

**‘Honest and Fair’ or ‘Passive and Shallow’: Representations of
Victorian Women in Contemporary Museum Displays in the
Yorkshire and Humber Region**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own, except where work which has formed part of jointly-authored publications has been included. The contribution of the candidate and the other authors to this work has been explicitly indicated below. The candidate confirms that appropriate credit has been given within the thesis where reference has been made to the work of others.

Jack Gann and Lauren Padgett, 'Understanding the Victorians through Museum Display', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 2018, Vol 23, No. 2, 170 – 186.

The abstract, introduction, sections 1, 2, 3 and 6 of the above article were jointly written by Lauren Padgett and Jack Gann, so contain a mixture of ideas and contributions from both authors, informed by our individual PhD research projects. Some ideas and theory had been adapted from Part I: Introduction and Methods of this thesis, specifically the project rationale and literature review and references Boyd and McWilliam's concept of 'Victorianisms', Gardiner's concept of 'theme-park Victoriana' and the New Museology Movement.

The majority of section 4 of the article was written by Gann, based on his doctoral research of the Victorian street-scene in museums. Both Padgett and Gann co-wrote the concluding paragraph of this section, which is based on my research. Some ideas and theory had been adapted from Part I: Introduction and Methods of this thesis, specifically the project rationale and literature review. Focus was on Women in Heritage and Museums (WHAM!). Figure 2 in the article for this section was provided by Padgett and taken as part of this PhD research fieldwork.

The majority of section 5 was written by Padgett, drawing on this PhD research. Some ideas and theory had been adapted from Part I: Introduction and Methods of this thesis, specifically the project rationale and literature review sections of it. Focus was on Barbara Clark Smith's and Gaby Porter's research, representations of Queen Victoria in museum displays and the East End Women's Museum. The case study of the Widow Washer Woman's House in the article is an exhibit that is analysed as part of this PhD project. The analysis of the exhibit is adapted from Part II: Case Study Analysis, Findings and Discussion. Both Padgett and Gann co-wrote the concluding paragraph of this section based on their collective research.

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Abstract

This thesis uniquely investigates representations of Victorian women in contemporary museum displays within the Yorkshire and Humber region. It uses museum and heritage studies, feminist and gender studies, and Victorian studies as overarching disciplines and frameworks. Through the application of gender and feminist discourses and analysis to museums since the 1980s, previous studies have revealed that women in museum displays, when present at all, tend to be under- and mis-represented women. This project investigates how twenty-first-century museum displays represent Victorian women by analysing displays, exhibitions and galleries at case study museum sites and interviewing museum professionals. This two-pronged approach not only examines representations of Victorian women in contemporary museum displays, but brings to light curatorial decisions and issues about representing Victorian women in museum displays and collections. This project establishes whether the representations of Victorian women in museum displays are 'honest and fair'¹ or 'shallow and passive'² and recommends practical strategies, methods and ways in which Victorian women can be represented in a more 'honest and fair' way.

¹ The phrase 'honest and fair' comes from an article by Elizabeth Carnegie which explored women in museum, particularly as subjects of exhibitions. See Elizabeth Carnegie, 'Trying to be an Honest Woman: Making Women's Histories', in *Making Histories in Museums*, ed. by Gaynor Kavanagh (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), pp. 54 – 65 (p. 64).

² The words 'shallow' and 'passive' come from Gaby Porter's study of representations of women in British museums. She used the phrase to specifically describe the roles of women as represented in museums; however, it is used here to describe representations of women generally. See Gaby Porter, 'Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums', in *Theorizing Museums*, ed. by Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), pp.105 – 126 (p. 110).

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Preface

This preface will provide an insight into the personal motivation behind this doctoral project. The project combined my passion for the Victorian period, women's history, and museums. These interests were fostered by my academic studies and a brief but varied career in museums. My undergraduate studies, for a BA Honours degree in English and History (awarded in 2011), developed these interests through the subjects I studied – which ranged from Victorian working women and Victorian literature to museums, heritage and public history. As part of my studies, in 2010 I undertook a work placement with Bradford Museums and Galleries. After my placement, I was invited to become a casual museum assistant with Bradford Museums and Galleries, which started my museum career. While working for Bradford Museums until 2014, I had various roles across different museum sites whilst continuing my studies to gain my undergraduate degree, followed by a postgraduate degree, a MA in Museum Studies (awarded in 2013). From 2013, I also worked at The Peace Museum in Bradford until this doctoral project commenced in October 2014. This was made possible by a PhD studentship awarded by Leeds Trinity University and the Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies. It was a chance conversation whilst curating an exhibition for Bradford Museums and a guilty conscience that inspired this specific doctoral research.

When I was working for Bradford Museums, I was presented with the opportunity to co-curate an exhibition as part of my professional development. The exhibition had to focus on the local furniture manufacturing company, Christopher Pratt and Sons. The company was founded in 1845 by Christopher Pratt and was based in Bradford for nearly 160 years and run by several generations of the Pratt family until business was later sold and subsequently relocated to Leeds in 2003. It was a wonderful opportunity to curate a large-scale temporary exhibition, displayed at Bradford Industrial Museum from December 2012 to April 2013.³ As successful as the exhibition was, I had one regret. A few weeks before the exhibition launch, the Pratt family told me that Christopher Pratt would remain at the business premises late into the night dealing with orders and that his wife, Jane, would stay to help.

³ 'Christopher Pratt and Sons: Bradford Cabinet Makers, Upholsterers & Decorators', *Bradford Museums and Galleries* <<http://www.bradfordmuseums.org/whats-on/christopher-pratt-sons-bradford-cabinet-makers-upholsterers-decorators>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

When it got too dark to continue working, she would light candles and hold them close to what her husband needed to see. Jane also managed the upholstery department and helped to balance the books. This struck a chord with me. I realised that while I had been planning and designing the exhibition, I had foolishly overlooked the role that female family members had in the business, directly or indirectly. The exhibition's message truly was 'Christopher Pratt and Sons', sidelining the Pratt mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters. Some representations of women were present in the exhibition – albeit nominal and marginal – through the photographs of garden parties showing family life, photographs of female employees in the workshop constructing WW1 sea-planes and flying boats, and the exhibited wedding and mourning dresses belonging to Pratt women.

It was too late to incorporate this new information as exhibition plans were firmly in place. I believe that women could have had, and should have had, a bigger role and presence in this exhibition. The exhibition's narrative of an impoverished boy who built a furniture empire spanning across two centuries and several generations was, it seemed to me, at best incomplete and at worse fraudulent, without the acknowledgment of Jane's support. On reflection, if there had been an opportunity to include Jane in light of the new information, what would that inclusion have looked like? Would I have represented her as the Victorian ideal wife and stereotypical 'helpmeet' to her husband? Or would I have challenged this stereotype, representing her as an equal entrepreneur, working alongside her husband as a key cog in the business?⁴

When a doctoral studentship investigating 'The Victorians and the contemporary heritage industry' was advertised at Leeds Trinity University, I applied without hesitation. When writing my project proposal, I only had one idea in mind: the

⁴ A parallel can be seen between the imagined image of Jane assisting Christopher Pratt and the grocer's wife and grocer examining the accounts in Charles Green's painting *Something Wrong Somewhere* (1868) (see Figure 1, p. 170). Victorian paintings, however, traditionally tended to represent daughters and wives less as autonomous and equal figures, and more as helpmeets to their fathers and husbands, popularised and idealised in Coventry Patmore's poem 'The Angel in the House' (published in four instalments between 1854 and 1862). More recently, historians such as Alison Kay with her publication *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship. Enterprise, Home and Household in London, c. 1800-1870*, have revised nineteenth-century women's business history by demonstrating female agency within the business world. See Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, ed. by Henry Morley (London: Cassell & Company, Limited, 1891) <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4099/4099-h/4099-h.htm>> [accessed 27 October 2015]; Alison Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship. Enterprise, Home and Household in London, c. 1800-1870* (London: Routledge, 2009).

representation of Victorian women in contemporary museum displays. I saw this as an opportunity to not only pursue my academic interests further, but to also redeem myself. And, more importantly, a chance to help museums give recognition to Jane Pratt and the many other women like her who are consciously or subconsciously excluded, sidelined or inadequately represented in museums displays.

Part I: Introduction and Methods

(i) Project Rationale

This section will explore the project's rationale. It will justify a project exploring representations of Victorian women in museum displays in the Yorkshire and the Humber region as not only original but useful, worthwhile, and much needed. It will also explain why the particular parameters of the research project were chosen and demonstrate how the project builds on past and recent studies, naturally drawing on and adding to a recent increasing interest in academia and museums into Victorian women.

This research project and, thus, the thesis's title, *'Honest and Fair' or 'Passive and Shallow': Representations of Victorian Women in Contemporary Museum Displays in the Yorkshire and Humber Region*, can be broken down to understand its meaning, purpose and function in more detail. Why explore representations of Victorian women in contemporary museum displays? What is meant by 'honest and fair' and 'passive and shallow'? Today's museum displays about Victorian women still fall foul of not representing Victorian women's histories adequately and effectively, despite there being opportunities for representations in museum displays to be more rigorous and truthful. This research project explores how and why Victorian women's histories are textually and visually represented the way it is in contemporary case study museum displays, and makes recommendations for museum displays to represent Victorian women's history in more rigorous and nuanced ways. The phrase 'honest and fair' was used by Elizabeth Carnegie in her reflective chapter about 'collecting, displaying and communicating women's history'.⁵ Carnegie encouragingly pointed out that 'every museum has objects which were used, made, bought by or depict women which can be interpreted in ways which allow honest and fair appraisals of women's roles in society'.⁶ The words 'shallow' and 'passive' were used by Gaby Porter to describe how museums represent the roles of women.⁷ The essay that they were used in specifically, as well as Porter's wider research, was radical and forward-thinking as it applied poststructuralism and feminist theory to analysis representations of women in museum displays at a time when the third wave of feminism was prompting only tentative steps towards

⁵ Carnegie, 'Trying to be an Honest Woman: Making Women's Histories', p. 54.

⁶ Carnegie, 'Trying to be an Honest Woman: Making Women's Histories', p. 64.

⁷ Porter, 'Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums', p. 110.

analysing the museum and heritage industry. In the context of this research project and thesis, there are positioned as binary opposites with 'honest and fair' used to compass the type of representations museums should be striving to create, make and employ in their displays and 'shallow and passive' in used to describe the type of representations museums should move away from and avoid in their displays, as indicated in past studies and, indeed, this research. The reading and research undertaken, and subsequent analysis and conclusions made, allowed the following research questions to be explored, investigated and ultimately answered:

- (1) How are Victorian women represented in contemporary museum displays?
- (2) Why are Victorian women represented in this way?
- (3) What challenges or barriers do contemporary museums face when representing Victorian women in museum displays?
- (4) What can be done to include/improve representations of Victorian women in contemporary museum displays?

These research questions will be posed again later alongside other methodological approaches and reasonings. Meanwhile, other specificities of certain aspects of the research project will be explained in detail.

The Victorian focus of this research project makes it unique, as no previous studies have specifically investigated representations of Victorian women in museum displays. However, several past studies have explored representations of women in specific museum types and their case study museums often had a Victorian focus. For example, Andrea Taziker investigated the portrayal of women in industrial museums⁸ while Gaby Porter explored gender bias in representations of work in history museums.⁹ Both provided an analysis of the representations of women in Victorian-themed displays as well as other temporal settings. This research project will build upon and expand this integral and foundational body of research which provides a framework, useful insights and relevant findings.

⁸ Andrea Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', in *Women in Industry and Technology from Prehistory to the Present Day: Current Research and the Museum Experience*, ed. by Amanda Devonshire and Barbara Wood (London: Museum of London, 1996), pp. 163 – 196.

⁹ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums', *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*, 3.1 (1990) 70 – 83
<http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/3.1/Porter.html> [accessed 11 November 2014].

The Victorian period – with its abundance of tangible material culture and rich history of social strife and shifts, cultural changes, industrial improvement, political progression, and economic expansion – has been embraced by the contemporary museum and heritage industry.¹⁰ Many museums are either fully immersed in the Victorian context, have a Victorian theme in one or more galleries, or represent an element of the Victorian past. Even with this temporal parameter to the research project, there is still a wide range of potential case study museum displays, due to the dominance of the Victorian past within the museum and heritage industry. As Kelly Boyd and Rohan McWilliam stated, ‘The general public frequently takes comfort in Victoriana and representations of the nineteenth-century past.’¹¹ This public appetite for the Victorian past is not a new craving, but an insatiable hunger that has been rumbling for decades and will no doubt continue, if not intensify. The museum and heritage industry has been, and are today, only too willing to cater for this visitor-consumer demand.

The case studies for this research project will be within the Yorkshire and Humber region, as the Victorian period is ‘one of the richest periods in [Yorkshire’s] history’, and well-represented in the region’s museum and heritage sites.¹² The region experienced urban and industrial expansion in the Victorian period, whilst still retaining coastal and agricultural commerce. The Yorkshire and Humber region’s Victorian textile industry of woollen and worsted, ranging from the cotton industry of Lancashire and the East Midlands’ lace industry, is reflected in numerous museum and heritage sites within the region, such as Leeds Industrial Museum.¹³ The wealth and luxury of the region’s Victorian industrialists and entrepreneurs is displayed in and by such museums as Cliffe Castle Museum in Keighley¹⁴ and the Royal Pump

¹⁰ Several publications provided overviews of the region’s Victorian past: Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London: Penguin Books, repr. 1990); Ian Dewhirst, *Gleanings from Victorian Yorkshire* (Driffield: The Ridings Publishing Company, 1972); Dewhirst, *Yorkshire Through the Years* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd: 1975); and J. R. Thackrah, *Victorian Yorkshire* (Clapham: The Dalesman Publishing Company Ltd, 1979).

