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The Museum of Antiquities: a Retrospective

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In April 2008 the Museum of Antiquities closed its doors to the public in advance of the transfer of the Society's archaeological collections to the new Great North Museum. It seemed appropriate, as we enter this new stage in the Society's history, that the Museum of Antiquities and its achievements over its half century of existence be chronicled and celebrated.

HISTORY

THE TALE OF ALL THE MUSEUMS AT NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY which are now incorporated into the Great North Museum begins in 1743 with the ornithologist Marmaduke Tunstall. A man with wide interests, his mansion at Wycliffe on the Tees was filled with his 'invaluable collections of manuscripts, books, prints, coins, and gems, besides a spacious museum stored with rare birds, and many other curiosities relating to natural history' (Philipson 1981, 317–8). In 1791 his collection was bought, for £700, by the solicitor and noted antiquary, George Allan of Blackwell Grange, Darlington, but after Allan's death in 1800 the collection was allowed to decay until the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne (Lit and Phil), which had been founded in 1793, bought it in 1822 for £400.

The decision to acquire the Allan Museum had its opponents, but the objections were overruled and in 1827 George Townshend Fox, a prominent benefactor of the Lit and Phil, published his *Synopsis of the Newcastle Museum*. When Fox retired a Museum Committee had to be appointed to replace him in order to cope with the increasing number of artefacts which were being donated, as well as with the resulting financial burden. In 1829 it was decided to form the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne (NHS), with its own membership and its own subscription income, to run the natural history section of the Lit and Phil (Philipson 1981, 319). The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne had already been formed on 23 January 1813, when seventeen gentlemen met in the Long Room of Loftus's Inn 'for the purpose of adopting the best measures to promote enquiry into antiquities in general but more especially those of the North of England and of the counties of Northumberland, Cumberland and Durham in particular'. Monthly meetings were held in the Keep of the New Castle but the Lit and Phil provided space for the artefacts that were donated from the very first meeting. The first archaeological artefact in the catalogue is a now missing millstone, but Accession 1813.2, a small altar to Belatucadrus from Brough in Westmorland, emphasizes that the Antiquaries' interests were never confined to the small geographical space of Newcastle; indeed, a wide range of objects relating to the archaeology and history of the whole of the North of England, plus the occasional mummified hand from Mexico, soon accumulated, creating storage problems.

Before long the Antiquaries' rooms on the ground floor of the Lit and Phil were overflowing and in 1849 the Society removed their collection of archaeological artefacts to the



newly renovated Keep. The Antiquaries continued to store and display their collections in the Keep and the 13th century Black Gate for the best part of a century. In the 1930s, however, their Council began to be concerned that medieval buildings run by volunteers were not ideal for a collection of international importance. Discussions were entered into with the University of Durham about a new Joint Museum. A grant of £5,000 was acquired from the University Grants Committee and plans were well advanced when war broke out in 1939 and the scheme had to be put on hold. In the 1940s Dr C. I. C. Bosanquet, Rector of King's College, and a keen antiquarian, revived the project with the help of Professor Ian Richmond.

The first formal agreement to found a Joint Museum of Antiquities was signed in 1950 and work started immediately on preparing the artefacts for their move. David Smith, who had worked with Prof. Ian Richmond on the Museum at South Shields Roman fort, was appointed to undertake the work in 1953, in association with William Bulmer, then Honorary Keeper for the Society. Bulmer is well known for his models, particularly of Hadrian's Wall, but few people recall that he catalogued the Black Gate collection prior to its move to the Museum; in 1958 it was reported that his index ran to 2,969 entries and included some 600 line drawings to scale. He had already begun to make the models of Hadrian's Wall and its installations with a £1000 grant from a then anonymous benefactor, later revealed to be Robert Spence. The Wall model itself was finished in the late 1940s and first displayed to the 1949 Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall.

The Joint Museum was initially established in October 1953 at 11 Sydenham Terrace, where a temporary exhibition of the sculptures and inscriptions was set up, but the building was mostly used for the cleaning and treatment of the stones, which had been housed in the Heron Pit in Castle Garth and showed impressive levels of atmospheric pollution as a result. A drying-out store for the stones was established in College Avenue. In 1949 a building had been designed by W. B. Edwards and Partners for the Northern Coke Research Laboratory of the Department of Physical Chemistry and erected at the east end of the Quadrangle — a position that had been earmarked for the Museum before the War. It was decided to reclaim the site but not demolish the Coke Testing Station as it was felt that it would make an ideal museum. Conversion of the building was completed only four days before the arrival of the 1959 Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall. On Monday 9th October 1959 the public were allowed in for the first time, with regular opening hours of 2–5 pm Mondays to Fridays.

Just as the naming of the Great North Museum has caused much discussion, so too did the naming of the Museum of Antiquities. The Society's annual report for 1958–9 stated: 'Early in 1959 an agreement was reached between the University and the Society on the question of the name by which the Museum ought henceforth to be known. It was agreed that the name should be the Museum of Antiquities of the University of Durham and of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne'. This was not the most felicitous of titles but it had the advantage of being all encompassing.

The grand opening was on the 27th April 1960 (fig. 1). Professor Ian Richmond, in his address to a large invited audience from both the region and the wider world of archaeology, said 'Tacitus said that fifteen years were a large slice out of a man's life; we have waited double that time'. A recording of the full ceremony was retained in the Museum's collection but the text of Professor Richmond's speech was published verbatim in the Society's Annual Report for 1960. This goes on to record that 'many of those who visited the museum immediately after the ceremony expressed appreciation of the display, of the elegant exhibition cases made by Mr William Embleton, the Museum's Senior Technician, and of the labels, hand



Fig. 1 The Grand Opening of the Museum in April 1960.

printed by Mr Robert Cessford. All seemed to be delighted by the full-scale reconstruction of the Carrawburgh Mithraeum and by the recorded commentary upon it, spoken by Dr Saxton, which is available at the touch of a button. The proceedings were well reported in the local press and on the Opening Day the Manchester Guardian carried a special feature on the new Museum and its collections'. Dr Saxton was the Assistant Registrar of King's College and the first secretary of the Joint Museum Committee and his involvement represents the start of the Museum's habit of calling on people from all over the University when assistance was required.

