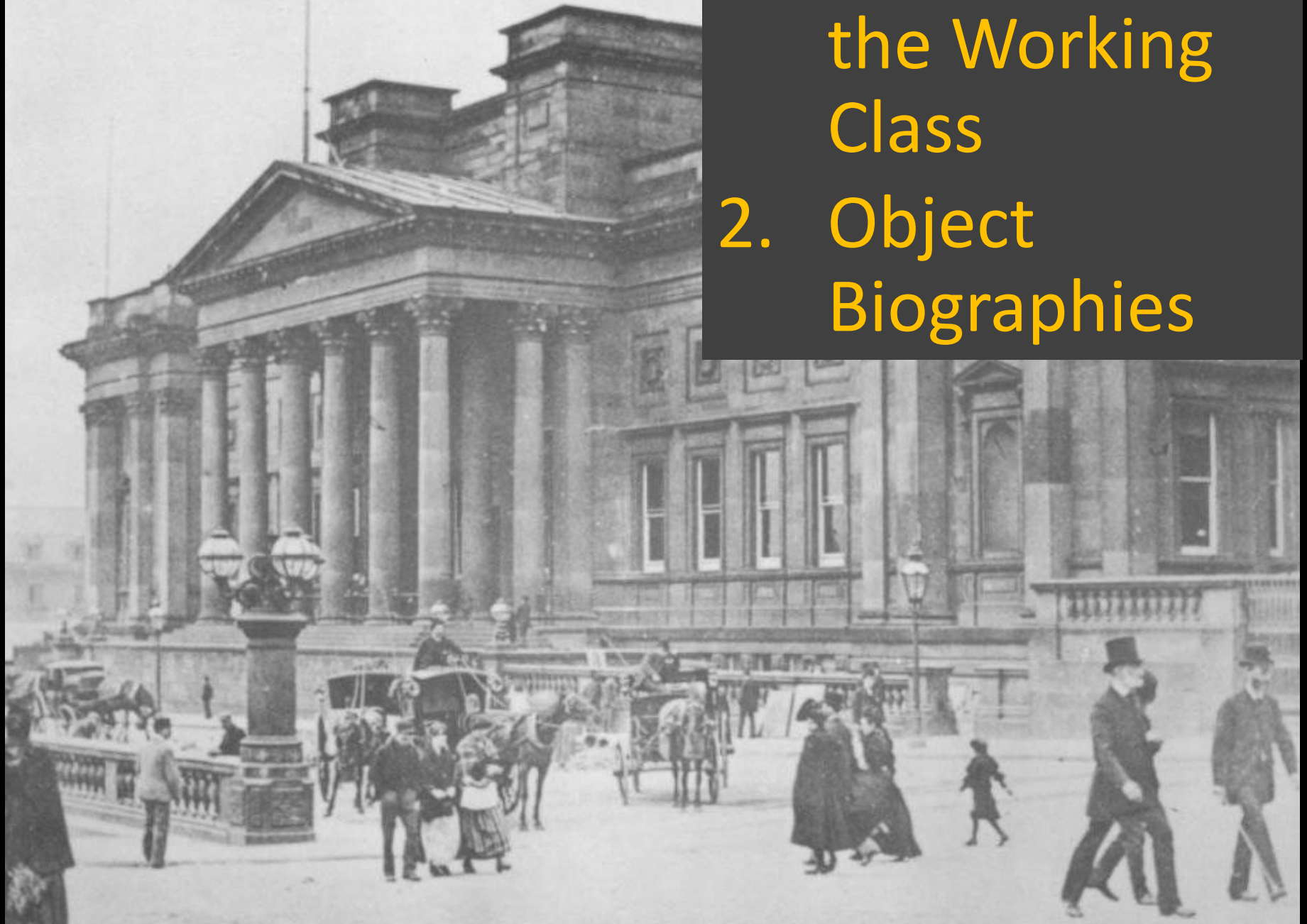
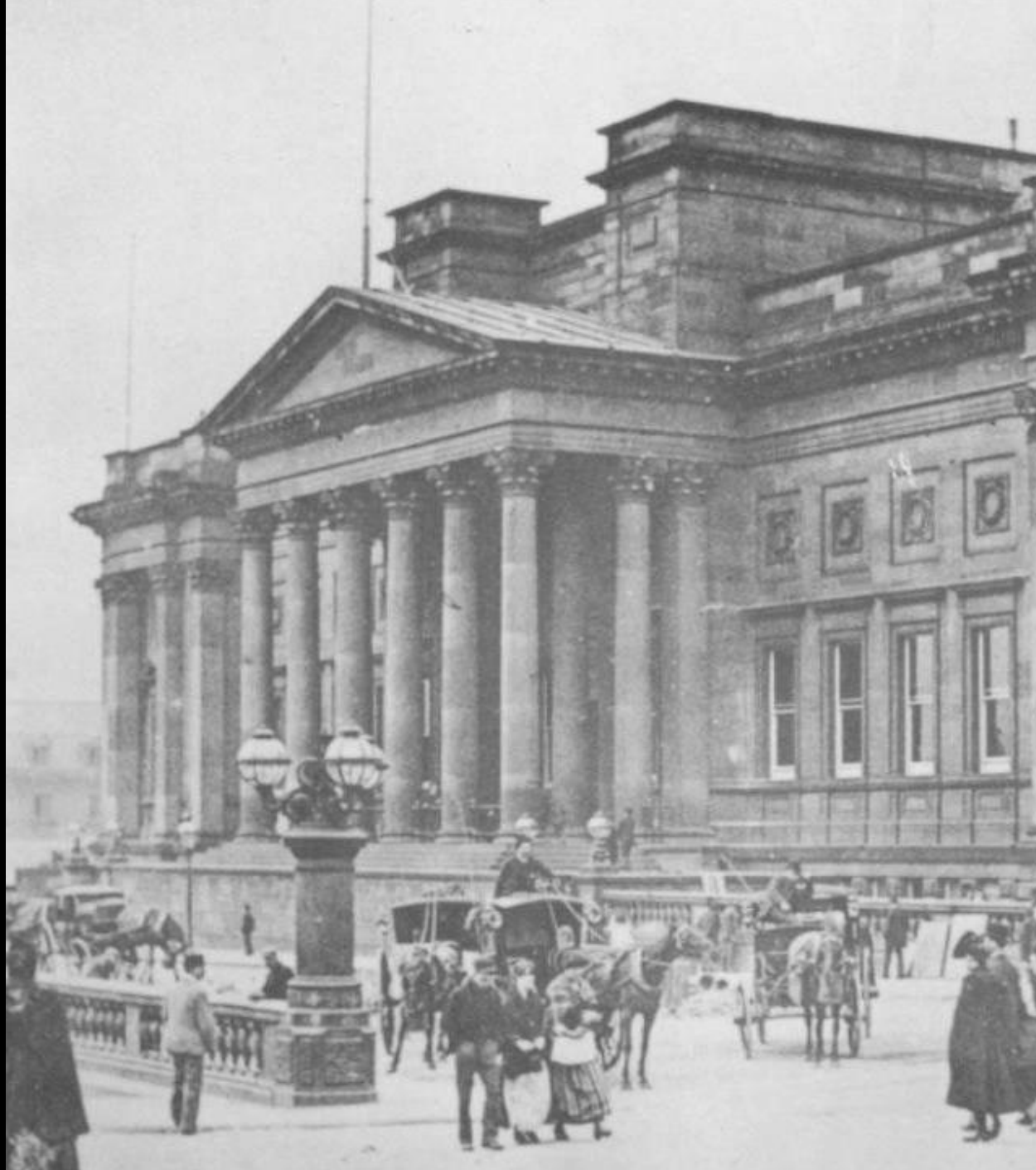


‘A Permanent Civilising Effect’? The Politics of Museums in Victorian Liverpool



1. Museums and the Working Class
2. Object Biographies





What does a museum exterior like this 'say' to you?

What messages does it convey?

What 'traditional museums' are you familiar with?



William Wyld, *St George's Hall, Liverpool* (1852), built 1841–1854. Commissioned after royal visit to Liverpool and Manchester, October 1851 (

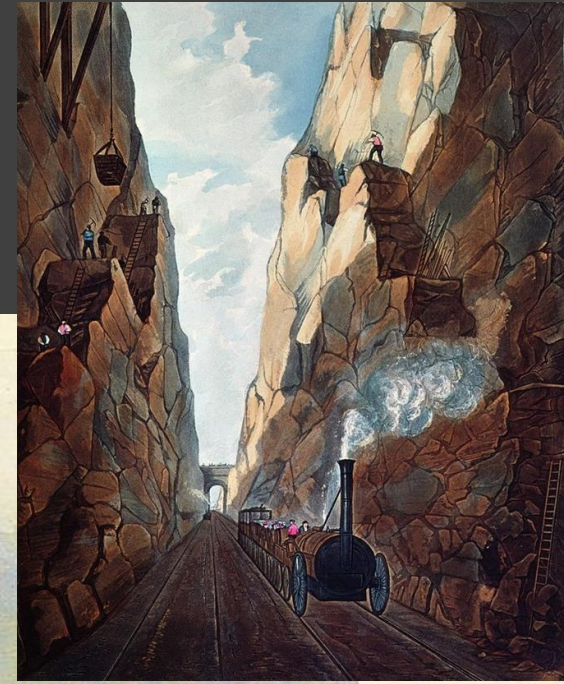
“... one of the finest modern buildings imaginable, quite worthy of ancient Athens ... The taste is so good & the style so pure ... Albert, whose great mind is always so ready to admire & approve all that is vast, great & grand, was delighted. He never really admires what is small in purpose & design, & frittered away in detail.”

- Queen Victoria on St George's Hall



Thomas Roscoe, *The Book of The Grand Junction Railway, being a History and Description of the Line from Birmingham to Liverpool and Manchester* (c. 1839)

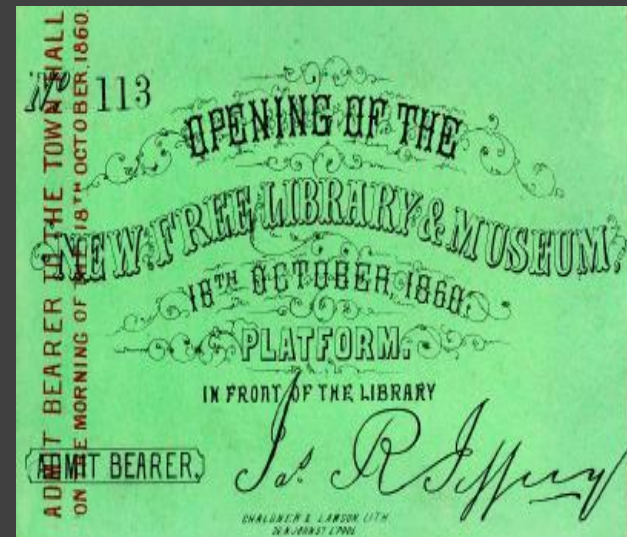
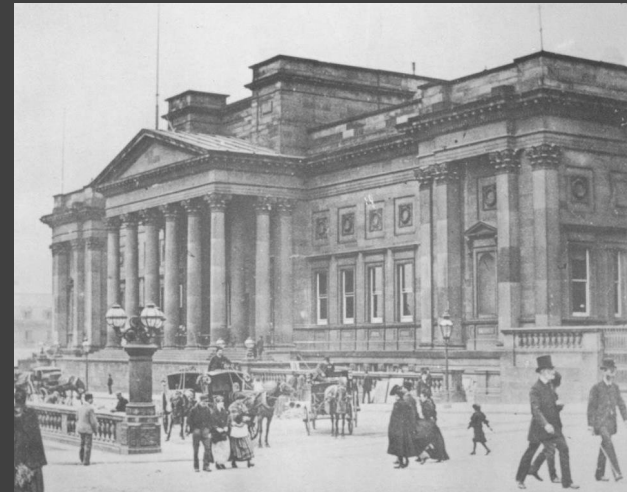
TT Bury, *Coloured Views on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway* (1831).