¹¹ Kelly Boyd and Rohan McWilliam, ‘Introduction: Rethinking the Victorians’, in *The Victorian Studies Reader*, ed. by Kelly Boyd and Rohan McWilliam (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1 – 48 (p. 35).

¹² Thackrah, *Victorian Yorkshire*, p. 9.

¹³ Thackrah, *Victorian Yorkshire* p. 7.

Armley Mills, housing Leeds Industrial Museum, was once the world’s largest woollen mill. See ‘Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills’, *Leeds Museums & Galleries* <<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries/Pages/armleymills.aspx>> [accessed 5 October 2015].

¹⁴ Cliffe Castle Museum, a Victorian mansion built by textile industrialist Henry Butterfield, has restored Victorian rooms. See ‘Cliffe Castle – Visitor Information’, *Bradford Museums and Galleries* <<http://www.bradfordmuseums.org/venues/cliffe-castle-museum>> [accessed 5 October 2015].

Room in Harrogate.¹⁵ In contrast, the poverty and deprivation of the Victorian working classes in the region's slums, backstreets, and back-to-back houses¹⁶ is also represented in museum and heritage sites, such as Thackray Medical Museum, Leeds.¹⁷

The contemporary museum and heritage industry within this region differ from that of others – not just in terms of the history which museum and heritage sites represent, but with regards to financial support and governance. There has been much debate, particularly within the Museums Association, about a North-South divide in terms of funding and support, with the Northern heritage and cultural sector neglected compared to that of the Southern regions, especially the city of London.¹⁸ The region may not have as many national museums as others or attract the most museum visitors, but it has a wide variety of museums in terms of governance (from several national museums, many local authority museums and numerous independent museums), types and themes (from historical homes to industrial history to literary heritage). Many of these offer localised and regional historical perspectives as opposed to national narratives.

One may ask if the representation of Victorian women, or women in general, in contemporary museum displays requires investigation. In 1994, Robert Sullivan controversially stated that 'museums are generally racist and sexist institutions', not 'maliciously' but 'thoughtlessly' or subconsciously.¹⁹ Previous research in the mid-to-late 1980s and throughout the 1990s of representations of women and gender in museums demonstrated that, when present, representations of women were

¹⁵ The Royal Pump Room Museum, a former nineteenth-century water pump house, represents the town's popularity with affluent people wanting to sample the sulphur water for remedial purposes in the Georgian and Victorian period. See 'The Royal Pump Room Museum', *Visit Harrogate* <<http://www.visittharrogate.co.uk/things-to-do/royal-pump-room-museum-p1203181>> [accessed 5 October 2015].

¹⁶ Thackrah, *Victorian Yorkshire*, p. 10.

¹⁷ Thackray Medical Museum's *Leeds 1842* gallery contextualises the health risks for people living in the filthy, over-crowded streets of nineteenth-century Leeds.

'Leeds 1842', *Thackray Medical Museum* <<http://www.thackraymedicalmuseum.co.uk/visit/exhibitions/leeds-1842/>> [accessed 5 October 2015].

¹⁸ Rebecca Atkinson, 'Who will benefit from the Northern Powerhouse?', *Museums Association* <<http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/museums-journal-blog/26052015-northern-powerhouse>> [accessed 9 October 2015].

¹⁹ Robert Sullivan, 'Ethics and Consciences of Museums', in *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums*, ed. by Jane R. Glaser and Artemis A. Zenetou (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), pp. 100 – 107 (p. 100).

commonly 'passive and shallow', 'undeveloped'²⁰ and 'sidelined'.²¹ More recent studies since 2000 found discrepancies between how men and women are represented in displays. In 2010, Barbara Clark Smith declared that museums are gender blind as a result of an 'invidiously gendered society'.²² As museums are extensions of society, they therefore perpetuate (on a subconscious level) this gender blindness, societal sexism, and androcentricity. Therefore, the representation of women in museum displays requires continuing examination and exploration as gender inequality is an ongoing issue.

Contemporary museums have a social responsibility to represent women in a comprehensive, rounded and equal way. The role of the twenty-first-century museum is dramatically different from that of Victorian museums, which were considered 'a powerful antidote to the gin palace'²³ for the Victorian working-classes, and even from that of the 'male, pale and stale' museums of the 1980s.²⁴ According to Richard Sandell, contemporary museums have 'the potential to contribute towards the combating of social inequality and a responsibility to do so'.²⁵ Museums are not just repositories of objects, knowledge and history, but potential platforms for change and exchange that can challenge pre-conceived ideas and misconceptions, tackle inequalities, and correct inaccuracies. Museums should be accepting and responding to this social responsibility and curing themselves of the gender

²⁰ As previously stated, the phrase 'passive and shallow' is taken from Porter's 1996 study, as is the word 'undeveloped'.

Porter, 'Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums', p. 110.

²¹ The word 'sidelined' was used by Marie Louise Stig Sørensen to describe the representation of women's history in archaeological displays. See Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, 'Archaeology, Gender and the Museum', in *Making Early Histories in Museums*, ed. by Nick Merriman (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), pp. 136 – 150 (p. 141).

²² Barbara Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', in *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, ed. by Amy K. Levin (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 65 – 70 (p. 67).

²³ Sir Henry Cole, Director of the South Kensington Museum (later renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum) said this in 1857 about its extended evening opening hours, allowing the working-class to visit after work. It illustrates the Victorian belief that museums could socially, culturally and intellectually educate and improve the lower classes as a more appropriate past-time/leisure activity. See Mark Goodwin, 'Objects, Belief and Power in Mid-Victorian England: The Origins of the Victoria and Albert Museum', in *Objects of Knowledge*, vol. I, ed. by Susan Pearce (London: Athlone Press Ltd, 1990), pp. 9 – 49 (p. 28).

²⁴ Prior to the New Museology Movement, which emerged in the 1970s and was popularised in the 1990s (which, in theory, saw museums become more inclusive), museums tended to exhibit white, male, middle and upper-class history, hence the phrase 'pale, male and stale'.

²⁵ Richard Sandell, 'Museums and the Combating of Social Inequality, Roles, Responsibilities, Resistance', in *Museums, Society and Inequality*, ed. by Richard Sandell (Oxon: Routledge, 2002), pp. 3 – 23 (p. 3).

blindness diagnosed by Clark Smith by challenging gender stereotypes and boundaries, rewriting misogynistic interpretive text, and bringing women out from the background and into the forefront. Hilde Hein, who has appealed for a feminist perspective in museums, also promoted social responsibility in terms of their representation. Hein stated that,

Museums are answerable . . . for (1) their choices of what to represent, including the means by which they do so; (2) their non-representations that add up to exclusions, whether or not intentional, and, most problematically, (3) what they do not choose to – but nevertheless do – represent, by indirect means.²⁶

Hein concluded that museums ‘are training us to think, see, understand, or imagine the universe in one or more specific ways.’²⁷ If one were to think about this in terms of representations of women, if museums deliberately or unintentionally omit women’s history or only represent women’s history and experiences in inaccurate or stereotypical ways, then what is that doing for our education? Are we being trained by museums to see the universe as patriarchal, androcentric and misogynistic, or that a woman’s role in it is, at best, peripheral or flitting, or at worse, invisible or insignificant?

Many contemporary museums strive to be inclusive and culturally accessible by catering for groups, communities, and individuals traditionally excluded in museums, such as people with disabilities, LGBTQ* communities and ethnic minority groups.²⁸ However, even with current progress by contemporary museums representing these groups, many are overlooking women. Ironically, UK population figures show that females outnumber males, while museum visitor data also shows that female visitors outnumber male visitors, visitors with disabilities and those from

²⁶ Hilde Hein, ‘The Responsibility of Representation: A Feminist Perspective’ in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Janet Marstine (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 112- 126 (p. 118).

²⁷ Hein, ‘The Responsibility of Representation: A Feminist Perspective’, p. 123.

²⁸ Janice Majewski and Lonnie Bunch’s seminal article ‘The Expanding Definition of Diversity: Accessibility and Disability Culture Issues in Museum Exhibitions’ theorised three tiers of museum access: physical, intellectual, and cultural. Since this article, much work has been done on an academic and practical level to improve cultural access (the representation in museum displays and collections) for not only those with disabilities, but ethnic minority groups and LGBTQ communities. See Janice Majewski and Lonnie Bunch, ‘The Expanding Definition of Diversity: Accessibility and Disability Culture Issues in Museum Exhibitions’, *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 41 (1998), 153 – 160.

an ethnic minority background.²⁹ And yet, many museums still ignore women, include them in displays intermittently or present them inadequately.

An exploration of the contemporary representation of women in the Victorian period is fruitful because it was a time of intense variety and change when patriarchal and societal values about gender roles were in tension with the lived experience of many women. The myths of Victorian 'separate gender spheres', the 'cult of domesticity' and the angel-in-the-house ideology have become engrained in popular culture as universal reality for all Victorian women, rather than the middle-class ideals that they were.³⁰ In reality, as stated by Katie Milestone and Anneke Meyer,

Crudely, middle-class women were increasingly forced into the private realm whilst working-class women worked in factories, sweatshops or as street traders or prostitutes.³¹

Lydia Murdoch's publication *The Daily Life of Victorian Women* draws out the variances and variables (such as 'class, religion, race, age, and locality')³² in the

²⁹ The table below compares population and museum visitor figures for females, people who identified themselves as disabled, people belonging to a non-white ethnic group, and LGBTQ communities.

	Female	Disabled	Non-white ethnicity	LGBTQ
Population figures	UK - 50.95% (32.2 million) [1]	UK - 19% (12 million) [2]	England & Wales - 14% (7.7 million) [3]	UK - 1.6% [4]
Museum visitor figures [5]	59%	5%	5%	No data

[1] Office for National Statistics (ONS), '2011 Census: Population Estimates for the United Kingdom, 27 March 2011', <<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/population-and-household-estimates-for-the-united-kingdom/stb-2011-census--population-estimates-for-the-united-kingdom.html>> [accessed 28 July 2015].

[2] Department of Work and Pensions, 'Family Resources Survey: Financial Year 2013/14', June 2015, p. 40,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/437481/family-resources-survey-2013-14.pdf> [accessed 29 September 2015].

[3] ONS, 'Figure 3: Ethnic groups by English regions and Wales, 2011'

<<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/chd-en-figure-3.xls>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

[4] ONS, 'Integrated Household Survey, January to December 2013: Experimental Statistics', October 2014, p. 2, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_379565.pdf> [accessed 29 September 2015].

[5] The Arts Council, 'Renaissance Hub Museum Exit Survey Financial year 2011 - 2012', pp. 10, 13 and 14, <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Renaissance_exit_survey_report_2011-12.pdf> [accessed 29 September 2015].

³⁰ Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36.2 (June 1993), pp. 383 – 414 (pp. 383 – 384). Vickery's polemic article debated the complexities of using the separate spheres as a category or framework for nineteenth-century women's history and argued that 'new categories and new concepts' are needed to 'map the breadth and boundaries of female experience' (p. 413).

³¹ Katie Milestone and Anneke Meyer (ed.), *Gender and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p. 190.

experiences of Victorian women, contesting a monolithic experience; 'no one uniform life experience for Victorian women existed.'³³ Murdoch points out the contradiction of 'the ideal of separate spheres' which became 'widespread amongst the working classes' even though 'working-class women could not fully devote themselves to their homes and families because of their need to work for wages.'³⁴ To Murdoch, 'The binary division of life's actions into public and private spheres oversimplifies the many ways in which women actively engaged the worlds beyond their homes.'³⁵ But how are these Victorian women's histories collected, interpreted and displayed by museums?

Turning to film studies, 'verisimilitude' is a useful concept to unpack and understand this perceived history or a cultural construct of history versus reality. Christine Gledhill stated that:

Verisimilitude. . . refers not to what may or may not actually be the case but rather to what the dominant culture believes to be the case, to what is generally accepted as credible, suitable, proper.³⁶

It is 'normative perceptions of reality – what is generally accepted to be so'.³⁷ It does not need to be factually real, accurate or authentic, but relies on a mutual cultural understanding or acceptance of its *realness*. Steve Neale, drawing on the work of Tzvetan Todorov, identified and defined two types of verisimilitudes: cultural verisimilitude and generic verisimilitude.³⁸ Cultural verisimilitude, which 'refers us to the norms, mores, and common sense of the social world *outside* the fiction',³⁹ seems most pertinent to this research project. Often the two perpetuate one another as generic verisimilitude becomes part of cultural verisimilitude over time and vice versa. As Neale stated 'the two regimes merge also in public discourse, generic knowledge becoming a form of cultural knowledge, a component of "public

³² Lydia Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO LLC, 2014), p. xviii.

³³ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. xvii.

³⁴ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. xxiv.

³⁵ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. xxv.

³⁶ Christine Gledhill, 'Genre and Gender: The Case of Soap Opera', in *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1997), pp. 337 – 386 (p. 360)

³⁷ Gledhill, 'Genre and Gender: The Case of Soap Opera', in *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, p. 360.

