lords.

In 1987 the Law Commission issued a report on the subject of treasure trove and recommended that an inter-departmental committee should consider the questions of policy involved and then propose the principles on which a new law should be based. In 1988 the Department of the Environment issued a Consultation Paper on Portable Antiquities and invited responses from interested bodies, which they received. But in spite of pleasant reassurances from Government, nothing was done. There was a perpetual rumour that "Legislation is in the offing" but it has always proved to be a non-starter. Accordingly we decided that the time had come for private initiative. Starting with a letter to "The Times" in October 1989 which achieved some support, we have set to work to draft a Private Members Bill to amend the law. We have a small team working on it, consisting of a lawyer, a numismatist, two archaeologists and a senior Peer who has undertaken to introduce the Bill once it has reached its final form.

Originally we intended to produce a Portable Antiquities Bill, designed to cover a wider range of objects of archaeological or historical importance, and we set out to consult a large number of interested bodies, including National Museums, your own Society, the Museums Association, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Country Landowners Association, the National Council for Metal Detecting, the Association of County Councils, the Association of District Councils, the Coroners, and very many archaeological organisations, including the Society of Antiquaries and the Council for British Archaeology. At this stage, although only three organisations were showing what might be termed negative responses, it became clear that, if we were to succeed we would be wise to limit the scope of the Bill. One factor must be emphasised, we are determined to succeed if at all possible, and to achieve success we have to be prepared to carry on endless negotiations until agreement has been reached with all interested parties, if that is at all possible! So far we have been negotiating for

two years. We feel that our bill is a step towards the comprehensive antiquities legislation we would all wish to see enacted. We do **not** go along with the argument that one Bill would preclude any further desirable legislation in the same field.

What are the doubts that have been expressed to us? The CBA fear that anything other than the Abinger Bill is unlikely to succeed. They point to the fact that it is so very short and simple, in which they see great merit. But it no longer meets the situation created by the vast increase of illegal treasure hunting and the knock-on effect of the Wanborough decision. It is of little use to pass through a bill which is so brief that it is totally innocuous, so widely drawn that everything slips through its mesh. The British Museum did not like our draft Portable Antiquities Bill at all, they were worried about the fact that it called for a lot of expertise, expense, and extra work. The Country Landowners want a Bill which will give them both more rewards and also safeguards.

We have tried to meet all these objections. We are working closely with the British Museum, both they and we have agreed to compromises, and we very much appreciate their support and co-operation. Our present draft Bill relates only to amendments to Treasure Trove and Trespass. It is far shorter than the original one, yet retains as many teeth as possible, and it provides safeguards which we very much hope will satisfy the country landowners. It may well reduce the level of expenditure incurred at present.

The draft bill in outline

Definition of Treasure Trove

a. To define the percentage of gold or silver as at least 5%, or less in the case of coins (so as to include 3rd and 4th century debased coinage).
b. To include other objects, such as bullion, jewellery etc. over 150 years old.
c. To include containers or associated objects, if any are found with a. or b. above.
d. Provision for any class of object, to be specified by the Secretary of State by an order. This would, of course, cover such objects as bronzes - one calls to mind several recent important finds.

Limitation

It is recognised that the inclusion of all single finds of coins would be too wide in view of the many thousands found every year. Some weeding-out process is needed. Museums are the bodies who can best give advice on this, but the problem as the National Museums state it, is that not every museum has a member on its staff with the necessary specialist expertise. Our view has been that this is a matter best resolved by the museums among themselves. A formula is being sought whereby those who do have such specialists on their staff are designated accordingly as places from which advice should be sought. (A list of designated museums would need to be updated from time to time according to which held this expertise).

Animus Revertendi

Has been dropped, since everything within the definition will be Treasure Trove.

Coroners Inquests

It is necessary to have a legal mechanism for dealing with Treasure Trove. The Bill retains the function of the coroner, because to assign it to some other body, e.g. magistrates, would involve cumbersome new legislation. But the bill makes important changes.

a. The coroner need not hold an inquest, after he has sought advice from the appropriate museum. He has discretion to hold one if he deems it necessary, but he does not need to empanel a jury.
b. The coroner's decision is binding. The Wanborough trials demonstrated the need for this to be so.

Reporting Finds

No longer to the police but to a coroner or to a relevant museum, within a specified time, 14 days. As the law stands, treasure hunters who have kept a find for months are able to claim that they were "just about to report it". There should be guidelines and a code of practice for how to transmit information about the circumstances of the find and for its subsequent evaluation or conservation. Failure to report without reasonable excuse will be an offence and would lead, on conviction to a fine and confiscation.

Trespass

The Bill creates a new offence of "Trespass for the purposes of searching for Treasure Trove". Without this, the police are virtually powerless to arrest a person plundering archaeological sites. The police do not see great difficulty in achieving this legislation - they have comparable powers where Trespass for poaching is concerned.

Rewards

The object of giving rewards to finders of Treasure Trove has always been, strangely, to provide a carrot to encourage **reporting**, not as a compensation if or when the Crown wishes to acquire the object. If it (or its museums) does not so wish, the object returns to the finder. So he gains either way, but the person from whose land it has been removed, may not. Some landowners have felt aggrieved, others have sought to go into partnership or make informal arrangements; to do so could encourage the wholesale exploitation of the land in the hopes of revealing more and more treasure. What the Bill seeks to do instead is to provide the landowner with safeguards over trespass and to ensure that illegal Treasure seekers do not get rewarded. Over and above, the landowner has access to the civil courts for redress.

The bill retains the present procedure whereby the Treasure Trove Reviewing Committee decides the fair market price upon which rewards are determined. It also, and most importantly, changes the law in relation to the passage of legal title. If a person buys an object in "market overt" or from a "mercantile agent", he will no longer be able to claim that he has acquired legal title to it.

Conclusion

We have now nearly completed our negotiations, we await a reply from the Country Landowners and we hope to gain the co-operation of the CBA. What is also needed is to create a climate of public opinion in favour of new legislation. A law which was devised in Saxon times, which Richard I was unable to enforce, is most certainly not appropriate for the 20th century. Why do we still labour under it?

THE PROBLEMS OF A TREASURE-HUNTING INITIATIVE

Richard Warner, The Ulster Museum.

The Law

It often comes as something of a surprise to British colleagues that Northern Ireland, though administratively part of the United Kingdom, has its own laws on a number of matters. Some of these date originally from the time when Ireland was a single administrative unit and despite their modification and updating these have retained close similarities to equivalent laws applying in the Republic of Ireland. Others date from the time between 1922 and 1972 when Northern Ireland had its own Government, legislating (or so it was hoped) in a way appropriate to the needs of the province, and usually without looking over its shoulder to Britain. The Historic Monuments Act NI (1971) though a piece of local legislation is, because of its longer history, similar to the National Monuments legislation in the Republic, though this latter has recently been updated to create the best piece of antiquities legislation in these islands. The Northern Ireland Historic Monuments Act, though nominally aimed at the protection of sites, has a number of sections relevant to treasure-hunting and portable antiquities. It is due for rewriting within the next two or three years, though there are strong hints that as a result of direct rule it may be brought slightly more into line with British legislation, which is in many ways inferior.

Under the Historic Monuments Act NI (1971)

'The finder of any archaeological object shall, within fourteen days of such finding, report the circumstances of the finding and the nature of the object ... to the Director of the Ulster Museum ... and .. shall, together with such report, forward the object found.' (section 12, 1).

'An archaeological object ... may be retained by the Director ... for a period not exceeding three months after the furnishing of the report..' (section 12, 3).

An archaeological object is defined as:

'any object .. which is, or appears to be, of archaeological or historic interest and which has, by reason of that interest, a value substantially greater than its intrinsic value or the value of the materials of which it is composed' (Section 27).

Finally:

A person shall not, save under and in accordance with a licence issued by the Ministry [now the Department of the Environment] .. dig or excavate in or under any land ... for the purpose of searching generally for archaeological objects..' (section 11, 1).

There are, of course, other sections which deal more specifically with damage to Historic Monuments, though it has to be said that even with regard to scheduled sites their only protection from interference by searchers is section 11 of the Act. It should also be said that the 'law' of Treasure Trove also applies in Northern Ireland and is interpreted more or less as in Britain, in other words in a basically ad-hoc and inconsistent fashion.

It is quite clear that the prohibition on unlicensed excavation applies, ipso facto, to treasure hunters as long as their 'purpose' can be shown to be the search for archaeological objects' as defined by the Act. This proof of purpose is the Achilles heel of the Act, as we shall discover later.

The Protagonists

State archaeology in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of two bodies - the Historic Monuments Branch of the Department of Environment (advised by a Historic Monuments Council) and the Department of Antiquities of the Ulster Museum (a national museum under a Board of Trustees). While obviously these bodies have different main roles there is a certain amount of overlap, particularly with respect to portable antiquities and treasure-hunting. The Historic Monuments Branch has the responsibility for prosecuting the Act, as well as a routine obligation to protect sites and monuments from interference. The Museum, on the other hand, has the implied obligation to record all objects reported under the Act. Incidentally, it has been a matter of concern to Museums in Britain that were 'Portable Antiquities' legislation to be enacted in England and Wales (an equivalent already exists in Scotland) they would be inundated by extra work, and I am led to believe that this has caused some opposition to the introduction of such legislation. Our experience is that while extra work is most certainly generated, this is nothing but beneficial to the institution in justifying staff numbers, bringing to light potential acquisitions and showing that the museum actually cares about the portable ancient heritage.

Treasure-hunters in Ireland are fairly well organised and the most active belong to a club or federation. This is quite useful as all the clubs and federations have been infiltrated and most such treasure-hunters are therefore 'on file'. The most active treasure-hunters are usually aware of the law, and flout it quite blatantly. This in turn means that they do not often report their finds under the Acts (Northern and Republic). A substantial number of marginally active treasure-hunters, unaware of the law, continues to report finds and these people are usually put off the hobby when told that they are breaking the law. Irish treasurehunters

belong to all classes and professions, though it is interesting that the characteristic description recently identified in England - people of great enthusiasm and interest but of low formal educational attainment dominates here also.

The Problems

Treasure-hunting in Ireland with the use of metal-detectors is not yet as serious a problem as it is in England. There have been some spectacular finds but curiously these have proved, in the Republic at least, to have been a setback to the hobby. The legal wrangling over the Derrynaflan hoard of early Church metalwork from Co. Tipperary had the effect of producing public antagonism towards a hobby which a surprising number of people, and more importantly politicians and journalists, saw as cultural theft. The result was that the already strong National Monuments Act in the Republic was further strengthened and now forbids the sale of literature that encourages treasure-hunting for ancient artefacts, and the possession of a metal-detector in the vicinity of a scheduled site. The media attack on treasure-hunters in the Republic was recently crowned by a massive public expose of two Co. Meath priests and a surgeon who had, it was claimed, been looting ancient sites for many years. In contrast the official and media attitude to treasure-hunting in Britain has always seemed to smack of the 'harmless hobbyist view, shared, it appears by many archaeologists. One feels that too many archaeologists in Britain have the same disinclination to offend treasurehunters as that non-smokers often have towards smokers. It is an attitude that existed in Ireland, possibly due to the weaker role of the 'amateur' here. Irish treasure-hunters, who naturally prefer to be called 'detectorists', take little account of the border and frequently meet at all-Ireland rallies, as well as travelling to rallies in England. We have heard, though we have not yet proof, that English treasure-hunters may be becoming active here, bringing their detectors with them on holiday. Most are probably unaware of the law although it has been made clear in the two major treasure-hunting magazines - 'The Searcher' and 'Treasure Hunting'. State archaeologists in the Republic, particularly the staff of the National Museum, have for some years taken a very active and positive line in opposition to treasure hunting, with a great deal of success. The Irish Association of Professional Archaeologists - the professional body to which most Irish archaeologists, north and south, belong - forbids in its code of ethics negotiating with illegal treasure-hunters.

In Northern Ireland we are somewhere between Britain and the Republic in our approach to the problem and our use of the law. Although most Northern Irish archaeologists are opposed to any sort of cooperation with treasure-hunters, until recently we have turned a blind eye to their activities. The Northern authorities have been loathe to use the law in defence of the heritage, not a single case having been taken under sections 11 or 12 of the Act until this year. We had in fact believed that the problem was almost non-existent here because of the virtual absence of detected finds coming to our notice. Our refusal to treat with treasure-hunters was, therefore, a relatively easy moral line to follow.

The Blackwater

In 1989 rumours began to come to our notice concerning large numbers of artifacts that had been found in the dredgings of a small river in the south of the province, the river Blackwater. Since the middle of the last century artifacts have come from the major Irish rivers as a result of dredgings and the two national museums owe a substantial proportion of their fine collections of ancient metalwork to this source. Although it is clear that much of this material, particularly the large number of Bronze age and Iron age weapons, was intentionally consigned to the rivers, a widespread west-European practice at this time, this explanation most certainly does not explain all the material. Nevertheless it was widely assumed that it was only the major rivers which would be expected to produce such artifacts. The Blackwater is a rather small river, I would compare it to the Cam, and though just about negotiable by shallow draft boat had not been a important source of archaeological finds. The Blackwater dredgings, aimed at controlling flooding in adjoining farmlands, had been started in the 1960's and had continued on an irregular basis since then. Some stretches of the river had been dredged at least twice. The dredged material - clay, sand and gravels - was first tipped on adjacent banks, then spread, often at some distance from the tip (though always adjacent to the river) and finally harrowed. As a consequence the banks over a considerable distance consist of a layer of redeposited river material, often up to a metre deep and extending as much as 50 metres back from the river edge. Because little was ever reported, and we did not expect the river to be a rich source of artifacts, the dredgings were not archaeologically inspected.

The Meeting

It transpired that treasure-hunters had in fact discovered what we had not - that the river was indeed rich in ancient material - and had been working the dredgings, with great success, for the last five years. They had amassed great collections, none of which had been reported under the Act. We (the Department of Antiquities of the Ulster Museum and the Historic Monuments Branch) were approached by a detectorist who was concerned at this state of affairs, and through him we were able to convince the main group of these people, those belonging to the Banbridge Detectorists' Club, that they would be well-advised to allow us to see their material. A meeting was arranged in spring of 1990 in a hotel in Banbridge between the club and two archaeologists (one of them myself). Laid out before us was an almost unbelievable array of material,

to which we had to respond as blandly as possible, without comment or threat. It was agreed that a group of the club officers would work out some plan to allow the material to be recorded, and if possible acquired. After several such meetings, and a great deal of acrimony and implied threats from both sides, and on the advice of the legal experts in the Department of the Environment, it was decided to offer an amnesty. This covered material found up to the date of the announcement provided it was reported to us within a stated time. To our surprise this was agreed, and a substantial proportion of the material was reported to us. This raised a major dilemma.

The Dilemma

Under the Act the material from the Blackwater had to be reported to the Museum, and we in turn had to receive it for recording. Yet under the same Act this material had been illegally acquired and, in effect, counted as stolen property (it was most unlikely that the landowners were aware of its existence). Furthermore the museum curators were apparently prohibited from handling the material by section 5.3 of the Museum Association's Code of Conduct for Curators forbidding a curator to

'identify, accept on loan or acquire by any means, an object which he has good reason to believe was acquired by its current owner ... by .. illegal means'.

We were particularly unhappy about this prohibition because in Britain, for which community the code had been written, treasure-hunting was not illegal. In other words we were prevented from following a desirable course of action by a code which put no such constraint upon the curators in its own area of competence. I have to say that this particular ethical provision is all the more irksome in that British antiquities legislation is possibly amongst the worst. Britain is one of the few countries not to have ratified the UNESCO convention, probably for the same reason given, proudly, by the Museums and Galleries Commission in its review of the Waverley Criteria for the intentional weakness of those criteria - namely, the need to preserve London's pre-eminent place in the international trade in antiques I can understand, and wholeheartedly approve of, the intention behind the prohibition. It is intended to prevent British curators accepting material that has been removed illegally from foreign states, to the detriment of the people of those states. However, in this case it constrained us from rescuing our own material and preventing its export TO a foreign state (likely to be Britain). I raised this dilemma at a meeting of the SMA and with P. Boylan of the Museums Association in 1990 and received, in effect, the clearance to ignore this particular unintentional effect of the code. This was confirmed by our own Board of Trustees, with the aid of a internal memorandum of quite breathtaking pragmatism put out to curators in the British Museum by their Trustees. The line we decided to follow can be summed up as follows - the illegality or immorality of the action does not extend to the object. We can accept the object without condoning the action. I must add that this should only apply when attempting to rescue ones own cultural property, not when acquiring someone else's.