ENTRANCE TO THE RAILWAY STATION AT LIVERPOOL.

Liverpool's public museum: chronology

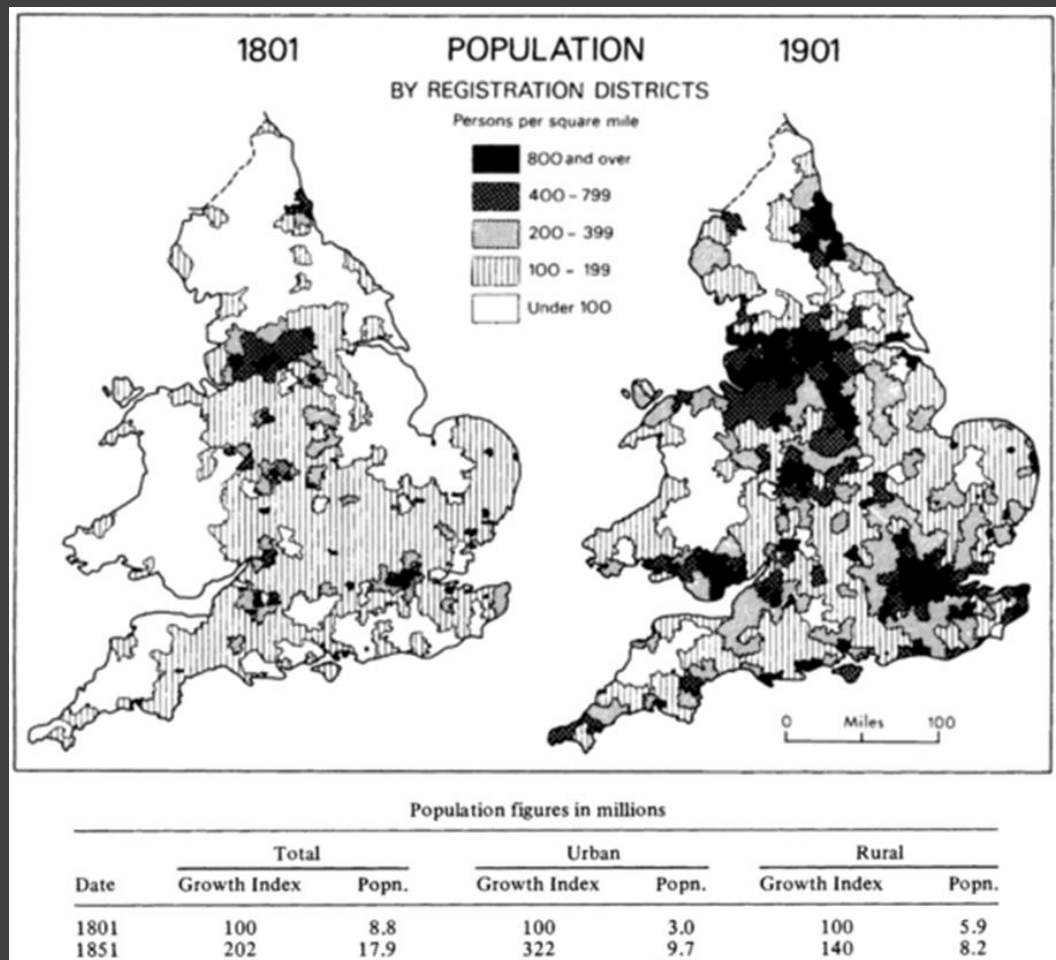
- **1845** Parliament passes Museums Act permitting local authorities to levy rates for public museums
- **1851** 13th Earl of Derby bequeaths Natural History Collection to Liverpool; museum committee established
- **1852** Parliament approves Liverpool's museum; Derby Free Library and Museum opens
- **1853** Expanded Derby Museum opens
- **1857** Foundation stone laid on new museum building
- **1860** Museum moves to its current location on William Brown Street



REFORM IN MID-C19 BRITAIN

- 1830** **Opening of Liverpool–Manchester Railway** (first intercity passenger line)
- 1832** **Great Reform Act** (widens male franchise [limited]; est. new parliamentary constituencies & removes ‘rotten boroughs’)
- 1833** **Factory Act** (legislation to monitor industrial conditions)
- 1834** **Poor Law Amendment Act** (attempted reform of poverty relief in England/Wales; workhouse instituted)
- 1835** **Municipal Corporations Act** (est. uniform system of local government in England & Wales; est. democratically-elected municipal councils; strengthened power of municipalities)
- 1838** **Anti-Corn Law League est.** (merchants’ and industrialists’ calls for end of protection tariffs for domestic agriculture; led by Manchester School);
- 1845** **Museums Act; publication of *The Condition of the Working Classes in England***
- 1846** **Repeal of Corn Laws**
- 1850** **Public Libraries Act**
- 1851** **UK Census for first time shows urban population surpassing that of rural areas; Great Exhibition, London**

Town/city	1801	1851
Greater London	1,011,157	2,286,609
London	879,491	1,995,846
Liverpool	82,430	320,513
Birmingham	73,670	232,638
Manchester (inc. Salford)	81,299	228,433
Edinburgh	82,560	193,929
Bradford	42,780	181,964
Glasgow	46,779	148,116
Huddersfield	47,079	123,860
Wolverhampton	29,202	104,158
Sheffield	39,049	103,626
Leeds	30,669	101,343
Preston	29,899	96,545
Blackburn	33,173	90,738
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	34,092	89,156
Rochdale	26,577	72,515
Swansea	17,510	46,907
Cardiff	15,325	46,491

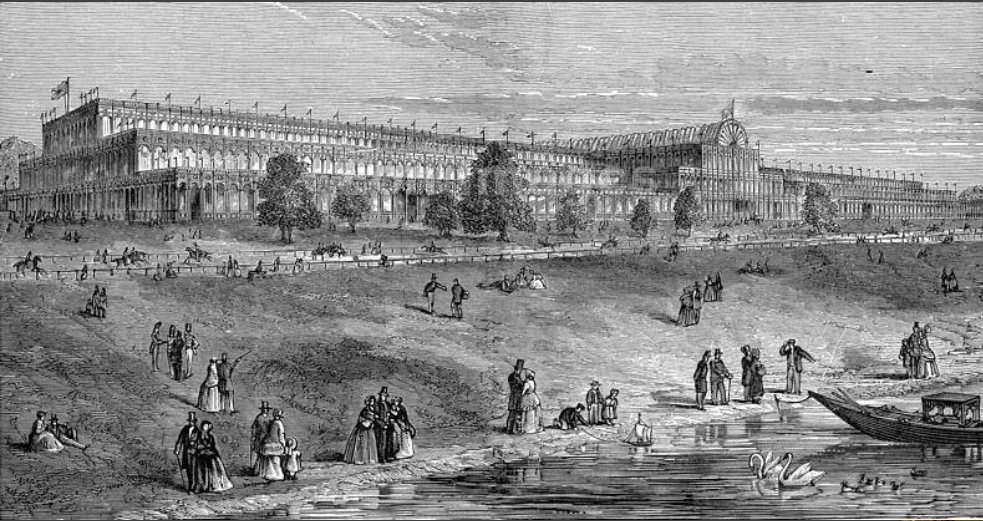


Population of selected UK Towns and Cities, 1801–1851

UK Census data, adapted from <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>; map and table from Richard Dennis and Hugh Clout, *A Social Geography of England and Wales* (Pergamon: Oxford, 1980), p. 43

The Great Exhibition of 1851: Distinguishing characteristics

Participation



- Total of six million visitors (equivalent to roughly 1/3 of UK population in 1851)
- Average daily attendance of 42,000
- 14,000 exhibitors
- 100,000 items exhibited
- 34 nations represented
- 34 British colonies represented

The Great Exhibition and the Modern World: Mass Communication

LANCASTER AND CARLISLE RAILWAY.

EXHIBITION TRAINS.

LONDON & BACK

On and after Saturday the 21st June, 1851, a Train will leave Carlisle for London every Saturday Morning at about 1 a.m., carrying 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class Passengers.
To return either in 7 or 14 days by a corresponding Train, leaving London at about 8 p.m. each Friday night.

FARES TO LONDON AND BACK:

	A. M.	1st class	2nd class	3rd class
Leave CARLISLE at about 1 0	60s.	40s.	30s.	
" PENRITH ..	1 35	56s. 6d.	37s. 6d.	28s. 6d.
" SHAP ..	2 0	54s.	36s.	28s.
" OXENHOLME ..	2 45	50s.	33s.	26s.
" MILNTHORPE ..	3 0	48s.	32s.	25s.
" BURTON ..	3 10	47s.	31s. 6d.	24s.
" LANCASTER ..	3 30	45s.	30s.	23s.

LANCASTER, 15th June, 1851.
10305668
A. WILKIN, PRIVATE AND GENERAL CARRIAGE, LANCASTER.

GREAT EXHIBITION OF ALL NATIONS EXCURSIONS FROM ABERGAVENNY TO LONDON AND BACK.

On Monday, August 4, at 7 a.m.,
Returning from Paddington on Monday, August 11th, at 1 p.m.

On Monday, August 18, at 4 a.m.,
Returning from Paddington on Monday, August 25th, at 9 a.m.

FIRST CLASS FARE . . . 40s. 6d.
SECOND CLASS FARE . . . 30s. 6d.

For full particulars, see prospectus accompanying the Tickets, which will be issued at the Golden Lane office, Friday, the 1st of August, for the Train on Monday, the 4th, and on Friday, August 18th, for the Train on the 25th.

ROBERT WILLIAMS,
PUBLISHER, 10, Golden Lane, London.

DEDICATED TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE ALBERT, K.G., ETC.

THE CRYSTAL PALACE

DESCRIBED AND ILLUSTRATED BY BEAUTIFUL ENGRAVINGS CHIEFLY FROM DACTYLOTYPE BY BEARD, MAYALL, & CO.

JOHN TALLIS AND COMPANY, LONDON AND NEW YORK.