Even once the Museum was open changes regularly occurred. The establishment of Department of Archaeology in 1972, for example, took away the first floor gallery but brought the Museum more into the life of the University and provided day-to-day contact with archaeologists with a wide spread of knowledge.

The Museum initially accepted material from the earliest prehistory in the region up to the end of the Anglo Saxon period, but its Collecting Policy was expanded in 1978 so that the large Medieval and Post Medieval collection that Miss Barbara Harbottle's team at Newcastle City Council was then excavating at sites throughout the City could be accommodated.

A slightly more unusual step was taken in 1991 when the Museum agreed to provide accommodation for the University's Memorabilia Shop. The Museum's shop was the only publicly accessible retail outlet on campus at the time and it seemed logical to expand the Museum's activities in this way. The result was a wider awareness of the Museum throughout the University's staff and student population and particularly amongst the Alumni.

STORAGE

In almost every Annual Report from 1960 David Smith regretted the lack of suitable long term storage for the material that was not to be displayed and this continued to be a problem. The collection includes the largest quantity of Roman inscribed and sculptured stones in Britain, not to mention the largest collection of prehistoric rock art in a British museum, and this is a

category of material that causes major storage difficulties. In the early years large pieces of stone were continually being moved around Newcastle, and even out to Close House, as temporary stores were requisitioned for other purposes. In 1963 a stone store for the Museum was included in the plans for the new Daysh Building on Claremont Road. This was state-of-the-art at the time, with gantries and moving shelves and pallets carefully designed to deal with moving and accessing large stones. The Dexion rolling steel platforms, capable of supporting 4 tons each, were installed in October 1967. When it was completed 62 tons of inscribed and carved stones could be accommodated; needless to say, this has not proved to be adequate over the long term. The equipment has now been superseded by more modern technology but museum designers regularly visited when planning large scale museum storage to get some ideas. Sadly, not all the Museum's storage has proved as reliable: in 2007 a faulty condenser in the Bruce Store led to many boxes of medieval material being covered in green mould.

CONSERVATION

Initially Charles Daniels, as Assistant Keeper, was responsible for conservation and even attended a course on 'Technical methods in field and workshop' at the University of Birmingham in 1962; as a consequence it was reported that 'he'd been able to proceed with the conservation of a small number of iron objects not previously impregnated with wax and to improve the treatment of the leather and wood objects found at Housesteads in 1961' (*Annual Report 1962*). He then attended a longer course at the Institute of Archaeology in London. Neither of these, however, fully equipped him to deal with the wide range of objects found in the Corbridge Hoard, which he excavated in 1964 (Daniels 1968; Allason-Jones and Bishop 1988). The Hoard included iron, textiles, wood, bronze, bone, wax writing tablets and even papyrus: now mere flakes. This material was beyond the skill of all but the most professional conservator and the University and Society busied themselves in raising funds to establish the Conservation Lab in the Percy Building. Miss M. A. White was the first Conservator. This became the archaeological conservation centre for the North East, housing the Museums Service for the North of England conservators until the Service moved to their new premises in the House of Recovery.

ACQUISITIONS

The collection did not remain static but continued to expand throughout the Museum's history. The Acquisitions Policy of the Museum was originally based on Statute 2 of the Society's 1813 Statutes, which states that the object of the Society is 'the study, investigation, description and presentation of antiquities and historical records in general and of those of the historical counties of Northumberland and Durham and the City and County of Newcastle upon Tyne'. The Collections' chronological scope covers all periods up to c. A.D. 1600 (or later in the case of multi-period sites where the whole assemblage must be preserved as a group). Its geographical scope covers the County of Northumberland and the City of Newcastle upon Tyne, and the Roman frontier zone westward from the mouth of the River Tyne to the River Irthing, with the exception of sites provided with site museums. Material found within the town boundary of Berwick upon Tweed has always been offered to Berwick Museum. As a result of this policy the Museum, in effect, acted as the county museum for Northumberland for over 40 years, even though Northumberland as a county retreated from Newcastle in the 1970s.

The sculptures belonging to the Duke of Northumberland came to the Museum in 1959, following a visit to Alnwick Castle by Ian Richmond. He had been asked to report on the condition of the Duke's collection of inscribed and sculptured stones. In his opening address in 1960 he recalled, 'they were housed in one of the ancient towers of the medieval circuit of the Castle, very strong, with very thick walls, very cold. I rather expected that when we saw the stones we should see that they were suffering from damp and the effects which frost has upon damp when it gets to it, often with very disastrous effects. But when the stones were inspected we found that the thick walls had effectively kept out the frost and that they were in fact in very good order. . . It was with a certain division of mind that I told the Duke that the stones were in perfectly good order and there was no reason why they should not stay where they were. The reply was, 'Wouldn't you like them in Newcastle?' The Museum maintained its links with Alnwick Castle, with first David Smith and then the current author acting as informal advisors and helping with the redisplay of the Castle's own Museum of Antiquities in the 1960s and again in the 1990s.

Roman sculpture has also been on loan from the Society of Antiquaries of London. This includes the altar from Benwell dedicated to the 'Three Witches' which Thomas Bewick used on the Society's seal. It was this altar that was lent back to the Society of Antiquaries of London's Tercentenary Exhibition at the Royal Academy in 2007. Some small altars were also passed to the Museum on loan from the National Museums of Scotland in 1978. A group of facsimiles of sculpture from Hadrian's Wall, which was prepared for an exhibition at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff in the 1960s, was first transferred to the Museum of Antiquities on a long term loan in 1962 but given to the Museum in perpetuity in 2006.