The Initiative

The limited amnesty was taken up by only a half dozen treasure-hunters, but these gave sufficient information to indicate that their finds were a very small proportion of the produce of the river Blackwater. We received descriptions of material not reported, and unlikely to be reported, and the names of finders, but our informants would not have been willing to give this information in court. Both the quality and the quantity of the material reported to us illustrated what we had heard from rumour - that this was a major source of archaeological artifacts. It was obvious that we had to go onto the offensive, to become pro-active rather than reactive. We recognised that the treasure-hunters possessed, besides an enthusiasm, a skill that we were unlikely in the short term to match. We decided therefore to institute a controlled version of the initiative used by people like the late Tony Gregory in England. We would use the treasure-hunters to save the material still buried in the existing dredgings or likely to be pulled out of the river in future dredging operations. But because of the law, and our uncompromising attitude to treasure-hunters, we had to organise this initiative very carefully indeed.

We offered to those treasure-hunters who had already shown us their goodwill by coming in during the amnesty membership of the scheme under the following conditions:

1) The licence to search (in effect an excavation licence) would be held by the Museum and the would work only as an agent of the Museum, under its direction.
2) All material thus found would be surrendered to the Museum, no rights of ownership being claimed by the finder.
3) All information relating to the finds would be properly kept and passed to the Museum.

and various other requirements pertaining to the proper administration of the scheme.

Three or four of the friendly treasure-hunters agreed to these terms and were allowed to join the scheme (with a few more who have since agreed). The scheme was then publicised in the press and it was made quite clear to treasurehunters, and landowners, that anyone not thus legitimised was acting illegally and should be prevented and reported, and that such people would be liable to prosecution. We hoped, then, to criminalise those who refused to cooperate.

Because the main justification for the scheme was the rescue of material, both already on the river bank and yet to be dredged, it was clear that the scheme had to guarantee that the material would end up in the national collection, that is in the Ulster Museum. This was why no member of the scheme could be allowed to keep anything he found, a rule that would be applied rigorously to this and to any similar scheme. Several potential members of the scheme, including some of our original contacts, could not accept this constraint upon their actions and were not, therefore, allowed to participate. They, like all others not in the scheme, were left in no doubt that we would regard any treasure-hunting by them as contravening the Act.

The Scheme In Action

It was soon clear to us that the river bed was owned by the adjacent landowners - usually but not always the case with rivers and lakes. It was obvious, such was the movement of dredged material, that the identification of the exact provenance of any artifact prior to its removal from the river was well nigh impossible. We therefore decided to ascribe ownership to the owner of the land in which it was found by detection. Such information is part of the find information required from the searcher both under the Act and under the requirements of the scheme. We decided, in complete fairness to all parties and following a widespread European practice, to offer the landowner 50% of the value (as decided by us) in return for title, the other 50% going to the finder as a reward. It may be felt, and it has occurred to us, that as the finders were working under our direction and licence, much like the ordinary digger on an excavation, any reward was inappropriate. We decided, however, that a pragmatic reward-driven scheme would, at this juncture, be the most satisfactory. One thing we did not allow was independent agreement by the searcher with the landowner. By far the majority of the landowners agreed to give up the objects discovered on their land, and to our division of the purchase price (indeed some waived their share). Those landowners who did not agree were struck from the scheme, in that their land was ruled out of bounds for searchers. It seems likely that in a number of cases objects have 'walked' between the lands of an unfriendly farmer and those of a friendly one. We obviously disapprove of this practice but we are unable to police the scheme on the ground on a 24 hour basis - a responsibility we leave to landowners.

This raises the matter of the physical running of the scheme. It is run by the Department of Antiquities of the Ulster Museum in consultation with the Historic monuments Branch. One curator (C. Bourke) spends a fair proportion of his time administering the scheme, particularly the receipt of finds. A freelance qualified archaeologist (Dr G. Ramsay) is employed part-time on a contract basis to control the scheme physically (occasionally assisted by another). This entails liaising with Department of Agriculture drainage operatives and contractors, landowners and tenant farmers and searchers in the scheme. It also entails the discouraging of unauthorised searchers. The cost of the contract team is borne by the Historic Monuments Branch, while the Ulster Museum, besides providing curatorial time, finances the purchase of the finds.

A certain amount of searching has been undertaken by the Museum in a more formal and organised fashion than is possible under the scheme as it normally runs (that is, ad-hoc searching by the detectorists). This is particularly undertaken as a follow-up to important finds where we feel that only part of an object has been recovered and have reason to believe more may be present. This has proved particularly fruitful, for instance in the case of an early multi-piece shrine. It also serves to sterilise such sensitive areas to unauthorised treasure-hunters, particularly when it is undertaken with the aid of careful mechanised soil-removal so that the whole depth of dredged material is searched.

The Outcome

A great deal of material found prior to the scheme, and reported under the amnesty has been recorded, and most obtained for the collections. A great deal more has also been found under the scheme, all of which has been added to the collections. The benefit to public cultural property has been immense. Media coverage, particularly when instituted by us, has been positive and we have been very careful to keep the scheme in the public eye, especially in the area of the river Blackwater. We have found that landowners and farmers are keen to help us, as long as they are kept constantly informed. Occasionally they blame us for not controlling the unauthorised searchers, which would be extremely difficult for us.

Unfortunately the number of treasure-hunters within the scheme is tiny compared to the total number active in the province, or even active along the Blackwater. Our scheme members have been cold-shouldered by these unauthorised detectorists, and have also been the subject of investigation by the Department of Health and Social Services. While we cannot condone the failure of those who receive reward for their searching to notify the proper authorities, we are certainly rather discouraged by the fact that those treasure-hunters who illegally sell their finds on the antiques market are financially better rewarded than those who help us, especially if they have to pay tax or give up benefit. I suppose the latter are rewarded by their satisfaction at having done the right thing!

The unauthorised treasure-hunters have been extremely active in their opposition to us and to the scheme (in addition to their treatment of the scheme members), with letters to the papers and treasure-hunting magazines. The

archaeologists involved in the scheme have been subjected to abuse in these organs. Despite this we know we have been successful in our aim of keeping most of the treasure-hunters away from the Blackwater. We also know the names of several who have substantial unlawful collections, and we will move to secure these collections as soon as we are able.

One treasure-hunter who, though he had reported archaeological artifacts he had found in the dredgings, could not be included within the scheme as he was unable to agree to all the conditions, was caught by our field-worker, with two of his friends, detecting on the river dredgings. They were working a part of the river which, although nothing had yet been reported from the precise spot, was close enough to known find areas to be regarded as potentially 'archaeologically sensitive'. The Department of Public Prosecutions decided to prosecute him under section 11 of the Act and the prosecution took place in October 1991 in a Magistrate's Court. He was found to have breached the Act, though this decision was overthrown on appeal on the grounds that the State was unable to prove beyond reasonable doubt that he was looking for archaeological material as defined in the Act rather than the modern fishing spinners for which he claimed he was searching. This illustrates the major weakness of the Act, proof of intent, and the need to tighten it. There is no doubt that the outcome of this case was a setback to the scheme, and has probably encouraged unauthorised searchers.

The Future

We are, despite the setbacks and antagonism, sure enough of the usefulness of the scheme, both in recovering artifacts and preventing unauthorised treasure-hunting, that it will be continued. Indeed we intend to widen it to other rivers where dredgings have taken place, and other areas where artifacts are under threat but are not in an archaeological context requiring formal excavation. Beyond the widened scheme, towards a rapprochement with treasure-hunters, we will not under any circumstances go. We are aware of the dangers of compromise and pragmatism and we have no intention of allowing the hobby to spread unchecked. We would encourage colleagues in Britain to pursue similar initiatives to that on the Blackwater but we would remind them that they should, when supping with the Devil, use a very long spoon indeed.

SITTING COMFORTABLY? MUSEUMS AND THE ANTIQUITIES MARKET

David R.M.Gaimster, British Museum

As other papers in this volume confirm, the scale of the portable antiquities trade in Britain has reached crisis proportions. By way of comparison, should the present trends continue unchecked, Britain could be facing a national Heritage catastrophe as serious as that which has occurred in the Lebanon (Fisk 1991a & 1991b) or in the Peoples Republic of China (Norman 1991). The recent "murky deals" scandal involving former staff of Sotheby's Antiquities Department has done little to calm fears of auction house complicity in the illicitly trafficking of cultural property (Independent 13 & 19 December 1991). Let us hope that the current initiatives to radically improve the laws for the protection of portable antiquities in England and Wales receive the support of the whole archaeological community and that their recommendations proceed swiftly into the statute book (see Lady Hanworth this volume; and British Archaeological News, Vol.6, Nr.6, November 1991, 1).

It is not the purpose of this short paper to add further fuel to the debate on the proposed antiquities legislation, but rather to examine the nature of the antiquities trade itself, its motivation and the consequent professional dilemmas facing all museum archaeologists, working either in a National or local authority institution. The aim is primarily to give a museum perspective to some of the issues raised by Martin Henig in his perceptive essay "From the Field to Bond Street: the Pirates and their Loot" (Henig 1987).

Flicking through the pages of a recent copy of **Minerva**, it is clear to the casual reader that, despite the recession, the trade in antiquities in this country is a buoyant one. Indeed, of all the cultural property markets, archaeological artefacts are seen as one of the most reliable commodities for the investor. As the auction house correspondent of the magazine says, fine antiquities are now a better bet than Impressionist or modern paintings (Eisenberg 1991, 41), "The unsold lots in the four major sales [of 1991] in New York and London represented only from 6.2% to 15% of the total values, an exceptional performance in view of the economy". The late medieval Middleham Jewel, sold at Sotheby's for a record £1.43m in 1986 speaks for itself. Indeed, the fact that Britain is currently in economic recession makes treasure hunting a most worthwhile activity. The author knows numerous treasure hunters in the London area who live solely (and well at that) from the proceeds of their metal detecting. Clearly, the auction houses, aided and abetted by inadequate protective legislation, have conspired to hype sale prices and effectively create the current bazaar mentality for their own ends. In this way, the medieval gold ring subsequently found at Middleham Castle during a metal detectorists' rally, was sold on the back on the previous discovery for a hammer price of £38,000 (Sotheby's, London 2 October 1991, lot 342). The now regular biannual sales of antiquities at Sotheby's and Christie's, with their glossy "mail-order" catalogues containing quasi-scholarly descriptions, provide up-to-the-minute information on prices and act as a major encouragement to the treasure hunter (see "publications" below).

However, it is also clear that blame for these insidious trends cannot be placed at the feet of Britain's auction houses and dealers alone, and that to some extent we are all responsible for the increasingly commercial exploitation of archaeological artefacts. A recent editorial in Antiquity (Vol. 62, Nr. 234, March 1988, 5) neatly identified the difficulties museums face in their role as educators and popularizers of the past, "And museums are often uncomfortably placed in this, as their combined functions of spectacle, show business and scholarship provide contrary impulses". I shall be investigating, therefore, the extent to which museums in their capacity as education and research bodies are contributing, albeit unintentionally, to the trade in portable antiquities in this country. For this purpose, three areas of museum activity are selected for scrutiny: acquisition policies, the manner of exhibiting artefacts, and their scholarly publication. All three may, to varying degrees, be linked to the upsurge in the antiquities market.

Acquisitions

The question of purchasing objects from the trade, many of which are found by metal detector without proper archaeological recording, throws up the starkest conflict of interests for museum archaeologists. The dilemma has been discussed at length recently by Brian Cook of the British Museum's Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities (Cook 1991). According to Cook, decisions have to be made as to whether the museum should acquire such objects because of their intrinsic importance, so that they become part of the national or community Heritage rather than disappear into a private collection; or whether they must be refused on the grounds that, firstly they are of reduced archaeological interest because they have lost their archaeological context, and, secondly to purchase them only encourages the treasure hunters to continue their destruction of the archaeological evidence. It is perhaps worthwhile at this point to quote the Trustees of the British Museum's recently published policy statement,

The British Museum deplores the deliberate removal of ancient artefacts from British soil other than by properly directed archaeological excavation, especially when the context of those artefacts is thereby left unrecorded and severely damaged. However, although the unauthorised excavation of such material from a scheduled monument is

illegal and can never be condoned, much of what is discovered elsewhere is brought to light lawfully; persons in possession of it often have a legal title to dispose of it as they think fit. In these circumstances, the Museum has an overriding duty to try to acquire such finds as it considers appropriate to the national collection. To refuse to follow this course would entail a serious loss to our heritage, since we would then lose the chance to see and record a great many objects. The Museum understands, and shares, the concern of the archaeological world, but since there is a ready market both here and abroad, the situation will not be remedied by a museum embargo. Selective acquisition remains, in our view, not only the practical, but also the proper course." (BM Trustees 1990, 10).

In practice this means that ex gratia payments are negotiated with finders or dealers, usually with little reference as possible to current sale-room trends. Often agreements fail to be reached and the Museum must bid at auction like everyone else. The enamelled bronze pyxis made in Roman Gaul and found at Elsenham, Essex, came into the British Museum collections in this way (Johns 1991). Although we may rejoice that the first Roman pyxis to have been found in Britain is now safely in the care of the national museum, it is of some concern that periodic involvement by museums in the antiquities trade may be contributing towards higher prices and higher dividends to those supplying the market.

Although a *designated* wreck-site, in 1988 Christie's went ahead in auctioning the best-preserved artefacts from the Royal Naval warship HMS **Invincible**, which sank in the Solent in 1758 (Christie's, S. Kensington, 10 March 1988). Refusing to take part in the sale itself, the Historic Dockyard, Chatham, was forced to purchase a type-series of finds in order to prevent the wholesale dispersal of this nationally important time-capsule and to at least make some record of the discoveries. The fact that the museum had to buy the items and was not given them was not properly made known at the time (Murdin 1989, 21). The case illustrates how, even with the best intentions, museums are forced by their responsibilities to preserve the Heritage into participating in the antiquities market.

Exhibitions

By presenting the past in an exciting way we also risk increasing the desirability of artefactual remains and stimulating the desire for personal ownership. Robert Hughes, the eminent art-critic, has chastised recent trends towards the spectacular in exhibition designs which can also be levelled at many of our archaeological displays, "The museum... has adopted, partly by design, the strategies of other mass-media: the emphasis on spectacle, the cult of the celebrity, the whole masterpiece-and-treasure syndrome" (Hughes 1991, 400-401).

Here several "blockbuster" exhibitions put on at my own institution instantly spring to mind: "The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966-1066" (1984) or "Treasures for the Nation" (1988) to name but a few. At the same time, however, museums are constantly being criticised for not showing enough of their holdings. In order to comply with public demand, money has to be sought from the commercial sector in order to finance special exhibitions. To make a good return on the sponsor's investment the emphasis on exhibitions must be on the unique and the spectacular: hence the "blockbuster" approach. Accompanying catalogues become instant "form-guides" to entire categories of archaeological artefacts. Even archaeological forgeries, such as "Billys and Charleys", have attained a new commercial status since the recent "Fake? The Art of Deception" exhibition held at the British Museum (Jones Ed. 1990, cat.199).

Publication

Perhaps, as we have already seen in the discussion on exhibition catalogues, one of the most depressing trends is the increasing use by auction houses and dealers of museum and other scholarly publications to provide the framework for artefact valuations. As Henig (1987, 14) has stated ominously, "I very much fear that any and every catalogue of antiquities stimulates the market". Henig quotes his own doctoral thesis on Roman engraved gemstones as a graphic illustration of how academic research has been exploited in this way. More recently I note that Brian Spencer's recently published (1990) catalogue of medieval pilgrim badges from the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum has already attracted the attention of **Minerva** Magazine. The reviewer describes it as a "long awaited publication much talked about amongst curators and collectors..." (**Minerva**, Jan./Feb. 1992, 40-41).