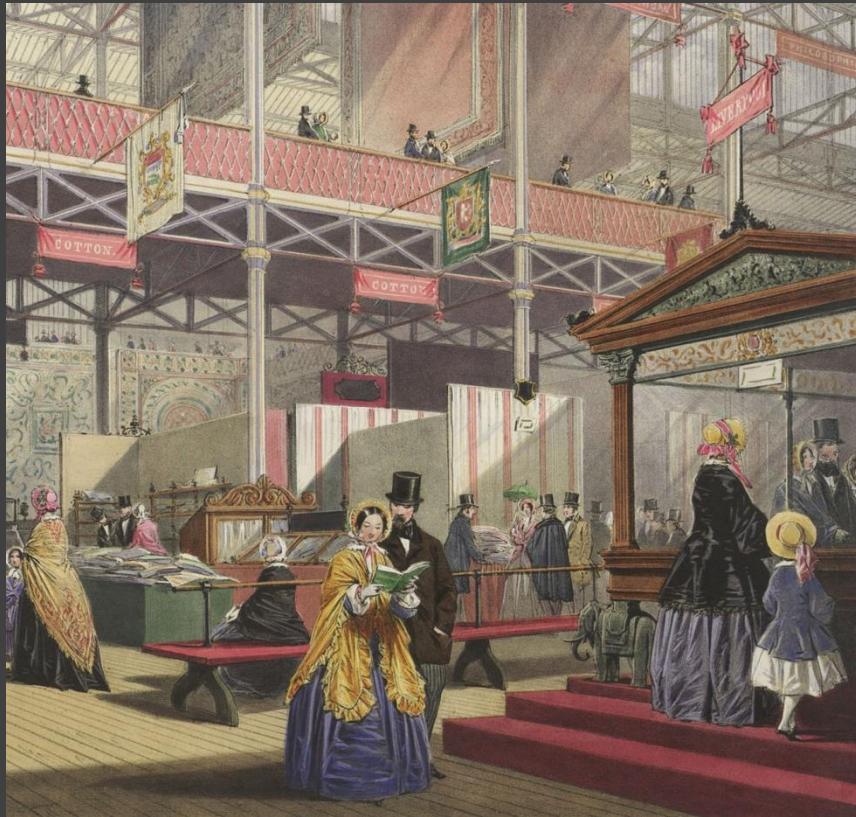
Improved means of transport

- Establishment of a national rail network; excursion travel (catalyst to tourist industry)
- Internal transport system in London; use of omnibuses
- Steamship allows speedier, easier international travel

Improved communications technology

- Invention of electric telegraph; integration of communities at long distance
- Publishing industry: coverage by newspapers and pamphlets; books, pamphlets, brochures and catalogues produced for the exhibition

The Great Exhibition and the Modern World: Urbanisation



- A celebration of London's status as the capital of empire and as the metropolis of 2.3 million inhabitants

(Images of visitors to the Liverpool Town Council display at the Crystal Palace, and the Sheffield Hardware exhibit)



- A celebration of a system of towns and cities in the UK; funded and facilitated by these municipalities

Legacies of 1851

Victoria and Albert Museum (left), and Natural History Museum (right), in two legacies of the 1851 Great Exhibition, London



'Albertopolis'



“Liverpool is the most central town in the empire; an immense city, growing with unexampled rapidity in wealth, population, and extent.. In corporate and dock estates she possesses means of improvement far beyond those of any city in the kingdom.

“But with all these advantages, Liverpool does not rank high – we almost said ranks low – **in matters of literature and taste.**

“ ... In recent years a few cheap trains from the inland districts have poured in passengers in the holidays. But these are soon distributed by river steamers; and on their return they visit the docks ... after this there is **nothing else to attract them.** But let us **possess a well-selected museum and it is surely not too much to say that scarcely any pleasant tourist would pass through without appropriating a day to see** it; not only so, but its attractions alone would induce visits of persons at any easy distance. Need we, then, say that every influx of visitors adds to the customers of the shopkeeper?

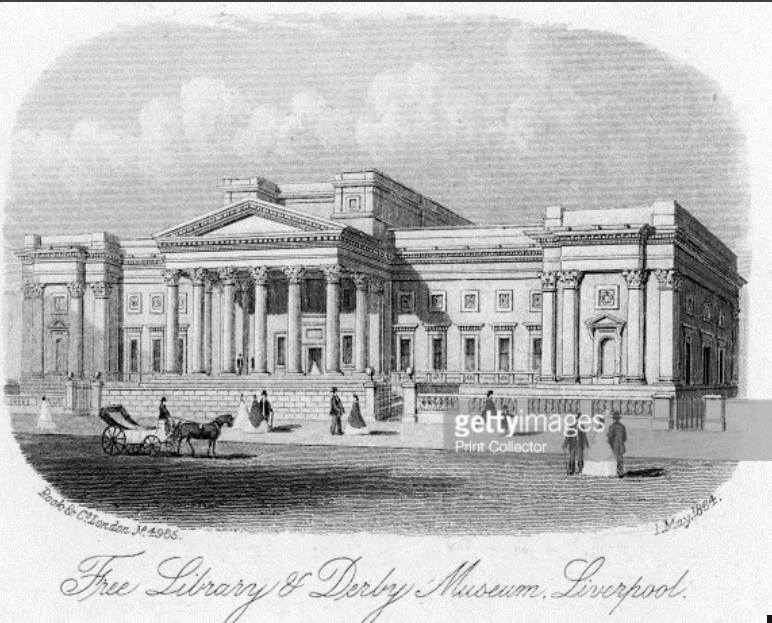
- ‘Museum and Public Library,’ *Liverpool Mercury*, May 6 1851, p. 8.



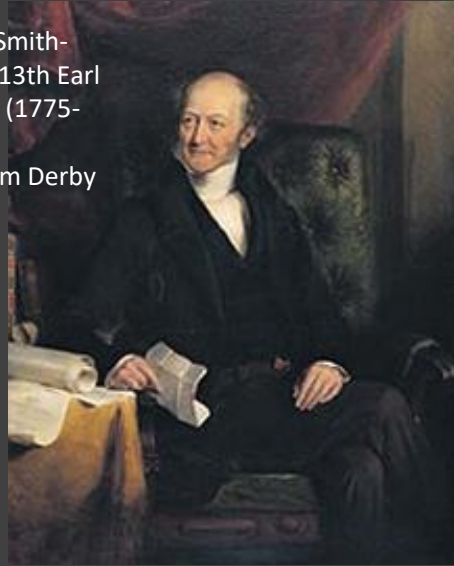
“... The support of a large part of the same class in London is derived from or pleasure visitors. Turn to Paris, and in this respect, London is far outdone; and this arises from the fact that each of these cities possesses numerous public exhibitions [and] objects to of attraction for visitors. **Why is it that the pleasure and instruction seekers of the world are now crowding to London to see a leviathan temporary museum, for after all the exhibition partakes mainly of this character?”**

- ‘Museum and Public Library,’ *Liverpool Mercury*, May 6 1851, p. 8.

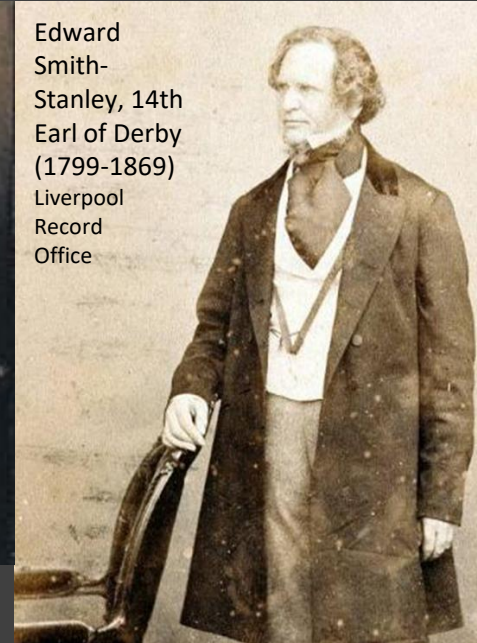
Founding of Liverpool Museum, 1851



Edward Smith-Stanley, 13th Earl of Derby (1775-1851)
by William Derby



Edward Smith-Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby (1799-1869)
Liverpool Record Office



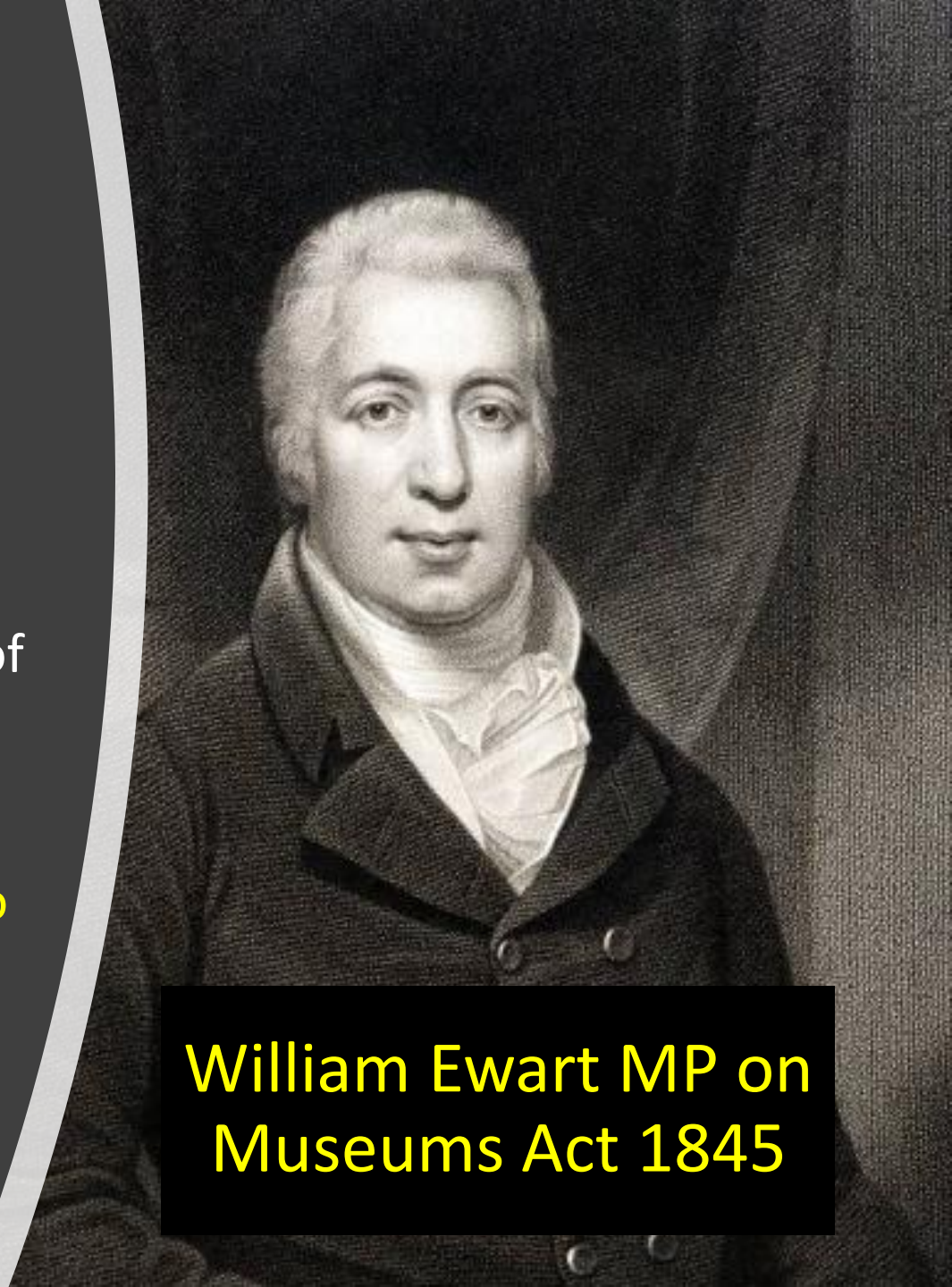
Free Library and Derby Museum, Liverpool, May 1864