³⁸ Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (Oxon: Routledge, 2000), pp. 32 – 33.

³⁹ Gledhill, 'Genre and Gender: The Case of Soap Opera', p. 360.

opinion.”⁴⁰ Gledhill believed that ‘the demand for a ‘new’ realism from oppositional or emerging groups opens up the contest over the definition of the real and forces changes in the codes of verisimilitude.’⁴¹ However, Gledhill warned that these new changes and ‘new signifiers of the real in their turn solidify into the established codes of cultural verisimilitude and become open to further challenge’.⁴² Gledhill and Neale were considering this concept through the lens of film studies and media studies, respectively, or more broadly, cultural studies. Cultural verisimilitude could be applied to how popular culture and public discourse or opinion views Victorian women. The ‘cult of domesticity’ and ‘separate spheres’ ideology could be considered as markers, signifiers or conventions of the *genre* of Victorian women within cultural verisimilitude. But do museums reiterate this separate sphere narrative and myth by reinforcing and perpetuating this genre or popular culture image of Victorian women in their displays or do they represent Victorian women’s history beyond this misnomer and challenge it, more in line with Murdoch’s complex and multifaceted interpretation of the experience of Victorian women? This is what this study will explore.

The representation of Victorian women in museum displays became an issue for debate in August 2015 with the opening of a new museum in London. Original plans for the local history museum suggested one celebrating East End women’s history, such as the suffragette movement. However, when the museum’s frontage was unveiled, it was no longer a museum about women’s suffrage, but women’s suffering: it was revealed to be the Jack the Ripper Museum.⁴³ The Museum – as it calls itself, one may call it an attraction instead – has been accused of glamourising and sensationalising the murders of Victorian women for commercial profit. The level of protest against the Museum by the general public demonstrated how gender issues in a museum setting are now becoming a public issue, rather than just a niche curatorial or academic concern. It provided an opportunity for the museum and heritage industry to re-think and reconsider more closely and carefully what and how history, particularly women’s history, is represented in their collections and displays.

⁴⁰ Neale, ‘Questions of Genre’, *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2003) pp. 160 – 184 (p. 163).

⁴¹ Gledhill, ‘Genre and Gender: The Case of Soap Opera’, p. 360.

⁴² Gledhill, ‘Genre and Gender: The Case of Soap Opera’, p. 361.

⁴³ Nadia Khomami, ‘Museum billed as celebration of London women opens as Jack the Ripper exhibit’, *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jul/29/museum-billed-as-celebration-of-london-women-opens-as-jack-the-ripper-exhibit>> [accessed 13 September 2016].

Over the past few years, several exhibitions have been specifically curated to present revised versions of Victorian women's history which challenge cultural understanding about Victorian women more generally as well as that of specific Victorian women. Buckingham Palace's 2010 exhibition *Victoria & Albert: Art & Love* utilised modern scholarship to present Queen Victoria in a different light. The exhibition 'challenged the popular image of Victoria – the melancholy widow of 40 years – and revealed her as a passionate and open-minded young woman.'⁴⁴ Dr Lynda Nead's exhibition *The Fallen Woman* at The Foundling Museum (September 2015 – January 2016) 'focused on the myth and reality of the 'fallen woman' in Victorian Britain.'⁴⁵ The Dickens Museum's exhibition *The Other Dickens: Discovering Catherine Dickens* (2016), curated by Professor Lillian Nayder, had the 'aim to debunk a series of myths surrounding the life of Catherine Dickens.'⁴⁶ All three exhibitions offer a revisionist interpretation that rights wrongs and rewrites these specific Victorian women's histories. These exhibitions and the debate around the Ripper attraction are but a few pieces of evidence of the start of a cultural shift in which and how Victorian women's history is represented in museum displays. Thus, a research project, such as this, investigating representations of Victorian women in contemporary museum displays is not only topical, but necessary.

⁴⁴ 'Victoria & Albert: Art & Love', *Royal Collection Trust* <<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/victoria-albert-art-love/the-queens-gallery-buckingham-palace>> [accessed 5 August 2016].

⁴⁵ 'The Fallen Woman', *The Foundling Museum* <<http://foundlingmuseum.org.uk/events/fallen-woman/>> [accessed 5 August 2016].

Lynda Nead has contributed to the fields of feminist art history and social history of the Victorian period, particularly relevant publications include *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) and *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁴⁶ 'The Other Dickens: Discovering Catherine Dickens', *The Dickens Museum* <<http://dickensmuseum.com/blogs/exhibitions/100668038-the-other-dickens-discovering-catherine-dickens>> [accessed 5 August 2016].

The exhibition stems from research undertaken by Nayder, published in the publication *The Other Dickens: A Life of Catherine Hogarth* (2012). The research and subsequent exhibition sought to rehabilitate the character of Catherine, as discussed by Nayder in an article in *The Guardian*. See Lillian Nayder, *The Other Dickens: A Life of Catherine Hogarth* (London: Cornell University Press, 2012); Maeve Kennedy, 'Life of Catherine Dickens to be Celebrated in New Exhibition', *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/03/life-of-catherine-charles-dickens-museum-exhibition-london-wife>> [accessed 28 August 2016].

(ii) Introduction to Theoretical Terrains

This section will explore the theoretical terrains, the academic foundation and grounding for this project, exploring disciplines, research areas and particular studies within them, that proved relevant and germane to this project. This project drew upon and consulted relevant critical literature and academic developments in Museum Studies and Heritage Studies, Feminist Studies and Gender Studies, and Victorian Studies to ground it in these theoretical terrains. This section is by no means an exhaustive review of these studies, but merely an effort to pinpoint some of the key developments within the studies that are relevant to the study of women and gender in museum displays and collections, and therefore critical to this research project. While these areas of scholarship will be addressed separately, there is clearly an overlap between them, due to a common focus on the study and exploration of women's history across these Studies.

Museum Studies and Heritage Studies⁴⁷

Museum Studies and Heritage Studies, which emerged as academic disciplines in the 1960s, were originally considered niche research areas.⁴⁸ Since then, as Sharon Macdonald stated, 'Museum studies has come of age'; the same can be said about Heritage Studies as both have developed from 'unusual and minority subject[s] into the mainstream' through an interdisciplinary approach in recent years.⁴⁹ This approach opened up these disciplines to archaeologists, geographers, art and social historians, and material culture and visual culture researchers, amongst others.⁵⁰ Sandell has in recent years focussed on social

⁴⁷ For the purpose of this section, the term 'museum and heritage studies' and the word 'disciplines' will refer to both museum studies and heritage studies more generally. A specific discipline will be referred to explicitly when a distinction is required or when referring to one discipline in particular.

⁴⁸ The founding of the Department of Museum Studies at University of Leicester in 1966, the first department dedicated to this discipline, allowed museum workers to professionalise and laid the foundation stone for museum studies as an academic discipline. Since then, museum studies has become more academically rigorous and more widely studied. See 'About the School', School of Museum Studies <<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/about-the-school>> [accessed 22 November 2015]; 'The First of its Kind', School of Museum Studies <<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/about-the-school/history-of-x>> [accessed 22 November 2015].

⁴⁹ Sharon Macdonald, 'Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction', *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Sharon Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), pp. 1 – 12.

⁵⁰ It must be acknowledged that there are differences between Museum Studies and Heritage Studies. Museum Studies (or museology) is the study of museums and museum curation, whereas Heritage Studies focusses on heritage institutions more broadly, such as museums, historic homes,

justice and equality in museums.⁵¹ Laurajane Smith, within Heritage Studies, has shaped current thinking by advocating for heritage to be examined and explored not as ‘a “thing”, tangible places or objects but as a ‘cultural and social process’,⁵² ‘reflecting cultural and social values, debates and aspirations’.⁵³

Robert Hewison’s polemic publication *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (1987) discussed the rise of the heritage industry and initiated an influential heritage debate with the disciplines.⁵⁴ In *The Heritage Industry*, Hewison noted that the number of museums had doubled (a ‘museum explosion’) since the 1960s.⁵⁵ Hewison credited this increase of museums to the decline of Britain.⁵⁶ Distinguishing ‘history’ from ‘heritage’, Hewison deemed the latter as a manufactured version of the past to commercialise its economic potential.⁵⁷ As the heritage industry preserved a version of the past, Hewison asked ‘what kind of past we have chosen to preserve’?⁵⁸ This pertinent question was kept in mind throughout this study in terms Victorian women’s past or history, particularly in terms of the historical narratives and material culture that museums perpetuate and preserve. To answer this himself, Hewison highlighted the National Trust’s country houses, which came to be ‘symbols of continuity and security’ in the 1980s.⁵⁹ Hewison examined the historic/country-house in terms of its survival through the National Trust and described these houses (and the values they represent and re-enforce) as a nostalgic representation of a ‘paradise lost’.⁶⁰

and heritage and archaeological sites, exploring the concept of heritage and the past, and negotiations with it (such as heritage tourism). These disciplines arguably come under the umbrella of Cultural Studies.

⁵¹ See Sandell, *Museums, Society, Inequality* (Oxon: Routledge, 2002); Sandell, *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007).

⁵² Laurajane Smith, ‘Introduction’, *Uses of Heritage* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1 – 7 (p. 2).

⁵³ Smith, ‘Introduction’, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen London Ltd, 1987).

⁵⁵ Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, p. 84.

⁵⁶ Its degradation, urbanisation and modernisation, according to Hewison, prompted an ‘impulse to preserve the past [which] is part of the impulse to preserve the self’. See Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, p. 47.

⁵⁷ Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, pp. 83 – 84

⁵⁸ Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, p. 47.

⁵⁹ Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, p. 71.

⁶⁰ Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, p. 53.

Kevin Walsh in *The Representations of the Past* (1992) also offered a similar critical view, disapproving of the heritage industry's 'commercialization of pasts'⁶¹ as 'the past has emerged as a reservoir of shallow surfaces which can be exploited in the heritage centre or on the biscuit tin.'⁶² Analysis placed the onus for specific representations in museum displays on the museum visitors themselves, as opposed to the museum curators. Walsh implied that museums were providing the type of heritage the visitors wanted.

Although Hewison and Walsh had little to say specifically about the representation of women in museums, their exposure of the androcentric, white-British and elitist past that the heritage industry of the 1980s and early 1990s represented clearly suggested that women were largely marginalised, as exemplified through the Victorian country house. However, Hewison alluded to an impending change, stating that 'Now that the public's taste has shifted towards a nostalgia for the everyday, the [National] Trust is opening the kitchens as well as the state rooms'.⁶³ This suggests that the type of heritage represented in historic homes was evolving with an opportunity, albeit a narrow one, for working-class women's history to be represented through the kitchen and servants' quarters. This prompted considerations about how wide or far this change has been applied by other museums as well as the representation of working-class Victorian women and Victorian women in a domestic setting in case study museum displays, such as the Widow Washer Woman's House at Abbey House Museum.

From the late 1980s into the 1990s, this 'male, pale and stale' past that had been packaged and sold by the heritage industry was being redesigned and rebranded, prompted by new ideologies which permeated both museum and heritage academia and practice. One of these was the New Museology movement which saw museums, in theory, challenge exclusivity and elitism, and adopt a democratic, inclusive style.⁶⁴ New Museology had emerged in the 1970s, 'influenced by postcolonial theory, cultural theory (identify politics), and the history wars of the

⁶¹ Kevin Walsh, *The Representations of the Past: Museums and Heritage in a Post-Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. i.

⁶² Walsh, *The Representations of the Past: Museums and Heritage in a Post-Modern World*, p. 3.

⁶³ Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, p. 72.

⁶⁴ Peter Vergo, 'Introduction', in *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1989), pp. 1 – 5 (p. 3).

era', according to Kylie Message.⁶⁵ Peter Vergo in *The New Museology* (1989) noted a 'widespread dissatisfaction with the 'old' museology, both within and outside the museum profession'; Old Museology was in his opinion was 'too much about museum *methods*, and too little about the purposes of museums'. Jennifer Barrett explained how New Museology was popularised in the 1990s as museums, facing funding pressures, needed a new approach to public history.⁶⁶ Additionally, a formalist, object-focussed approach to museum displays shifted to an analyst approach, focussing on people, stories and narratives. The previous formalist approach, according to Kevin Moore, allowed objects to 'speak for themselves'⁶⁷ and was criticised for 'marginalizing the history and culture of women, ethnic minorities, the working class and other disadvantaged groups'.⁶⁸ By contrast, the newly implemented analyst approach used objects as props to represent and interpret history, focusing instead on people, narratives and stories which allowed these previously marginalised histories to be made explicit in museum collections and displays. This institutional change, and arguably philosophical change, was observed by Graham Black in 2012: 'Over the last two decades museums have gone a long way towards transforming themselves from in-ward looking, curator-driven and collections-focussed institutions to out-ward facing, audience-focused destinations.'⁶⁹ This 'representational critique' of museum displays and collections, encouraged by New Museology and an analyst approach, was 'part of a broader development in many cultural and social disciplines that gathered pace during the 1980s', according to Sharon McDonald, and 'probe[d] the historical, social, and political contexts in which certain kinds of knowledge reigned and others were marginalized or ignored.'⁷⁰ It allowed previously hidden histories to be revealed, including those of women. The approach taken by case study museum sites for this study was considered with this in mind.