Some donations were rather unexpected. On 7th March 1962, for example, the Museum was presented with a Neolithic axe from South Jutland 'by the Lady Mayoress [of Newcastle] on behalf of the Danish Agricultural Producers' Association'. In those days there were no collecting areas or collecting policies to limit collecting zeal.

As well as transferring its archaeological material to the Museum in stages, the Society continued to show an interest in improving the collections. The Aemilia Finger Ring was bought in 1992 by the Society with grants from a range of national bodies (Allason-Jones 1991). The Society had previously bought the Nunnykirk cross (Cramp and Miket 1982, no. 39) and more recently has purchased the Bamburgh Coin Hoard, so beautifully published by Elizabeth Pirie in *Archaeologia Aeliana* just before she died (Pirie 2004), and the Colette Hoard of Bronze Age artefacts (unpubl.). As the accredited archaeological museum for the north of England there was some pressure on the Museum to buy artefacts that were declared Treasure Trove, an increasing number since the Portable Antiquities Scheme was implemented. The Museum, however, never had a purchase fund, so anything that had to be bought required extensive form filling as funding was sought. The Society's support in this area has been deeply appreciated.

EXHIBITIONS

The first temporary exhibition was *Midianite Timna: Valley of the Biblical Coppermines* (1972) opened by Prof. Ron Tylecote, then Chairman of the Joint Museum Committee and a famous metallurgist. The Museum subsequently continued to mount temporary exhibitions, usually about two or three per year. Some of these were borrowed from other institutions, some prepared in-house; several went on tour to other museums. One exhibition was prepared

specially for the Gateshead Garden Festival where the allotted space was in a domestic conservatory, which limited what could be displayed. It was decided to work on the premise that people like watching other people working and a rota of students used the time to stick medieval pottery together whilst answering questions about archaeology. One series of temporary exhibitions which is still remembered amongst the older members of the University were those to mark the retirement of members of staff in Classics and Archaeology, such as George Jobey, John Gillam, and Brian Shefton.

Since *Roman Hair* in 1985, when hairdressers came in to the galleries to dress people's hair in the Roman manner, the Museum has developed a reputation for mounting small but quirky exhibitions. Who could forget 'the Elvis naan' of Hunt Emerson's spoof exhibition *Phenomen-omix*, which was the Museum's contribution to Newcastle's International Comic Festival in 1996? Or the exhibition *Cargo Cult*, when Dr Michael Jeffries of the University of Northumbria explored the religion of shopping and looked at Eldon Square through the eyes of an archaeologist of the future. Then there was *Old Age in Roman Britain*, which was opened by Mr George Harbottle, then aged 104. This was a particularly interesting exhibition as it drew attention to Cicero's polemic *On Old Age*, which not only influenced some work that Age Concern carried out but was also later exploited in a research project by a colleague in the Medical School.

The exhibition *Flints and Stones: Real Life in Prehistory* was planned to coincide with *The Flintstones* film being screened in cinemas. Based on current knowledge of the Mesolithic period — this was before Clive Waddington excavated at Howick — artefacts from the British Museum and the National Museums of Scotland and Wales were borrowed to supplement the Museum's own collection. Advantage was taken of the need to clear asbestos from the Second Gallery to strip the room out completely for the exhibition. It was then possible to turn the space into a cave, complete with cave-dwellers provided by acting students from Jarvis Management Training Theatre, led by Patrick Williams as shaman. The Museum entered into a sponsorship deal with McDonald's which offered visitors to the exhibition discount in their restaurant in Northumberland Street and led to advertising leaflets for the exhibition being included in McDonald's boxed meals (fig. 2). There was also support from UCI Metro Centre Cinema and Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive, so this was probably the Museum's most well advertised exhibition and proved conclusively that it is possible to have a popular exhibition on early prehistory. Visitor figures actually doubled.

Hands on History was based on the premise that it is not only archaeologists who use artefacts to learn about people; we all do it every day. The centre of the display was an untidy desk with a notice board behind. Visitors were asked who the owner of the desk might be, were they male or female? young or old? using the items on the desk or in the desk drawers as evidence. The second part of the display investigated how we use all our senses when trying to understand objects. Photographs of modern objects were displayed around the Museum; for example a modern toothbrush was displayed next to the Chevington Chapel 14th-century bronze hygiene set.

For many people the most famous exhibition mounted in the Museum of Antiquities was *Scraping the Bottom*. In 2003 work began on a major scheme to improve and restore Leazes Park with Heritage Lottery Fund support. Part of this project involved draining the large boating lake to remove generations of mud and rubbish. As the detritus was removed, hundreds of objects which had found their way into the lake were discovered. The Friends of Leazes Park collected and washed these artefacts but had nowhere to display them to the



Fig. 2 Actors from the *Flints and Stones* exhibition in MacDonald's restaurant.

general public, who were fascinated with the process. Barbara Harbottle approached the Museum of Antiquities and it was agreed that an exhibition would be mounted. There was no attempt to conserve the artefacts or to arrange them in any sophisticated way — there were too many of them — but a selection of artefacts was chosen to represent various aspects of the life of Leazes Park, such as fishing, picnicking, and its time during the Second World War. Adam Greenwold provided some display boards describing the history of the Park, which put the finds into context. Although this exhibition involved artefacts that fell neither within the Museum's chronological or geographical remit, it linked us to our immediate neighbours, many of whom had never visited the Museum. Visitors were keen to tell their stories of the Park and a book of comments was placed in the exhibition gallery; this has now become a valuable social history document in its own right.