Henry Wyndham Phillips, *The Royal Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851* (V&A)



There are peculiar circumstances at the present time which allow for the diffusion of works throughout the country ... by means of railway

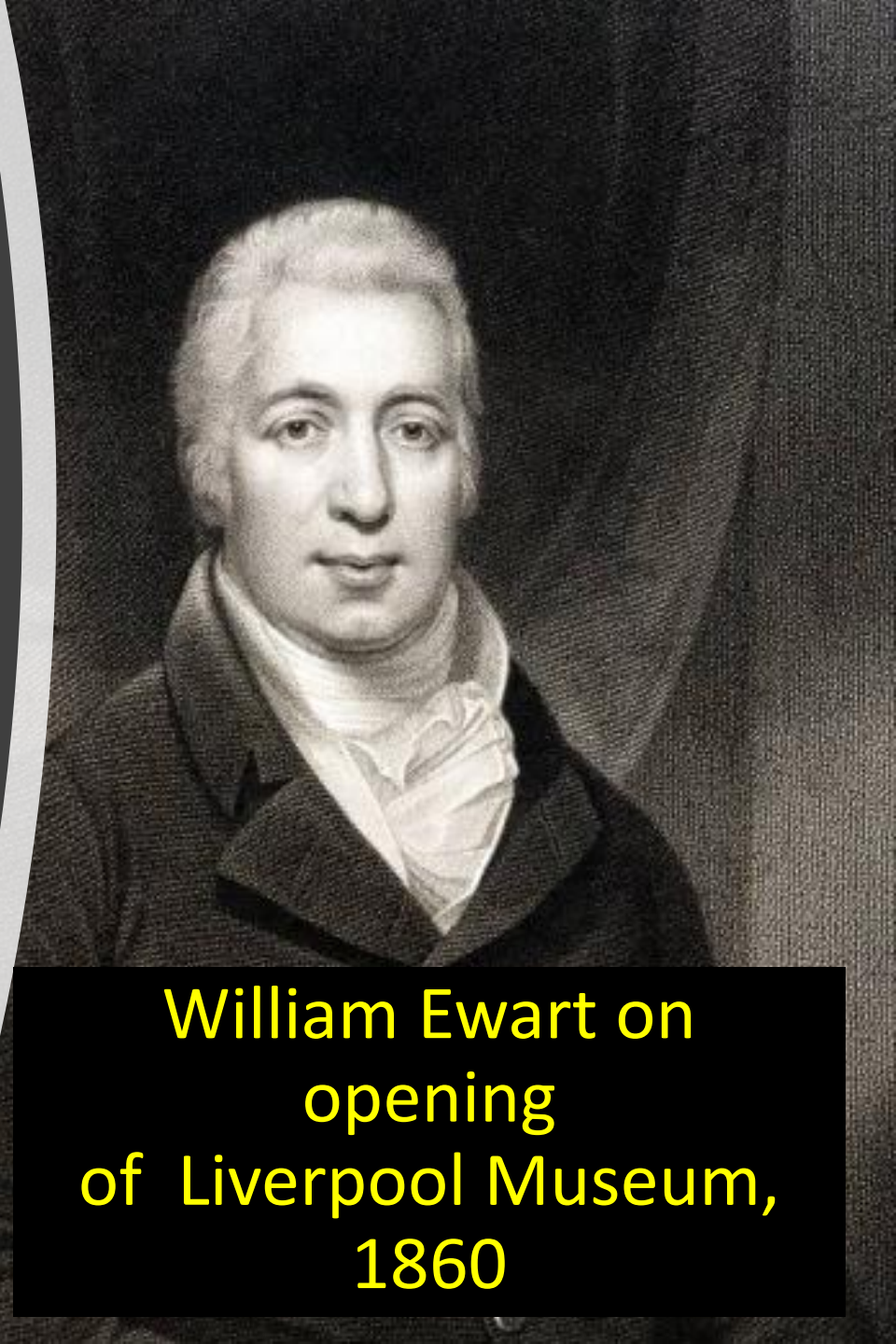
... It would be the fault of the Government if there was a single manufacturing or large town in the country deficient of a museum of such a character as might give a **sound taste in art to the population of that town**; and thus enable them to apply the skill they would obtain in the arts to manufactures.



**William Ewart MP on
Museums Act 1845**

It is a proud day for Liverpool to see this building now risen amongst us. I believe that this institution will have **a permanent civilising effect** on the character of our population. **I believe it will civilise them**; I believe it will Christianise them; I believe it will scatter the blessings of peace and of religion.

Liverpool Mercury, 19 October 1860



**William Ewart on
opening
of Liverpool Museum,
1860**

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill

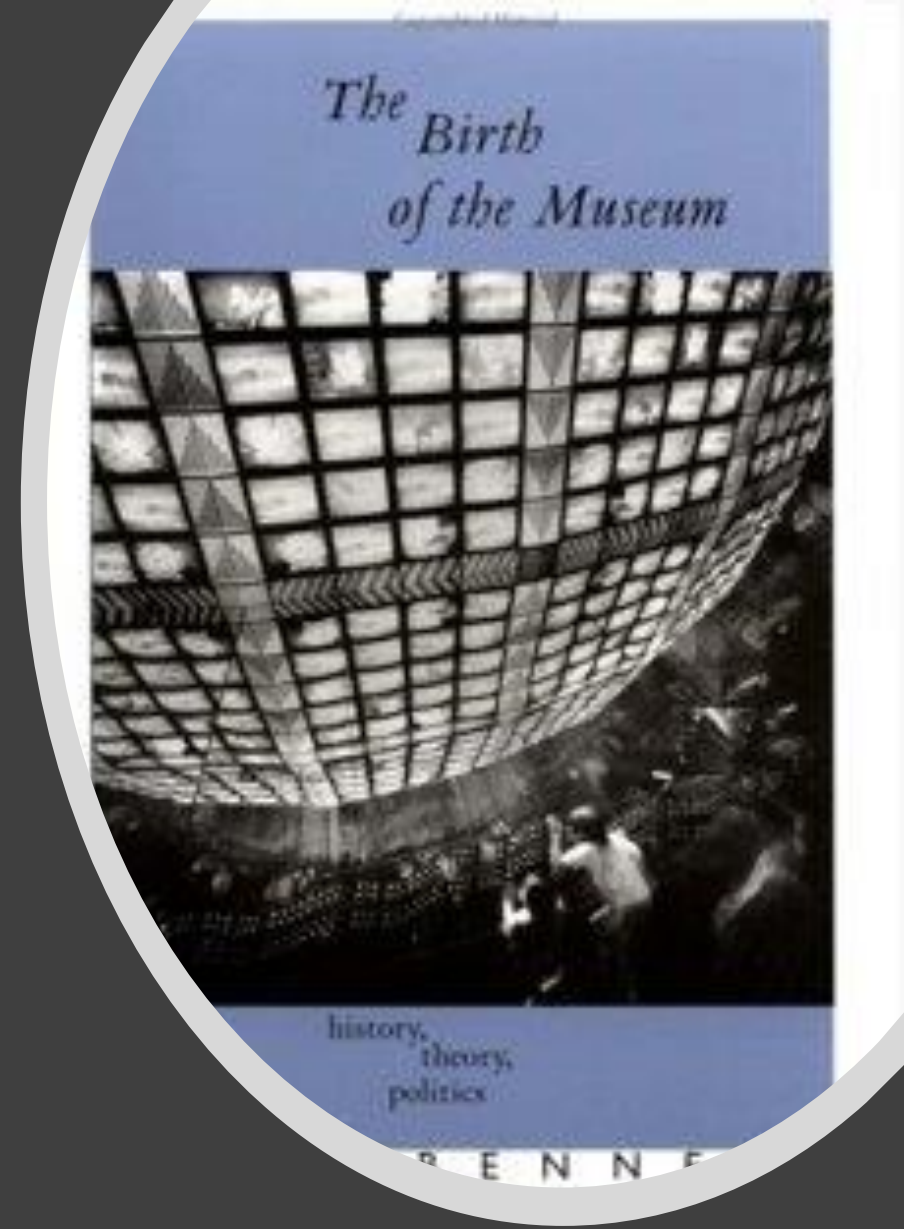
Museums =

- Disciplinary technologies
- Aimed to produce governable citizenry
- 'Hierarchical observation, normalising judgement & examination'



Tony Bennett

- Public museums and prisons = 'Janus face of power'
- Museums = persuasive rather than coercive power, which sought to regulate and reform the working classes through



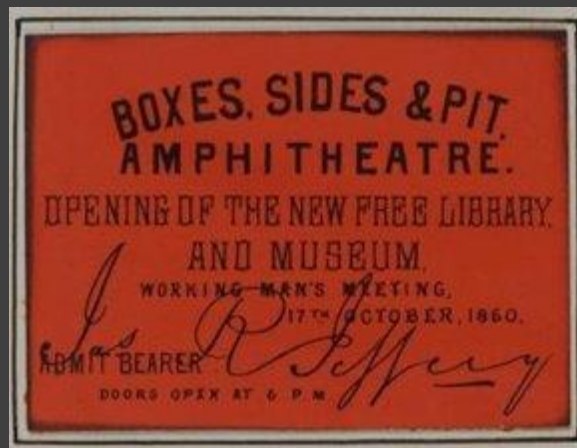
Kate Hill

- Hill = lack of sources makes it difficult to substantiate how working classes experienced museums
- Visitors = 'great unknown' for historians 'despite the weight of speculation, assumptions and pedagogy targeted at them'

Liverpool City Mission Lantern
Slide
Reference No: M 287 LCM/10/88

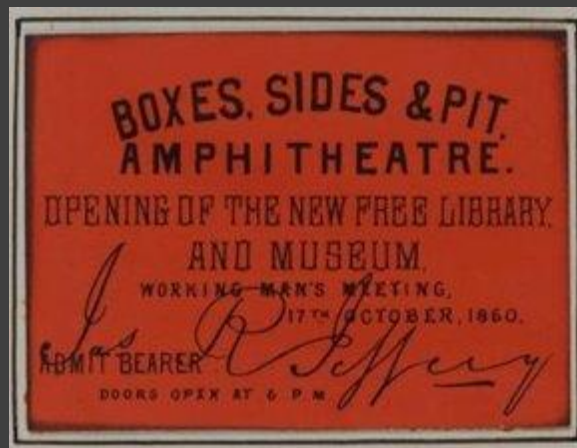
Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850-1914





“ There was a time, sir, when what we know call workmen were looked upon as mere beasts of burden. Knowledge to them was a hidden thing ... and we were looked upon a class who knew only how to eat, drink, sleep and work. Yet amidst all this intellectual gloom we have reason to thankful that there have been spirits that have arisen ... Stephenson, Watt and Brunel... sprang ... from us showing us plainly that the mind that exists in the masses only needs cultivation and encouragement

Daniel Guile, 'A Working Man' in 'On the Opening of the Free Public Museum,' *Liverpool Mercury*, October 18 1860, p. 3



“ ... But, my working friends, we have a great deal to learn. Self-denial must be exercised. The power of the mind must gain complete victory over sensual appetites. Our leisure hours, instead of being spent in the taproom (‘hear, hear’ and applause), the singing room, and the dancing room, must be given to study, to thought, to perseverance, and to industry”

Gr. Br. Drunkenness, Select Committee

JAMES BLACK LIBRARY.

No.