⁶⁵ Kylie Message, 'Introduction: Headline News', in *Museums and Social Activism: Engaged Protest* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1 – 42 (p. 22).

⁶⁶ Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) pp. 4 – 5.

⁶⁷ Kevin Moore, *Museums and Popular Culture* (London: Cassell, 2000), p 33.

⁶⁸ Moore, *Museums and Popular Culture*, p 34.

⁶⁹ Graham Black, *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), p. 75.

⁷⁰ McDonald, 'Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, p. 3.

Tony Bennett in *The Birth of the Museum* (1995) was acutely aware of this representational critique.⁷¹ Bennett claimed that ‘the space of representation shaped into being by the public museum was hijacked by all sorts of particular ideologies’.⁷² Bennett identified that ‘a principle of general human universality’ within museums meant that

on the basis of the gendered, racial, class or other social patterns of its exclusions and biases, any particular museum display could be held to be partial, incomplete, inadequate.⁷³

Bennett explored some of these exclusions and biases at Beamish Museum, which primarily focussed on the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. He noted that ‘the history of the region’s labour and trade union movements, and the activities of the women of the North East in suffrage and feminist campaigns’ were absent.⁷⁴ Bennett accredited these exclusions to an institutional condition: ‘museum embodies, indeed is committed to, an institutionalized mode of amnesia’.⁷⁵ Because of this amnesia, ‘the exclusion and marginalization of women and women’s culture’⁷⁶ in museums persisted as museums forgot women’s history or did not explicitly refer to it, instead representing it under the catch-all ‘story of Man’, or ‘human universality’.⁷⁷ Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine in *The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* also acknowledged how ‘Decisions are made to emphasize one element and to downplay others, to assert some truths and to ignore others’ as ‘every museum exhibition, whatever its overt subject, inevitably draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it.’⁷⁸ For this study, the elements are museum text (names of exhibits, language and word choices and historical information) and material culture (museum objects and reproduced images).

⁷¹ Tony Bennett in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* examined the origins and evolution of the museum and exhibition as cultural institutions through a social, ethical and philosophical perspective, particularly a Foucauldian one. See Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Oxon: Routledge: 1995).

⁷² Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, p. 97.

⁷³ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, p. 91.

⁷⁴ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, p. 111.

⁷⁵ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, pp. 111 – 112.

⁷⁶ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, p. 103.

⁷⁷ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, p. 91.

⁷⁸ Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, ‘Introduction: Museums and Multiculturalism’ in *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 1 – 9 (p. 1).

Material Culture Studies, which Bennett alluded to above, was originally conceptualised in anthropological terms in the 1980s and 1990s but has developed in a more interdisciplinary way since then. Material Culture Studies, the study of the relationship between objects and people, is now firmly part of humanities and social sciences more broadly.⁷⁹ Susan Pearce's pioneering work from the 1980s, particularly her publication *Museum Studies in Material Culture* (1989), considered Material Culture Studies from the perspective of museums as they 'represent the stored material culture of the past, while museum exhibitions are the principal medium through which that past is publicly presented'.⁸⁰ Building on Pearce's work, Sandra Dudley has pointed out that museum objects (material culture) are often de-contextualized and considered 'dead' as the object, now part of a museum collection, is removed from its original purpose and function. However, Dudley urged that material culture in museums should be re-contextualised, as opposed to de-contextualised, as in the museum setting objects are still 'engaged with by human subjects' and 'continue to participate in socialised relationships and interactions and to be attributed particular meanings and values as a result'.⁸¹ Material culture is an element that many of the previous studies examining representations of women and gender in museums displays and collections have explored, and one focussed on in this study too.

Pearce's in-depth object analysis of one object, an infantry officer's jacket worn during the battle of Waterloo, held in the collections of the National Army Museum, not only demonstrated how material culture can be analysed in a museum setting but employed a semiotic approach.⁸² Pioneered by Ferdinand de Saussure, semiotics, the study of meaning-making via the study of signs, has been adopted by a range of cultural studies' fields, including Museum Studies and Material Culture Studies. Some researchers have expanded this to examine meaning-making through the complex combinations of different communication methods used in museums displays, such as objects, interpretive language, and other sensory strategies

⁷⁹ Sandra Dudley, 'Introduction: Museums and Things', in *The Thing About Museums: Objects and Experience, Representation and Contestation*, ed. by Sandra Dudley et al. (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 1 – 11, (p. 2).

⁸⁰ Pearce, 'Museum Studies in Material Culture', in *Museum Studies in Material Culture*, pp. 1 – 10 (p. 1).

⁸¹ Dudley, 'Introduction: Museums and Things', pp. 1 – 11 (pp. 1 – 2).

⁸² Susan Pearce, 'Objects as Meanings; or Narrating the Past', in *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 19 – 29.

(sounds, smells, sights and touch).⁸³ These interpretive methods converge to create what Andrea Hofinger and Eija Ventola called ‘complex semiotic processes’ and what others, such as Michael O’Toole, have suggested requires multimodal analysis. Several researchers have developed work on this.⁸⁴ While semiotics and multimodal analysis provided frameworks for display analysis, they implicitly influenced this project’s approach rather than explicitly structured it, such as the analysis of museum text and material culture in the case study museum displays.

Feminist Studies and Gender Studies

Feminist Studies and Gender Studies are both ‘complex political philosophy’ with a ‘rich variety of ideas’, according to David Bouchier.⁸⁵ While Feminist Studies and Gender Studies will be addressed together, it must be acknowledged that they are different disciplines with varying theories, analytical tools and applications.⁸⁶ In the UK, these Studies can be traced back to the second wave of feminist activity from

⁸³ Andrea Hofinger and Eija Ventola, ‘Multimodality in Operation: Language and Picture in a Museum’, in *Perspectives on Multimodality*, ed. by Martin Kaltenbacher, Charles Cassily and Eija Ventola (Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing House, 2004), pp. 193 – 209 (p. 193).

⁸⁴ Both systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and multimodality approaches of analysis in a museum context have been used in several studies to analyse museum language and semiosis. Alfred Pang analysed representations of Singaporean nationalism in the exhibition ‘From Colony to Nation’ at Singapore History Museum. Hofinger and Ventola used the Mozart-Wohnhaus Museum in Salzburg to analyse the ‘interaction between pictures and spoken language’. Emily Purser analysed the language and images used to interpret Australian cultures in the Berlin-Dahlem (a museum of indigenous cultures).

See Alfred Pang Kah Meng, ‘Making History in *From Colony to Nation*: A Multimodal Analysis of a Museum Exhibition in Singapore’, in *Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Systemic-Functional Perspectives*, ed. by Kay L. O’Halloran (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 28 – 54; Hofinger and Ventola, ‘Multimodality in Operation: Language and Picture in a Museum’, in *Perspectives on Multimodality*, ed. by Martin Kaltenbacher, Charles Cassily and Eija Ventola (Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing House, 2004), pp. 193 – 209; Emily Purser, ‘Telling Stories: Text Analysis in a Museum’, in *Discourse and Community: Doing Functional Linguistics*, ed. by Eija Ventola (Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2000), pp. 169-198.

⁸⁵ David Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge: The Movement for Women’s Liberation in Britain and the USA* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd: 1983), p. 62.

⁸⁶ Feminist Studies focusses on ‘the roles, experiences, and achievements of women in society’. Gender Studies, on the other hand, examines the ‘Differences and inequalities between women and men’.

See ‘Women’s studies’, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd edn, ed. by Angus Stevenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199571123.001.0001/m_en_gb0958090> [Oxford Reference, accessed 30 November 2015]; Imelda Whelehan and Jane Pilcher, ‘Introduction: Everywhere and Somewhere: Gender Studies, Women’s Studies, Feminist Perspectives and Interdisciplinarity’, in *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, ed. by Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2004) pp. ix – xv (p. ix).

the late 1960s into the 1970s.⁸⁷ From the late 1970s, these Studies as areas of academic research were developed with the number of academics, degree programmes, and research centres specialising in them increased rapidly.⁸⁸

As Cherry's publication suggests, Feminist Studies and Gender Studies have been influenced over time by different political agendas, such as liberalism, socialism and radicalism, and different discourses, such as psychoanalysis (from the 1970s), post-colonial theory, post-structuralism, post-modernism and queer theory (from the 1990s).⁸⁹ These approaches proved influential from the late 1980s and into the 1990s encouraging feminist and gender scholars to explore the lives of women and men, gender boundaries and stereotypes through other lenses of identity that marginalised their subjects, such as class, race/ethnicity and sexuality.⁹⁰ The application of these concepts created a more nuanced understanding of the varied experience of women and men as opposed to a monolithic, 'Eurocentric', elitist perspective. This new perspective and approach from the early 1990s is considered the third wave of feminism. As the Literature Review will show, feminist and gender discourses influenced museum and heritage research, with researchers such as Gaby Porter⁹¹ and Rebecca Machin using gender as an analytical tool to examine museum displays.⁹² This in turn has influenced this study and research.

⁸⁷ From the 1830s, Victorian women, or more specifically middle class and elite Victorian women, campaigned for the extension and development of women's rights (such as reforms to legal liberties and legislations, working conditions and education access) and to raise awareness about women's issues. This movement was continued into the early twentieth century by Suffragettes, culminating with the eventual but staggered enfranchisement of women. Martha Weinman Lear's article 'The Second Feminist Wave' (1968) coined the usage of referring to the women's movements as 'waves'. She referred to the emerging wave of the time of publication as the second wave, therefore suggesting that the women's movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was the first wave. During the second wave, polemical books were published which examined and exposed societal patriarchy and the power struggle between men and women, such as Sheila Rowbotham's *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It*. See Martha Weinman Lear, 'The Second Feminist Wave', *New York Times Magazine*, 10 March 1968, 24 – 25, 50 – 56; Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* (London: Pluto Press, 1973).

⁸⁸ Whelehan and Pilcher, *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, p. x.

⁸⁹ See Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge: The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the USA*, pp. 66 – 75; Anna Tripp, 'Introduction', in *Gender*, ed. by Anna Tripp (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 1 – 17.

⁹⁰ See Rosemary Hennessy, 'Class', pp. 53 – 72; Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Meg Coulson, 'Race', pp. 73 – 92; Rey Chow, 'Sexuality', pp. 93 – 110, in Mary Eagleton (ed.), *A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory*, ed. by Mary Eagleton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003).

⁹¹ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

⁹² Rebecca Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', in *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, ed. by Amy K. Levin (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 187 – 200.

Academic feminism and gender studies during 1980s were concerned with the representation of women;⁹³ this 'became one of the crucial areas of feminist debate'.⁹⁴ This focus developed both Studies as interdisciplinary critiques or discourses particularly in art history, amongst others. In terms of art history, art historians and visual culture researchers developed a body of research on artistic representations of gender and women. Griselda Pollock's pioneering research in the 1980s laid the foundation for the field of feminist art history.⁹⁵ Work by others since then has enhanced this field, such as Deborah Cherry's *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850 – 1900* (2000) which contextualises Victorian feminism and visual culture through the lenses of gender, class, colonialism, race and politics.⁹⁶ These studies aided the analysis of graphic and reproduced images in terms of how the selected images portray women and what message this then infers about Victorian women's history in the museum displays.

Victorian Studies

The Victorian past has, of course, been studied since the period ended. Since 1901, 'the Victorians have been made and remade throughout the twentieth century'.⁹⁷ As with the Museum and Heritage Studies, and Feminist and Gender Studies, new and a wide-ranging critical theory were applied to Victorian Studies. After the 1980s, the 'Age of Representations'⁹⁸ saw a shift 'from social history to a new interdisciplinary cultural history',⁹⁹ the incorporation of critical theories and the examination of class, race/ethnicity, 'gender, national identity, imperialism, science and consumerism'.¹⁰⁰ Feminist and gender discourse certainly encouraged new lines

⁹³ Whelehan and Pilcher discuss in detail representation in gender studies. See Whelehan and Pilcher, *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, pp. 135 – 139.

⁹⁴ Whelehan and Pilcher, *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, p. 135.

⁹⁵ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Art, Women and Ideology* (London: Pandora, 1981); Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988).

⁹⁶ Deborah Cherry, *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850 – 1900* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁹⁷ Miles Taylor, 'Introduction', in *The Victorians since 1901: Histories, Representations and Revisions*, ed. by Miles Taylor and Michael Wolff, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 1 – 13 (p. 2).

⁹⁸ Boyd and McWilliam, 'Introduction: Rethinking the Victorians', p. 25.

⁹⁹ Boyd and McWilliam, 'Introduction: Rethinking the Victorians', p. 23.

¹⁰⁰ Boyd and McWilliam, 'Introduction: Rethinking the Victorians', p. 25.

of enquiry within Victorian studies. A focus on women's history 'was itself challenged', according to Boyd and McWilliam,

A new kind of gender history insisted that it was no longer enough simply to reconstruct the lives of women; instead, it was important to think about how gender was an important form of social organisation that determined people's lives. . . All subjects needed to be rethought in terms of the way gender assumptions structured existence.¹⁰¹

Rogers also identified 'the Victorian woman' as part of an 'emergence of 'new subjects of enquiry'.¹⁰² The histories, lives and experiences of Victorian women have been, and continue to be, extensively researched and revised in recent decades.¹⁰³ As well as new subjects, new contributors emerged as, according to Rogers, Victorian Studies' interdisciplinarity attracts researchers from different fields and cultural institutions, 'including museums, galleries and heritage centres.'¹⁰⁴

One strand of Victorian Studies which has emerged is an interest beyond the Academy into representations of the Victorian past in popular culture and public history. Jerome de Groot defined public history as 'Non-academic or non-professional history'.¹⁰⁵ History in popular culture and public history and the subsequent study of it is not unique to Victorian history, as de Groot illustrated throughout *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* with examples of different periods and histories utilised in popular culture media.¹⁰⁶ In a manner reminiscent of Hewison's positioning of history and heritage as binary opposites, de Groot distinguished 'History' from popular culture and public

¹⁰¹ Boyd and McWilliam, 'Introduction: Rethinking the Victorians', p. 30.