As a university museum, student exhibitions were an important feature of our temporary exhibitions programme. Some of these were mounted by students studying in the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, such as *Framing Holy Island*, which incorporated artefacts from all the University's museums which related to Holy Island with some magnificent photographs taken by the students themselves. There were also exhibitions about student activities, particularly those of the University's Exploration Society, such as *Mongolian Rock Art*.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Glyn Goodrick joined the Museum officially as Computing Officer in 1998, having already worked with the staff for several years before that through his role in the Archaeological Practice. One day in 1995 Colm O'Brien turned up with the immortal words 'Glyn and I have had an idea'. The idea they had had was that the *Flints and Stones* exhibition was perfect for the Internet, a medium that had just gone public a few months before. *Flints and Stones* as a museum exhibition had won a BT North of England Museums Best Temporary Exhibition prize of £1,000, so there was some funding available. The result of this conversation was that the Museum became the first museum in Britain to mount an exhibition on the World Wide Web. This got massive publicity when it was launched on 1st June 1995, *The Guardian* and *The*

Independent being particularly thrilled, and such was the rush to see the exhibition that the University's mainframe crashed on the first day. Thereafter this side of the Museums' activities went from strength to strength and has brought in over £1 million in project funding. The website was invariably the most visited within the University, after the University's front page. In the *Annual Report* of 1998 it was reported that 'the number of Virtual Visitors who accessed the Museum's home page on the internet during the year was an astonishing 23,515'. It may have been astonishing in 1998 but by 2007–8, 2,686,434 virtual visitors were visiting one or other of the Museum's web sites annually — this put the Museum on a par with some of Britain's national heritage sites and made it a truly 24 hour museum: at any time of the day or night there were people all over the world visiting the website

The *SINE Project (Structures in the North East)* began in 2001 and was intended to digitise and mount on the Internet images of structures in the North-east of England that were held within the University. This project was also responsible for digitising the collection of 19th-century church plans held in Lambeth Palace Library (*Church Plans Online*). The project was funded by the New Opportunities Fund and in 2007–8 this section of the Museum's website attracted 1,239,252 virtual visitors. In 2002, the Museum staff worked with the Tyne and Wear County Archaeologist and Tyne and Wear Museums to make the Sites and Monuments Record for Tyne and Wear accessible through a website called *Sitelines*.

Amongst the Museum's other web offerings were 'Object of the Month' in which one artefact was selected each month and showcased. Over 120 artefacts from the Museum's collections were highlighted via this medium, bringing international awareness of the richness of the collections. The 'Virtual Mithaeum' used the new 'bubbleworld' technology to provide a wrap-around experience on screen of the Mithraeum reconstruction in the Museum, as well as the site at Carrawburgh. The Museum was also able to provide on-line access to its extensive Aerial Photographic Archive whilst 'Armamentarium' made it possible to republish H. Russell Robinson's *Armour of Imperial Rome*, the copyright to which he bequeathed to the Museum.

PROJECTS

The Museum was involved in many projects over the years, some serious, some less so, but all aimed at bringing the Museum to the attention of a wider public. *Projecting the Past*, for example, was funded by the Manpower Services Commission as part of its Community Action programme. This took exhibitions to the main waiting area of the Freeman Hospital, the canteen of the Nissan Factory at Washington, the ante-room of the Council Chamber of Newcastle City Council, the Rates Hall in Newcastle Civic Centre and St Mary's Roman Catholic School — all places that wouldn't normally show an exhibition. This was taking the Museum to the people rather than expecting them to travel to the Museum. *Projecting the Past* was also responsible for the *Wał Hadriana* exhibition (fig. 3). This was designed to travel round Poland for six months, starting in the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw, but was so successful that it went on travelling for eighteen months and was only called back because of concern that it might be showing its age, which was not so — it had been beautifully looked after. This was the first exhibition about Hadrian's Wall in Polish and its exhibition catalogue was the first publication on the Wall in Polish (Allason-Jones 1988). In 2009, the exhibition featured in an exhibition held in the State Archaeological Museum to celebrate its 80th anniversary, as one of the museum's historical highlights.



Fig. 3 The *Wat Hadriana* exhibition at the Arsenal Archaeological Museum in Warsaw.

In 1993 the Post Office produced stamps celebrating the 1950th anniversary of the invasion of Britain by the Romans. The Museum produced its very own first day cover. In order to add *dignitas* to the occasion it was clear that the Emperor Hadrian would have to attend in person so Charles Daniels, in full imperial regalia and beard specially grown for the event, and with an entourage of soldiers and petal strewers, processed down the Quadrangle, addressed his loyal subjects and posted the First Day Cover to the British School in Rome. Needless to say it never arrived! (fig. 4).

More recently, the Museum was invited to take part in *SCRAN* (*Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network*). This involved digitising images and information about the Museum's extensive Roman jewellery collection, which went on line. The exercise also meant that everything was in place for the Museum to install touch-screens in the Museum's First Gallery, which allowed visitors to discover more about the various artefacts than was possible to display on a label.

In 2005 the North of England Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, established a project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which was aimed at investigating barriers to museum visiting in the area. The project was called *Northumbria for All*, and the Museum of Antiquities' part in the project was to research the problems of rural transport. Throughout the May half-term buses were provided to bring visitors to the University's museums from Whittingham, Redesdale, Wooler and Edmundbyers. In this project we were aided by two international Museum Studies students on placement, who saw a great deal more of Northumberland than they had bargained for.



Fig. 4 Charles Daniels making a sacrifice as the Emperor Hadrian in 1993.

Museum of My Life was an arts project funded in 2007–8 by the Heritage Lottery Fund through New Writing North and was part of a regional project to engage people in their local museums through creative writing. Our project involved two groups of adults who came to the Museum one day a week to work with a Poet in Residence, Maureen Almond, and later an Artist in Residence, Gilly Rogers, as well as with the Museum's staff (fig. 5). This project resulted in a fascinating exhibition of poems and 'memory boxes' which were carefully placed in the First Gallery to provide insights and personal views on some of the Roman artefacts. The contributors to the project greatly enjoyed their relationship with the Museum and, to the staff's great delight, asked if they could continue to work with us. Mondays became very busy as members of the group assisted with organizing the Museum's archives.