EVIDENCE

JAMES BLACK,
No. 33 North Duke Street,
Leicester. - - -

ON

DRUNKENNESS,

PRESENTED TO

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

BY THE
SELECT COMMITTEE

SELECT COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE HOUSE TO INQUIRE INTO
THIS SUBJECT, AND REPORT THE MINUTES OF EVIDENCE,
WITH THEIR OPINIONS THEREUPON.

J. S.
J. S. BUCKINGHAM, Esq., M.P.,

IN THE CHAIR.

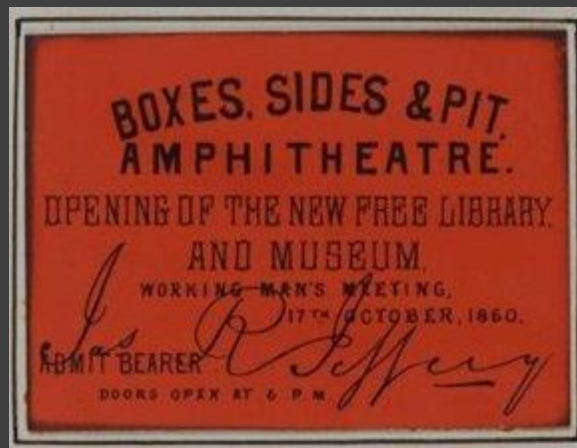
LONDON:

MR. D. MARTIN, 13, FOUNTAIN COURT, STRAND; OR OF MR.
B. BAGSTER, DEPOSITARY OF THE BRITISH & FOREIGN
TEMPERANCE SOCIETY, 15, PATERNOSTER
ROW; AND OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.

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“I consider myself one of the hardest working men in Liverpool (laughter) and I believe in my conscience that if [the museum] is taken advantage of by the working men of Liverpool, as I trust it will be, that the court I preside over will become comparatively empty and you will be able to make of me an idle man,”

T.S. Raffles, Liverpool Chief Magistrate ‘On the Opening of the Free Public Museum,’ *Liverpool Mercury*, October 18 1860, p. 3

(Below): Mr Toole, the toastmaster, at the opening of the Free Library and Museum, Liverpool, 1860, (LRO Ref: Hf 027 41 HUM)



People at the laying of the foundation stone of the Free Public Library, 1857.

(Above):
William Brown, laying of the foundation stone of museum
(LRO Framed Watercolours)

(Right):
Crowd includes Bishop of Chester, Nathaniel Hawthorne and J. A. Picton
(LRO Ref: P&SP - Libraries - Brown Library)

Liverpool's 'Old Families' (see: Tony Lane *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire* [Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1987], pp.53-84)



James A. Picton

Picture from Liverpool Record office
museum opening collection
(LRO Ref: Hf 027.41 HUM)



William Rathbone

at the 'working men's meeting,'
October 17 1860
Liverpool Record office museum
opening collection
(LRO)



The 14th Earl of Derby

(Edward Smith Stanley, three times
Prime Minister)
Picture from Liverpool Record office
museum opening collection
(LRO)

Barriers to Access: Opening Hours

- Liverpool Museum was typically open only during working hours (10am till dusk) and remained closed on the day when labourers had most free time to frequent it (Sunday).
- Saturday 'half-holiday' was added in 1857, but museum remained closed to the public on Tuesdays and Fridays and completely shut on Sundays
- Wintertime Monday evening openings – practice terminated between 1871 and 1888
- Full seven-day week s finally implemented in 1922

Sunday Society Campaigning

Compliments of the Author 19
WORKMEN AND MUSEUMS:

BEING SELECTIONS FROM

A SERIES OF LETTERS

CONTRIBUTED TO THE "LIVERPOOL MERCURY"

During the latter part of 1885 and the beginning of 1886,

BY

"R. M."

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY
EGERTON SMITH & Co., "MERCURY" PRINTING WORKS, WOOD STREET, LIVERPOOL.

1886.

UNIVERSITY
OF BRISTOL
LIBRARY

LIVERPOOL SUNDAY SOCIETY.

On Monday afternoon, the Liverpool Sunday Society met in the studio of the secretary, Mr. Wardlaw Laing, 8, The Temple, Dale-street, Councilor W. B. Bowring in the chair. This society has been recently organised on the same lines as the London Sunday Society, having much the same objects in view. There is a rapidly-growing feeling in Liverpool as to the necessity for a more rational observance of the Sunday amongst all classes than is possible at the present time. There are thousands of people in this city who are debarred from the pleasures of the art galleries, libraries, and museums, which are public property, on the only day they could possibly visit them. The friends of a more reasonable order of things have long felt the necessity for an organisation of some sort, round which they could gather, and several attempts at organisation have been made, but it has hitherto seemed as if public opinion was scarcely ripe for a successful movement. Now, however, a society has been formed

Barriers to Access: Comportment

It is requested that all parties visiting the museum come clean and in decent apparel to preserve an appearance of order and propriety. All smoking and spitting strictly prohibited. Children in arms not admitted nor children under 12 years of age unless accompanied by an adult.

Liverpool Record Office [LRO] 352 MIN LIB 1/2 Library and Museum Committee Minutes, 17 March 1853, pp. 84–86.

Museum Evening Openings

- January 1870: 'the great inconvenience' generated by 'large and increasing numbers of young people' using evenings 'for promenading and conversation rather than for the inspection of objects.'
- December 1870: youngsters caused 'annoyance and crowding out [of] well-conducted persons' via a litany of 'irregularities' such as 'persons wandering about without any object [i.e. purpose],' 'idlers ... occup[ying] seats to the exclusion of others,' and visitors 'spitting on the floors, lounging about and obstructing passages.'
- Museum committee discontinued evening openings in September 1871.
- Evening opening reinstated in 1888 – but only to avoid opening on Sundays

Working-Class Voices 'Speaking Back'

'Two working men' made 'very strong remarks as to the foolishness of expecting artisans to come to such a place after a hard day's work.'

One of the (unnamed) men objected that he was 'too tired to appreciate the beauties of the place,' highlighting various impracticalities associated with evening attendance:

As most working men live a mile or two from their work, it was impossible for them to get home after a hard day's work, get cleaned and get tea, then go to the museum with his wife and children, especially as he had to go to bed early in order to rise at five in the morning.

Mercury, 4 October 1888, p. 7. *Mercury*, 2 October 1888, p. 5.

Working-Class Voices 'Speaking Back'

'Medicine' at the Museums.—It may not be without interest, from a Folk-lore point of view, to place on record that but a few days ago, an Irish lad suffering badly from scrofulous sores, was brought to the Mayer Museum by his parents, who earnestly besought the authorities that they might be allowed to touch the child's neck with an Irish Stone Celt, exhibited in one of the cases. It was unavailing to try and persuade the deluded and superstitious couple, that no possible good could follow such an application. As their faith in the efficacy of the Stone could not be shaken, and they were loth to go away without being allowed to try this, in their belief, unfailing remedy, opposition was finally, and not without some hesitation, withdrawn, and the ancient implement placed in their hands. After the operation the parents departed happy, grateful, and in the most perfect confidence that their child would be healed, and not without expressions of surprise that so great a boon had been conferred on them without the fee, which they were prepared, and that very gladly, to pay.

Bulletin of the Liverpool Museums 1:1 (Liverpool: Henry Young & Sons,, 1897), p. 28

PART TWO

“Medicine” at the Museum’:

The Strange Case of Liverpool Museum’s Irish Stone Celt

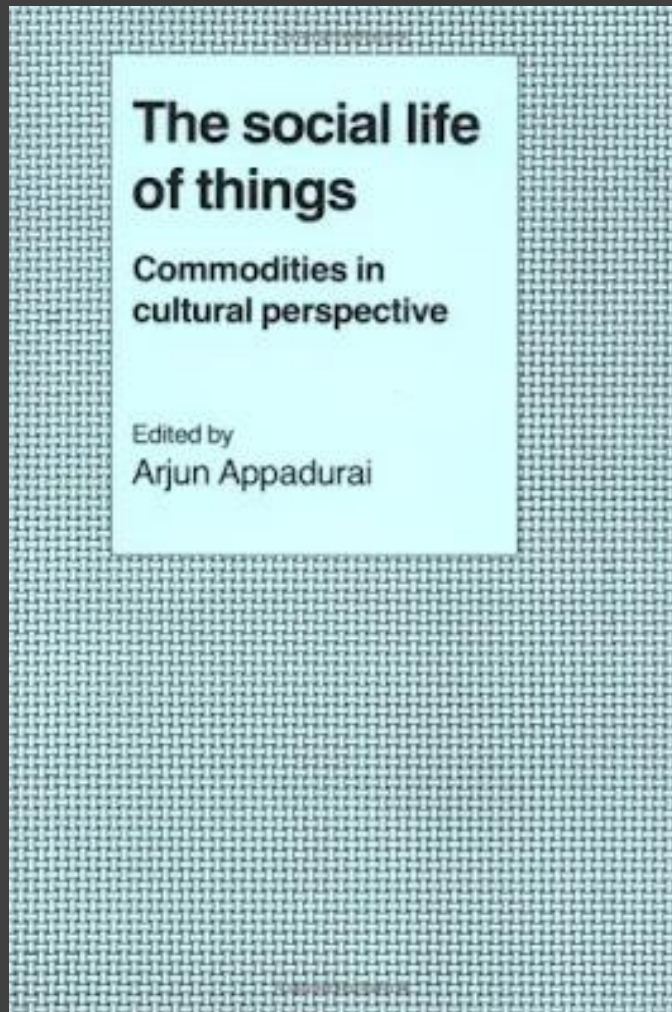
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Stone axeheads

- 13 Found in Little Crosby, Sefton
- 14 Found in Whiston, Knowsley
- 15 Found in Irby, Wirral
- 16 Found in Halsall, West Lancashire
- 17 Found in Toxteth, Liverpool



OBJECT BIOGRAPHY



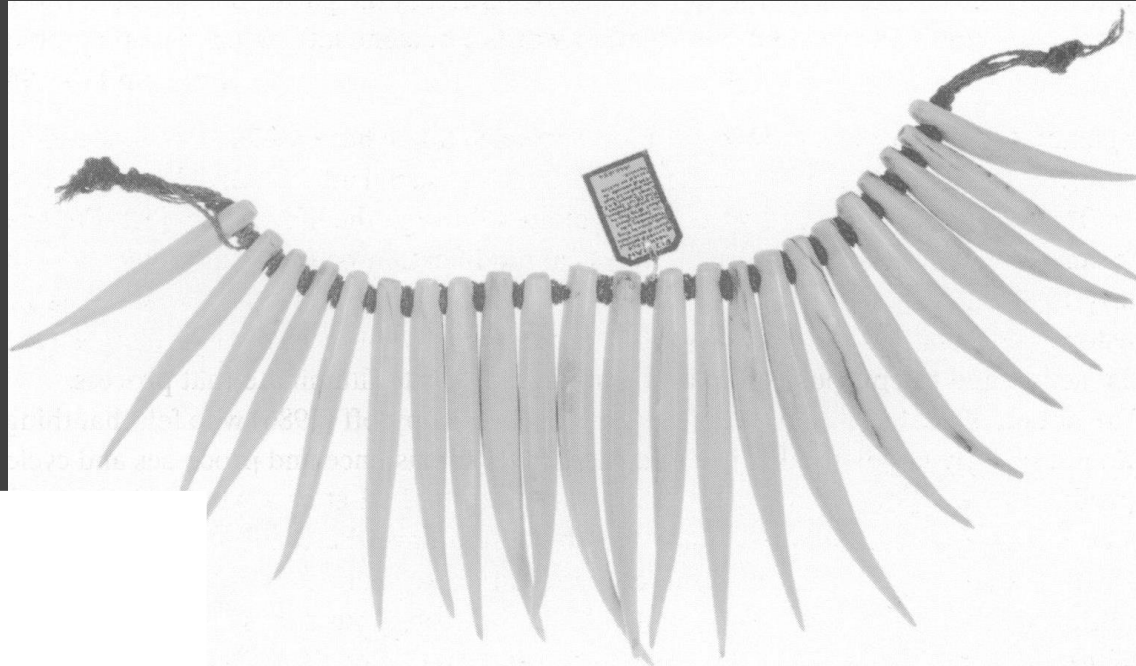
CHAPTER 2

The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process

IGOR KOPYTOFF

See also Chris Gosden and
Yvonne Marshall, 'The
Cultural Biography of
Objects, *World
Archaeology*, 31: 2
(October 1999):169-178

Godsen and Marshall, Cultural Biography of Objects



Thinking biographically

Accession Number: 1940.10.54

Country: Fiji

Name: neck ornament

Material: whale tooth, coconut fibre

Field collector: The Reverend James Calvert

Other owners: King Thakombau

Pitt Rivers source: Pilot Officer James Lionel Calvert via his Aunt Miss Gladys.