Of equal concern is the now common practice of citing museum catalogues and academic references in sale catalogues. Parallels to Anglo-Saxon brooches or medieval rings litter the pages, adding to the hype and creating artificially optimistic estimates. In this way museum research is being systematically exploited in order to stimulate prices. In the case of the Markyate Mount (a rare piece of Irish gilt-bronze horse-harness of the 8th-9th century AD, which was found in Hertfordshire in 1955), the final hammer-price of £60,000 doubled the original sale estimate following its inclusion in the "Work of Angels" exhibition held at the British Museum (Youngs Ed. 1989, cat.116; see subsequently Sotheby's, London, 8 July 1991, lot 79).

Moreover, even forthcoming catalogues and archaeological reports on artefacts are eagerly anticipated by the trade. For instance, one dealer has confided in me that the price of early English Brown stoneware is set to

explode once the report on the excavations at Fulham is published by English Heritage later this year (1992). His advice to museums is to "buy now... before it's too late." Even prices for fragments of historical pottery are soaring, as a recent Sotheby's sale of British Medieval and later wares amply demonstrated (Sotheby's, London, 6 March 1990). On this occasion an incomplete and poorly restored Nottingham jug of the 13th to 14th century reached a hammer price of £8,000 (lot 216). Research publications in virtually all categories of archaeological finds are being used ruthlessly as benchmarks for commercial valuation.

Conclusions

Citing a number of recent case-studies, I have tried to demonstrate the increasingly uncomfortable position many museums are facing in view of the steady growth of the national antiquities trade. Regardless of the activities of auction houses and other commercial institutions, it is now clear that museums themselves must accept some responsibility for the motivation behind the supply of artefacts to the trade. Museum acquisition, exhibition and publication policies have been identified here as possible stimulants to treasure hunting. Perhaps this, in view of the inadequacy of the law, is the price to pay for saving a small sample of finds for future study (Cook 1991).

While accepting these conflicts of interest as part of the realities of living in a free-market, museum curators must in return exploit their fundamental position as public educators. Unlike any of the other arms of the archaeological profession, curators are in a unique position to put the message of common, as opposed to individual, ownership across to the general public. Displays, videos and museum literature should be aimed at encouraging a community responsibility to the local historic environment and its artefactual remains. Legislation is all very well, but illicit treasure hunting and dealing will always be a fact of life, whatever the punishments prescribed. Only through our education programmes can the continuing haemorrhaging of the national archaeological heritage be staunched to a containable level. On this issue the Society of Museum Archaeologists have already made a timely and influential contribution (Gaimster ed. forthcoming).

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TEMPORARILY REMOVED? MUSEUMS, ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE NEW HERITAGE

Blaise Vyner

Under this appropriately ambivalent title it is proposed briefly to investigate two main themes: the first being that over the past decade and more museums have become increasingly distanced from the 'activity' of archaeology, the second is the suggestion that in the public presentation and appreciation of 'heritage' it is not only museums but also archaeology that is largely absent. Inevitably, in the pursuit of the broader themes a number of generalisations will exclude the specific exceptions so an apology is presented in advance to all those museums which are actively involved in campaigning for the preservation of the built and historic environment, all the local museums which are actively involved in programmes of archaeological rescue and research fieldwork and publication and especially to all the museums who are involved in the presentation of the wide range of archaeological evidence and its interpretation as part of a larger assessment of their local environment. In making that apology an underlying assumption, however ill-founded, is that the majority of museums are not so involved in archaeology and perhaps do not see their role in these terms.

The suggestion that there is a substantial gap between museums and field archaeology, of course, comes as no surprise and has been highlighted again recently (Crowther 1988), while the general absence of archaeology from heritage centres is well known. However, the lack of archaeology or any sense of chronological depth from most countryside interpretation should concern us almost as much as the implicit suggestion that museums are not any longer involved in the interpretation of archaeology in the field - the June 1991 issue of **Interpretation,** the journal of the Centre for Environmental Interpretation, takes the theme of interpreting archaeology without making any reference to the role of museums, and in doing so maintains its previous position (Binks **et. al.** 1988). Uncharacteristically, this paper will end on a note of optimism, or at least, defiance.

It is often suggested that the gap between museums and field archaeology developed with the rise of semi-independent field units, indeed it did, but these were a symptom rather than a cause and derived an artificial and, as we have seen, short-lived status through the availability of Manpower Services Commission Schemes. An alternative explanation might be better sought in the local government reorganisation of 1974, following which a split developed between planning archaeology centred within county authorities and museums with archaeological collections which for the most part went to district authorities. The establishment of sites and monuments records within the planning structure strengthened the perceived dichotomy between museums and their role in the passive collection and display of archaeological finds, and planning archaeologists (whether or not located in planning departments), concerned with the active conservation or investigation of archaeological sites. Conservation and excavation became the gift of the county archaeologist and the preserve of fieldwork contractors. Fieldworkers, whether or not directly associated with the planning archaeologists, had little involvement with museums until the (often long delayed) time came to hand over what survived for curation and display.

Traditional museum links with amateur archaeology have also been damaged or severed in recent years; the gap is symptomatic of a general distancing of archaeology from the public (Pryor 1991). Legislative and economic pressure has frequently resulted in museums being unavailable as meeting places for local archaeological societies and groups, while at the same time pressures for economic development within local authority areas have tended to muzzle the museum as a focus for debate and protest. Although museums can sometimes claim a better record than planning archaeologists in their attitude to and relationships with metal detector users such legitimate issues as provenance, ownership and the claims of better antiquities legislation are side-stepped in purchase manoeuvres, as in the current initiative by the Yorkshire Museum to purchase the Middleham jewel. In this specific instance it might be noted that the somewhat drab leaflet originally issued to canvas public support was replaced with a much more attractive colour version under the sponsorship of Christie's.

Pressures within local government over the past decade have ensured that many museum professionals who started out as archaeologists, with the ability and the energy to promote archaeological conservation and research, became enmeshed in the general administration and development of their museum services and this allowed archaeological units to consider themselves as the only active participants - the attitude is neatly encapsulated in a parenthetical remark made by a long-standing unit worker this year relating to the text of comments submitted in relation to the workings of the 1979 antiquities legislation - 'sufficiently flexible to cover a one-liner in the county journal saying "we put a pipe-trench across it and dumped the junk in the local museum" if that is what the exercise calls for'. If anything, the current legislative and administrative framework is likely to promote this attitude from those actually conducting what archaeological excavation and fieldwork is undertaken under the aegis of contract archaeology. The solution is unlikely to lie in museums insisting on being the contract

archaeologists; although there is nothing in legislation that prevents them undertaking this particular aspect of archaeology, the drawbacks of the philosophy have been outlined (Schadla-Hall 1991).

The long-standing museum tenets of curation, interpretation and education do not exclude contract archaeology, but perhaps more to the point, nor do they restrict museums to the storage of whatever archaeological material those undertaking fieldwork choose to deposit ('I'm afraid some of those shoeboxes are a bit broken'), the display and interpretation of such chance collections ('yes, beehive querns are probably Iron Age, but we just don't have any Roman domestic material') or an educational reliance on serendipity ('yes, some decent slides would be a good idea, but I'm afraid we haven't got any').

While, as will be shown later, there is some evidence that museums are beginning to address long-standing problems of presentation and interpretation, there is little sign that they are aware of the potential of re-establishing a presence in active archaeology, for want of a better expression to include conservation, investigation and research. The necessity of museums involving themselves in the process of contract archaeology if only to be aware and to make others aware of the storage and conservation requirements of excavated material has and will be made by others - the only comment to make here is that the machinery is already in place for the dialogue between museums and planning archaeologists. Museums should be concerned, as others are, that the climate of contract archaeology does not safeguard many sites where there is no willingness or onus to pay for archaeological work and that the happenstance of development precludes any coherent research strategies.

There are potentially two areas where museums are in a position to redress this imbalance; both involve their reinstatement as a focus for debate and an investment of enthusiasm as much as resource. In the first place the establishment of a research strategy would provide the context for the museum display and interpretation of existing collections and the basis for joining discussions over planning and conservation. It would also provide a background for the development of active accessions policies which might stimulate research-based fieldwork - why should museums have to base interpretation entirely on the results of historical accident? Provided that museums have staff with appropriate experience and interests there is no a priori assumption that research strategies require external involvement, but to acquire co-operation, if not academic respectability, the involvement of appropriate local professional and amateur archaeologists would seem desirable. The second strand involves renewed contact with amateur archaeology, and not just the more active fieldworkers; museums need to maintain the visible allegiance of local amateur archaeologists if they are to retain the credibility of their administrations and the general public, although this source of moral and indirect financial support appears to have been overlooked in recent considerations of the role of museums in field archaeology (Southworth 1991). Museums can do this without recourse to calls for a renewal of the outdated spirit of the Festival of Britain. Community involvement does not necessarily hinge around the availability of meeting halls but might instead involve the provision of a locale for occasional alternative interpretations of the past; this can provide the opportunity for a broader public, or individuals, to establish dialogues with the past (Merriman 1991, 134-40). The current absence of such opportunities is implicit in the suggestion that some museum developments might in the future be parish-based (MGC 1991, 14).

With our national archaeological quango in the vanguard of the popularisation of the term 'heritage' it may come as a surprise to consider that much of the public perception of the word does not appear to include archaeology at all. While this may seem reassuring in view of the increasingly pejorative overtones of the word, it is sobering to consider that, if archaeology does not always find a place in museums, its relationship with 'heritage centres' and other recently developed interpretation facilities is even more tenuous. It could be claimed that the preparation of archaeological displays requires more specialist knowledge, and that exhibits are less easily acquired, than, say, natural history and while this may be true it does not entirely explain the wholesale absence of archaeology from interpretation outside museums.

The often-quoted figures for new museum openings obviously include the whole range of interpretation facilities, most of which concern either social history or natural history, commonly in buildings of different types and in differing locations. With a few notable exceptions, most obviously the English Heritage site museums, most new museums (in the real sense of the word) have been constructed in urban centres and involve the display of not archaeology but social history, perhaps because their construction has been the result of a trade-off with town centre development. The recent boom in interpretive development began not with the Museums Act of 1964 but with the Countryside Act of 1968, augmented by the tourism and economic development blandishments of the 1980's. As early as 1969 there was a warning of an apparent obsession with Natural History (Stansfield 1969) and a survey of the content of the interpretation centres for the North York Moors National Park at Danby and Sutton Bank identified geology, history, natural history, land-use and 'other' (Prince 1982, 166). Archaeology, indeed, any of the past before the 18th century, is hardly represented in these

displays, despite the fact that the moorland landscape is a direct result of agricultural activity at least some of which began in the Neolithic (Spratt 1989). Such confusions extend to the softer landscapes of the Pembrokeshire coast, which, despite the presence of numerous prehistoric enclosures, is still claimed to be 'in its natural state' (National Trust 1988). 'Heritage' as presented in countryside interpretation comprises the contemporary natural history and 'the landscape', the most obvious elements of which tend not to be more than two centuries old. In the interpretation of the countryside archaeology has been marginalised.

The dictionary definition 'heritage - anything transmitted from ancestors or past ages' (Chambers 20th Century Dictionary) has a vagueness which has proved helpful in justifying the variety of centres which take the name - perhaps better described as buildings with no obvious use. By definition these are usually in urban surroundings and the interpretations they contain usually relate to their previous use or to the social and local history of their surrounding area. Restricted collections, security, vision or ambition combine to limit the presentation of archaeology in the majority of heritage centres. The bias towards the provision of interpretation of specifically urban 19th century social history seen in heritage centres is also reflected in museum provision, especially in areas like north-east England, where social and economic regeneration has been seen as important (Vyner 1991). This maintains the distinction between the provision of information on natural history in the countryside and the interpretation of the past in an urban environment. The distinction continues also to be reflected in the legislation and management of the built and natural environments (Darvill 1987, 168-9).

Perhaps the most obvious recent archaeological activity in museums has been the very welcome provision of new or revised archaeological displays in such museums as Carlisle, Hull or Avebury, and major temporary displays as at Cardiff and Scunthorpe. Avebury is particularly interesting in the provision of interpretation which interrelates objects with their contexts in the landscape outside, provides interactive display items and offers the possibility of alternative interpretations, although it is reassuring to find that the area map from the old displays is (illicitly) retained in order to show visitors the locations of the various monuments alluded to in the exhibition. Elsewhere there are still disappointingly few explorations of explanation or context, little account taken of the management and interpretation of archaeological sites from which they came, still less of the potential of recovering further information or developing the interpretation of the displayed objects; is it only a coincidence that a panel on magic and ritual is adjacent to the exposition of archaeological method?

If museums are to succeed in offering interpretations of archaeology they will need to achieve once again a primary involvement in field archaeology. The content of countryside information suggests that museums must also ensure that archaeology is included in the interpretation of the rural environment. Both ambitions can be met through the development of appropriate research agendas: the call to museums must be not 'give us back our heritage' - that can happily go - but 'give us back our archaeology'.

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COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY AND MUSEUMS

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A distinguished museum archaeologist addressing a local society ended with the following words. *"May I hope that my remarks have served to demonstrate that which cannot be too earnestly impressed upon all who have the advance of knowledge at heart, namely, that the archaeological harvest in these parts, at one time truly plenteous, has been scattered by the winds of ignorance and apathy. About this wonderful County of ours patches of the grain still lie concealed, but the gleaners are few. If further destruction is to be arrested, if this material is to be gathered so that we may piece together and read aright the marvellous story of our prehistoric forerunners, then more gleaners are necessary, more enthusiasm must be shewn; and, what is all-important, the work of discovery and recording must be carried out, not by antiquated methods, but in a co-operative spirit and by rigid adherence to scientific rules" (Toms 1907, p.10).*

These are the words of an archaeologist committed to involving the community in the discovery of its past. They could have been uttered in the last decade. Until the 1970's many field projects were undertaken by amateurs. By the mid 1970's professional units established in response to the boom in rescue archaeology (Rahtz 1974) put amateur noses out of joint. In contrast, the 1980's witnessed English Heritage project funding, the deployment of MSC schemes, diminishing central government funding for fieldwork, the rise of contract archaeology and the founding of the Congress for Independent Archaeologists (Selkirk 1985). The wheel turned full circle and the contribution that could be made by amateurs started receiving serious consideration by professionals. However, the opening quotation is not associated with recent events; it comes from Herbert Toms' talk in 1907 to the Brighton and Hove Natural History and Philosophical Society on his recent discoveries of mesolithic 'pigmy' flints.

Toms had been General Pitt Rivers' surveyor and, as museum assistant and later curator of Brighton Museum, was one of the first professional museum archaeologists in Britain. He also married Lady Pitt-Rivers' French maid (Holleyman 1987, 28). Although perhaps not widely known outside Sussex, Toms was an extremely competent museum archaeologist who played a significant part in the development of amateur archaeology in Britain.Pitt Rivers introduced him to field archaeology and Toms trained Eliot Curwen and his son Cecil to fieldwalk and to undertake survey work (Holleyman 1987). They in turn, in 1930 at the Trundle in West Sussex, taught Grahame Clark, Stuart Piggott and Charles Phillips to wield a trowel, setting in motion a lineage of archaeological field practitioners running parallel to those descended from Sir Mortimer Wheeler. Toms wanted local people to recover archaeological material in and around Brighton and to this end was the principal instigator in founding the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Club. At the inaugural meeting at the Museum on 27th October 1906, with 33 people in attendance, Toms stated that the object of the Club "should be to foster an interest in the antiquities of the County with a view to the proper recording and preservation of the same" (Holleyman 1987, p.19). After two years of regular summer outings and winter lectures, the Club boasted 163 members. At this stage, Toms introduced them to field archaeology, arranging fieldwalking, or 'flint hunts' as they were called, and small-scale excavations. A sub-committee was then set up under Toms' leadership "to discover, survey and publish plans of earthworks on the South Downs between the rivers Ouse and Adur" (Holleyman 1987, p.22). Throughout the 1920's and early 1930's the Curwens directed excavations at a variety of well-preserved earthwork sites on the South Downs, on behalf of either the Club or the Worthing Archaeological Society (Holleyman 1987, pp.26-7), excluding barrows as the Curwens were "evangelicals of the strictest sort" (Phillips 1987, p.31). Christopher Hawkes, then at the British Museum, reported on the later Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery from their excavations, using this work as the basis for his A, B, C classification of the Iron Age in Britain (Hawkes 1959). Furthermore, Cecil Curwen's excavations at Whitehawk causewayed enclosure at Brighton race course in advance of road construction were amongst the first large-scale rescue excavations in this country. "Toms played no active role in any of this research but took a paternal view and was always ready with advice and a cheery word" (Holleyman 1987, p.27). In 1935 the Club changed its name to Society, continuing to excavate regularly up to the 1970's. Toms died of a heart attack in 1940 and a tribute to him in the Brighton and Hove Herald acknowledges the part he played in stimulating community involvement in archaeology: "he communicated his enthusiasm to others and was indeed one of Brighton's greatest archaeological missionaries" (quoted in Holleyman 1987, p.28).