The *Museum of My Life* team were also able to assist in a collaboration in two projects with Culture Lab. The first formed part of the European 6th Framework INSCAPE project whose aim was to develop a suite of tools to support the authoring of interactive stories. Two mock museum galleries were set up and explored by a mixture of virtual and augmented reality. The second project involved providing the raw data for Culture Lab staff to produce an interactive table which allowed the visitor to access and question information about individual objects. Both of these projects represented cutting-edge research into how to provide intellectual access to museum collections for visitors and the *Museum of My Life* members much enjoyed their involvement in the future of museum display.

EDUCATION

The Museum's curatorial staff were responsible for school party visits until funding became available to appoint Andrew Parkin as Education Officer. Over the years he built up the Museum's Education Service, not just for ordinary school groups but with children with a range of disadvantages as well as with Gifted and Talented groups; several groups came over from Cheshire regularly. Work experience opportunities were provided for six or seven schoolchildren each year, several of whom have gone on to read archaeology at university and then on to careers in excavation units and museums.



Fig. 5 The *Museum of My Life* Team.

Over the years the Museum also accessed the funding for a number of special educational projects. *Benwell Centre of the Universe*, for example, built on the multi-period strengths of the Museum's holdings from Benwell to engage 11-year-old children from Westgate Community College in the history of their locality. This was funded by the DfEE and used as a case study for the Government report, *The Learning Power of Museums — a Vision for Museum Education*. The results proved a very popular section of the Museum's website.

The Living History event *Marching with the Legions* was first held in the Hatton Gallery, but then in the Museum as part of one gallery was turned into a barrack room and children learned Roman drill and the tortoise formation in the University Quadrangle. *WallNet*, on the other hand, was a website produced in association with Senhouse Roman Museum at Maryport, Brigantium Archaeological Reconstruction Centre and Birdoswald Roman Fort. This introduced children to Hadrian's Wall using the cartoons of Dave Hall, whose contribution to *Flints and Stones: Real Life in Prehistory* had added so much to the displays.

And then there was *Reticulum*: this began in 2000, first funded by DfEE and designed to help the junior schools in Blyth District find a way of using their computing equipment to learn about the Romans in Northumberland. From small acorns mighty oak trees grow and this proved an amazing project under the leadership of Jo Catling and Arlene Rankin. Not only did children of all abilities respond to this project but teachers with many years' experience began to blossom and develop new ideas. Even the children of St Andrew's Roman Catholic First School, who weren't due to study the Romans that year, but didn't want



the museum of antiquities staff...

Fig. 6 The Museum of Antiquities 2005 Christmas card, designed by children in the Reticulum Project.

to miss out, took part as they used the project for their Literacy Hour and redesigned the Museum's publicity leaflet and posters.

The *First Cohort Project* built on *Reticulum* and worked with schools up the Northumberland coast. Then the *Flavinus Project*, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, invaded the remote primary schools of rural Northumberland. *The Curator as Artefact* was the published assessment report and a teacher's pack was made available in print and on-line (fig. 6). All these projects, under the generic title *Reticulum*, were short-listed for the Gulbenkian Museum of the Year Prize in 2004, making the Museum of Antiquities the first university museum to be short-listed for this prestigious award. The Reticulum Methodology is now used throughout the North East of England, Britain, America and Australia and has revolutionised the teaching of history.

Outside the formal school system the Museum participated in National Archaeology Days, providing a range of special activities for families. The Museum also provided a venue for the Young Archaeologists Club, set up by Dr Jane Webster of the School of Historical Studies in association with Andrew Parkin. The Museum also worked closely with Barbara Bell in the *Minimus Project*, an innovative learning package of books, events and after school activities, to encourage small children to learn Latin.

Older learners were not ignored. Various staff in the Museum have provided day-schools on a number of topics for a wide range of people and a good collaboration existed over many



Fig. 7 Museum Studies students working with Clare Pickersgill on the *Take it to the Grave* exhibition.

years with the Centre for Lifelong Learning. Being a university museum the teaching of undergraduates and postgraduates was an important feature of the Museum's activities. Using the Museum's collections, two very successful artefacts modules were set up for second and third year archaeology undergraduates. The Museum was also very much involved in the setting up of the MA in Museum Studies at Newcastle University. Several of the staff regularly taught on this programme, particularly providing an Archaeology Special Option for the Museum Studies MA students (fig. 7).

Outreach is an important part of any museum's activities and the Museum of Antiquities was no exception. Lectures to local history societies, Women's Institutes, Retired Gentlemen's Associations and the like, were provided at a rate of about 30 a year. These served to take the Museum out to its constituents but also served to remind staff of the extent of the Museum's area of influence.

Both from within the University and from other British universities the Museum welcomed many placement students, including at least one foreign placement student each year. Anna Nilson joined the staff as a successful candidate from the West Swedish Trainee Programme for Young Academicians, whilst Reuben Dirk from IPP Amsterdam, Anette Herzhauser from the University of Mannheim, and Caroline Cummins Foster from Connecticut College were among the placement students who spent time with us. Many of these excellent students have kept in touch and it has been pleasing to watch their careers develop.

ARCHIVES

The archives held within the Museum of Antiquities were larger and more far-ranging than in many museums and all have been extensively used over the years by scholars, students and the general public. In future they will be housed by the Great North Museum in its resource centre at Discovery. The largest of these is the Aerial Photographic Archive which includes the work of Norman McCord and Tim Gates, amongst others, and provides aerial photographic cover for most of the North of England. The Hadrian's Wall Photographic Archive was the product of a Job Creation Project in the late 1970s, which resulted in an exhibition, mounted in the Hatton Gallery, for the 1979 Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall. The Museum has also cared for the Libyan Society Archive, reflecting the long-term links between staff in the Museum and Libya. This will, in future, be housed in the Centre for Interdisciplinary Artefact Studies within the School of Historical Studies. Other collections relate to excavations carried out within the Museum's collecting area, in particular by Prof. George Jobey and the Archaeological Practice. In recent years these collections have been augmented by the important Stan Beckensall Rock Art Archive, which was catalogued and arranged by Marie Harrison, and the Margaret Firby Slide Collection.