The above is part of the Pitt Rivers Museum catalogue entry for a Fijian necklace made of sperm whale teeth strung on coconut fibre (Plate 1). This object, sitting in its glass case, may seem static and isolated, but this is a misapprehension of museum objects and of objects generally. Despite their apparent stasis such objects are continually picking up new significances, connections and meanings. Upon seeing the necklace, the first question a Fijian visitor to the Pitt Rivers museum might ask is: whose was it?; immediately followed by: which village did it come from? The history of ownership and use of such objects is often well known to Fijian people, especially if this history involved important chiefs, for objects touched by chiefs are thought to be both powerful and dangerous.

Godsen and Marshall, Cultural Biography of Objects

At the heart of the notion of biography are questions about the links between people and things: about the ways of meanings and values are accumulated and transformed

The central idea is that, as people and objects gather time, movement and change, they are constantly transformed, and these transformations of person and object are tied up.

Not only do objects change through their existence but they often have the capability of accumulating histories, so that the present significance of an object derives from the person or events to which it is connected

OBJECT BIOGRAPHY

- What might be meant by the phrase 'object biography'?
- What questions might researchers ask in order to establish an 'object biography'?
- What issues and factors might be considered when compiling an 'object biography'?

MUSEOLOGICAL OBJECT BIOGRAPHIES

- WHAT
- WHO
- WHERE
- WHEN
- HOW?

OBJECT BIOGRAPHY: WHAT

- What is the object?
- What materials is the object made of?
- What utilitarian functions might the object have?
- What social, cultural or religious functions might the object have?

OBJECT BIOGRAPHY: WHO

- Who 'made' the object?
- Who has used the object?
- Who has owned the object and who owns it currently?
- Who acquired the object for the museum?

OBJECT BIOGRAPHY: WHERE

- Where did the object originate from?
- Where was the object found (e.g. in archaeological dig?)
- Has the object 'travelled' over the course of its life?
- Where is the object displayed (or not) at a museum?

OBJECT BIOGRAPHY: WHEN

- When did the object originate?
- When was it made?
- When did the object enter the museum's collection?
- When was the object discovered?
- When was the object purchased?

OBJECT BIOGRAPHY: HOW

- How has the object been used and interpreted?
- How did the object enter the museum's collections?
- How is the object viewed and understood by museumgoers?

'Medicine' at the Museums.—It may not be without interest, from a Folk-lore point of view, to place on record that but a few days ago, an Irish lad suffering badly from scrofulous sores, was brought to the Mayer Museum by his parents, who earnestly besought the authorities that they might be allowed to touch the child's neck with an Irish Stone Celt, exhibited in one of the cases. It was unavailing to try and persuade the deluded and superstitious couple, that no possible good could follow such an application. As their faith in the efficacy of the Stone could not be shaken, and they were loth to go away without being allowed to try this, in their belief, unfailing remedy, opposition was finally, and not without some hesitation, withdrawn, and the ancient implement placed in their hands. After the operation the parents departed happy, grateful, and in the most perfect confidence that their child would be healed, and not without expressions of surprise that so great a boon had been conferred on them without the fee, which they were prepared, and that very gladly, to pay.

- What was the provenance of the stone celt and why might it have held significance to the Irish family?
- What *are* stone celts?
- How can we interpret the “Medicine” at the Museum’ story?
- What does it tell us about how museumgoers interacted with museum objects?

Axe head

4000 BC - 2500 BC

M6411

● On display

📍 Museum of Liverpool

Share:    

Specifications

Accession number	M6411
Collection type	Axe head
Date made	4000 BC - 2500 BC
Place collected	Europe: Northern Europe: UK: England: Merseyside: Liverpool: Toxteth
Date collected	1866

Information

Neolithic stone axe head found in Parliament Fields, Toxteth Park in 1866. The surface is flaked, from the chipping of the stone to form the shape, and the cutting edge is polished to sharpen it. Petrographic analysis identifies it as from Great Langdale, Cumbria.

The axe was found by Mr Forrest when passing soil disturbed by workmen who were leveling an area of Parliament Fields, Toxteth Park.

Magic Worlds

18 Oct 2013—02 Mar 2014

📍 World Museum

Magic at the museum



Irish type stone axe head (or 'celt') found in Parliament Fields, Toxteth Park, in 1866. This is probably the stone axe used to cure the Irish lad mentioned in the 1897 report. World Museum is currently hosting the 'Magic Worlds' exhibition. It's a fun and child-centred look at the miraculous, fantastical, illusional and folkloric - including everything from magicians to fairytales. The exhibition got me thinking about the role that 'magic' has played in the museum collection that I curate - the African collection. It's true to say that there is a darker side to the long relationship that museums have had with all things 'magical'. The French philosopher J. P. Sartre considered the fantastic and the miraculous to have a history in

Provenance

Local farmers
Neolithic stone axes

Neolithic stone axes were important items. Some were brought to the Liverpool area from mountainous areas, such as Wales and the Lake District. People exchanged them as gifts at ceremonies and social gatherings.

Settlements, such as those found by archaeologists at Hale and Little Crosby, show that between about 5000 and 3500 years ago people were starting to live in bigger camps. However, other evidence from the region suggests that they continued to move around to some extent, from season to season.



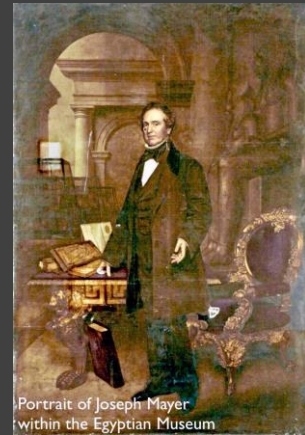
Provenance

Occurrence of an early Stone Celt in Parliament Fields.

Mr. Forrest, who has for some years had charge of the Egyptian Museum in Colquitt Street, reports that, during last summer, he was passing across the open ground here, where workmen had been removing soil in levelling, when he detected a celt lying alone near a heap evidently lately carted. Such a very unusual occurrence caused him to visit the place repeatedly afterwards, but nothing else of an antiquarian nature appeared. This early instrument is formed of a light-coloured limestone and measures 4 inches in length by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in breadth at the smaller, to $1\frac{5}{8}$ inches at the broader end.

Henry Ecroyd Smith, 'Archaeology of the Mersey District 1866,' *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 7 (1867), p. 169

Joseph Mayer (1803–1886)



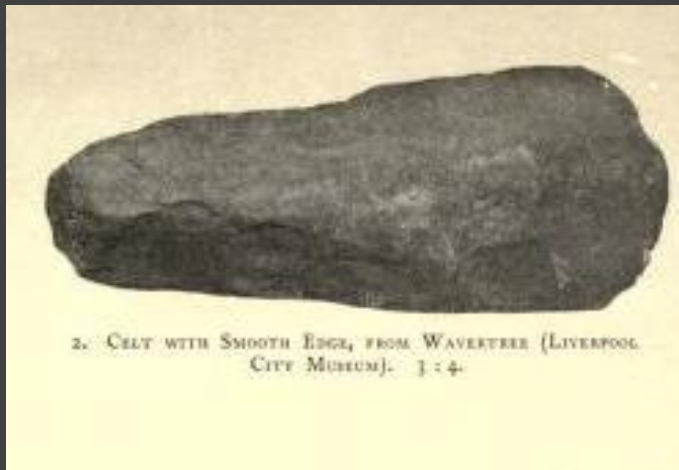
Scholarly Interpretation

Another typical celt is seen in the photo, Plate II.—2. It is of rough polished body which is smoothed towards the edge. Its length is 4 in., width $1\frac{1}{8}$ in., and thickness $\frac{3}{4}$ in. The material is light-coloured limestone. This celt was found in Parliament Fields, Toxteth Park, Wavertree, and it remains appropriately in the public museum of the city of Liverpool. Most

THE
MAYER COLLECTION,
IN THE LIVERPOOL MUSEUM,
CONSIDERED AS
AN EDUCATIONAL POSSESSION.
—
A PAPER
READ BEFORE THE MEMBERS OF THE
LIVERPOOL ART CLUB, 5TH NOVEMBER, 1877.
—
BY
CHARLES T. GATTY,
ASSISTANT CURATOR OF THE MAYER COLLECTION.



John Garstang, 'Early Man,' *The Victoria History of the County of Lancaster*, Vol. I (London: Archibald and Constable, 1906), p. 218



show you.

Here are six stone implements, celts or axe-heads, about which there is an unmistakable similarity of material, design and construction, and yet they come from countries very far apart. Two were found in Denmark, a third came from North America, a fourth from New Zealand, a fifth from an island in the Pacific, and this very beautiful one was found in Tranmere Pool, near Birkenhead. Here is another and smaller series of arrow or javelin-heads. No. 1 was found in Yorkshire, No. 2 in Ireland, No. 3 in the United States, No. 4 in Mexico, No. 5 in California, No. 6 in the region of the Esquimaux, No. 7 in Arabia, No. 8 in Egypt, and No. 9 in Wavertree. Now, a stone implement is a very simple form of a manufactured weapon. It represents man in a primitive state of civilisation, making use of a very obvious material; and as it is found in most countries, it is a fair inference to suppose that what is called "the stone age," is a period or stage through which all the human family pass in their turn: not all at the same time, but in their due order; now Egypt, now Greece, now Italy, now Britain, now America, now Australia. But the features common to the human family do not end with the use of stone implements. The next period, again presents us with a marvellous unity of material and design. Here are a few bronze implements, one from Ireland, and another, very similar to it, found in Central India. Here, again, is one from France, and another from Norfolk, both exhibiting the same material, design and construction.

Scholarly Interpretation

John Evans, *Ancient Stone Implements, Weapons and Ornaments of Great Britain* (London: Longman, Green, Reader and Dryer, 1872), pp. 51-52, 87

In the Mayer Collection at Liverpool is a celt of clay-slate, 4 inches long and ground at the edge, found at Toxteth.