As far as I am aware Toms can be accredited as the first museum archaeologist to encourage community archaeology in this country. What form does community archaeology take today?

Susan Pearce (1990, p.181) gives a minimalist definition of 'the community' "as those people who are neither professional curators nor professional archaeologists" at the start of her chapter on 'reaching out into the community'. She then discusses amateur archaeologists, education and the public but, apart from acknowledging Peter Liddle and Leicestershire Museums Service as developing the concept of 'community archaeology' (Pearce 1991,

p.183) and that a community archaeological programme can be one of a number of means of involving people in extending "the creation and curation of the archive" (Pearce 1990, p.202), she does not discuss other projects which fall under the guise of community archaeology. The purpose of this paper is to look at the full range of community archaeology work that is currently being undertaken by museums in this country.

First, a few words on why community involvement in archaeology is desirable. It enables work to be done by non-museum staff that might not otherwise be possible to achieve given present resource levels. It gives an opportunity for the public to participate directly in archaeological work, thus helping to demystify the subject and show that it is not simply the pursuit of an elite sheltered from reality in ivory towers. It provides another means beyond museum displays of communicating an awareness and knowledge of archaeology to a wider audience. And, in the present climate of accountability and being seen to give value for money, it generates potential pressure groups that can provide external support for museum archaeology services.

Pearce referred to the Leicestershire Museums Service community archaeology scheme, an excellent project which is worth discussing further. "The past is not the exclusive preserve of anyone - professional archaeologist or otherwise. Ordinary people must have the right to know about the past of their own communities and, more than this, must have the right to participate in its discovery" (Liddle 1985, p.3). Starting with this premise, Leicestershire Museums established a scheme "to collect, store and disseminate archaeological information in such a way as to involve ordinary people fully in the process" (Liddle 1989, p.44). The three main aims of the scheme are "to maximise the quantity and quality of archaeological data; to involve actively as many people as possible; and to make information available to the widest audience as quickly as possible" (Liddle 1989, p.45). This is achieved through mobilising local people, organised into 'cells' covering two or three parishes, to monitor sites under development and to undertake fieldwork, of which fieldwalking is the major activity. Support is provided by museum staff in the form of regular newsletters, meetings with speakers, training courses on identification and techniques and informal help and advice, as well as through press releases, public displays and the production of leaflets and booklets (Liddle 1989, p.44). In this way, the Museums Service has activated community involvement in local archaeological research and discovery.

The Leicestershire scheme has achieved significant results, although it must be stressed that the Museums Service has invested considerable staff time and other resources in the scheme. In recent years, the concept of 'community museums' has emerged for museums either created by or concerned specifically with serving the community (Lock 1991). If community archaeology is considered in a comparable fashion, three main forms can be defined: projects initiated, undertaken and managed by the community; projects undertaken by the community and managed by professional museum archaeologists; and projects initiated and undertaken for the community by professional museum archaeologists (**pace** Lock 1991, p.27). Each of these will be discussed in turn.

Projects initiated, undertaken and managed by the community

Up to the 1960's and 1970's, before the number of people employed as archaeologists increased dramatically, there were many local people involved in archaeological projects. The Curwens and the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Club have already been mentioned but their work is the tip of the iceberg. In Sussex alone there have been other distinguished amateur archaeologists, working either individually or under the banner of a local archaeological group, who have carried out fieldwork, given public talks, issued press releases and put together exhibitions. From the lectures given by Hilaire Belloc on Ancient Sussex at the turn of the century to the evening classes run by Con Ainsworth in the 1980's, John Pull deserves further attention for his contribution to community archaeology. Pull, a postman and later security guard, was shot dead in a bank raid in 1961. After a disagreement with Cecil Curwen and having his privately-published account of the neolithic flint mines at Blackpatch reviewed unfavourably by Grahame Clark and Stuart Piggott, he virtually turned his back on professional archaeologists. He then undertook a remarkable series of excavations at the Church Hill, Findon and Cissbury flint-mining sites in the 1940's and 1950's (Holgate 1991, pp.31-2) and succeeded in spreading word of his discoveries to residents in the Worthing district through exhibitions, talks and newspaper reports. I was reliably informed by Ralph Merrifield, who worked as a museum assistant under Toms at Brighton Museum in the 1930's, that Toms definitely approved of Pull.

Today, the days of amateurs working in isolation without any form of professional assistance are virtually over. Field archaeology techniques and standards of recording have developed to the extent that set-piece excavation and post-excavation analysis is a time-consuming and costly undertaking that requires greater expertise than in previous decades. Advances in archaeological theory, notably in the wake of David Clarke's book on Analytical Archaeology (1968) and the emergence of processual archaeology, reinforced the divide between amateurs and professionals to the extent that amateur practitioners now usually need professional encouragement in planning fieldwork and with post-excavation analysis. There are

very few instances where members of the local community initiate, undertake and manage archaeological projects without any form of professional help, unless the work of metal detector users who are not simply out to plunder past material remains for financial gain is taken into account. Although scorn has been poured on metal detector users for the damage and looting caused by the 'cowboy' element amongst their fraternity, a significant number are interested in history and in contributing to our knowledge of the past. The occasions when metal detecting groups collaborate fruitfully with field archaeologists is increasing and the work of some of these groups could thus be defined as a form of community archaeology.

Projects undertaken by the community and managed by professional archaeologists

Archaeological work undertaken by members of the community but managed by archaeologists forms a large proportion of the community archaeology projects pursued in this country. A prime example is the scheme initiated by Leicestershire Museums that has already been discussed. Most local societies which are still actively involved in fieldwork are supported in their activities by museum archaeologists (Selkirk 1990), a point which is reinforced by the large number of local societies which have museum archaeologists on their committee or who use museum premises for their meetings (Pearce 1991, p.181). There are also instances where the society is directly linked to a museum, as exemplified by the Stoke-on-Trent Museum Archaeological Society which covers the Staffordshire part of the Peak district and uses purpose-built premises on the back of the City Museum and Art Gallery for meetings. Until recently, museum staff have served on the committee for the Society and co-ordinated fieldwork, but at present the Society is run as an independent entity. However, there is still active consultation with museum staff concerning all field projects undertaken by the Society. In other cases, whilst there might not be direct links between societies and a local museum, advice is often sought from local museum staff on fieldwork or on other activities.

Since the establishment of field units in the 1970's the scale of field projects undertaken by amateur societies has diminished to the extent that many societies that were once active in the field largely restrict their activities to evening talks and field trips. In the past, it was commonplace for these societies to have an excavation in progress. In fact I partly owe my interest in archaeology to spending occasional Sundays when I was at school in the mid 1970's helping the Lancaster Archaeological Society excavate a Roman bath house. Today, the situation is different and a number of local societies are stagnating. As expressed recently in the newsletter for the Manshead Archaeological Society of Dunstable (Horne 1989, p.14): "The years ahead will be a great challenge but if we are to continue to excavate we must prove that we are the equal of the professionals in our excavation methods and recording techniques. We must not be afraid to acknowledge when our methods are inadequate and change them. If we do not I fear that we will be reduced to field walking and helping on digs run by other people. This would be a sad end indeed for such a vital Society." In situations such as this it is the responsibility of museum archaeologists to motivate society members to carry out fieldwork and other activities that will complement the work of professional archaeologists.

One way to do this is to demonstrate to these societies the value in undertaking field projects that professional units cannot attract funding to carry out themselves. Broadly speaking, under the present regime of contract archaeology, this includes fieldwalking, surveying earthworks and the speculative investigation of sites where archaeological deposits might occur **in situ** but previous investigation has not revealed sufficient evidence to enable planning committees to impose conditions that require an archaeological evaluation to be undertaken before detailed planning permission can be granted. Fieldwalking is by far the easiest and most rewarding form of fieldwork to persuade local societies to start implementing. It is crucial to fieldwalk using controlled methods of recording, for example walking regularly-spaced transects across fields, but otherwise the equipment, finance and expertise required to carry out an exercise of this nature is minimal compared to excavation. The results that can be achieved include defining the extent and nature of sites under cultivation and discovering previously-unknown sites, which enables existing sites and artefact find spots to be put in their landscape context. Following on from this, it might be useful to excavate a sample of the sites investigated by fieldwalking in order to determine whether or not any in situ archaeological deposits have survived destruction by ploughing. Apart from the work undertaken by Leicestershire Museums Service, there are several examples of fieldwalking projects undertaken by the community but initiated and managed by museum archaeologists, two of which will serve to illustrate their nature and value. In the mid 1970's Chris Saunders at Verulamium Museum started fieldwalking with the Archaeological Group of the St. Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society. Up to the mid 1980's, they had covered much of the late pre-Roman Iron Age settlement at Verulamium and had sampled a substantial part of the Ver Valley in the vicinity of St. Albans. In 1987, they embarked on a detailed survey of Cross Farm, Harpenden, a project which includes fieldwalking, surveying earthworks in woodland and a hedgerow survey. The Society's members also process finds from sites excavated by the Museums Service's Field Archaeology Section.

In 1988 I used an evening talk to the Manshead Archaeological Society of Dunstable and their newsletter (Holgate 1989) as a means of drawing attention to the merits of fieldwalking. I was fortunate that one of their members, Ren Hudspith, came forward and expressed an interest in learning how to fieldwalk. Ren picked up the technique quickly and, galvanised into action by Ren, the Society has now spent the last four winters in the field. They have almost completely covered three parishes and have started on a further three parishes in the Dunstable-Luton environs and have discovered a number of new sites. These include two mesolithic sites, neolithic-Bronze Age sites, several Iron Age and Romano-British sites and two medieval sites (Hudspith 1991; forthcoming). The Romano-British discoveries are of particular interest when compared with the results of the fieldwork undertaken a few kilometres to the south around St. Albans. At St. Albans just over 20 villas are known from the area around the Roman town of Verulamium. Fieldwalking, though, has failed to locate any significant scatters of Romano-British material in the region that could be interpreted as farmsteads or ancillary farming sites. It would therefore appear that farmworkers lived on the villa estates, as the recently published excavations at Gorhambury villa indicated (Neal **et al.** 1990). Around Dunstable, a small market town founded in the Roman period at the intersection of Watling Street and the Icknield Way, only one villa is known. However, the survey by the Manshead Archaeological Society shows that a number of small farmsteads, most of which have also produced Iron Age material, continued to be occupied throughout the Romano-British period, a pattern of settlement and possibly economic and social organisation different to that prevailing in the St. Albans region. The fieldwalking exercise has thus generated hypotheses that can be tested by further fieldwalking and, when the opportunity arises, by excavation. It has also helped revitalise the Manshead Archaeological Society.

One difference between these two examples and the Leicestershire Museums community archaeology scheme is that instead of recruiting teams of amateur fieldworkers largely from scratch to provide a county-wide coverage, they used existing societies as a potential pool of fieldworkers that, once activated, could continue working and recruiting new members with little more than words of advice and encouragement. Clearly, fieldwalking projects are of value not only as archaeological research projects but also as community archaeology schemes. How best to initiate and manage such schemes depends on local circumstances but the importance of finding at least one person willing to co-ordinate activities is crucial to keep up momentum and ensure recording is of a consistently high standard.

A second group of fieldwork projects undertaken by the community but managed by museum archaeologists consists of excavations and surveys involving the use of MSC schemes. These schemes were devised to provide work experience for one sector of the community: the long-term unemployed. A number of museums, for example Stoke-on-Trent and South Shields, took the opportunity offered by these schemes to set up a variety of projects that otherwise might never have been conceived. At Stoke, a three-year historic buildings survey was started in 1982, as a Community Heritage Project, with about 25 people recording pre-1922 buildings. This culminated in the creation of a detailed and fully illustrated archive, a temporary exhibition and the publication of two superb books on Stoke's history (Hawke-Smith 1985; Baker 1991). In 1987 the Museum launched the large-scale excavation and display of Halton Abbey. Despite being unable to convert the project into an ET scheme, the local authority made available enough funding to employ four core staff. Now in its fourth season, the project has been whittled down to two core staff but, with a dozen volunteers and Museum Society members working at weekends, the project continues. Open days are very well attended and the site is already a successful education facility.

The Roman fort of Arbeia at South Shields is under the care of the Tyne and Wear Museum Service. Here, excavations using MSC schemes began in 1983 with, as at Halton Abbey, public display in mind. The aim is to expose the complete ground plan of the fort, although a row of houses on part of the site will need to be demolished first, a task which is scheduled for 2010. Today, funding for the excavations mainly comes from South Tyneside's capital programme and an ET scheme, one of the few archaeology ET schemes in the country. The site is also used as a training excavation for archaeology students at Newcastle and Durham Universities. Whilst there is a museum at the entrance to the fort, the emphasis is on creating a 'living site'. A replica gateway has been constructed, there is a Roman herb garden and it is planned to erect further replica buildings within the fort. Further interpretation is provided by a regular programme of events. These events are an example of another range of community work managed by museum archaeologists, namely the use of local people as interpreters. A re-enactment society was set up, administered by museum staff but made up of interested volunteers, and christened Quinta after the name of the auxiliary unit that garrisoned the fort in the early third century. Members of Quinta don armour and perform displays of drill and tactics using Roman commands; demonstrate the religious side of Roman life by performing sacrifices on a replica altar; and prepare food using Roman recipes. The Society also undertakes outreach work for the Museum Service by attending non-museum events, for example the Gateshead Garden Festival, where they set up their camp with a cooking fire and a shelter and re-enacted aspects of the Roman Festival

of Neptune in order to show the part religion played in Roman military life.

Projects initiated and undertaken for the community by museum archaeologists

These largely include travelling exhibitions, events and talks that take place away from the museum at a location literally within the community. The temporary displays mounted alongside excavations undertaken by the museum-based field teams at Leicester, Winchester and Southampton fall within this category (Pearce 1990, p.196), as does the Museum shop that was opened in the street close to excavations in Leicester in the late 1980's and the coin hoard put on display by Aberdeen Museums and Art Gallery in a new shopping development close to where it was discovered (Southworth 1991, p.19). Whenever festivals, open days and shows are being held it is worth considering taking along what could be described as an archaeological roadshow, using videos, graphic panels and objects, to demonstrate the work of museum archaeologists. On a less formal basis, making an appearance at community centres enables the museum to reach parts of the community that other aspects of museum work cannot reach. Many museums do this already but the prize for making the most impact within the community with a single event must go to St. Albans Museum Service who, with staff dressed in replica Roman dress, set up a stall on market day and sold herbs, cakes, museum souvenirs and publications. This was carefully planned as a one-day exercise that would literally go out into the market place and attract the attention of a high proportion of local citizens. The specially-packaged herbs and home-made cakes sold extremely well and the stall, apart from generating income and considerable interest, also featured prominently in the local press.

In addition to the range of museum-based community archaeology schemes currently in operation, there are other projects that have been initiated by other archaeological bodies. The Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology have obtained funding from three of the seven district councils in Lincolnshire to each support one community archaeologist to help care for and interpret the district's archaeology. Part of their time is spent monitoring and advising on planning applications, whilst the remainder is spent encouraging and training local groups to carry out fieldwork themselves, giving talks to schools and local societies and presenting archaeology by producing publications and by erecting interpretation panels at archaeological sites (Dave Start **pers. comm.**). Bristol University Extra-Mural Department set up a landscape archaeology project in Shapwick, Somerset as a means of involving the local community in the past, not so much by employing large numbers of villagers in the work but by keeping them informed and involved at each stage of the project (Aston 1989). A third example, this time a project undertaken for the community by professional archaeologists, is the publication of a regular newspaper by the Essex County Council Archaeology Section, in which they report on recent archaeological work undertaken in the county by both the professional field units and amateur societies in a format that can easily be assimilated. There is thus scope for museums to co-operate with other professional archaeologists in promoting awareness of archaeology in the community.