¹⁰² Helen Rogers, 'Victorian Studies in the UK', *The Victorians since 1901: Histories, Representations and Revisions*, ed. by Miles Taylor and Michael Wolff (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 244 – 259 (p. 246).

¹⁰³ Ground-breaking publications about Victorian women in 'the Age of Representation' include: Nead's *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*; Judith Walkowitz's *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992); and Deborah Epstein-Nord's *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representations and the City* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995).

While there is a substantial body of publications to consult for information about the history of Victorian women, June Purvis's *Women's History Britain, 1850 – 1945: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press Ltd, 1995), Kathryn Gleadle's *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) and Murdoch's *The Daily Life of Victorian Women* provided an apt chronological and thematic overview of the experience of Victorian women.

¹⁰⁴ Rogers, 'Victorian Studies in the UK', p. 245.

¹⁰⁵ Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*, 1st edn (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*, 1st edn.

history's representation of the 'historical'.¹⁰⁷ De Groot was keen for the historical, alongside heritage, not to be discredited as 'The cultural representations of the past are crucial in contemporary society's historical imaginary'.¹⁰⁸ Media portraying the Victorian past include literature, TV programmes, films and, more recently, video games with *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* (2015) set in Victorian London.¹⁰⁹ John Gardiner in *The Victorians: An Age of Retrospect* referred to film and TV adaptations of nineteenth-century canonical authors ('Austen, Dickens, the Brontës, Hardy')¹¹⁰ in the twentieth and twentieth-first century, while James Thompson traced the portrayals and representations of the Victorian past in BBC programmes since the 1920s.¹¹¹ Recent examples of nineteenth-century-themed BBC TV series include *Ripper Street* (2014 – 2016), *Taboo* (2017) and the living history series *The Victorian Slum* (2016) amongst others. The popularity of the Victorian past as a context for these media formats is fuelled and encouraged by public demand and appetite for them.

But while these media and their Victorian representations have received academic attention, museum displays have been largely overlooked. Gardiner uniquely examined Victorian representations in museums and commented on the 'theme-park' treatment the Victorian past received.¹¹² This theme-park treatment of Victorians by museums, as identified by Gardiner,

is a view of history in museums, visitor attractions and shops that foregrounds the interactive and the commercial, favours sensory input and atmosphere above the dryly factual, and elevates private and local experience beyond the traditional narratives of national history.¹¹³

According to Gardiner, this treatment should be considered as a relationship to the Victorian past, one built on 'nostalgia and atmosphere', as opposed to a genuine reflection of the Victorian past. Gardiner identified several key features of this 'theme-park Victoriana', such as: the 're-instatement of alternative pasts, based on

¹⁰⁷ de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*, 1st edn, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*, 1st edn, p. 181.

¹⁰⁹ Ubisoft Quebec, *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* (video game) (Quebec, Canada: Ubisoft, 2015)

¹¹⁰ John Gardiner, *The Victorians: An Age of Retrospect* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), pp. 98 – 99.

¹¹¹ James Thompson, 'The BBC and the Victorians', *The Victorians since 1901*, pp. 151 – 166.

¹¹² Gardiner, 'Theme-park Victoriana', in *The Victorians since 1901 Histories*, ed. by Miles Taylor and Michael Wolff (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 167 – 180 (pp. 167 – 168).

¹¹³ Gardiner, 'Theme-park Victoriana', p. 167.

regional and working-class histories'; an interaction with the Victorian past (exemplified by school workshops of 'Doing the Victorians' and living history events) and a 'commercial dimension' (with museum gift shops and tours).¹¹⁴ Parallels can be seen between Walsh's and Hewison's view of the commercialised past more generally and Gardiner's assessment of Victorian heritage. Overall, Gardiner criticised this 'theme-park' approach as this 'vision of the [Victorian] past . . . lacks subtlety and nuance, and in doing so fails to respect the complex humanity of people who lived in a different age.'¹¹⁵

Juliet John has also provided a rare albeit more nuanced analysis of the heritage industry's representation of the Victorian past. In 'Dickens and the Heritage Industry; or, Culture and the Commodity', John sought to 'expose the conflict in the heritage industry between the promotion of an anti-materialist ideal of Culture and the commercial, materialist context of that industry's evolution.'¹¹⁶ John used the example of heritage industry surrounding Charles Dickens, exploring the Dickens industry of his time and the posthumous Dickens industry. John argued that

What is interesting is that in heritage tourism, the commodity is not seen as representing a link to the Victorian past, but as symbolising the difference or conflict between past and present.¹¹⁷

This echoes what Gardiner said about the 'theme-park Victoriana' being a relationship with the Victorian past, as opposed to a reflection of it.

Victorianist academics have worked closely with museum and heritage sites, their collections and exhibitions as archives of material culture and primary sources for research purposes, but also as platforms to display, disseminate and demonstrate academic research by working collaboratively with museums on projects and exhibitions. There are several recent examples of this relationship between Victorian-focussed academic research and museum exhibitions or public history. Jane Hamlett adapted her collaborative research on Victorian residential institutions for the exhibition *Homes of the Homeless: Seeking Shelter in Victorian London*, Geffrye Museum (2015). Lynda Nead's exhibition, *The Fallen Woman* at

¹¹⁴ Gardiner, 'Theme-park Victoriana', pp. 169 and 176.

¹¹⁵ Gardiner, *The Victorians: An Age of Retrospect*, p. 103.

¹¹⁶ Juliet John, 'Dickens and the Heritage Industry; or, Culture and the Commodity' in *Conflict and Difference in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by Dinah Birch and Mark Llewellyn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 157 – 170 (pp. 157 – 8).

¹¹⁷ John, 'Dickens and the Heritage Industry; or, Culture and the Commodity', p. 160.

The Foundling Museum (September 2015 – January 2016), was based on her research into the figure of the fallen woman in Victorian art and literature. Janine Hatter, of the Mary Elizabeth Braddon Association and University of Hull's Centre for Nineteenth Century Studies, curated a travelling exhibition on Braddon, hosted at The Treasure House, Beverley, in 2016 as *Theatre, Crime and Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Yorkshire*.¹¹⁸

Academic networks are also combining Victorian studies with a museum and heritage angle. The 26th Virginia Woolf conference in June 2016 had the theme of 'Virginia Woolf and Heritage', exploring Woolf's negotiations with heritage.¹¹⁹ The BAVS 2016 conference had the theme of 'Consuming (the) Victorians' specifically exploring the public consumption of the Victorian past through public history and popular culture. A special edition of the *Journal of Victorian Culture* focussed on 'Curating the Victorians'.¹²⁰ This research project is therefore situated in this developing and dynamic research strand within Victorian Studies that explores Victorian representations in popular culture and public history; however, this project uniquely examines the overlooked medium of museum exhibitions, building upon Gardiner's work, and applying a feminist perspective.

The identification of key landmarks within these theoretical terrains has demonstrated how this research project is both situated within and expands upon existing scholarship. It has also highlighted how the disciplines have all focussed on representation or 'representation critique' at some point – Museum Studies since the 1980s, Feminist and Gender Studies since the third-wave of feminism in the 1980s and in the early 1990s, and Victorian Studies since the 1980s. This strand running through the disciplines justifies the project's interdisciplinary approach, and the theories and analytical tools within them provides an over-arching framework for this research project.

¹¹⁸ See 'The Fallen Woman', *The Foundling Museum* <<http://foundlingmuseum.org.uk/events/fallen-woman/>> [accessed 26 October 2016]; 'Homes of the Homeless: Seeking Shelter in Victorian London', *The Geffrye Museum* <<http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/Download.ashx?id=29321>> [accessed 26 October 2016]; East Riding of Yorkshire Council, 'Your Treasure House Exhibitions and Events 2016 Beverley', p. 23, <<http://www2.eastriding.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=484647>> [accessed 26 October 2016].

¹¹⁹ Virginia Woolf and Heritage, 'About the conference', <<https://viriniawoolf2016.wordpress.com/about-the-conference/>> [accessed 25 October 2016].

¹²⁰ This publication was inspired by Victorian Studies' recent *curatorial turn*, as described by Rohan McWilliam at the BAVS 2015 conference. See *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 2018, Vol 23, No. 2.

(iii) Literature Review: Representations of Women in Museums

Over the last few decades, many studies have explored gender bias and the representation of women in museum displays and collections.¹²¹ A historiographical review of these studies will be presented. I will trace the growing concern about the exclusion of representations of women in museum displays in the 1980s and subsequent remedial inclusion, exploring the focus onto the quality of these inclusions in the 1990s, and outlining the recent problematisation and re-examination of women and gender in museums today. Studies offering a nuanced assessment of particular displays or museum collections will be outlined thematically to present a wide range of explorations of the representations of women in different museum types and themes, such as military museums, science-based museums and displays, and those focussing on themes of work and domesticity.¹²² In these two sections, there will be examples and case studies of perceived good and bad practice, as identified in previous studies and by past researchers. Together these will demonstrate some of the past studies and research projects, on an international scale but with a British focus, that have influenced, inspired, and enhanced this research project into the representations of Victorian women in museum displays. It will, thus, establish that this study builds on this existing foundation to explore in a new, emerging area considers representations of Victorian history in museums, focussing on women's history specifically.

Historiography

A starting point for this historiography of representations of women and gender critique in British museums is suggested by Kevin Moore, who stated that gender issues 'remained relatively ignored until the late 1980s in British

¹²¹ As previously pointed out, none have specifically focussed on representations of Victorian women although there have been over-laps where studies of gender and women in certain museums have examined the representation of women in a Victorian periodised/themed display.

¹²² The science-based museums and displays are ones specifically with a Natural History and an archaeological focus.

museums'.¹²³ It is worth acknowledging international differences between British and American museums. Moore noted that American museums experienced a cultural shift away from the 'great white men' narrative in the 1970s, a decade before British museums.¹²⁴ However, Jane Glaser and Artemis A. Zenetou stated in *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums* that the 1970s feminist movement actually 'bypassed the [American] museum community'¹²⁵ and that it was not until 'renewed activism' around the time of the book's publication (1994) that 'status quo – particularly the elite male image of museums – [was] being challenged and affected'.¹²⁶ Coincidentally in the same year of the book's publication, there was a special issue of the international journal *Gender and History*¹²⁷ which 'analyze[d] the influence – or the absence of influence – of the burgeoning scholarship of women's history on a myriad of public representations of the past'.¹²⁸ It contained several articles by American curators and academics presenting American museum and heritage site case studies, such as Patricia West's assessment of 'The Museumization of Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House'¹²⁹ and Nancy Shoemaker's investigation of gender in Natural History displays at two Natural History museums (the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, Washington, and Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago).¹³⁰ Edith Mayo provided a useful overview of key developments in American scholarship regarding gender in history more generally and in the museum and heritage industry specifically.¹³¹ It may be more appropriate to deduce that the 1970s onwards may have seen some conscious awareness about the representation of women and gender in museums by individual American institutions, researchers and museum workers, and then the 1990s, as the prevalence of publications and research suggests, representations of gender and

¹²³ This relates to the 'representation critique' and New Museology movement in museum practice and academia that were discussed in the 'Introduction to Theoretical Terrains' section in Part I.

¹²⁴ Moore, *Museums and Popular Culture*, p. 33.

¹²⁵ Glaser and Zenetou, 'Preface', in *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums*, pp. XVII - XXI (p. XVII).

¹²⁶ Glaser and Zenetou, 'Preface', p. XVIII.

¹²⁷ *Gender and History*, 6. 3 (1994).

¹²⁸ Barbara Melosh, 'Introduction', *Gender and History*, 6. 3 (1994), 315 – 319 (p. 315).

¹²⁹ Patricia West, 'Gender Politics and the 'Invention of Tradition': The Museumization of Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House', *Gender and History*, 6. 3 (1994), 456 – 467.

¹³⁰ Nancy Shoemaker, 'The Natural History of Gender', *Gender and History*, 6. 3 (1994), 320 – 333.

¹³¹ Edith Mayo, 'Putting Women in Their Place: Methods and Sources for Including Women's History in Museums and Historic Sites', in *Restoring Women's History Through Historic Preservation*, ed. by Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003) pp. 111 – 128 (pp. 111 – 114).

women becoming a more mainstream concern within the American museum and academic communities.