IMPLEMENTS OF THE NEOLITHIC PERIOD.

CHAPTER III.

CELTS.

CELTS REGARDED AS THUNDERBOLTS.

51

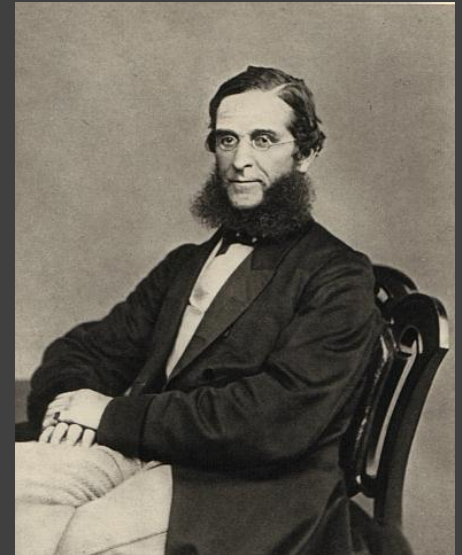
The general form of stone celts is well known, being usually that of more or less flat blades, approaching an oval in section, with the sides more or less straight, and one end broader and also sharper than the other. In length they vary from about two inches to as much as sixteen inches. I do not, however, propose entering at once into any description of the varieties in their form and character, but to pass in review some of the opinions that have been held concerning their nature and origin.

One of the most universal of these is a belief, which may almost be described as having been held "semper, ubique et ab omnibus," their having been thunderbolts.

"The country folks* of the West of England still hold that the 'thunder-axes' they find, once fell from the sky." In Cornwall † they still have medical virtues assigned to them; the water in which "a thunderbolt," or celt, has been boiled being a specific for rheumatism. In the North of England, and in parts of Scotland, they are known as thunderbolts, ‡ and, like flint arrow-heads, are supposed to have preservative virtues, especially against diseases of cattle. In Ireland the same superstition prevails, and I have myself known an instance where a stone celt was lent among neighbours to place in the troughs from which cattle drank, on account of its healing powers.

In most parts of France, § and in the Channel Islands, the stone celt is known by no other name than *Coin de foudre*, or *pierre de tonnerre*, &c. Mr. F. C. Lukis || gives an instance of a flint celt having been found near an spot where a signal-staff had been struck by lightning, and which was proved to have been the bolt, by its peculiar smell when broken.

In Brittany ¶ the stone celt is frequently thrown into the well for purifying the water, or for securing a continued supply; and in Savoy it is not rare to find one of these instruments rolled up in the wool of the sheep, or the hair of the goat, for good luck, or the prevention of the rot or putrid decay.



The German belief is much the same as the Irish. Stone celts are held to preserve from lightning the house in which they are kept. They perspire when a storm is approaching; they are good for diseases of man and beast; they increase the milk of cows; they assist the birth of children; and powder scraped from them may be taken with advantage for various childish disorders. It is usually nine days after their fall before they are found on the surface.

In Holland ** in like manner, they are known as *donder bijlen*.

Scholarly Interpretation

Nor is the belief in the meteoric and supernatural origin of celts confined to Europe. Throughout a great part of Asia the same name of thunderbolts, or lightning-stones, is applied to them. Mr. Tylor§ cites an interesting passage from a Chinese encyclopædia of the seventeenth century respecting lightning-stones, some of which have the shape of a hatchet.

In Japan|| they are known as thunderbolts, or as the battle-axe of Tengu,¶ the Guardian of Heaven; and in Java** as lightning-teeth. The old naturalist Rumph,†† towards the end of the seventeenth century, met with many such in Java and Amboyna, which he says were known as “Dondersteen.”

In Burmah‡‡ and Assam§§ stone adzes are called lightning-stones, and are said to be always to be found on the spot where a thunderbolt has fallen, provided it is dug for, three years afterwards. When reduced to powder they are an infallible specific for ophthalmia. They||| also render those who carry them invulnerable, and possess other valuable properties.

Among the Malays¶¶ the same idea of the celestial origin of these stones prevails; while in China they are revered as relics of long deceased ancestors.

It is the same in Western Africa.* Mr. Bowen, a missionary, states that there also the stones, or thunderbolts, which Saugo, the Thunder God, casts down from heaven, are preserved as sacred relics. In appearance they are identical with the stone hatchets picked up in the fields of America.

There are two* deductions which may readily be drawn from the facts just stated; first, that in nearly all, if not indeed in all parts of

* See also Tylor, *l.c.*, p. 228.

the globe which are now civilized, there was a period when the use of stone implements prevailed; and, secondly, that this period is so remote, that what were then the common implements of every-day life have now for centuries been regarded with superstitious reverence, or as being in some sense of celestial origin, and not the work of man's hands.

John Evans, *Ancient Stone Implements Weapons and Ornaments Of Great Britain* (London: Longman, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1872), pp. 53, 55—56 – citing Edward B Tyler, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilisations* (1865)

RESEARCHES
INTO THE
EARLY HISTORY OF MANKIND
AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF CIVILIZATION.
BY EDWARD B. TYLER
AUTHOR OF "PRIMITIVE SOCIETY"
SECOND EDITION.
LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, LANEWAY STREET.
1886.

AUGUST, 1897.

VOL. I. No. 1.



Bulletin of the Liverpool Museums

Under the City Council.

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Edited by H. O. Forbes, LL.D., Director of Museums.

LIVERPOOL:
THE FREE PUBLIC MUSEUMS;
HENRY YOUNG & SONS, 12, SOUTH CASTLE STREET,
AND 23, PARKER STREET.
ISSUED 4th AUGUST.

forms figured, in the *Dansator* as an early

3. **West African Masks.**—These masks are cut out of solid soft wood, with the face coated with a layer of whitening, except the eyebrows which are black, and the lips which are red. An elaborately carved coiffure, coloured black, surmounts the face, and in two of the specimens, it is continued under the chin. On the top of the masks are holes for the insertion of ornaments of flowers or feathers. They were attached to the wearer by grass cords, the perforations for which are visible behind.



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

Fig. 1. (Presented by Mr. A. Ridyard) was obtained at Kopa, Sette Kama. Its dimensions are 12½ inches high by 7½ broad, the face measuring 8½ by 6½ inches.
Fig. 2. (Presented by Mr. S. Toby) came from the French Congo State. It measures 13½ inches in height by 8½ in breadth, the face being 7½ by 6½ inches. The lips remain of the natural colour of the wood.

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BULLETIN OF THE LIVERPOOL MUSEUMS.



FIG. 3.

Fig. 3. (Collected by Mr. J. C. Harrison) is also from Sette Kama. It has on the forehead a black lozenge, or tribal mark, in relief, on which four smaller ones are carved. This mask, which measures 9½ inches in height by 5½ in width, has a less extensive and elaborate coiffure, there being only a slightly rounded elevation (coloured black), representing a short-cropped crown of hair; but the portions of a series of wooden pegs indicate that the mask was surrounded by some additional ornamentation.

As to the ceremonies in which these objects were used, the donors have, so far, been unable to obtain any information except that they are entirely prohibited to women. The intrusion or prying into these rites by women, or even their chance encounter with the wearer of such a mask, would have to be expiated by death.

'Medicine' at the Museums.—It may not be without interest, from a Folk-lore point of view, to place on record that but a few days ago, an Irish lad suffering badly from scrofulous sores, was brought to the Mayer Museum by his parents, who earnestly besought the authorities that they might be allowed to touch the child's neck with an Irish Stone Celt, exhibited in one of the cases. It was unavailing to try and persuade the deluded and superstitious couple, that no possible good could follow such an application. As their faith in the efficacy of the Stone could not be shaken, and they were loth to go away without being allowed to try this, in their belief, unfailing remedy, opposition was finally, and not without some hesitation, withdrawn, and the ancient implement placed in their hands. After the operation the parents departed happy, grateful, and in the most perfect confidence that their child would be healed, and not without expressions of surprise that so great a boon had been conferred on them without the fee, which they were prepared, and that very gladly, to pay.

Arnold Ridyard (1851-1924), Chief Engineer with Elder Dempsters
©National Museums Liverpool, World Museum



Interpretive Context

'Kroo Boys' and Liverpool Museum

Malapterurus electricus.—Numerous specimens of this interesting fish have now been alive in the Aquarium tanks, during the past two years. The great difficulty in obtaining specimens lies in their transportation. Being inhabitants of fresh water, and of a tropical climate, they require special attention as the ship in which they are being brought approaches our latitude, as well as frequent changes of pure and well aerated water, which is not always to be obtained from a ship's tanks. Thanks, however, to the indefatigable care and attention, kept up for the many weeks of the long voyage from West Africa, by Mr. A. Ridyard, the chief engineer of the 'Niger,' one of Messrs. Elder, Dempster & Co.'s large fleet of steamers, we have had a regular supply of Electric-fishes in the Aquarium during all that time. We have gratefully to acknowledge the lively interest taken by Mr. A. L. Jones, and the other members of the firm, who have most liberally carried, freight free, anything coming for the Museums, and given every encouragement to the officers of their vessels to aid the Institution whenever it has been possible compatibly with the exigencies of the service.



Alice Seeley Harris Archive, Bodleian Library
MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 17 / B7 (Box 7)

Kroo boys feeding on a West African steamer.

The specimens we have received—most of them about 6 or 7 inches long—have rarely, though in excellent health, grown much after their arrival; yet in their native state they attain to a considerable size. One individual, now in the Derby Museum, which died, *en route* last year, measures two feet four inches in length, and weighs about ten pounds, which, according to Kroo boys interrogated at the Museum, is not one of the largest. On the Nana Kroo River they give to the Electric-fish the name of 'Ntobo.' It lives in the mud, and is caught easily by baiting a hook with the fleshy exterior of the palm-nut (*Elais guineensis*) of which it appears to be fond, and of which it will eat, sparingly, on board ship during transport. The natives of West Africa dread to enter the rivers in which the *Melapterurus* abounds, as they allege that the shock, from a full grown specimen, will often prove fatal.

It is not surprising to find that the fish, whose power is so incomprehensible, and alarming power is latent in this fish has been turned to account by the 'Medicine Man.' According to the Kroo-men it is an old sorceress who first obtains the 'power' from the fish by cooking it with various ingredients of her pharmacopeia. From her the 'Juju-man' obtains it, by partaking of her brew, but he must never disclose, under pain of the medicine failing at the critical period, the name of the woman under whose incantations it has been prepared. Before going forth to war, men are made strong and brave, either by being rubbed by the Juju-man with the Sorceress' Medicine; or, by holding under his direction a fish in each hand till it dies, when the 'true' will be found to have entered into them, and rendered them irresistible, and immune to harm from any flying missile.