Conclusions

Given that museum archaeologists are concerned with all aspects of archaeology, there are many opportunities for museum staff to involve the community in a variety of archaeology projects. Recent studies have shown that interest in the past, particularly at a local level, is far greater than might popularly be believed in the museum world (Merriman 1985; 1989). In order to enhance the service museums provide to the communities who pay for this work, it is vital to increase local awareness of and participation in museum activities. There are many people who are prepared to work as volunteers, providing additional support to undertake tasks that otherwise might not get done. Instead of perceiving volunteers as a threat to our professional livelihood, involving them in museum work should be seen as a way of forging links with the local community (OAL 1991). The funding of local authority museums has always been non statutory. It is important now more than at any time before to do everything possible to ensure that local communities support the service provided by museum archaeologists. Otherwise we ourselves could end up being consigned to the ranks of the amateurs.

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CULTURAL IDENTITY AND MUSEUMS

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"From the spire of San Marco Square, Galileo married the earth to the universe for the very first time. It was shocking. It was anathema. It was blasphemy. It was Italian." *(Promotion by Bloomingdales in co-operation with the Italian Institute for Foreign Trade,* The New Yorker, *16 September 1991)*

"Nationalism is the measles of mankind" (Albert Einstein)

Before looking at some of its implications for museum practice, it is necessary to explore several meanings of the concept of "cultural identity". This paper is not meant to be a guide to practice, however, but rather a contribution to a wider debate which is nevertheless closely linked to what museum do.

Determinism, voluntarism, and identity A great deal of contemporary debate in the social sciences (not simply in archaeology and anthropology) turns on distinctions between what a recent study of the dynamics of ethnicity in the postcolonial Pacific labels "primordialist" (or "Mendelian") versus "circumstantialist" (or "Lamarckian") models (Linnekin and Poyer, Eds., 1990). This, of course, is another transformation of the evergreen "nature/nurture" or "nature/culture" debate.

In the context of ethnicity, the "Mendelian" model refers to objective "givens" like biological relationships or physical background, while the "Lamarckian" recognises that people are able to negotiate their social environments, at least to some extent, in order to create identities for themselves.

There are two reasons, however, why the issue of cultural identity is not as straight forward as this observation suggests. The first is that it is not just the terms which are used to establish cultural identity that vary between societies, but the very notion of "cultural identity" itself (Linnekin and Poyer 1990;4). The second reason is that the very discussion about how people construct their cultural identities constitutes, in varying ways but to an increasing extent, part of the circumstances in which that construction is done. (The extent is increasing as those previously only referred to in discourse now manage to participate in it, and may someday actually control it).

To say that notions of cultural identity are socially variable does not, of course, mean that people can evade at will the consequences of the objective biological, physical or social conditions of their lives. What it does mean is that these factors are anticipated by collectively - and historically - constructed (i.e. cultural) definitions of identity as much as by individuals out to negotiate preferred identity as much as by individuals out to negotiate preferred identities for themselves. If, as Linnekin and Poyer (and many other writers) correctly suggest, inappropriate Western assumptions have been applied in trying to interpret the complex cultural systems of people elsewhere in the world, the answer is not to deny, as a matter of principle, the significance of material or relatively non-negotiable factors, but rather to see how they feature in the interaction between the objective and subjective, between cultural patterns and individual creativity.

However a "person" is defined, a person's experience is only partly determined by factors entirely outside their control while, on the other hand, they are free to decide their destiny only to a limited extent. For the most part, life delivers a set of limited obligations and freedoms which do not respectively and neatly divide between the "material" and the "non-material". Over-emphasising voluntarism in discussions of cultural identity, moreover, disguises important differences between what might be possible for a particular individual but not, on any appreciable scale, for others. A slave, for instance, might manage to escape from her predicament; but slavery as an institution can hardly be described as the consequence of all slaves not escaping.

What used to happen is one dimension of social experience for which archaeologists have some indirect evidence in material form. They lack evidence of any kind that peoples in at least the preliterate past recognised the option of living their lives differently from how material evidence suggests they lived it. That, of course, is not to say that alternatives did not exist or were not recognised: in fact, it is very likely that they did and were. But if the motive for change was there, the opportunity may not have been. Behind all such reflections is the thought that an important distinction exists between our experience and how we choose to represent it.

Science, culture, museums

Museum work is implicitly predicated on the reality as well as the idea of a distinction between the representation and that which is being represented. This formula sums up the main practical problem not just for museum archaeology but for any attempt to squeeze meaning from whatever counts as "evidence".

Museum activities are rooted in the scientific pursuit of knowledge dating from the European Enlightenment. On this view, knowledge develops through steady accumulation punctuated by breakthroughs (such as Galileo's). At least certain kinds of knowledge are the key to social prestige and reward. On the other hand, activities

that privilege inspiration over knowledge are socially marginalised: the artist, the shaman, the insane. We might add the impresario and the curator. Such people produce things that are hard for other people to define, and they operate in the spaces between "really" productive institutions.

This kind of epistemology and social classification fits societies geared to expanding material production, but it makes (and made) little sense in other contexts. By "other contexts" I mean not just those societies which anthropologists traditionally deal with, nor the precapitalist formations which have attracted archaeologists, but also those contemporary societies - such as Britain at the present time - that are ideologically geared to economic expansion but are actually experiencing recession. This viewpoint is, I suggest, a fertile one if we want to make sense of the current debate about cultural identity in the museum context.

The museum world, in common with many academic disciplines, is currently held in tension between determinist and voluntarist arguments, never quite agreeing with either yet unable or unwilling to ask why such unsatisfactory formulas should exert such authority. What is lacking so far is a well-developed rationale for museum work that starts from the assumption that avoiding these extremes is itself something positive. Instead, if there is any attempt to theorise this predicament, it is in terms set by one extreme or the other, which means that no-one feels happy about it.

The best chance for such a rationale to emerge seems to be through the collective activity of developing archaeological knowledge and defending or improving resources for presenting it to a wider audience: a linking of academic and curatorial roles, of research and representation, intellect and social awareness. As the 1991 SMA Conference itself showed, the circumstances in which archaeologists work make it increasingly difficult (even undesirable) to keep these aspects separate from each other.

Using monuments

Any theoretical rejustification of museum work (not a legitimation of any particular past or present practices, of course, but of the principle of such work) would have to take account of the social context in which it is carried out.

Cultural identity is central to this context. Past material cultures were mobilised in part to express such identities, and in many cases these can be interpretated from material evidence. But just as in the past, cultural identities were claimed, expressed, or even created by means of materials poached from other societies or from earlier generations (Shennan 1983), so museum collections and displays represent our own manipulation of the social meanings of objects of the public and ourselves. More than this: museums do not merely monitor change; they are agents of change (Prossler 1991).

A reliable view of the place of museums in contemporary society is even more important if on that basis policies are going to be made which guide not only how a museum itself will function, but also how that functioning will contribute to wider objectives. This is, of course, a vast subject and one that requires collective discussion. For the moment, however, it might be approached in a more restrictive way in connection with cultural identity.

Museums and their collections of whatever provenance or vintage are amongst the most distinctive monuments of (and to) the present. But "the present" cannot be monumentalised independently of particular sections of society. In the first instance - i.e. from close-up museums are memorials to specific individuals: the founder or benefactor, the collectors, the curators. The farther away the imaginary interpreter gets, in space, time or social distance, the broader the groups or categories - archaeologists, scientists, the middle class, the British, even "the West" - that appear to be commemorated. If museums are agents of change rather than passive memorials, these are not, however, mutually-exclusive or incompatible roles. On the contrary: museums are able to take on this active and distinctive function previously by virtue of their dominant image as memorials or even tomb. The image stands in symbolic contrast and therefore offers an alternative - to three key features of contemporary social experience: mobility, fragmentation, and the loss of memory (Jackson 1984). These, of course, are also sources of new cultural identities and of anxiety about them, which helps explain why, if one is uncertain about them, there is little that establishes or legitimises as thoroughly as a museum display.

Globalisation

Museums and museum-related techniques for codifying and packaging experience are spreading rapidly through the world and into new areas of everyday life. These techniques include collecting (invoking concepts of the authentic, the isolatable object or item, the part representative or diagnostic of the whole, and significance detached from life), recording and preservation (freezing time), and display (representing ersatz reality).

In thinking about how the past and the present might be presented to the present, it is therefore necessary to step outside the usual academic discourse in which evidence is accumulated and interrogated; for the decision presupposes an orientation of some kind towards a global future. Even if that orientation is to deny the relevance of whatever might be imagined beyond the

horizon, the actual circumstances in which material is collected and displayed are certainly relevant to our successors and contemporaries. Just because it is a cliche to say that the world is shrinking, does not mean that globalisation is not accelerating and giving wider currency to the views which museums help form.

Globalisation, however, is not simply the outcome of some autonomous technological imperative but relates to the same drive for raw materials, labour and markets which has characterised capitalism throughout its development. The extension and intensification of museum techniques (Horne 1984, 1986; Wright 1985) is intermeshed with the operations of this system both in the obvious sense that they facilitate more comprehensive exploitation and also because they simultaneously ameliorate some of its effects. It is not, however, the museums as a whole or as a category that works as "Ideological State Apparatus" (Meltzer 1981, following Althusser), but only certain aspects of the way it works or is interpreted. It is by affecting aloofness from mundane economics (however ironic that may sound to curators or directors struggling with reduced budgets) that museums are enabled to play this ideological role. Taken as a whole (i.e. without impugning motives in individual cases), philanthropy and public-spirited sponsorship from millionaires and large corporations points to a form of "laundering" capital: some (not all) prominent museums benefit (or would do if their grants were not also cut) while smaller ones or those outside the main urban centres are getting frozen out.

Here again, the accent is on what is visible to the public in terms of press releases when the new gallery or exhibition is opened, and the physically imposing structure itself and its associated literature. Behind the scenes, collections and activities tend to be disregarded in these circumstances, so that those museums whose budgets are being cut most are forced to give greater priority to displays than to the upkeep of their collections, in the hope of attracting approval or sponsorship. This achieves in an unpublicised way what happens when, despite strong opposition from professional organisations, museums disenfranchise future generations by selling off parts of their collections (at present a more serious problem in other countries than in Britain).

Opportunities for resistance

At root, the problem is more serious than a nebulous and unactionable philistinism (a regrettable expression that is doubtless unfair to Philistines) and neither can it be blamed on misguided politicians. The reality is that resources which until recently had been adequate to maintain a wide network of public museums, and therefore to sustain the ideal that there is democratic access to at least those aspects of culture represented by museums, are now patently insufficient. But it might be easier to cope with the present recession (others are likely) if it is realised that the concept of cultural identity offers museums an alternative to working forever at the behest of self-serving economics. Within the phenomenon of global museumisation there is also a neglected counterhegemonic potential.

People not only use the museum as a temple or forum (Lavine and Karp 1991: 3, citing Duncan Cameron), in the sense of a site dedicated to functions which they come to perform and then leave, but they also use it to define their social identity. This is done by visiting museums and using the concept of the museum in a wider frame of reference (the sort of experience that accounts for the popularity of museum replicas and mementoes or the favourable connotation of words like "heritage" even amongst non-visitors). This kind of identity-defining is done actively within a dialogue rather than disclosed, ready-made, in a single "reading" (Barrett 1991.)

Freedom of choice: a matter of degree

Not everything is negotiable, however. Visitors manipulate the symbols of cultural identity which museums provide and deploy, and they do so to some extent according to their own interests. Limited though it is to the accessible contexts and contents of particular museums (broadened through concepts about museums and their practices, and narrowed via those aspects that are actually known), this opportunity to negotiate identity is attractive to people because it pushes into the background the practical limits on their freedom to redefine themselves at will within a given social hierarchy.

As described by Bourdieu (1979), sources of cultural capital like museum visiting oblige subjects to competitively redefine their social status even when other motives for visiting may be more important. However, conscious social climbing or aspiration to higher status are themselves characteristic of only certain status positions or personality types, and neither contentment, resignation nor discontent with one's social status is determined by social division per se. To say that identity is negotiable is untrue to the extent that control over one's social position is restricted, but true to the extent that at least some kinds of cultural identity are optimal. But the sort of negotiation that museums allow means that however unfavourable a social or cultural identity is perceived to be, it need not appear uncomfortably explicitly or final. This is not simply because the negotiation procedure is flexible, so that it can be stalled or ignored, but also because (to repeat the point made earlier) the monument itself - the museum or its collections - is perceived to be both outside and yet also part of the society whose internal distinctions it helps define.

Given that the symbolic use of museums actually depends on their non-symbolic activities, questions of "cultural identity" in relation to museums are nevertheless usually focused on exhibitions, i.e. on the most obviously public side of museum work. Linked with display are spectacle and consumption: key terms in the self-image of corporate capitalism. The scope of choice in some areas of daily life is emphasised at the expense of those in which choice is limited. Consonant with the free market model of contemporary economics (eloquently debunked by Wallerstein (1991)), a spurious voluntarism is projected onto other aspects of daily life. *Don't Worry* about what you can't choose; *Be Happy* choosing what you can.

"Thanks to colour magazines, travel, and Kodak, Everyman has a well-stocked musée imaginaire and is a potential eclectic. At least he is exposed to a plurality of other cultures and he can make choices and discriminations from this wide corpus, whereas previous cultures have been stuck with what they'd inherited." (Jencks 1984: 95; sexist terminology in the original)

Non-symbolic factors may reinforce, neutralise or even reverse the implications of display for the cultural identity of at least sections of the museum's public. These include the possession and use of research collections, educational and publishing activities, and also what might be called a museum's institutional status. Whatever the balance between statute and pragmatism in determining the course of a museum's work, some of its activities appear to be more open to negotiation than others.

The public

If the public were all the same, there would be no sense in talking about cultural identities. Middle-class as it may seem, not even the museum-going public is homogeneous. The definition of "the public" proposed here is a very broad one, and is critical to the argument that follows. This "public" comprises three main categories:

1. museum visitors together with those who directly or indirectly pay for cultural institutions at the present time;
2. the people, and their present-day descendants, from whose cultures museum collections derive; and
3. future generations.

The conventional definition of the public is, of course, limited to the present. Extending it to the future has the advantage of making explicit the principle of custodianship on which practically all museum work is implicitly founded. This theme will be explored in more detail later.

Extending the definition into the past, however, has a rather different purpose. It is not implied that the nature of responsibility which we in the present have to the future is the same as that which we might conceivably have towards the past. Indeed, any notion of responsibility towards the past, or to any ancestor, cannot be taken at face value (Durrans 1989.) Since nothing we do is retroactive in the literal sense of reversing linear time, such a notion can only be a code for expressing a sense of responsibility towards those in the present or the future for whom some ancestor, ancestry or past is or might be significant. While we might, and should, show respect for what, after careful consideration, still appears to us as evidence - as the physical attributes and spatial distribution of material traces of past activities - this is in the end simply an assertion of preferred present practice. Yet in this expression it claims legitimacy from the past like anyone seeking their family genealogy or cultural roots. The point is that claiming legitimacy from the past, even if it seems justified, is simply a way of representing a decision in and about the present.

Posterity

An attempt to justify actions in the present in terms of their anticipated effects on the future, however, raises a different principle. It is true, of course, that a reified future can be as blatantly ideological an excuse as a reified past for present iniquities; but it is still possible to specify the time-lapse after which present actions might be judged. The claim to be doing something for the benefit of posterity is therefore falsifiable to the extent that the next generation (for example) finds what you have done to be of no benefit to themselves, either directly or in terms of conforming to their own concept of what should be done for subsequent generations. This formula offers the possibility (though not the guarantee) that the next and each subsequent generation will broadly approve what you have done and will repeat or adapt your actions from similarly altruistic motives. Carrying out museum work along these lines is, or should be, very demanding. But rejecting this approach - i.e. denying the possibility of altruism - would be to dismiss as self-deluding much of what museums do and have done for many years.

There is, in fact, some plausibility in the argument that the self-image of museums as servants to posterity derives from just another ideological paradigm. The problem in that case is to specify an alternative paradigm, and to show how it might organise museum work better. If, however, there is no escaping ideology, then there can be no grounds, apart from the subjective views of the critic, on which any alternative paradigm might be based. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that even if it is compatible with an ideological definition of museum functions, some orientation to posterity, in the sense of gearing present practice to an anticipation of its future assessment, is a necessary (if not a sufficient) condition for commitment to knowledge. Since the past can never hear us, appealing to the past in the

absence of an orientation to posterity, at least of the sort discussed here, is surely the mark of a charlatan.