In terms of the British museum and heritage industry, most relevant to this study, contrary to Moore's suggested date of the late 1980s for when gender issues started being considered, the formation of the group Women, Heritage and Museums (WHAM!) in 1984 places this several years earlier, in the early or mid-1980s. This independent group was established in the July of 1984¹³² after a Social History Curators Group (SHCG) Working Group, put together in 1982,¹³³ hosted a successful SHCG conference on 'Women and Museums' earlier that year in April 1984.¹³⁴ WHAM! was established in the same year as the publication of Donald Horne's book *The Great Museum: The Re-presentations of History* which explored patriarchal values in European tourism through the continuing legitimization of male authority. Horne

recognised that this was so consistent as to be almost universal . . . With exceptions. . . women are simply not *there*. They make their appearance as dummies of sturdy peasant women . . . or in other useful supporting roles; they may be seen nude, or partly nude, created as an object for the male gaze.¹³⁵

WHAM! was established to address the (in)visibility of women as museum subjects, visitors and professionals. In 1988, Sue Kirkby specifically referred to WHAM! as a 'campaign set up for a more realistic portrayal of women in museums'. She also stated that 'The whole question of bias in museums is one which has only recently been acknowledged by the profession itself. It has not yet received much public attention.'¹³⁶ While its formation does not demonstrate universal interest amongst museum practitioners and academics, it does illustrate that a small group of individuals were concerned about the deficient representation of women in

¹³² Social History Curators Group, 'Daughter of WHAM!', *SHCG News*, 6 (1984), (p. 3) <<http://www.shcg.org.uk/domains/shcg.org.uk/local/media/downloads/SHCG6.pdf>> [accessed 22 April 2015].

¹³³ Social History Curators Group, 'Setting the Record Straight', *SHCG News*, 6 (1984), (pp. 2 – 3) <<http://www.shcg.org.uk/domains/shcg.org.uk/local/media/downloads/SHCG6.pdf>> [accessed 22 April 2015].

¹³⁴ Social History Curators Group, 'Coming Events', *SHCG News*, 3 (1983), (p. 1) <<http://www.shcg.org.uk/domains/shcg.org.uk/local/media/downloads/SHCG3.pdf>> [accessed 22 April 2015].

¹³⁵ Donald Horne, *The Great Museum: The Re-presentations of History* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p. 4.

¹³⁶ Sue Kirkby, 'Policy and Politics: Charges, Sponsorship, and Bias', in *The Museum Time-Machine*, ed. by Robert Lumley (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 89 – 101 (pp. 99 – 100).

museums, and attempted to address it through theory (debate, discussion and research) and practice (hosting exhibitions and reviewing museum policy).¹³⁷ Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, however, was critical of WHAM! and its early gender critique of museums, which, according to her, was primarily concerned with 'counting women'. Stig Sørensen claimed that the 'visibility [of women] was so highly regarded that, in striving towards it, questions about how it was obtained were neglected.'¹³⁸ This resulted in tokenistic and underdeveloped representations of women who were shoe-horned into exhibitions as an afterthought. As Beverley Butler surmised, 'women [were] 'put in' to exhibitions; exhibitions [were] rarely built around them.'¹³⁹ Stig Sørensen's criticism helped structure this study as it encouraged an approach that went beyond quantitative analysis to explore some of the issues and barriers museums face when collecting, researching and displaying Victorian women's history and how these factors affect and influence museum displays.

In the 1990s, the focus shifted away from this quantitative focus to a qualitative one. Writing in 1988, Gabriel (Gaby) Porter described how 'From the cautious aim of 'putting women back' into history has grown a stronger campaign which recognizes that women can't simply be slotted in to the existing structure.'¹⁴⁰ Pioneering studies by individuals such as Porter,¹⁴¹ Butler¹⁴² and Elizabeth Carnegie¹⁴³ emerged in the 1990s as early academic scholarship that analysed the representation of women in British museums.¹⁴⁴ Porter's doctoral research and subsequent publications based on it were ground-breaking as her approach was one of first research-driven applications of gender theory to museums.¹⁴⁵ Porter uniquely

¹³⁷ Sue Kirkby wrote a useful overview of WHAM! See Kirby, 'The 'Guerilla Girls' or a 'Gentle Group of Academics and Museum Workers', in *Women in Industry and Technology from Prehistory to the Present Day: Current Research and the Museum Experience*, pp. 301 – 311.

¹³⁸ Stig Sørensen, 'Archaeology, Gender and the Museum', p. 141.

¹³⁹ Beverley Butler, 'Virginia Woolf, Madonna and Me: Searching for Role-Models and Women's Presence in Museums and Heritage', *Women in Industry and Technology from Prehistory to the Present Day: Current Research and the Museum Experience*, pp. 19 - 26 (p. 25).

¹⁴⁰ Porter, 'Putting Your House in Order', in *The Museum Time-Machine*, ed. by Robert Lumley (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 102 – 127 (p. 106).

¹⁴¹ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'; Porter, 'How are women represented in British history museums', *Museum International*, 43. 3 (1991), 159 – 162; Porter, 'Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums', pp.105 – 126.

¹⁴² Beverley Butler, 'Virginia Woolf, Madonna and Me: Searching for Role-Models and Women's Presence in Museums and Heritage', pp. 19 – 26.

¹⁴³ Carnegie, 'Trying to be an Honest Woman: Making Women's Histories', pp. 54 – 65.

¹⁴⁴ Porter, 'Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums', p. 111.

¹⁴⁵ Porter, 'Studies in Gender and Representation in British History Museums' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 1994), <<http://hdl.handle.net/2381/8496>> [accessed 26 October 2016].

examined both representations of women and men, identifying how representations in museums established them in 'hierarchical oppositions' where "women" became the background against which "man" acts'.¹⁴⁶ Porter's analysis of both the representation of women and men has been adopted for this study in order to assess the differences between how representations of Victorian men and women are treated in the case study museum displays, and explore reasons why. Porter,¹⁴⁷ Butler¹⁴⁸ and Carnegie¹⁴⁹ were all critically analysing the quality of representations of women in museums in terms of its context, message, and meanings – as this study also does. Their research showed that representations of women in museums were, if present, stereotypical, limited to certain histories, such as social and domestic history, and 'riddled with inaccuracies'.¹⁵⁰

Throughout this decade, museum professionals continued to cast a critical eye over their own practice, becoming more conscious about representations of women's history in their displays and collections. Siân Jones and Sharon Pay, who analysed gender in museums in 'archaeological and historical terms', were highly critical of museum curators, remarking that 'museum curators misled the public about gender roles in the past through the deliberate omission or misrepresentation of women's experiences'.¹⁵¹ However, they later said that 'female museum professionals are moving towards a wider and more profound feminist perspective'.¹⁵² This difference between male and female curators, and how this affects and effects the representations in museum displays and collections, has been explored by others also, as this Literature Review will demonstrate. As well as being critical of museum curators, they also blamed academics, museum researchers and critics for focusing on the representation of particular individuals, social groups and communities, but neglecting broader gender issues. They stated that

¹⁴⁶ Porter, 'Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums', p. 110.

¹⁴⁷ Porter, 'Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums'.

¹⁴⁸ Beverley Butler, 'Virginia Woolf, Madonna and Me: Searching for Role-Models and Women's Presence in Museums and Heritage'.

¹⁴⁹ Carnegie, 'Trying to be an Honest Woman: Making Women's Histories'.

¹⁵⁰ Beverley Butler, 'Virginia Woolf, Madonna and Me: Searching for Role-Models and Women's Presence in Museums and Heritage', p. 21.

¹⁵¹ Siân Jones and Sharon Pay, 'The Legacy of Eve' in *The Politics of the Past*, ed. by P. Gathercole and D. Lowenthal (London: Routledge, reprnt. 1994), pp. 160 – 171 (p. 161).

¹⁵² Jones and Pay, 'The Legacy of Eve', p. 167.

Many who are critical of museums and the heritage industry for neglecting the social dimensions of class and race. . . . allow issues of gender and the presentation of gender roles to go without comment.¹⁵³

Published papers written by museum professionals, using their own museums and exhibitions as case studies and discussing practical difficulties, indicate this growing sense of responsibility by some curators.¹⁵⁴ Curators who had inherited historic displays with a lack of women's history or existing gender bias began to be consider how these problems could be remedied. In a published collection of papers read at the 1994 (tenth anniversary) WHAM! conference on 'Women in Industry and Technology', Rosemary Preece, the then curator and visitor services manager at the National Coalmining Museum for England, discussed the difficulties in incorporating women's history into a mining exhibition due to limited history and material culture about women's participation in the mining industry as workers.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, Sue Werner, the then education officer at Forge Mill Needle Museum, and Su Jones, an academic, shared issues with representing women in displays about the male-dominated industry of needle-making.¹⁵⁶ This was the start of a problematisation of gender in museums which would be further developed. This study similarly interviewed museum professionals at the case study sites as their reflections and problematising on their own practice, and the limitations they face with their collections and sites, helped draw out and unpick some of the practical barriers and issues that affects representation of Victorian women in museum displays.

Some studies began to explore the causes of the inadequate representation. Fault was found in two areas of museum practice: the curatorial staff and the collections. In terms of the curatorial staff, as early as 1991, the sex of the curator was identified as an influential factor affecting the representations of gender in museum displays. It was clear that male curators tended to gravitate towards HIS-

¹⁵³ Jones and Pay, 'The Legacy of Eve', p. 160 – 161.

¹⁵⁴ The publication *Women in Industry and Technology from Prehistory to the Present Day: Current Research and the Museum Experience* is an apt example of this. See Amanda Devonshire and Barbara Wood (eds.), *Women in Industry and Technology from Prehistory to the Present Day: Current Research and the Museum Experience* (London: Museum of London, 1996).

¹⁵⁵ Rosemary Preece, "Equal to Half a Man': Women in the Coalmining Industry', in *Women in Industry and Technology, from Prehistory to the Present Day: Current Research and the Museum Experience*, pp. 155 – 161.

¹⁵⁶ Sue Werner and Su Jones, 'Forge Mill Needle Museum and Women in the Needle Industry', *Women in Industry and Technology, from Prehistory to the Present Day: Current Research and the Museum Experience*, pp. 145 – 153.

story when it came to developing collections and exhibitions.¹⁵⁷ Sue Wilkinson and Isobel Hughes, writing in 1991, commented on the high number of male curators in military museums and connected this to the lack of wider women's history, beyond traditional roles and histories, represented in military museums. This debate is detailed later. A lack of women's material culture within collections was also acknowledged as a problem, as well as the limiting categorisation and cataloguing of objects which in effect obscured, hid, or camouflaged the women's histories which were and are present in museum collections. Porter offered reasons for this, such as the perishability of working-class women's material culture. She described how a work dress would be recycled and reused as rags when it became unwearable, explaining the lack of working-class female costume in museums' costume collections. Porter considered how the categorisation systems, Social History Industrial Classification (SHIC) and Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) systems, used by many museums, limit the identification and acknowledgement of women's histories connected to objects in museum collections, as later discussion will show.¹⁵⁸

Porter and Stig Sørensen extended this critical analysis beyond the types of women's histories represented in exhibitions to an examination of exhibition/display design and layout. Porter noted the positioning of women's history on the edges and in the background of displays.¹⁵⁹ Attention was paid to the language used in interpretive text. An example given by Porter demonstrated how a museum label at Leeds Industrial Museum infantilised women: the label referred to female workers in the pattern-making section as 'girls' regardless of their age.¹⁶⁰ Stig Sørensen drew attention to the message and tone of display graphics which often reinforced gender associations and stereotypes. Stig Sørensen, who specifically examined archaeological displays and their representations of women and gender, suggested that curators should consider 'composition, position, image, colour and size' of sex/gender representations in display graphics as they 'convey impressions of strength, will and knowledge' and play a part in representing or stereotyping

¹⁵⁷ Sue Wilkinson and Isobel Hughes, 'Soldiering On', *Museums Journal*, November 1991, pp. 23 – 28 (p. 26).

¹⁵⁸ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

¹⁵⁹ Porter, 'Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums', p. 112.

¹⁶⁰ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

gender.¹⁶¹ Porter's analysis of museum text and Stig Sørensen's analysis of display graphics influenced this study's focus on analysing the messages inferred by specific word choices, exhibit names and historical information, and reproduced graphics, respectively.

Porter stated in 1996 that – despite extensive feminist readings of 'other media such as history, television, cinema and magazines' – museums had been 'overlooked or avoided'. She went on to say that

Until very recently, few people have undertaken critical research about museums, and there have been few occasions where they have come together with people working in museums to share and openly explore critical issues of representations, sexual difference and identity or cultural diversity.¹⁶²

This suggests that there was not just a lack of museum research using feminist or gender discourse at the time, but also a limited amount of museum research that intersected with museum practice. It would be fair to surmise that the 'few occasions where they have come together' is under the guise of WHAM!

Enquires into WHAM! suggested that the group disbanded around the mid-to-late 1990s, if not in the early 2000s. Its collapse raises certain questions. Did representations of women in museums become less of a concern to individuals involved with WHAM! or the museum industry in general? Had gender issues in museums been effectively addressed, so the group and its objectives were redundant? Kirby implied that, at the time writing in 1996, WHAM! members and contributors believed that museums still had progress to make in terms of addressing gender issues, and WHAM!'s aims and objectives were still relevant. The reason why WHAM! disbanded is unknown; enquiries to SHCG members resulted in speculative rather than definitive answers. WHAM! had sound aims and objectives, and had, according to Kirby, made some progress. But it lacked the essentials (such as willing volunteers, financial support and resources) required to weather the economic climate and achieve its goals in a long-term basis.¹⁶³ It may be that these logistical issues identified by Kirby resulted in its disbandment as opposed to lack of interest, appetite or necessity.

¹⁶¹ Stig Sørensen, 'Archaeology, Gender and the Museum', p. 143.