Liverpool Museum and Conceptions of Race

African section of Mayer Museum [Anthropological galleries] and Mammalian Gallery, Liverpool Museum, from *Fifty-First Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Museums of the City of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1904)

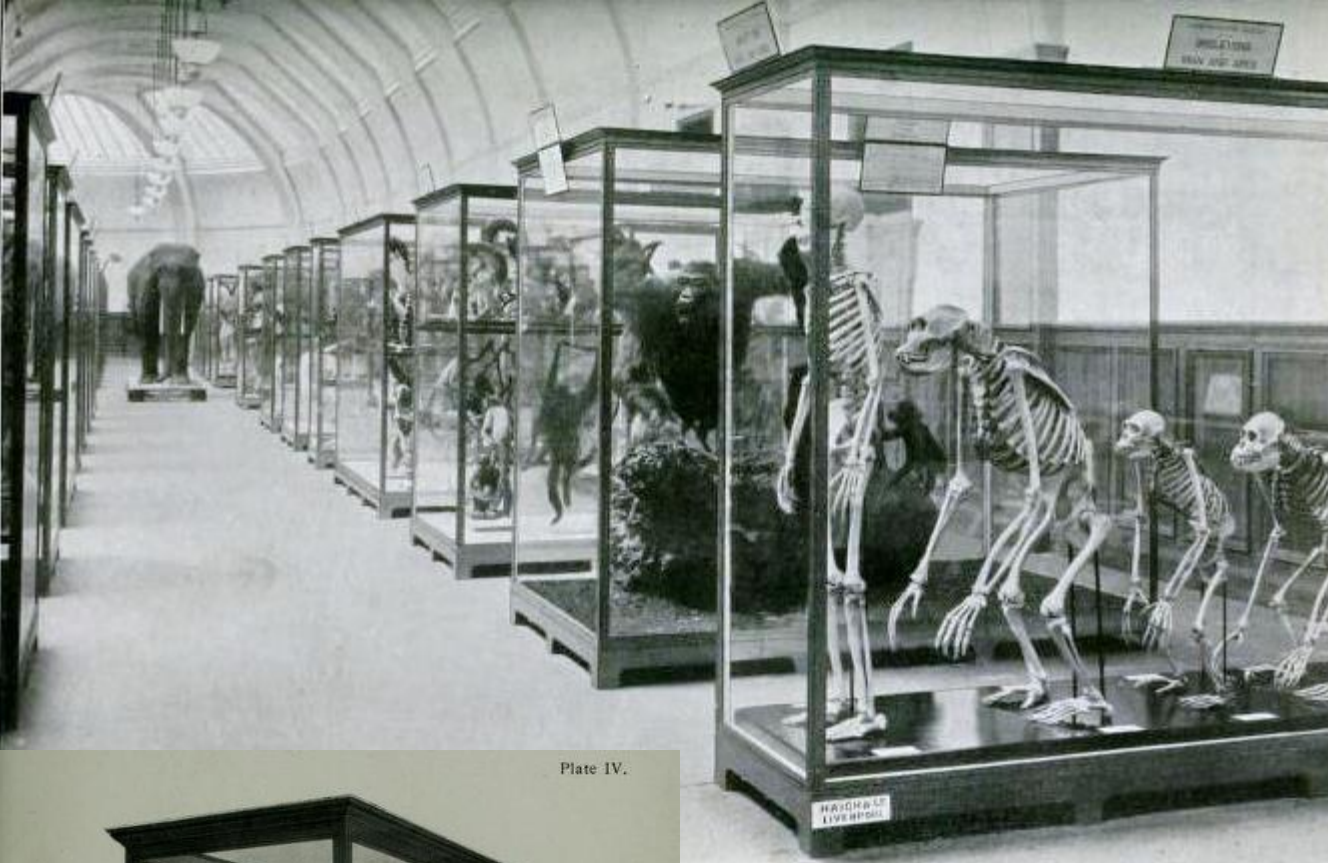


Plate IV.



“The Biological series falls into logical sequence with the Anthropological exhibits ... the series will commence with the highest animal forms in their culmination in Man, as exemplified in ... handiwork [of] the three great ethnic divisions of the globe, namely, the Caucasian (white), the Mongolian (yellow), and the Melanian (black) Races.”

- *Forty-Ninth Annual Report of the ... Museums ... of Liverpool* (1902), pp. 36, 55.

Liverpool Museum and Conceptions of Race: Liverpool Museum as 'Contact Zone'

“It is gratifying to mention the admission, year after year, of **streams of German and Scandinavian emigrants, who after seeing their packages piled up at the railway station, seem to pass immediately to the museum.** In the midst of the distractions of the most important crisis of their lives, these strong-hearted men and women find time and inclination to increase their stock of knowledge; and, though they are unable to understand the explanatory labels, their conduct strikingly indicates respect towards the institution and its purpose.”

- Henry H Higgins (Liverpool museum committee member, donor and curator), 'Museums of Natural History,' *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1884), pp. 186–187.

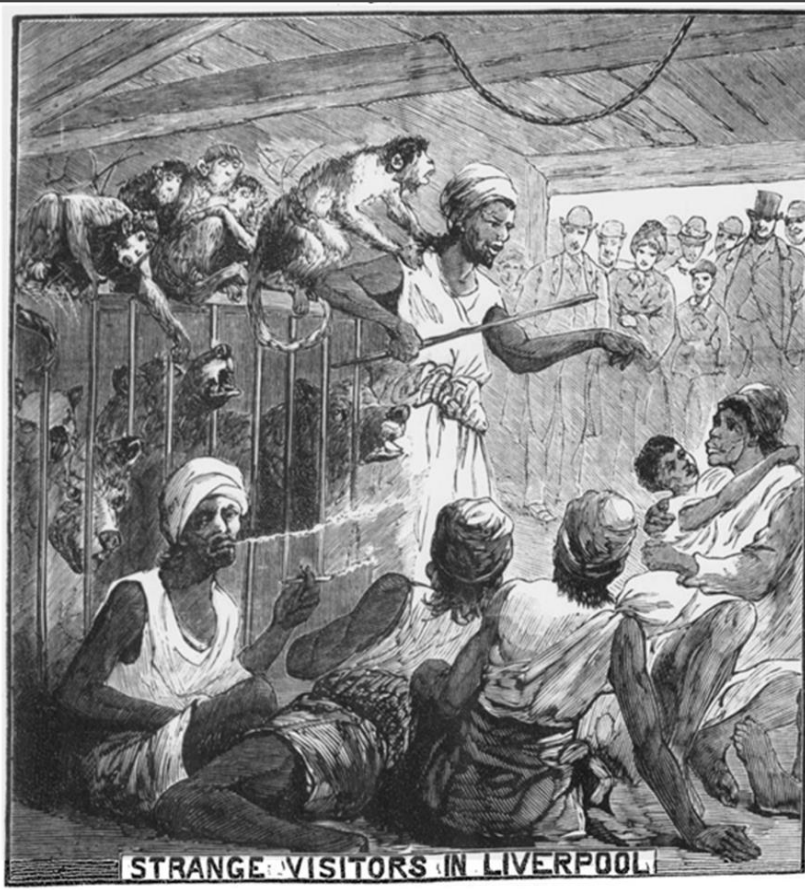
“ ... the class of people met ... [are] **mostly emigrants** ... [who] were apparently interested in what they saw.”

- 'Museums and the Public: An Outsider's View [From the *Liverpool Mercury*],' *Museums Journal* (Vol. 2, No. 9, March 1903), p. 267.

Liverpool as 'Contact Zone'

Victorian Liverpool resembled “what social scientists would now call a ‘**diaspora space**’: a **contact zone** between ethnic groups with differing needs and intentions as transients, sojourners or settlers (categories that were no[t] mutually exclusive).”

- John Belchem and Donald M. MacRaild, ‘Cosmopolitan Liverpool,’ in Belchem, ed., *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character & History* (Liverpool, 2006), p. 311.



Russian Jews being examined by a doctor before emigration from Liverpool, *The Graphic*, November 21 1891; ‘Stranger Visitors in Liverpool,’ *Illustrated Police News*, July 11 1885, p. 1.

Museums and Touch

“Mr W. Rathbone rose and said ... he was aware of that objections might be raised to [opening Liverpool Royal (Institution to the public)], ... arising from **the apprehension of mischief from the too prevalent habit of our countrymen of examining objects of curiosity through the medium of their fingers.**”

- ‘Liverpool Royal Institution,’ *Liverpool Mercury*, February 17 1826, p. 3.

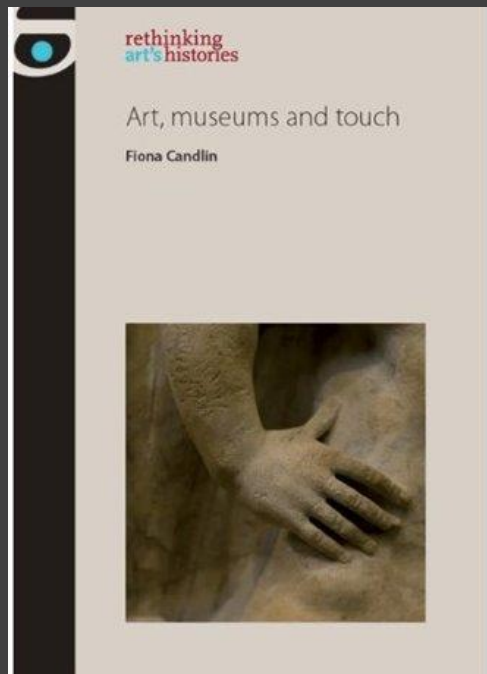
“[Visitors] do not belong to any class of society in particular. A large proportion belong to the **operative classes**, and of these again many are youths in their apprenticeship. The advantage to these which [the museum] presents would be difficult to over-estimate, and the effect is **beginning already to tell in a marked manner upon their conduct.** For some time after the [museums’] opening , before the system of its organisation was fully understood, a **slight degree of disorder and irregularity was perceptible. Individuals came direct from their occupations, with unwashed hands and negligent attire. To leave no excuse for this conduct, the Committee provided lavatories, which were for a time useful, and answered their purpose. The necessity for them has now almost entirely passed away.**”“

- *Report of the Library and Museum Committee of the Town Council of the Borough of Liverpool* (Robert H. Fraser: Liverpool, 1853), pp. 6-7

'Medicine' at the Museums.—It may not be without interest, from a Folk-lore point of view, to place on record that but a few days ago, an Irish lad suffering badly from scrofulous sores, was brought to the Mayer Museum by his parents, who earnestly besought the authorities that they might be allowed to touch the child's neck with an Irish Stone Celt, exhibited in one of the cases. It was unavailing to try and persuade the deluded and superstitious couple, that no possible good could follow such an application. As their faith in the efficacy of the Stone could not be shaken, and they were loth to go away without being allowed to try this, in their belief, unfailing remedy, opposition was finally, and not without some hesitation, withdrawn, and the ancient implement placed in their hands. After the operation the parents departed happy, grateful, and in the most perfect confidence that their child would be healed, and not without expressions of surprise that so great a boon had been conferred on them without the fee, which they were prepared, and that very gladly, to pay.

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Fiona Candlin on Museums and Touch



- Regulations on visitors touching artefacts only introduced when museums began to freely admit *all* members of the public in 19th century
- Prior to this, touch congruent to 18th-century museums' enlightenment ideals
- Victorian museums entered a different 'sensory regime' in which certain types of touch, and certain people's touch, were now off-limits.
- Working-class touch 'associated with damage,' 'a lack of common sense' and poor hygiene

A photograph of a museum wall. The wall is a textured, teal-colored surface. On the left side, there is a white rectangular sign with black text that reads "Please do not touch the objects". To the right of the sign, there is a large, dark, smudged footprint on the wall, which appears to be a handprint. The footprint is positioned as if it was made by someone reaching out to touch the sign.

Please do not
touch the
objects

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Erik Schepers
Civil
Disobedience
in the British
Museum,
2016