Cultural identity

If the public includes future generations, and museums owe at least some responsibility towards them, then contemporary expressions of cultural identity have to be treated as recordable, i.e. as a matter of observing and documenting how people behave and are categorised by others, as well as how they categorise themselves. Among the "others" who define cultural identities, and are in a position to disseminate their definitions, are museum curators; but this responsibility is not, of course, confined to them.

The use of material evidence to confirm or claim cultural identities is often obvious in well-publicised cases: the Bronze Age corpse found in the Similaun glacier in September 1991, for instance, has been claimed by Austrians, Italians, French, and Upper Tyrolese. When cultural objects can be linked to the past, especially through the respectable-seeming academic disciplines of history or archaeology, their capacity to legitimise cultural identities is usually enhanced. The legitimation sought is social; it is valued to the extent that it receives publicity and influences others.

In this respect, accessible museum exhibitions offer a significant opportunity to assert cultural identity, while the prestige that attaches to many museums (and to "the museum" as a category) further strengthens the assertion itself. But museums clearly do not have a monopoly in this field, and cultural identity is expressed in many other forms within archaeology (Shennan 1989).

Taking stock of current debate in this subject, largely limited though it is to representation in the form of exhibitions, exposes several neglected aspects of the relationship between museums and cultural identity. Discussion of these leads to an interpretation drawing on the concept of "managed meaning" (Cohen and Comaroff 1976), of the way in which debate about cultural identities is conventionally handled.

Key themes in cultural identity and display

Overemphasis on the optional or constructional aspect of cultural identity has its counterpart, in history and archaeology, with the idea, criticised by Appadurai, that the past is a "limitless and plastic resource, infinitely susceptible to the whims of contemporary interest" (Appadurai 1981) In practice, matters are more complex. Not only do curators present some themes as self-evident and others more tentatively; but some visitors are more inclined to worship, and others to argue, with what they see. The presentation of data varies not only in its openness to challenge, but also, whether it is questioned or not, in how far it satisfies whatever criteria are used to judge its validity. If a temple implies mystification and a forum critical debate, neither encompasses the further characteristic of most museums (and, for that matter, of academic disciplines) that they decide and disseminate what seems reasonable according to more or less explicit procedures for defining and interpreting evidence.

It is not enough to suggest that museums occupy some intermediate position between temples and forums: they are also distributed (and shift) along a continuum between the maximum and minimum extent to which reasonable information is provided together with at least some of the grounds for accepting it. Whichever position a museum occupies on this continuum at any given moment is obviously provisional, the result of a necessary compromise between certainty and doubt.

Neither certainty nor doubt can be fully indulged in an institution aiming to develop knowledge or educate its public. On the one hand, facts cannot be absolute since they are defined in terms of their relevance to interests which are themselves historically variable. On the other hand, to refuse to speak on the grounds that what one has to say can be no more than provisional would amount not merely to intellectual conceit, but to complicity in however the discussion one is avoiding might be misused by those less reticent about it. Limitations of time and opportunity, of course, effectively prevent any museum from using its resources to the fullest extent possible in combating misinformation, stereotypes and prejudice in the multiple discourses of public and private life. It is sometimes forgotten that even if museums devoted themselves to doing nothing else, such problems would be unlikely to disappear since they are generated by interests and experiences over which a museum culture has little autonomous control.

This argument cannot, however, be used to defend museums against the more familiar charge that the very characteristic that enables them to function as teachers, viz., their apparent neutrality, also facilitates their use as instruments of power (Karp, in Karp and Lavine 1991: 14). That is to say, by participating in socially-embedded discourse, a museum foregoes its right to neutrality, while "neutrality" means passive partisanship towards whatever is predicted as the outcome of the discussion from which the museum backs off.

The issue, therefore, is not whether a false notion of the "innate neutrality" of the museum can be sustained, but rather, how to choose between and justify the partisan options which any museum practices, whether tacitly or overtly. Most criticism of museums as legitimisers of established codes stops short of this and its tone is typically bemused, as if contested meanings were confined to

academic debate rather than echoes or transformations of terms used in wider contests for power.

Even when this wider context is grasped it is usually in the form of categories of ethnic or other culturally-distinctive groups that are treated as posing especially serious or interesting problems for analysis. More particularly, and despite the seductive complexity of the claims and counter-claims its construction entails, ethnicity is perhaps the last bastion of the exoticising tendency within anthropology. Ethnic identities reproduce the quality of the traditional ethnographic "Other". Observing how members of ethnic minorities define and negotiate their identities reproduces the traditional distance between observer and observed to the large extent that academic (or, for that matter, museum-based) specialists do not count themselves among the minorities concerned.

By contrast, such observers cannot avoid being implicated in the ways in which identities of class and gender are constructed. This may help explain why class and gender restrictions have been overshadowed or subsumed by ethnicity in discussions of identity in public culture. Internal variation and divisions of interest within class and gender categories are also treated as so obvious that the operational utility of either class or gender as a concept is increasingly questioned. This has not yet happened in respect of other forms of cultural identity, and if ethnic identity in particular is routinely treated as flexible and contested, ethnic communities are regarded, especially in museum displays and associated education or outreach programmes, as essentially close-knit and unitary. Thus, debate around how far museums are relevant (or give a voice) to ethnic communities tends to ignore the extent to which those individuals or organisations with whom the museum is in closest contact represent the ethnic community as a whole.

In this respect, arguments about exoticising versus assimilating approaches in exhibitions (stressing difference from, or similarity to, the visitor), or whether objects should be displayed within a context designed to evoke their "authentic" setting or else surrounded by explanatory labels, cannot simply be resolved by appealing to local groups with what are believed to be a close interest in or knowledge of the theme of the display. This leaves space for curatorial judgement and therefore accountability. In practice, consultation among interested or relevant groups cannot guarantee consensus; nor is this necessarily desirable. The curator or the museum itself may be called to account for approach taken in an exhibition, but the museum's attention is itself often valued and offsets any minor resentment which aspects of the exhibition might arouse, even if no more than a very small minority of those who see it choose to react in this way.

Since there is no ultimate arbiter in such matters outside the museum on whom curators can pin responsibility for particular themes and styles of display, the best that can be done is to present, simultaneously or in a succession of exhibitions, a variety of material and interpretive frameworks designed both to impart information and provoke reactions as a prerequisite to deeper understanding. Most discussion and criticism of displays risks serious misunderstanding in this respect. An exhibition that could work well if experienced in the context of other representations is often condemned by those who fail to concede the relevance of such experience. Alternatively, a display that deserves to be assessed on its own merits may be dismissed because it is not what the critic thinks it should be. Members of the public may reproduce these reactions, but most tend to use their visits opportunistically, so that what a critic or a curator thinks people derive from an exhibition may be quite different from what they actually experience.

Museums still know very little about their contemporary public and how to communicate with them. For certain specialised subjects, the relevant public may have tastes and assumptions quite different from those of the population as a whole. Valuable though they might be, visitor surveys cannot unteach what is already known about the importance of providing resources from which museum-goers can enlarge and revise their understanding. The most instructive parallel is surely with a public library, where a shelf of Desmond Bagley does not mean that there is not another of Thackeray or Dickens or Dostoyevsky, or, indeed, in some libraries, further shelves of books in Gujarati, Urdu, Greek, etc. A statement of sorts is being made in the choice of books put on display, but a museum exhibition constitutes a much fuller statement.

The source of this "fuller" content and what it should be raises a key and concluding argument in this review of the debate about exhibitions and cultural identity. A contrast is drawn between the imposition of curatorial ("authorial" or "authoritarian") categories and the attempt to show material as nearly as possible in terms of the categories used by those who made or used it. Yet the terms of this contrast ignore the desirability of variety in display and the actual variability of the museum audience.

A decision to present artefacts in categories derived from the culture in which they were made and used remains a curatorial decision, and the many other variables connected with the pervasively and subtly influential display environment, from exhibition cases and label design to the architecture itself, are supplied by the museum or by the broader and still less negotiable museum culture of the exhibiting society, and are to that extent "authorial". The idea that there is a single "native categories" approach is itself often open to question,

just as labelling as "authoritarian" the necessary compromise between curatorial certainty and doubt is to delegitimise even the principle of stating a provisional point of view. There is certainly a lot to be said for including in an exhibition the grounds on which and procedures by which one arrives at given interpretations - this should not only be to induce healthy scepticism of what is presented without such critical apparatus but also to encourage people to apply the same approach to other examples of received wisdom in which the risk of misinterpretation may be even more serious.

But to take this argument too far would be to ignore the realities in which most museums operate. It would be absurd, for example, for a curator to emphasise at every turn the uncertainty of the view being presented, as if all visitors were deconstructionists already wearied by an excess of positivism. For at least some visitors, indeed, the prospect of reliable information could well risk the effect of leaving intact any less reliable (and even dangerous) ideas which they may already hold.

Contexts and con-texts

Much of the contemporary debate about museums and cultural identity, then, glosses over several important considerations: the variability and the future component of the museum's public; the significance of the museum as a social institution; its research work, geared to some purpose perhaps devoid of present advantage; and the necessity of compromise incumbent not just on museums but on any development of public knowledge.

What is striking about such omissions is that those engaged in the conventional forms of this debate routinely overlook them. The relevance of these omitted factors was argued in the last section. In the present section we shall ask how it has been possible for this one-sided debate to emerge in the first place. To put the matter another way: it is not enough to issue a corrective to a conventionally-framed argument; it is necessary, rather, to ask how, in what conditions, that argument has attained its conventional status. (2).

The way museums and their functions have come to be thought about is not at all the autonomous development suggested by citing a pedigree of museological literature over the past quarter-century. That literature charts the course but not the currents which have been negotiated on the way. Nor have all the relevant factors been "negotiated" as an intellectual activity: some, perhaps the most influential, have supplied conditions and assumptions which have evaded analysis. The notion of a level of competition over and above that which seems to be taking place is essential to the effort of making sense of these developments. It would be reasonable but is not necessary to gloss these different levels as "real" versus "illusory" (invoking ideology in the sense of "false-consciousness"), but the following summary of Cohen and Comaroff's (1976) approach to "the management of meaning" serves as a framework for the argument developed here:

"... analysis of those transactions that involve competition over the management of meanings should precede analysis of those substantive and intrinsic values over which the competition is apparently taking place." (Appadurai 1981: 203)

In the present context, arguments are about cultural identities in museum exhibitions. But it is clear that there is also at least one other level of competition: that of control over museum policy.

It is by no means clear as to whether a shift of funding away from public and towards private sources reflects any desire, still less any conspiracy, on the part of the private sector to control what museums do. The business establishment has for a long time been able to exercise a good deal of control over cultural policy via boards of trustees and a variety of local or national institutions. Neither is it clear that this development is driven by the desire of ascending or marginal entrepreneurs for quick profits or prestige in a market hitherto protected by public patronage. In fact, the profit margins in cultural sponsorship of this sort are probably too narrow to be attractive, as many curators unsuccessfully pursuing reluctant sponsors will appreciate.

A more likely explanation is the more obvious one that public funds are being squeezed, so that what could once be afforded, in the question-begging but still largely unquestioned framework of wider priorities of state or state-led expenditure, is now curtailed or abandoned altogether. The private sector then steps in, opportunistically and incoherently, to boost its self-image or turn a quick profit, where persuaded or tolerated by grateful or resentful curators.

The effect of this so far is that the private sector is increasingly influential in museum work even though it is unlikely to completely replace funds no longer forthcoming from public sources. For the most part, the policy of private sponsors, or of public bodies pressured into adopting similarly short-term effectiveness measures, is to seek a profitable or at least a reasonably calculable return on investment.

This return may be measured in terms of public attitudes, especially among larger, often transnational, companies that cannot afford not to cultivate their corporate images in ways which have little direct bearing on profit-figures but which they know through experience to be vital to their

long-term competitiveness. The result, however, is the same: a privileging of the present public over posterity; of exhibitions over research or documentation; of easy rather than difficult subjects for exhibitions; and of entertainment over education in those exhibitions that are presented.

One aspect of the shift towards entertainment rather than education is the tendency for exhibitions to not just omit scholarly language from their label or information panels but to avoid objects and collections themselves, as the main traditional focus and raison d' être of museum work, in favour of models and reconstructions: to resort, in other words, to effect rather than substance, to impressions of a subject rather than the material evidence on which much of our knowledge of that subject is based. Of course, these consequences are not evident in every instance; existing practices tend to resist such pressures; and in some respects socially desirable results are perfectly compatible with the aims and interest of private-sector funding, which can be applied at least as generously or sensitively as public funding has ever been. Nor does private funding necessarily mean greater control over political or other potentially controversial aspects of an exhibition; indeed, public funding may be significantly more restrictive in such respects. Neither, on the question of the style and appeal of exhibitions, can there be any objection to improving education itself by harnessing entertainment to it, or to making facts and interpretations more accessible to a wider public by avoiding unnecessarily complex language in galleries or by using a picture instead of a thousand words, or perhaps a model instead of ten thousand. But there is a risk: it is easy to forget that caring for collections, which refer to some of the many permutations of cultural life in time and space, involves protecting evidence against short-term expediency; reasserting the importance of that evidence for interpreting the human condition in a many-sided way; and defending the public's (including the future public's) right to know what that material is capable of disclosing.

The central point remains: the overall trend of the shift of funding and the narrowing of social purpose and accountability to the drive for private profit or "value for money", highlights precisely what the debate about cultural identities has also stressed: the importance of exhibitions to the exclusion of those other aspects of museum work on which exhibitions have always depended in the past. However, if a debate about the place of cultural identity in museum exhibitions is one level of competition, is this simply a symptom of the second-level competition over museum funding and policy control? The alternative suggested here is that both are symptoms of a third.

As long as debates about cultural identity are conducted in hermetic terms, i.e., in terms of a closed ideology in which notions of appearance and option displace those of substance and necessity, their political force is effectively defused. Reducing museums to shop-windows, or to machines for generating prestige rather than understanding, serves or follows the same ideology. So does the growing tendency of production, a narrow cost-benefit calculus dressed up as public accountability.

What, then, might be the transactions entailing "competition over the management of meanings" which underlie the arguments identified here and the parallel trends which give them currency? Their defining principle seems to be the denial of the future as a source of potential alternatives to the present. It could hardly, of course, be a denial of the future in the sense of a resource to perpetuate, stabilise or extend present political and economic structures, and indeed, realistic acceptance of that kind of future is evident in centralised control with computer-based modelling and forecasting, however far this departs from rhetoric about free markets. The dangerous aspect of the future, from the perspective of any established interest, is rather its potential to challenge present plans and forecasts. It is therefore not "the future" in the abstract which is feared or denied, but the capacity of those who will constitute it to organise themselves collectively in advancing their own interests against those of existing power-holders or of those to whom that power is deliberately bequeathed. All the trends and arguments identified here are predicated on the same denial of what for museums is the most relevant resource of all: the future public.

This denial proceeds by different routes. For instance, it has become widely and reasonably accepted that museums cannot offer completely value-neutral samplings of the world as it was or is. Bias is, of course, inherent in the production of knowledge or ideology through material objects, and curators have been aware of it for much longer than the recent vogue for discussing it explicitly might suggest. It is therefore worth asking why the subjective dimension of museum work is now such a hot topic.

The postmodernist paradigm

Part of the answer clearly lies in wider currents of thought loosely defined as "postmodernist". While debate about the role of "the subject" engages a whole range of academic fields, new stress is given to the relativity of knowledge. Instead of "facts" about the world, we have interpretations of it.

On the positive side, interpretation invites scepticism, whereas "facts", by definition, are beyond dispute. The negative side, as many critics have pointed out, is that for postmodernist epistemology discourse is all. It follows that whatever determines the dominance of (or preference

for) one interpretation over another, it cannot be correspondence or goodness of fit between the interpretation and that which is interpreted. It is not trivial to point out that, on the whole, engineers tend not to be postmodernists. With their tangible exhibits - their "hard evidence" - museum curators also have good reason not to go all the way with postmodernist relativism.