COWEN LIBRARY

At the meeting of the Joint Committee of Management on 15th December 1956 it was resolved that an archive relating to the Hadrianic frontier and associated sites should form an essential part of the Museum. The Museum Library became part of the Department of Archaeology with the Museum in 1972 and was called the Cowen Library after John Cowen, a banker and prehistorian who was the Society's Keeper of Collections for many years. The Library, and responsibility for its librarian, reverted to the Museum when the Archaeology Department was subsumed into the School of Historical Studies. Books were added each year by purchase, such as the classical library of Professor George Bean, or through donations from friends and colleagues, such as Prof. J. M. C. Toynbee and John Cowen himself. The library had an extraordinary collection of publications, particularly what is called grey literature: offprints, typescripts, etc. This collection proved invaluable to the archaeological community in the region for many years. The Cowen Librarians over the years were Elizabeth Harrison, Caroline McLure, Pat Southern, and Averill Robson, ably assisted by rotas of students.

PUBLICATIONS AND RESEARCH

The Museum always provided access and support to academics and students wishing to do research on the collections as well as carrying out an active research programme in-house. Work by the staff focused largely on the Museum's own collections but many have developed an international dimension, such as the work on jet and shale that was carried out with the late Mick Jones in the Department of Fossil Fuels (Allason-Jones and Jones 1994; Allason-Jones and Jones 2002).

Over the years the Museum published many monographs such, as:

- L. Allason-Jones, *A Guide to the Inscribed and Sculptured Stones in the Museum of Antiquities* (1989) (3 editions)
- M. Almond and G. Goodrick, *Recollections* (2008)

- C. B. Burgess, *Bronze Age Metalwork in Northern England, 100–700* (1968: out of print)
- J. Catling and A. Rankin, *Stories from the Northern Frontier* (2007)
- R. J. Cramp and R. Miket, *Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon and Viking Antiquities in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne* (1982)
- C. M. Daniels, *Mithras and his Temples on the Wall* (3rd ed. rev. 1989)
- W. H. Manning, *Catalogue of the Romano-British Ironwork in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne* (1976)
- E. E. Pirie, *Catalogue of the Early Northumbrian Coins in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne* (1982)
- D. J. Smith, *Hadrian's Wall in Models* (2nd ed. rev. 1969: out of print)
- D. J. Smith, *Illustrated Introduction to the Museum of Antiquities* (1974; out of print)
- J. Tait, *Beakers from Northumberland* (1965: out of print)
- C. Waddington, *The Joy of Flint* (2004)

The Museum was also responsible for publishing 'Museum Notes' annually in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, either producing them in-house or encouraging colleagues to do so. Staff also published in journals and other volumes at a rate of about six papers per year and a book every three.

It has been calculated that, between the efforts of the Museum staff and the encouragement of other scholars, only about 5% of the Museum's collection remains unpublished in some form — a record few museums can beat. We also worked closely with other institutions; for example, there was a long term research collaboration with the National Museum of the Sudan in Khartoum, which is why the Museum is one of the few outside the Sudan to house a research collection of medieval Sudanese pottery and why staff continue to play a major part in the Sudan Archaeological Research Society.

MEDIA

It might be thought that involvement with television was a relatively recent departure for the Museum but its collections were always used for television programmes, starting in 1959 when the 'shaft section of the Rothbury Cross was lent to the BBC's Manchester Studios for Miss Rosemary Cramp's television broadcast on 26th February 1959 in the series of programmes entitled 'Story on your doorstep'. A photograph of the stone, provided by the Museum, was published on page 12 of the Radio Times for the week commencing 2nd February' (*Annual Report* 1960). In the same report it was also recorded that the Keeper and Secretary 'had attended at the Museum while Sir Mortimer Wheeler and Mr Stephen Hurst directed cameramen of the BBC Television Studios visiting the Museum in order to film selected Roman inscriptions and sculptures for a programme in the series entitled 'The grandeur that was Rome,' which was to be produced some time in 1960'.

BBC Radio Newcastle held an Antiquities Roadshow in the Museum in 1988. Various members of staff were also involved in *Time Team*, *Meet the Ancestors*, cooking programmes and even Ant and Dec's *History of Tyneside*. Staff members didn't just appear in front of the cameras themselves or work with film crews in the galleries; they also acted as a point of call for media researchers. This was a mixed blessing as such researchers do not pay for the service and can take up a tremendous amount of time. They are also rarely well informed on

the topic they are researching: the staff still recall with amusement the occasion when they were asked if they had an aerial photograph of Dunstanburgh Castle 'before it was ruined'.

PUBLICITY

Working with the media is essential if a museum is to get publicity and a museum needs publicity if it is to get visitors. This aspect of the Museum's work usually included leaflets and posters, but sometimes special campaigns were mounted, such as the Blyth bus campaign when buses from Newcastle to Blyth carried large advertisements for the Museum. However, publicity mostly involved keeping the local press informed as to the Museum's activities and in this we were nobly supported by the University's Press Office, particularly Mrs Melanie Reed. Probably the campaign she is most famous for was the announcement in 2007 of the discovery, by Assistant Director Clare Pickersgill, of the Cleopatra coin from the Society's collection. 196,000 web sites covered this discovery and staff spent three whole days dealing media enquiries.

CULTURE

As well as providing temporary exhibitions as part of the cultural life of the area, the Museum was also involved in other cultural activities, such as jazz sessions in the galleries. Jo Shapcott, winner of the 1999 Forward Prize, wrote a poem about the Mithraeum which was read at midnight in the museum as part of BBC Radio 4's National Poetry Day. Artists looking for inspiration have been regular visitors — the prehistoric rock art being particularly popular as a source of inspiration. Artistically gifted and talented children from Greenfield Community School at Newton Aycliffe worked with Stan Beckensall and Kathryn Hodgkinson in 2004 to produce the most stunning exhibition of painting and glass based on prehistoric rock art called *Written in Stone*.