¹⁶² Porter, 'Seeing Through Solidity: A Feminist Perspective on Museums', p. 106.

¹⁶³ Kirby, 'The 'Guerilla Girls' or a 'Gentle Group of Academics and Museum Workers', p. 308.

Like Porter, Stig Sørensen in 1999 acknowledged this neglect of gender issues by and in museums, stating that 'Gender concerns have as yet scarcely affected the museum'.¹⁶⁴ Applying gender more widely beyond museum studies and into leisure, tourism and heritage studies, Cara Atkinson in 1999 stated that 'leisure and tourism theory is only beginning to debate issues of gender and spatialisation'.¹⁶⁵ Briavel Holcomb, a year before in 1998, was also pessimistic about the current heritage industry's approach to representing gender, despite what she considered as a 'growing recognition of gender inequalities in what constitutes heritage and in efforts to make women's heritage more visible'.¹⁶⁶ Holcomb observed that 'women are one such group whose imprint on the [cultural landscape] is less visible and more ephemeral, less clarifying and more ambiguous than their male peers'.¹⁶⁷ She concluded that 'The 'add-women-and-stir' recipe is a start, but inadequate in the long run', and 'in a field which is intrinsically conservative, it will probably take decades to achieve gender equity'.¹⁶⁸ Viv Golding in 2009 wrote that 'Porter's writing on the representation of women in museums, although commenting on the situation in the late 1990s, remains largely true today', suggesting that there has been little comprehensive change or development in recent years.¹⁶⁹ This study could be seen as a litmus test to see where the museum industry with this, through the lens of Victorian women's history in museum displays.

In light of Golding's observation in 2009, it is more appropriate to suggest that the new and current wave of interest and progress in gender issues in museums – or at least that demonstrated in the specific studies highlighted in this literature review – started from 2010. This new direction of gender analysis in the museum setting, albeit limited, firmly centred on the problematisation of gender issues. Researchers and museum professions were not just analysing gender bias, but actively exposing,

¹⁶⁴ Stig Sørensen, 'Archaeology, Gender and the Museum', p. 138.

¹⁶⁵ Cara Atkinson, 'Heritage and Nationalism: Gender and the Performance of Power' in *Leisure/Tourism Geographies: Practice and Geographical Knowledge*, ed by. David Crouch (Oxon: Routledge, 1999), pp. 59 – 73 (p. 59).

¹⁶⁶ Briavel Holcomb, 'Gender and Heritage Interpretation', *Contemporary Issues in Heritage and Environmental Interpretation*, ed. by David Uzzell and Roy Ballantyne (London: The Stationery Office, 1998), pp. 37 – 55 (p. 38).

¹⁶⁷ Holcomb, 'Gender and Heritage Interpretation', p. 40.

¹⁶⁸ Holcomb, 'Gender and Heritage Interpretation', p. 52.

¹⁶⁹ Viv Golding, *Learning at the Museum Frontiers: Identity, Race and Power* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), p. 85.

challenging and redressing it.¹⁷⁰ One good example of this is Rebecca Machin's research project based on the Natural History galleries at The Manchester Museum which exposed the androcentricity of the displays, raised awareness about this issue to museum staff and visitors, and provided temporary ratification.

Hilde Hein¹⁷¹ and Barbara Clark Smith,¹⁷² whose recent works added to this new wave of academic and sector/industry interest, have both suggested that museums should adopt a feminist stance to be fully able to consider, reflect and address gender and feminist issues. Hein said that 'feminist theory [in museums] awaits practical realization',¹⁷³ and recommended that the background (in which women are represented) and foreground (where men are represented) of displays should be reversed, allowing women to come forward.¹⁷⁴ Hein applied feminist theory in its wider sense to include the representation of the 'other' (such as the LGBT communities, those with ethnic minority heritage and those with disabilities or of a lower class).¹⁷⁵ Hein highlighted that this wider feminist discourse 'has already yielded some inspiration to museums' exhibitionary practices',¹⁷⁶ describing this feminist 'reclaiming [of] the background' as a 'cognitive breakthrough', but warned 'it can also be warranted as an act of rebellion'.¹⁷⁷ Hein later stated that

Personally, I would welcome an end to the depiction of women in a manner that both mystifies and normalizes them as perennial "others", chiefly as sex objects, idealized maternal figures, helpmeets in the affairs of men and creatures of male fantasy.¹⁷⁸

Furthermore, Hein asked that it is

recognized that these are representations, maybe misrepresentations, that there are (or might be) alternatives to them, and that their reiteration whether intentionally or not, reinforces their hold on common belief.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁰ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum'.

¹⁷¹ Hein, 'Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective', in *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, ed. by Amy K. Levin (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 53 – 64;

Hein, 'The Responsibility of Representation: A Feminist Perspective', pp. 112- 126.

¹⁷² Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', pp. 65 – 70.

¹⁷³ Hein, 'Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective', p. 58.

¹⁷⁴ Hein, 'Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective', p. 57.

¹⁷⁵ Hein, 'Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective', p. 54.

¹⁷⁶ Hein, 'Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective', p. 54.

¹⁷⁷ Hein, 'Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective', p. 57.

¹⁷⁸ Hein, 'The Responsibility of Representation: A Feminist Perspective', p. 126.

¹⁷⁹ Hein, 'The Responsibility of Representation: A Feminist Perspective', p. 126.

As previously mentioned, Clark Smith described a gender blindness in museums, perpetuated by a gendered society.¹⁸⁰ Clark Smith argued that this gender blindness can be cured if museums interpret the objects on display, rather than let them speak for themselves.¹⁸¹ This connects with the shift from object focussed (formalist) displays to analyst displays centring on stories, people and narratives, as explained in the Introduction to Theoretical Terrains section. Clark Smith argued that the formalist interpretive method reinforces societal gender blindness as visitors 'see what they have been taught to see and . . . remain blind to what they have been taught to ignore' - in this case, women's history.¹⁸² Rather than letting the objects speak for themselves, the context and meaning should be spelt out to visitors.¹⁸³ The interpretation needs to explicitly reveal the connections to women and the 'hidden histories' of women as 'not to leave our visitors where they were when they entered the museum'.¹⁸⁴ This study's analysis of both museum text and the visual elements (material culture and reproduced images) examines how these components come together in the museum displays to represent Victorian women's history.

Clark Smith discussed how interpretive text in museums is often 'constructed as a male conversation' arguing that language should have a 'free, frank interpretive stance – a feminist one' as opposed to one 'embodied in biased and sex-specific points of view'.¹⁸⁵ One example of museum text was given in the context of Clark Smith's own exhibition ('Men and Women') on costume history. She posed the question, 'did corsets of the 1840s constrict women's waists and push their breasts 'upward', or did they constrict women's waists and make them look more busty?'.¹⁸⁶ Both say the same thing in terms of what the corset does the body, but the latter's language objectifies women. Clark Smith also identified and criticised the sexist social conventions of naming individuals in some labelling:

An example is labels that call John Adams "Adams" and Abigail Adams "Abigail". I also cite as an example the companion portraits labelled

¹⁸⁰ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', pp. 67 – 68.

¹⁸¹ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', p. 68.

¹⁸² Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', p. 68.

¹⁸³ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', p. 68.

¹⁸⁴ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', p. 68.

¹⁸⁵ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', pp. 68 – 69.

¹⁸⁶ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', p. 68.

“Helen Caldicott (Mrs. William Penn)” and “William Penn” where the second label is unmodified by reference to the spouse.¹⁸⁷

By referring to the male by his surname and the female by her forename, a hierarchy is implied, and the superiority of the male is suggested. Likewise, when a wife is referred to by her husband's name or when her status of 'wife of' is identified, it suggests that the woman's existence is only through her husband or an appendage of her husband. Both enforce the idea of a hierarchically gendered society which, as Smith's analysis showed, permeates through into the museum world and practice. This study will also unpick museum text and specific word choices, as Clark Smith did, to analyse what messages are explicit or inferred, and how that affects representations of Victorian women in museum displays.

More recently, Amy K. Levin analysed gender in museums using Queer Theory to unpack representations of LGBT histories and stories, gender binaries, assumptions, and stereotypes in museums. Levin concluded that 'Feminist theory provides a framework for discussing current and historical conditions that have led to the under- and misrepresentation of females in museums'.¹⁸⁸ She suggests that this must be taken further:

We must ask what unexamined gender assumptions continue to be unpacked every time we mount an exhibition or greet a visitor in our galleries. More specifically, as women have become increasingly visible in museums, how have we rendered our thinking about gender more complex, to encompass not only the experiences of individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, but also those who are marginalised within these communities?¹⁸⁹

Museums face a new gender challenge. Gender and sex in museums can no longer be seen as binary opposites, where both need to be present regardless of the quality – as was museum practice in the 1980s. Gender cannot just have its stereotypes identified and amended, as suggested in the 1990s, or problematised, exposed and redressed, as it has been more recently the case. According to Levin, gender in twenty-first century museums needs to be represented and reinterpreted in its complexity, embracing the diversity, fluidity, and nuances of gender and sex,

¹⁸⁷ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', p. 68.

¹⁸⁸ Amy K. Levin, 'Unpacking Gender: Creating Complex Models for Gender Inclusivity', in *Museums, Equality and Social Justice*, Richard Sandell and Eithne Nightingale (eds.) (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 156 -168 (p. 157).

¹⁸⁹ Levin, 'Unpacking Gender: Creating Complex Models for Gender Inclusivity', p. 159.

considering individual experiences as opposed to a monolithic experience. This approach may be the future direction of gender analysis in museums, and one to which this research project hopes to contribute.

Thematic Readings

While much of the contextual scholarship considered in the Historiography section offered general readings of gender and women in museums over the last few decades, specific studies of museum types, collections or themes, relevant to this project, will be discussed in this Thematic Readings section. Themes that will be explored include war/military museums, science museums and representations of work and domesticity. This sample is not exhaustive and offers a cross-section of museum types, themes and collections relevant and applicable to this research project.

The representation, or lack of representation as the case seems to be, of women in military museums, has been of interest to some researchers and museum professionals. Wilkinson and Hughes in 1991 commented on the need for war museums to 'write women back into the galleries' and consider 'the female component'.¹⁹⁰ They observed how traditionally military museums had a 'male preserve', catering for the 'veteran and enthusiast', whilst ignoring 'the other 50% of the population'. They appealed for a diversification of the military museum audience through the incorporation of social history, essentially "peopl[ing]" the collections in order to attract a broader audience'.¹⁹¹ As explained in the Introduction to Theoretical Terrains section, this can be considered in terms of the New Museology movement, popularised at this time, and the push towards analyst displays focusing on people, stories and narratives. Wilkinson and Hughes stated that women were excluded as 'military museums are largely run by white, middle class, able-bodied men' who cannot 'cater for another group whose perspectives it does not share and whose needs and interests are unfamiliar'.¹⁹² When women were occasionally represented in military museums, Wilkinson and Hughes noted that this was through living history events, as opposed to permanent museum displays. However, bound by gender

¹⁹⁰ Wilkinson and Hughes, 'Soldiering On', p. 24.

¹⁹¹ Wilkinson and Hughes, 'Soldiering On', p. 23.

¹⁹² Wilkinson and Hughes, 'Soldiering On', p. 27

stereotypes, 'these living history projects put women, quite literally, back into the kitchen as Civil War camp followers, behind-the-scenes tea-makers or seamstresses'.¹⁹³ They also identified that women were represented in stock roles as the 'nurse, whore or domestic servant' as well as indicating a tendency of including women through examples of 'exceptional women' who took on male roles, such as Joan of Arc. Wilkinson and Hughes warned that 'The danger with using such examples in displays is that they can appear contrived and 'tokenistic''. They posed the question 'Do we only want to see in our museums the women who, by stepping out of their 'traditional' roles have left a mark on history which even a male curator can recognise?'.¹⁹⁴ Like Wilkinson and Hughes, this study also identified a tendency to represent women in stock roles and tropes in some museum displays. This practice of representing women collectively through one exceptional woman was also criticised by others. In this case however, the experience of a minority of women is implausibly used to represent the mass experience of women.

Laura Brandon's analysis of representations of women within the Canadian War Museum's (CWM's) art collection made similar observations,¹⁹⁵ despite being published nearly two decades after Wilkinson and Hughes' article.¹⁹⁶ From Brandon's perspective, 'The women's movement. . . has had limited impact on curatorial practice in these military collections'.¹⁹⁷ While she highlighted examples of military exhibitions focussing on women's history, female artists, and art subjects, these were temporary, one-off exhibitions rather than permanent displays. One example given was the exhibition *War Brides: Portraits of an Era* on display at the CWM in 2007 'which presented women's experiences in. . . Canadian wartime marriages'.¹⁹⁸ Like Wilkinson and Hughes previously, Brandon also found that generally men dominated 'military history and exhibitions and collections'¹⁹⁹ and, specifically within the art collection at CWM, women were depicted and represented 'in traditional roles, either as observers on the periphery of the action, or as

¹⁹³ Wilkinson and Hughes, 'Soldiering On', pp. 23 – 24.

¹⁹⁴ Wilkinson and Hughes, 'Soldiering On', pp. 25 – 26.

¹⁹⁵ Laura Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', in *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, ed. by Amy K. Levin (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 105 – 114.

¹⁹⁶ Wilkinson and Hughes, 'Soldiering On'.

¹⁹⁷ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 111.

¹⁹⁸ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 111.