One of the aims of any anthropologist interested in material culture is to use it to make sense of what people thought and did, or think and do. That interpretation need not be cast in concrete, but is open to re-evaluation on the basis of an expanding corpus of recognised evidence. This procedure remains valid in principle even though it is not always or inevitably followed, and despite the tendency of theoretical orientations or subjective attitudes to undermine it. Such a formula is, nevertheless, anathema to postmodernist consciousness because it challenges the conceit that reduces the world to words, thoughts or images.

Bias in consumption

If this generalised intellectual reposturing called postmodernism helps account for heightened interest in the subjective side of museum work, it is hardly a full explanation. A further clue lies in the public domain in which museums function. Postmodernism in one form or another affects the production of knowledge by influencing the producers (curators) themselves. Something else, brought to the encounter with museums by visitors and perhaps other members of the public, concerns and consumption of that knowledge. (3)

What, then, has happened in the public domain that might help account for the interest in the subjective side of museum activity? Several tendencies can be identified. One is the acceleration of stylistic distinctions related to the "fashion system". This affects not just clothes, cosmetics, and music, but also leisure experiences and a wide range of consumer durables. The pattern is of minor variation creating fresh demand through high evaluation of novelty. Marketing of commodities has increasingly become marketing of status or persona to which the commodities themselves are then attached (Haug 1986).

Interwoven with this broad economic strategy is the fragmentation of one or two dominant youth subcultures (and, for that matter, of the images to which older people used to loosely conform) into a larger number of smaller, more fluid categories. In short, public life in the past decade or so has been marked by ever finer distinctions of subjective identity and the consumption of the signs by which that identity is claimed or advertised. More than a mere marketing ploy, this has become a prominent part of the economy as a whole and has come to influence apparently unconnected phenomena from the representation of political leaders and manifestoes to the construction of personal CVs and job applications. In all these areas, appearance is widely acknowledged to count for as much as or more than reality. The similarity here with postmodernist arguments in academic discourse is obvious, although the links between postmodernism as a form of discourse and the economic conditions which underpin it are many and varied (Harvey 1989).

Ethnic majorities and minorities (4)

Another tendency in the public domain which favours an interest in the subjective in museum work is the challenge posed by former colonies - the majority populations of the world - to western nations. This point must be carefully made because it is easily misconstrued. Much of the "developing" part of capitalism is not so much developing as stagnating or going into decline. International cultural diplomacy, in which debtor nations tout their cultural resources in Western capitals, reflects this closely (Walker 1991) (5).

Concern with social, political and economic unity and viability is pushed to the fore in poorer countries by circumstances over which they have little control. This sets the terms in which our overseas colleagues see museums as not so much - or even not at all - meant to display or preserve aspects of reality from the past or present, but rather to forge new cultural identities. In Western cultural museums, however, and among anthropologists generally, there remains a strong if implicit view that all ethnic identities are worthy of respect as well as of study, and that it is the proper business of museums not simply to preserve elements of those identities but to actively celebrate ethnic diversity as a desirable feature of any society.

What is again stressed in this orientation is the subjective side of ethnicity. "Identity" becomes an abstraction, divorced from the often harsh practical decisions that "developing" nations face. In developed Western nations, the largest ethnic communities are predominantly sorted into the lower-status categories of region, neighbourhood, class and occupation that have long characterised social division. Prejudice, oppression and deprivation did not start with immigrants or economic refugees, but it is among these groups that such problems now find their sharpest contemporary expression. The political agendas of Western societies on which arts, leisure and museums feature (usually near the bottom) also include strategies for dealing with (or containing) what is called an "ethnic problem". In fact, the problem is not the special property of ethnic communities, nor can it be solved by them alone. To be sure, its worst forms (such as racist violence) can be ameliorated by special effort; but the root problems belong to society as a whole and therefore demand social solutions.

This context provides a yardstick by which to assess attempts by museums to represent and celebrate aspects of the cultural life and tradition of ethnic communities. The communities concerned are marginalised in the wider society; their voice is little heeded. Curators attempting to counteract this do so, of course, against the common repression and sometimes the slaughter of cultural minorities. Yet it is also part of the experience of ethnic identity that potentially viable groupings of several ethnic communities can be broken up by a narrow pursuit of separatist aims to the likely disadvantage of everyone except those other nations or groups that can exploit the parts more effectively than the whole.

The world economic imbalance, most obvious in the debt burden on the South, penalises not just minorities but majorities as well. A model in which rule by an élite drawn from a majority ethnic group is construed as a problem mainly for that group's ethnic rivals has the corollary that a shift of ethnic dominance, or the sharing of power between representatives of different communities, offers hope of a solution. In practice, matters are both more complex and more straightforward than this model allows. Neither changing the ethnic flavour of the state nor splitting power between contending groups is likely to generate the tangible advantages which might give people the incentive to work together. There is, of course, no guarantee that this will ever happen, but its chances would seem stronger were power to be redistributed vertically, bringing the "WaBenzi" or their equivalents closer and more answerable to the mass of the population, rather than horizontally across ethnic boundaries. Ethnic strife is real enough and must be tackled accordingly; but it is often represented as a free-floating problem rather than an integral part of the predicament of national indebtedness and of gross maldistribution of power and wealth. Meanwhile, it may well look odd to others that in Britain (where state policy strongly opposes Welsh, Scottish and Irish autonomy), cultural museums concerned with overseas countries tend to pay more attention to what differentiates ethnic groups from each other than to what unites or potentially unites them.

Ethnic identity as problem and opportunity

Ethnic identity is more highly-charged than the categories on a census form might suggest. The legacy and reproduction of racism in contemporary Britain has generated both timidity and assertiveness in black and Asian communities. Opposing racism in principle has to be translated into the most effective specific means, taking account of the local community or communities, the work that a museum does or could do, and the sort of collections at its disposal. General arguments about how museums can most effectively combat racism or other forms of prejudice are unlikely to be useful (or heeded), however, unless they are given concrete meaning. And that may mean, among other things, interacting with members of local communities to a greater extent than normally happens, not only to sound out their views about the form and content of exhibitions, but also about the best way the museum can pursue its basic purpose as a collecting, educating and researching institution.

At this point we need two caveats. The first is that it would be as inappropriate for consultation to lead curators to abandon their responsibility towards collections and the effective operation of the museums they are paid to run as it would for consultation with other interested groups to be simply a public relations exercise, a veneer of democracy over a determination to do things the same way they have always been done. A balance has to be struck between humility and recognition of the insights that specialised study can yield. If the museum's public, as argued here, is not limited to the present but extends to future generations, then curatorial responsibility is to what is handed on (specimens themselves, and the full results of research) as well as to what is handed out (exhibitions and the publishable results of research).

The second caveat concerns the status of the museum itself and what might be called a "museum culture". This is always a relevant variable, generally raising the profile of those peoples or nations whose products are shown in its galleries. This point is well-illustrated by the example of a hammer-wielding British tourist in mid-nineteenth century Egypt. Knocking fragments off Cleopatra's Needle after it has been given to the British government but before it had started its eventful journey to the Thames Embankment, the vandal was taken to task by a fellow- countryman who argued that the obelisk belonged not to him as an individual but to Britain as a whole. "Well, I know it does", he replied, "and as one of the British nation I mean to have my share." (quoted in Hayward 1978: 25). This defence reflects not only the egocentric construction of national identity which foreign travel may strengthen, but also the role of physical protection as a prerequisite for mobilising symbols of national identity in a public rather than a private mode. The normal means of providing that protection is the museum but, as street lighting, conspicuous siting, police patrols, fences and railings have shown, powerful symbols, from Cleopatra's Needle to Stonehenge itself, can where necessary be protected against entrepreneurs and the construction of subversively private meanings.

Claims of different groups or individuals about the past are constrained by unequal access to power in the present. This social dimension, with its competing, alternative claims, is often obscured in discourse by the unifying effect of the first person, which makes the problem seem one of personal volition: "Since we choose to broaden our reality

backwards from the present we must find a way of dealing with known facts and worse still with truths which may not be compatible with our desirable, round, present." (Willmot 1985: 41 - 42)

Getting beyond partisan images in order to determine what actually happened in the past (or choosing between them according to their approximation to objective evidence) is based on the assumption that historical truth is not only knowable but also potentially useful. This assumption is problematical in both respects: first, because it is easily conflated with the view that anything like an absolute or complete truth can be discovered; and second, because "use" in this context implies an application beyond reversing the balance of social advantage or disadvantage.

The idea of historical "truth" is more acceptable if it refers to the sorts of evidence and reasoned interpretations of it with which archaeologists and other researchers are already familiar. Just as getting up in the mornings and making the coffee would be even more difficult if we really thought that we or the world did not exist, so archaeological practice would grind to a halt if the "things we call objects from the past" were in fact only "objects of the present" (Willmot, op. cit.:41.) Such truth is always provisional but it is also something you can work with. Similarly, if the past were no more than a bargaining chip in the present, competing claims about it could only be adjudicated on pragmatic or rootlessly moral grounds. Yet the experience and reasoning of social subjects (including specialised archaeologists) points to history not just as discourse but as temporal process. Inequalities of power then appear not merely as "givens" in the political present, but as products of a development in time.

This distinction is expressed in various forms. For example, in theories of visual representation, it underlies the critique of Cartesian perspectivalism (Jay 1988) and of the possibility of photography as a non-ideological documentary medium. In the political context, Jay points to a disturbing compatibility between postmodernist ideas and the culture industry (ibid.:20), a "compatibility" construed by others as an organic link (e.g., Harvey, op. cit.). It is not simply that reducing the world to representations runs counter to Baconian science, but that by choosing a particularly arid intellectualism in which to express itself, such reduction denies lessons implicit in practical experience. This amounts to a further example of a restrictive use of the concept of "knowledge", recognising only its explicit and intellectualised forms. Intuitive and other subjective versions of what we know (which happen, of course to be the main forms in which we guide our everyday lives) are then downgraded as unreliable and ideological. And they may indeed be just that but the point is that they are also repositories of estimations and approximations no less useful for being unfocused or resistant to explicit formulation.

John Berger once committed the unpardonable sin, in the eyes of postmodernist critics, of claiming that "photographs are records of things seen". Writers on photography have theorised to the point where the subtleties of creating and decoding photographic images oblige them to deny (or to regard as uninteresting - which is the same thing, only worse) that the image has anything to do with the material reality which the camera was pointed at (Tagg 1988: 198-189). And that offends not only "common-sense", which is rightly suspect, but also our practical experience which we ought to learn to trust more than we do.

All that is being argued here, therefore, is that a disadvantaged group that seeks to overcome its problems simply by trading in images might be successful but only temporarily so. Nevertheless, this is far from suggesting that such activity is necessarily or even usually a waste of time or effort. Indeed, even a temporary advance might prevent complete subjugation or buy time to work for longer-term solutions. But the pivotal point is that problems of any type will recur unless appropriate alterations are made to the structures which generate them.

One expression of this type of superficial approach to cultural identity has surfaced as "paternalism". Criticism of the paternalistic character of "ethnic arts" as a category has been largely ignored by museums:

"One's creative ability in the contemporary world is not necessarily determined by one's own origin ... the ideology behind 'ethnic arts', or the anthropological view that Afro/Asians are nothing but .... the representations of their own traditional cultures, will not hold together if the reality is allowed to enter into or confront it". (Araeen 1984: 102-3)

There is certainly something arrogant and absurd in the assumption made by many galleries and museums that particular ethnic communities constitute a "natural" audience for exhibitions about parts of the world of which only a diminishing number of their older members have much direct experience. That, however, is a reason to construct such exhibitions in an intelligent way, without assuming that one ethnic group will know all about the subject. Yet Araeen's wider question remains; whether the exhibition is of art of some other dimension of cultural experience, ethnic minorities find themselves culturally cold-shouldered, not only by representations connoting an exclusive "Britishness" long favoured by the dominant majority, but also by those representations, whether historical or contemporary, drawn from their own or their parents' cultures from which life in Britain has largely alienated them.

How far do museums try to make their displays of British art and antiquities, or of Mediterranean and increasingly East Asian civilisations, meaningful to those British citizens whose sense of national identity has been constructed in very different circumstances from that of the majority population? By their very presence, such displays shed prestige on their British host culture, but is this prestige shared by all British citizens? For that matter, how far will any museum try to prevent visitors in general from using exhibits to confirm misconceptions about the character of the culture which the objects represent, or - for that matter - about the institutions in which and through which they are displayed?

Instead of seeing such challenges as a problem, they should be seized upon as an extra incentive to do precisely what museums should be doing anyway. Acknowledging the feeling among minorities of exclusion from the dominant culture is the first step to acknowledging that in many respects that same culture is hardly shared by most of those who are nominally part of it. What a museum should do, therefore, is not make catering to the special needs of particular sections of its actual or potential public the main challenge of its public orientation (which can then seem patronising and opportunistic), but rather revise its whole approach to making more accessible what is still, even if only in formal terms, a publicly-owned resource. If successful, the result would be to enfranchise people against the grain of a long process of cultural deprivation created not just by patterns of work and domicile but also by the substitutes which commercial mass culture profitably crams into the lives of people who expect nothing more.

There is, of course, a deeply unfashionable value-judgement in this statement. What is being argued, however, is not that people are mere receptacles who do nothing creative with whatever resources are at hand - on the contrary. But even if mass culture has marvels of its own, that is no reason for anyone to be intimidated (as many are) by the cultural repertoire associated with upper socio-economic categories (Merriman 1989). Indeed, the case should probably be argued in much more powerful terms: the understanding, appreciation and future vitality of all cultural productions can develop to the fullest extent only when they are treated as the normal property of everyone. For museums this means far more than increasing visitor numbers. You cannot teach in a hundred exhibitions the finely-tuned aesthetic sensibilities of a connoisseur. But you can show how objects even of the most revered and refined type were made by people, by individuals, who get their hands dirty (Shanks and Tilley 1987). Subverting the aesthetic code of our cultural élite by expanding its terms is a scholarly duty aimed at a fuller and deeper understanding of material culture. But it also brings us up sharply against actual relations of power and authority, so it cannot be undertaken lightly.

Even when tied closely to factors outside an individual's control, ethnic identity is never a permanent condition but a phase in a social and political process. However they deal with (or anticipate) the ethnic challenge to museums, curators ought to make it compatible with an approach to the far more difficult question of what sort of cultural environment it might be desirable to create in the longer term.

Ethnicity, memory, imagination

Some "re-constructed" archaeologists have argued that curators (and anthropologists or archaeologists in general) should exercise due respect for the dead by treating them as far as possible as they would living "subjects". The dead, it has been reasonably said, cannot answer back. On the other hand, the dead can come to life (so to speak) as tokens of identity for their descendants. This seems to be the case especially where modern kin-groups (as large as clans or as small as families) are in competition with each other. Among the contemporary Parisian bourgeoisie, for example, rivalry is rife if unadmitted, and "the further back in time family memories reach, the more prominent is the family" (Sjögren 1991: 91, quoting Le Wita 1988). Moving up in scale and complexity from the family to state institutions, real or contrived "tradition" can sanction contemporary authority (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983).

The incentive for faking legitimacy may therefore be considerable. A recent census in Brazil revealed that far fewer respondents classified themselves as black than would be expected from normal observation. What this reveals, unsurprisingly, is that people try to evade the discrimination which even partial African ancestry still attracts. The Christian Church in India gains converts not so much from the power of sermons than because it offers a convenient exit from the caste system for those at the bottom of it. In fact, people have probably always been more flexible about their ethnic or other forms of identity than some modern expressions of national or sectional fervour might suggest. When in Rome you do as the Romans do.

Rome, however, reminded James Joyce, "of a man who lives by exhibiting his grandmother's corpse", by which he presumably meant that the ruins and tourists were both too much. Ethnic or any other sort of identity has both a predetermined / real / objective / grandmotherly quality and also an optional / contrived / subjective / fairy godmotherly quality about it. These two sides together constitute the "truth" of identity. It may not always or often be possible to determine who someone "is" apart from who they say they "are". It may amount to the same thing. It may not matter. What they say may in any case be far more interesting than who they "are". Yet would you lend a stranger £100 if all you knew of them was that they said they were honest? If we are interested in assessing knowledge-claims, we surely need the principle of a

difference between interpretation and reality, or between discourse and the practical world of which it is part. And if that is so, then we also need museums to say of their chosen subject not just "This is what it is like", but also "These are the grounds for our argument". Unless curators are genuinely undecided (which it may be quite proper to be), they should avoid the ersatz democracy of presenting alternative views with no suggested basis for choosing between them.