The *Writing on the Wall* conference in 2006 was held as the culmination of the Hadrian's Wall Tourism Partnership's Enrichment and Enterprise Scheme called *Marking the Wall*. The Scheme brought writers from the provinces of the Roman Empire and encouraged new creative writing. The Museum's staff acted as academic advisors for this project and welcomed many interesting and creative writers during the course of the project. The conference marked the launch of the book of the same name and led to the setting up of the Hadrian Arts Trust.

REGIONAL LINKS

Museum staff members have always played a part in the archaeological and museum life of the region. For many years David Smith ran the site-museums at Corbridge, Chesters and Housesteads as well as the Museum of Antiquities. He was also secretary of the Hadrian's Wall Museums Committee of National Heritage, a committee which was instrumental in establishing a full-time curator to look after these important collections. Lindsay Allason-Jones followed him as Honorary Curator at Chesters and is also a Trustee of the Senhouse Museum at Maryport, and the Corbridge Excavation Fund. Museum staff have also sat on a wide range of regional committees, such as the Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Steering Group, and an ever increasing number of committees relating to various aspects of Hadrian's Wall.



Fig. 8 Philippa Walton, Finds Liaison Officer, working with members of Newcastle's Chinese Community at an event set up by two Chinese students from the University Museum Studies MA programme.

The Museum also engaged with its local region when it agreed to host the Finds Liaison Officer for North East of England as part of the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The first FLO was Philippa Walton and is now Rob Collins, with assistance from Frances McIntosh (fig. 8). Their role has been to liaise with hobby metal detectorists, either individuals or clubs, throughout the region, identifying finds and recording them on the national database.

LOANS

Any museum with an important collection is regularly asked to loan items to temporary exhibitions. The more important the collection, the more likely these loans will be to foreign institutions. Since the Museum opened objects have often been loaned to other museums, including the Abbaye de Daoulas, the Louvre, and the National Museums of Scotland and Wales, as well as many local authority museums. In 2008, a large selection of the Museum's Roman collection was loaned to the British Museum for the Hadrian Exhibition. The most popular items for such requests over the years have been the Birth of Mithras relief, which was first loaned to the great *Art in Roman Britain* exhibition organized by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies in 1961, and one of the Anglo Saxon namestones from Hartlepool, which has been all over Europe. These loans have been reported each year in the Society's Annual Report.

PERSONALITIES

A museum may be known for its collections but it will only succeed if it has good staff and the Museum of Antiquities has always been fortunate in this area, with remarkably little turnover over the past 40 years.

David Smith was the Museum's first Keeper (fig. 9). He first came to King's College, Newcastle as a Fine Art student in 1940. After war service, graduation and gaining his PhD, he was employed at South Shields to catalogue the Roman artefacts there and to reorganize their display in the newly built museum. This led to his appointment as Research Assistant to Dr Ian Richmond in order to work on the transfer of the Society's collection from the Black

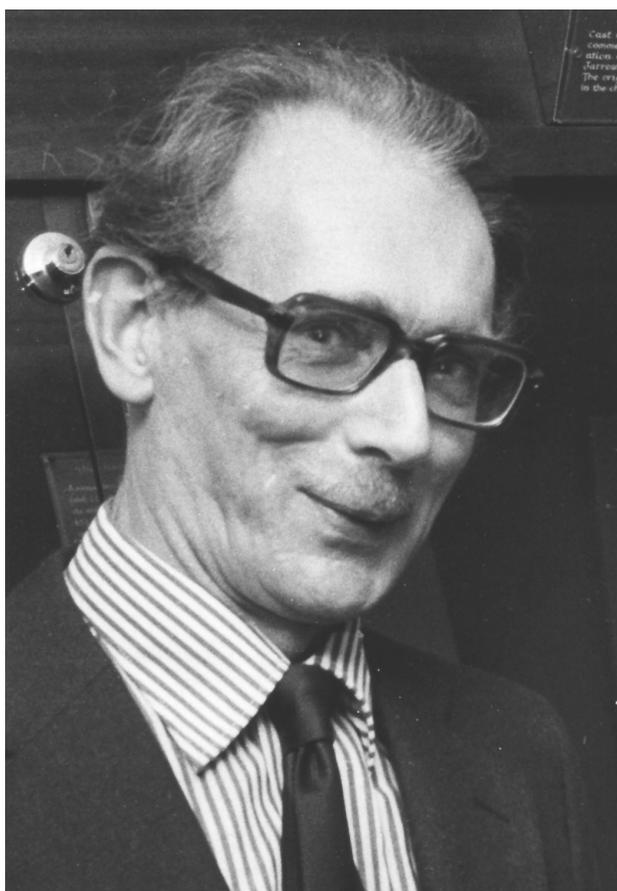


Fig. 9 Dr David Smith, the first Keeper of the Museum of Antiquities.

Gate to the Museum of Antiquities. He became Keeper of the Museum in 1960, to which was added the role of Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology when the Department was formed in 1972. When he retired in 1987 the Joint Museum Committee placed on record their acknowledgement of the part he had played in establishing the Museum and developing it into the principle museum for Hadrian's Wall and the main archaeological museum in the north of England. The Committee's annual report states: 'a major aspect of that achievement is an impeccable system of records and documentation, a proud record of museum publications, and a careful attention to . . . conservation'. The report went on to state that 'the Museum enjoys a professional status regionally and nationally, and an academic status internationally' and this was entirely due to David Smith's 'meticulous and scholarly service' to the Society for over three decades.

On David Smith's retirement, the title of Keeper of the Museum of Antiquities became attached to the role of Head of the Department of Archaeology and was taken by Professor Peter Fowler, then by Charles Daniels, and finally by Peter Davis before the Museum became a separate entity in 1998.

Charles Daniels was appointed Assistant Keeper with special responsibility for conservation soon after the Museum opened but transferred to full-time teaching when the

Department of Archaeology was established. He became Keeper when Head of the Department of Archaeology.

Roger Miket graduated with a degree in History at Newcastle and joined the staff as Technician in 1971 after working as a student volunteer. After five years he moved to Tyne and Wear Museums Service as Keeper of Archaeology. Whilst at the Museum he excavated in Newcastle at Westgate Road, Dean Street and along the Ouse Burn, and at Hepple, Crooksham and Cheviot Walk Wood in Northumberland as well as starting the excavations at Thirlings. He also worked with Professor Rosemary Cramp to produce a catalogue of Anglo Saxon and Viking objects in the Museum.

The current author joined the Museum's staff in 1978 as Junior Technician and became first Senior Technician, then Archaeological Museums Officer on David Smith's retirement, then Director of Archaeological Museums when the Shefton Museum was added to the Archaeological Museums' portfolio. She had the honour of taking on the role of Keeper of the Society's Archaeological Collections in 2002.

The Museum was always very fortunate in having its own technicians, the first being Mr J. Wright. It was William Embleton, who was appointed as Technician on 9th December 1955 and promoted to Senior Technician on 1st August 1958, who made the stands for the models and helped David Smith move the collections from the Keep and Black Gate. He was followed by Joseph Gluza, whose celebrated Polish cherry brandy is remembered, or possibly not, by those who attended the Museum's famous Christmas parties. After Mr Gluza's retirement the Museum welcomed Charlie Moore before Edwin Evans joined the Museum from Swan Hunters shipyard in 1993. He has become famous for his reconstructions of armour, to the extent that Tyne Tees TV produced a short television programme about his work.

Most visitors to a museum only meet the reception staff and a museum's reputation for friendliness depends on these important people. Amongst those who have worked on the Museum's 'frontline' are Mrs Evelyn Foulis, Mr A Stephenson, Maureen Mountain, Jackie Taylor, Jan Stanbridge and Bet Evans. Behind the scenes the secretaries were Edna Armstrong, Carol Riley and Julie King whilst cataloguers have included Charlotte Tagart, Sue Purvis, Linda Green, and Ellie Scott.

Over the years, and especially in the early years, the development of the Museum owed much to friends and outside specialists in various fields. The first was Noel Shaw of Shaw Processes, Newcastle, a specialist in the hardening of sand moulds for casting in metals. He advised David Smith on the cleaning of the many stone artefacts and devised a hardener to consolidate friable surfaces (*The Museums Journal* 1957). Another valued friend was Dr Richard Raper who, on retiring from the College's Department of Chemistry, established a small photographic darkroom in the Museum and became the museum's resident photographer. Mary Hurrell, likewise, a graduate from the Fine Art Department, volunteered to draw objects for record purposes and for publication. These are just a few of those who have willingly and generously given of their time over the years but there have been many more, far too many to mention but all much appreciated.

Also behind the scenes was the Joint Museum Committee, which acted as both a vehicle for liaison between the Society and the University and as a management committee for the Museum. The present author would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff of the Universities of Durham and Northumberland and the members of the Society who served on this committee over the years. In particular, the sterling work of Humphrey Welfare and Professor Richard Bailey as the last two chairmen of this committee must be recorded.



CONCLUSION

The Museum of Antiquities was open for 48 years and closed on April 19th 2008 in order to prepare for the move to the Great North Museum. A new chapter for the Society's collection opened in 2009.

In his report on the opening of the Museum David Smith stated:

'Intramurally, the primary and fundamental necessity is a complete catalogue of the collection. Complementary to this is the need for an archive of photographs of objects in the collection. Thirdly, in a museum in which the Wall and its relics figure so largely, the establishment of an archive relating to this subject ought to receive serious attention. And last, but by no means least, for there is an element of urgency about it, the entire collection stands in need of examination, and in certain instances of immediate treatment, by someone trained in modern methods of conservation and preventative maintenance.

'Extramurally, that is to say, in its relations with the public, both lay and academic, the primary undertaking must be to promote interest in and appreciation of the things of the past, especially those of our own region. This means first the establishment of a more or less permanent exhibition of local antiquities and publication of guides and catalogues. Secondly, it means provision, from time to time, of temporary exhibitions, both in and outside the Museum and not necessarily of local material. Thirdly it means the arrangement of lectures and film shows.

'As a statement of aims this contains nothing that the committees and staffs of leading museums in this country and abroad would not take for granted. Achievement will require years of continual effort, and it is to be hoped that the University may be able, at the earliest opportunity, to provide additional curatorial staff. The task is greater than one man may reasonably be expected to bring to completion in the foreseeable future'.

David Smith achieved a great deal during his time as Keeper and provided a sound basis on which the later Museum staff could build. It is pleasing that the Museum achieved to some extent all the aims he set himself in 1960, often punching above the weight of the average University Museum. The staff were particularly pleased when the Museum was accorded A+ rating by the Arts and Humanities Research Board, which put the museum on an equal footing with the Ashmolean and the Fitzwilliam museums and guaranteed external funding, although, sadly, not at the same level as those historic institutions .

When the Museum had to produce a Mission Statement in the 1990s the following was agreed upon: 'The overall aim of the Museum of Antiquities is to curate, display and enhance the collections in its care and disseminate archaeological information by publication and educational services.' This was felt to follow the spirit of the original concept which drove Sir Ian Richmond, Dr Bosanquet and the 1950s Society members. The staff and the Joint Museum Committee believe that they have followed these precepts, albeit having a great deal of fun whilst doing so (fig. 10).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express her gratitude to Dr David Smith, Roger Miket, Andrew Parkin, Julie King, Glyn Goodrick and Melanie Reed for reading drafts of this paper and searching their collective memories to check facts or provide illustrations. The paper was first read to the Society at its Anniversary Meeting in January 2008 and was later given in Newcastle University's Public Lecture Series in April 2008. Many members of those audiences





Fig. 10 The staff of the Museum of Antiquities in 2008.

have also contributed their recollections of the Museum's history and activities. Sadly, it has not been possible to include all these reminiscences but they have been recorded and will form part of the Museum's archive at the Great North Museum

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