Truth, said Francis Bacon, comes more easily from error than from confusion. The important thing is to preserve and be aware of the evidence to which a given representation refers, while recognising that the most useful interpretation is not necessarily reliable in every last detail (Shanks and Tilley, op. cit.: 98-99). Appreciating the epistemological link between evidence and interpretation allows representations to imaginatively suggest new ways of not just interrogating the evidence but also of defining it. The same recognition also reinforces a sense of responsibility towards transmitting to our successors both the evidence itself and the representations we construct upon it.

It is on this basis that museums can confidently address questions of cultural identity and challenge restrictive access to the cultural resources and opportunities of which they themselves are part. If such a stance also obstructs postmodernist rhetoric in the museum field, so much the better.

Notes

1. Karp and Lavine (1991) for instance, contains several papers on cultural identity, but the book's title privileges the words "exhibiting" and "display".

2. This is a far from pedantic point: only through understanding the circumstances in which a given set of ideas has gained currency does a counter-argument, however coherent or logical, stand any chance of success. Indeed, the more far-reaching the "counter-argument", the more it will need to embrace not just an argument in the narrow sense of a set of proportions but also a strategy for winning their acceptance.

3. The distinction between production and consumption in this context cannot, of course, be pressed too far; museum visitors do not take meaning from exhibition like shoppers buy biscuits (pace Bourdieu's claim that "the department-store is the art gallery of the working class"). Visitors in fact construct their own meanings partly out of resources made available to them and partly out of views and information which they themselves supply. The term "consumption" is used here simply to refer to what is done to curatorial output by those who come across it in a museum.

4. In the present argument, the terms "cultural" and "ethnic" are used more or less interchangeably. This is because much (though not all) of what is said here about ethnic identity and how museums relate to it also applies to class-, gender-, age-, religion-, or spatially-related (national, regional, local) categories in contemporary society. Each of these differentiations, of course, has characteristics of its own with correspondingly distinctive implications for how they are handled in museums and other representations. Yet all of them, including even the most apparently "natural" divisions by gender and age, are socially constructed. To this degree, therefore, they can be treated, at least for certain purposes, as variants on a shared theme.

5. Lest it be thought that the 1991 Japan Festival in Britain was a striking exception to this pattern, it is clear that the begging-bowl, like the initiative for the Festival itself, came from the British side (letter to the Times by the Festival's Chairman, Sir Peter Parker, 12 October 1991).

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TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ARCHAEOLOGY AT COLCHESTER

Mark Davies, Colchester Museums.

Although in 1846 it had been officially decided to provide for the collection of "any articles of antiquity or curiosity", the intended public museum to house them was not opened in Colchester until 27th September, 1860, when "The Chapel in the Castle", now known as the crypt or sub-chapel of the Norman keep, became home to the collections of both the Corporation and the Essex Archaeological Society. That solid chamber was dedicated to this purpose in 1855 as a result of discussions with the owner of the Castle, Mr. Charles Gray Round, who was Treasurer of the Society. Practical stimulus to official enthusiasm for the project had been given in 1852 by the bequest of Alderman Henry Vint consisting of a collection of fine bronzes, some of them of Roman date found in Colchester. However, the real motivation was a proviso that a fire-proof museum building had to be provided within five years of his death, otherwise the collection would go to the British Museum (1).

The new museum was founded as a joint venture between the Essex Archaeological Society and Colchester Corporation, with representatives from each body serving on the management committee. Occupation of the first storey of the Castle was slightly extended into the Arcade in 1866 and in 1868 the first catalogue was published. An entirely new catalogue was completed by Mr. J.E. Price, FSA, in 1882 (2), which proved to be an exemplar of its type, despite the awkward habit of its author of inscribing objects with Roman numerals, and by the end of the century a number of major collections of local antiquities had been acquired.

A succession of curators was employed in addition to the Society's appointment of an Honorary Curator - an arrangement which gave rise to some confusion and dispute from time to time. During the present century there have been three distinguished long-serving curators. The first of these was A.G. Wright, who had previously catalogued and arranged the Guildhall Museum. He served for 24 years until his retirement in 1926 and under his care the museum almost doubled in size as Colchester's archaeological collections became much more extensively known, researched and visited.

Wright was followed by Mark Reginald Hull, whose 26 years as curator was marked by thorough archaeological recording in the town, exhaustive research and a remarkable publication record. Under his authorship no less than three Society of Antiquaries' Research Reports appeared (3), as well as a Victoria County History volume on Roman Essex (4). In addition to copious records of local sites and finds, he also compiled a major index of Roman brooches from all over Britain, which he was still working on at the time of his death in 1978. Sadly this magnum opus, apart from the Iron Age section edited by Prof Christopher Hawkes (5), has not yet seen the light of day, although a copy of the manuscript is available for study in the museum's archives.

Rex Hull always said that he wanted to be an archaeologist, not a museum curator or, as he saw it, an administrator. He therefore developed the successful knack of being able to delegate tasks and responsibility for them without losing control. However, his record of achievement in the role of curator is not unremarkable, since in 1928 the Hollytrees Museum was opened to cater for later antiquities and the library of the Essex Archaeological Society, while in 1956 came the opening of the Natural History Museum in the recently redundant church of All Saints. But by far the most far-reaching improvement to the Castle Museum itself was achieved in 1935 when a new roof and first-floor galleries were built into the shell of the partly reduced Norman keep. This development provided an enormous increase in the space available for displaying the expanding archaeological collections.

In 1963 David T-D Clarke was appointed Curator and proceeded to revolutionise public access to the collections, not only in the galleries but with a highly readable series of publications which were leaders in their field. An education service was initiated for schools and became enormously popular, while increasing development in the town was met by the re-establishment in 1963 of the Colchester Excavation Committee with a full-time Director of Excavations working from the museum as an informally-related extension of the service. Two new museums were opened - one for social history in the redundant church of Holy Trinity in 1973, the other at Tymperleys, a late 15th century timber-framed house, in 1987 for the large collection of locally made clocks.

However, as far as the long-term future of Colchester's museum service is concerned, the most important innovation of David Clarke's curatorship was the development of a Museum Resource Centre, which was opened in 1981. By concentrating the curatorial staff, records, libraries, offices, laboratories and other working accommodation, as well as new archaeological storage, in a former factory building adjacent to the Castle, not only were these resources given much needed space to develop, but more public facilities began to be made available both there and in the historic museum buildings, especially in the Castle.

In April 1989, after an interregnum of six months, the Museum Service, having run as a smaller department

associated with Planning, emerged from a chrysalis of council restructuring as an integrated part of a new Department of Culture and Leisure. Following the appointment of a revised post of Curator and Head of Museum Services, Colchester museum service was split into two divisions with the second tier post of Assistant Curator retaining responsibility for Curatorial Services and Archaeology while other aspects of the previous duties were hived off and elaborated to create a new post of Customer Services Manager.

Following the introduction of the new departmental structure, which includes Tourism Development, considerably more investment has been put into museum display. The intention is to interpret the story of Colchester in its local and wider context by means of the museum's rich archaeological collections which had previously lacked a continuous chronological narrative. In June 1990 Hayley Sharpe Associates of Leicester were appointed as designer for the first phase of a three part programme of archaeological displays in the Castle. This was opened on 23rd July 1991 by the Mayor of Colchester, Councillor Paul Spendlove in the guise of the emperor Claudius, the total cost being £163,546. It concentrates on the prehistoric background leading up to the development of Camulodunum in the late Iron Age and its subsequent early Roman history, culminating in the destruction of the colonia by Boudica in AD 60.

By way of introduction there is an area devoted to the interpretation of archaeological evidence, including aerial photography, stratigraphy - shown as an archaeological section - the written record in various forms and environmental evidence. The main displays, which incorporate more recent discoveries, are linked together with backing panels painted with scenes illustrating activities typical of each main period. These are devised to become less distinct when approached, so that attention becomes more readily focused on the exhibits themselves. There is a partial reconstruction of an Iron Age roundhouse based on one from Lofts Farm, Great Totham, and the ground-floor displays culminate with the age of Cunobelin, followed by a video presentation of the history of Roman Colchester.

Upstairs the displays interpreting the Roman military period include a set piece showing full-size figures of a British warrior and a Roman legionary locked in mortal combat. The plight of the doomed colonists, trapped in the Temple of Claudius by Boudica's rebel army, is portrayed in a six-minute long audio-visual presentation produced by Triangle Two at a cost of £30,000. The experience is heightened by juxtaposition with artefacts and environmental evidence from the destruction levels and the inescapable sense of place derived from the actual foundations of the temple itself on the very site below the Castle.

The second phase of displays, which opened on 22nd July 1992, has concentrated thematically in more detail on everyday life in Roman Colchester. It includes the magnificent mosaic of the wrestling cupids from Middleborough and a number of innovative, but deliberately 'low-tech', tactile exhibits which have proved very popular with visitors of all ages. Among other things there are genuine pots to feel, a toga to try on, an inscription to rub and an actor's mask with which to gain applause, and from time to time gallery talks are given by museum staff dressed in Roman costume. The same designers were employed on this second phase with a budget of £93,000, while Rodney West Associates have been appointed to design the third phase dealing with the medieval period and later, which is due to open in July 1994.

As the main historic building in the town spanning nearly two millennia of history in its own structure, Colchester's Castle Museum not only provides an excellent focus for the interpretation of local archaeology, it also exemplifies the museum service's responsibility for ancient monuments and archaeological sites within the Borough. While at times this duty of care can seem financially burdensome if considered in isolation, it does on the other hand underline the advantages and importance of an integrated approach to the different aspects of a public archaeological service (6).

In 1992 an eight-phase programme of repairs to the external fabric of the Castle was completed which had begun in 1983 at an estimated cost of £500,000. Before each phase of the work stone by stone drawings were undertaken for the museum by the Colchester Archaeological Trust, based on a photogrammetric survey by the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at the University of York. In consequence a complete record of the building's exterior now exists. Thanks to financial support from a local firm of builders' merchants and a matching grant from the government's business sponsorship scheme, a new roof has been erected over the remains of the Norman chapel, to which the public were at last able to gain access in March 1989. The opening ceremony, performed by the then Minister for the Arts, Mr. Richard Luce MP, was followed by special guided tours. Following relocation of the original archaeological store, public toilets and a lift were installed within the Castle in 1992. These were carefully sited so as to avoid damage to the historic structure and again, like the chapel, were preceded by excavation and recording by the Trust.

Colchester's town walls are the oldest in Britain, dating from AD 65-80, and its ownership is complex, though the Council has the largest share. In 1991 the first of six phases of repair was begun at the south-east corner after much

planning, with the Trust commissioned to undertake the preliminary recording. This first section at Priory Street falls within two adjacent Areas of Development Opportunity and provision has been made within their planning briefs for conservation measures relating to future development, including landscaping and interpretation proposals for the town walls.

Substantial sections of the Iron Age dykes of Cunobelin's oppidum still survive in the suburbs as far as 2.5 miles from the town centre. Again, awkward complexities of ownership have had to be unravelled with assistance from English Heritage and an integrated management plan is in course of preparation. Although there has been a protective policy since 1973, some hope of additional resources being made available for the maintenance of these remarkable linear earthworks has come from the Council's adoption of a Charter for the Environment in 1990. Its first stated objective is to "safeguard our ancient monuments and buildings," and of the 18 performance indicators and targets relating to this the first 13 are archaeological.

The main focus of activity within the dykes and therefore the central pivot of Camulodunum is the important site at Gosbecks, which has enclosures with associated trackways, a Roman road, a large temple complex and a theatre. The scheduled area extends over about 425 acres of farmland and an ambitious scheme is steadily coming to fruition for the establishment of an archaeological park there of 166 acres, including most of the main features, which will be transferred to the Council's ownership. The proposal depends on consent for 20 acres of housing outside the scheduled area and includes an endowment of £500,000 and an offer by the developer to construct an interpretative centre at cost. This project represents a challenging opportunity to preserve and interpret an internationally important site not only in the context of Colchester Museum's various archaeological responsibilities, but also in co-ordination with other local environmental and amenity considerations.

In PPG 16 it is stated that "the key to the future of the great majority of archaeological sites and historic landscapes lies with local authorities, acting within the framework set by central government, in their various capacities as planning, education and recreational authorities, as well as with the owners of sites themselves. Appropriate planning policies in development plans and their implementation through development control will be especially important". This statement is particularly appropriate in the case of Colchester where the Council's museum is responsible for the archaeological service, including the provision of archaeological advice within the planning process.

In November 1988 Colchester Borough Council accepted the principle of establishing a unit of three staff within the museum to undertake what is now called the curatorial role and to organise developer-funded excavations. The intention was to provide an essential element of security for the archaeological service with excavation projects continuing to be undertaken by the Trust which had built up a strong record of achievement in this regard, though hitherto only funded on a grant-aid basis. When the new departmental structure came into being this development was put into abeyance while a major review of the museum service, supported by the Area Museum Service for South-east England, was undertaken (8).

Compulsory competitive tendering was being talked about and in April 1990 it was decided instead to put out a core contract to the Trust for the provision of certain archaeological services to the museum. These are -
1. archaeological advice on planning applications
2. evaluation of sites for planning decisions
3. organisation and management of excavation projects
4. publication of projects.

A formula was worked out, based on proposed annual expenditure of £37,500 to cover the salaries of the Trust's Director and part-time Administrative Assistant, accommodation expenses and a contribution to projects not covered by developer-funding. A contract sum of £32,000 was released from the museum's allocation of £45,000 for the new archaeological salaries and the difference was to be made up by a contribution from Essex County Council and administrative charges from developer-funded projects.

In 1990 an update of the part of the county SMR covering the Colchester district was funded jointly by Colchester Museum Service and Essex County Council's Archaeological Section. The work on this was carried out by the Trust in association with the museum as local archaeological record centre. In 1992 as a result of the new arrangements the Assistant Curator, who like previous Curators had acted as Honorary Secretary to the Trust as an extension of his professional duties, was advised to resign this office because of an apparent conflict of interest. This post acts as Archaeological Officer to the Council and client officer to the Trust and also co-ordinates the various curatorial services of the museum.

A current project which typifies the advantages of a co-ordinated approach to archaeology is the St. Botolph's project on the site of Britain's first Augustinian Priory. A large engineering works at the east end of the upstanding ruins of the nave of the priory church had been acquired by the Council a few years ago for a car-park and the part of this being scheduled was set aside. In association with English Heritage, who have kindly contributed some

funding in view of their guardianship responsibilities, and with the practical assistance of the Trust, the Museum Service has been implementing since December 1990 a programme of archaeological investigation, landscaping and interpretation on the site with a budget of some £57,000.

In 1991 the Norman priory church, founded about AD 1100, was shown to have had a square east end beyond a crossing flanked by two shallow transepts with a crypt lying partially beneath. The outline of the buried walls and columns of the church have been marked on the ground and the interior laid with turf, while the rest of the site has been landscaped and seeded with grass. Guided tours and a temporary exhibition were held as the work progressed and the Council has entered into a maintenance agreement with English Heritage for the guardianship area. Interpretative improvements are also being discussed and a joint management agreement for the whole site is planned in due course which will hopefully add to the improved public access to one of Colchester's major monuments.

Following the major review of the Colchester and Essex Museum in 1989, a detailed report was published in March 1990. This contained some 93 recommendations and in February 1991 led to Colchester Borough Council issuing a Development Plan for its Museums for the period 1991-1995. The following extract from the statement of purpose describes part of the core objectives and mission of the service:

"Colchester Museums aim to inspire and satisfy the interest, enjoyment and understanding of Colchester's heritage and environment by developing the full potential of the historic monuments and collections in their care.

A wide-ranging series of improvements to the service has been embarked upon, including the appointment of a Keeper of Archaeology in June 1991. A Retail Manager, Clerical Assistant (part-time) and an Education Officer (now fully funded by the Borough Council) have also been established, while a Keeper of Social History and a Cataloguing Assistant (1993/94) and a Field Officer (1994/95) await further consideration. The latter post harks back to the proposals of 1988 and relates to the objective stated in the Development Plan "To develop an integrated policy for the full range of archaeological services in Colchester."

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