¹⁹⁹ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 105.

caregivers and supporters. . . [or] as sexual objects'.²⁰⁰ Of that small pool of female portraits, they depict women as 'nurses and administrations' – 'traditional roles'.²⁰¹ One exception is a portrait of Marion Pattison, who heroically saved a man's life by fighting a fire, for which she received the George Medal. But even then, her portrait managed to put her on a pedestal and objectify and sexualise her, as the artist depicted her 'as a cross between the Virgin Mary and a Hollywood wartime pin-up'.²⁰² Brandon acknowledged that 'the general exceptions have been areas where women's roles and work find equivalents in masculine occupations',²⁰³ suggesting that perceived 'defeminised' women, women who have strayed into the masculine world, are commonly represented in military museums, such as female munition factory workers.

Brandon recommended several ways in which CMC and other military museums could improve and increase representations of women: by exploring women's history through 'research, exhibitions, and publications';²⁰⁴ by actively collecting as well as re-categorising existing collections to 'identify gaps and be proactive in filling them';²⁰⁵ by challenging 'misperceptions and misunderstandings about the role of women in wartime';²⁰⁶ and by supporting and showcasing female artists whose work depicts war.²⁰⁷ Like Porter with social history collections, Brandon found flaws in the collecting and categorisation practices for military objects which excluded women and women's history. As Brandon discovered, due to 'the historical undervaluing of [women's] experiences as well as their marginalization from the dominant masculine discourse of war', women rarely donate objects to war museums as they 'do not identify their own material culture relating to war as significant to museum collections'.²⁰⁸ Brandon suggested that 'careful and less traditional cataloguing'²⁰⁹ can resolve this issue, along with retrospective research of

²⁰⁰ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 108.

²⁰¹ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 108.

²⁰² Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 108.

²⁰³ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', pp. 109 – 110.

²⁰⁴ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 112.

²⁰⁵ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 112.

²⁰⁶ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 112.

²⁰⁷ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 113.

²⁰⁸ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 111.

²⁰⁹ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 111

finding ‘uncover[ing] and identify[ing]’ the hidden histories of women in the existing collection.²¹⁰ In conclusion, Brandon said,

Until it is widely accepted that our understanding of war and the material culture of war is gendered, we will be only marginally further ahead. We can certainly collect the material culture pertaining to women and war, but unless we can pry out its meaning, we will have no insights, only sterile collections.²¹¹

Science-based displays, collections and museums, specifically those with a Natural History or archaeological focus, have been the focus of several studies into the representation of women and the female sex. Two studies demonstrate the continuing critical concern about these representations in these types of museums: Stig Sørensen’s examination of women in archaeological displays²¹² and Machin’s study of the gender in The Manchester Museum’s Natural History displays.²¹³ Gender representations in the field of archaeology and archaeological displays have been identified and critiqued over the past few decades. Ian Hodder wrote about feminist archaeologies in 1986, highlighting the sexual division of labour as viewed by archaeologists and portrayals of males as the ‘stronger, more aggressive, more dominant, more active and more important than women’.²¹⁴ Sian Jones and Sharon Pay in the early 1990s analysed specific archaeological displays and their language, and the historical topics and roles of women displayed in exhibits.²¹⁵ For example, they identified ‘women-as-victim imagery’ in the displays at Yorvik Viking Centre, York.²¹⁶

In a more recent critique of archaeological displays, Stig Sørensen found that the ‘role of women as mothers and housewives cooking and caring through (pre-) history’ were obscured and there was a ‘simultaneous downgrading of these activities’, represented as insignificant compared to the roles of men.²¹⁷ As previously explained in the ‘Historiography section’ in relation to WHAM!, Stig Sørensen was critical of the ‘focus upon visibility and the implied connection

²¹⁰ Brandon, ‘Looking for the ‘Total’ Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress’, p. 109.

²¹¹ Brandon, ‘Looking for the ‘Total’ Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress’, p. 113.

²¹² Stig Sørensen, ‘Archaeology, Gender and the Museum’.

²¹³ Machin, ‘Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum’.

²¹⁴ Ian Hodder, *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 159.

²¹⁵ Jones and Pay, ‘The Legacy of Eve’ in *The Politics of the Past*, pp. 160 – 171.

²¹⁶ Jones and Pay, ‘The Legacy of Eve’ in *The Politics of the Past*, p. 162.

²¹⁷ Stig Sørensen, ‘Archaeology, Gender and the Museum’, p. 140.

between visibility and significance' as 'Reconstructions of prehistoric scenes and exhibitions [were] now commonly assessed in terms of how many women and men are presented'.²¹⁸ According to Stig Sørensen, this narrow, limited and tokenistic approach created the scenario in which 'women may be prominently present in a display and yet still be missing from the interpretation'.²¹⁹ Stig Sørensen recommended that other ('subconscious') variables must be considered. Despite her criticism of archaeological and pre-history displays, Stig Sørensen did identify some European (non-UK) exhibitions that 'attempted to produce alternative gender-informed presentations of the past'. Successful approaches varied, from an acknowledgment of gaps in archaeological evidence relating to women signified by empty glass cases (as used in the Nydam exhibition in Germany), the incorporation of real experiences of women in a wider social and political context (as seen at the Wasamuseum in Sweden) to an unsuccessful representation of women's history in isolation (in the 'The Powerful Women: From Volve to Witch' exhibition at the Stavanger Museum in Norway).²²⁰

Machin's analysis of gender representations in Natural History displays at a museum is comparable to the study by Nancy Shoemaker published in *Gender and Society* in 1994 which analysed representations of race and gender at two American Natural History museums.²²¹ Machin identified a research gap, recognising that, aside from Shoemaker's study, there was 'little work linking the representation of women to the representation of females of other species (and humans) in natural history exhibits' compared to 'social history, anthropology, archaeology and art'.²²² Machin's study of the 'Gender Representations in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum' prompted an initiative (albeit temporary) to expose, redress and challenge the observed gender bias.²²³ The study revealed a significant

²¹⁸ Stig Sørensen, 'Archaeology, Gender and the Museum', p. 142.

²¹⁹ Stig Sørensen, 'Archaeology, Gender and the Museum', p. 140.

²²⁰ Stig Sørensen, 'Archaeology, Gender and the Museum', pp. 144 – 145.

²²¹ Shoemaker, 'The Natural History of Gender'.

²²² Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 187.

²²³ Machin originally published her study in 2008 in the journal *Museum and Society* and subsequently in the 2010 book *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*. The latter was primarily consulted for this literature review. See Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', *Museum and Society*, 6. 1 (2008), pp. 54 – 67, <<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumsociety/documents/volumes/machin.pdf>> [accessed 1 December 2014]; Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', in *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, pp. 187 – 200.

quantitative and qualitative gender bias towards male specimens. Machin concluded that 'Not only are females under-represented in the gallery displays in terms of numbers, but they are apparently regarded as less fit to represent their species than the males'.²²⁴ Machin argued that the posture and positioning of the specimens hierarchically puts the female specimens below or behind male specimens. Machin suggested that some of the older mounts, with the male specimens in dominant poses and female specimens in submissive poses, may reflect the (historic) societal conventions and 'patriarchal norms' of the time which influenced the taxidermist.²²⁵ Machin offered reasons for these findings, such as the historic gendered collecting of specimens (male specimens favoured over female specimens) and mounting preferences (influenced by societal gender norms). Many private collections of taxidermy were later donated to museums, so the preferences of the original collector may influence the museum's collections which they belong to now. One identified preference was that female specimens of birds and mammals are generally 'brownier, smaller, duller, uninteresting' compared to 'often brighter and more flamboyant' male specimens, therefore male specimens were collected more, resulting in more examples of male specimens in museum collections.²²⁶

While the historic displays themselves are subject to the 'historical constraints' of 'stereotypes and prejudices' of their time, Machin found that 'contemporary display techniques and decisions' (the narrative, language and graphics) actually reinforced the historic gender bias.²²⁷ Detailed analysis of the interpretive language indicated that females are represented as resources or possessions owned by the male of the species. This echoes Clark Smith's point about how interpretive language can be likened to a 'male conversation' in which women are degraded and objectified.²²⁸ Focussing on the words 'mother' and 'father', Machin argued that 'mother' is used regularly whereas 'father' is not used at times, querying why is it acceptable to use

²²⁴ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 192.

²²⁵ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 193.

²²⁶ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 191.

²²⁷ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', pp. 193 and 195.

²²⁸ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', p. 68.

the word 'mother' to describe female specimens, but not refer to male specimens as 'fathers'.²²⁹ She proposed that

Thus curious use of language perpetuates perhaps unintentionally, the idea that the role of females (including women) is to reproduce, while males (including men) are capable of this and everything else.²³⁰

The illustrative graphics and artistic reconstructions were also perceived to have an unnecessary gender bias. Machin identified that stereotypical depictions of 'man the hunter' with women in the background.²³¹

To remedy this gender bias, Machin staged an intervention during 2006's International Women's Week to address some of the identified issues and highlight gender issues to staff and visitors. This included demonstrating the 'sexual dimorphism of a species' by displaying specimens of both sexes.²³² A female specimen of an antelope was put on display and the several male specimens already on display were covered up to emphasis the gender bias of the case.²³³ Machin highlighted the hierarchy suggested by the posturing and positioning of male and female specimens by 'circling' examples 'to draw attention to display patterns that were entrenched in the displays and which might otherwise remain unnoticed and unchallenged by museum visitors'.²³⁴ Machin also enlarged specific 'value-laden' labels (which objectified females or made females possessions of males) and placed them directly in front of the exhibits for the visitors to see the sexism for themselves.²³⁵ Machin concluded that the 'distance of history' is no excuse for 'perpetuating gender myths'; these myths can be exposed by interventions and there

²²⁹ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 194.

²³⁰ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 194.

²³¹ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 194.

²³² Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 192.

²³³ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 192.

²³⁴ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 193.

²³⁵ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 195.

is a 'need to question gender-based assumptions when choosing specimens and interpretative methods in exhibition display'.²³⁶

Studies focussing on the representations of women in museums through the themes of work and domesticity will be treated together.²³⁷ For many, work and home life overlapped and were interlinked as some work duties and professions took place in the home as outwork, making domestic life and work life at times undistinguishable from one another (unless work was specifically undertaken in a separate setting, such as a factory or mill). This overlap is not recognised by museums, according to Carnegie, as they split 'domestic and working life categories, as if they were mutually exclusive'. She also pointed out that the unpaid labour of running a household should be considered work as well as paid work. She suggested that 'links need to be made between the two'; hence the treatment of the two themes together.

Some studies that were consulted analysed representations of women in historic homes. Critics are not against women being represented in a domestic setting but are concerned about this being the only representation of women. As Butler put it,

It is not that women necessarily need to come out of the kitchen, be it Georgian, Edwardian or MFI, but that they need to be truthfully represented in this sphere and their role in other spheres recognised, re-evaluated and reaffirmed.²³⁸

The publication *Restoring Women's History Through Historic Preservation* contains several articles that explored the representation and interpretation of women's history in American historic homes.²³⁹ Patricia West declared that 'the historic house museum . . . need[s] active revision in order to represent women's history'.²⁴⁰ She proposed that 'the task of revision requires nothing less than shifting the institution's field of vision in order to identify and dissolve existing barriers to meaningful

²³⁶ Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 198.

²³⁷ Carnegie, 'Trying to be an Honest Woman: Making Women's Histories', p. 59.

²³⁸ Beverley Butler, 'Virginia Woolf, Madonna and Me: Searching for Role-Models and Women's Presence in Museums and Heritage', p. 21.

²³⁹ Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman (eds.), *Restoring Women's History Through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

²⁴⁰ West, 'Uncovering and Interpreting Women's History at Historic House Museums', p. 83.

interpretation of women's history in house museums.²⁴¹ One such barrier is the perceived notion that to represent women's history is to politicise the 'politically neutral' museum or satisfy 'political correctness'.²⁴² On the contrary, West stated that the traditional interpretations of historic homes focussing on a male and elitist history of 'the great white male' 'is highly political', not apolitical.²⁴³ West refers to the historic 'feminine mystique' and 'cult of domesticity' as themes which traditional interpretation of women's history in museums and historic homes, when present, accent or emphasise.²⁴⁴ Mayo also criticised the approach taken by museums to exhibit women's history through 'male-defined categories'²⁴⁵ or 'preexisting historical categories developed by and about men',²⁴⁶ praising those that represented women in 'exhibits that transcend categories of gender',²⁴⁷ acknowledging 'the shared experiences of men and women as well as gender-defined experiences'.²⁴⁸

With a regional focus relevant to this research project, The Yorkshire Country House Partnership collaborated with academics and museum curators from seven Yorkshire-based country houses and historic homes to create a publication and series of exhibitions (displayed in 2004) to 'demonstrate that the country house was, and is, a place where women played an active and important role' and 'to explore the role that women played in these buildings, uncovering both their private lives and their public personas'.²⁴⁹ As Ruth Larsen argued, prior to the project, it was 'difficult to discover what it was [women] did in the buildings' as women 'appear[ed] only as beauties on the wall'. She did however acknowledge that some museums attempted to represent the women of these houses beyond the male gaze;

²⁴¹ West, 'Uncovering and Interpreting Women's History at Historic House Museums', p. 83.

²⁴² West, 'Uncovering and Interpreting Women's History at Historic House Museums', p. 83.

²⁴³ West, 'Uncovering and Interpreting Women's History at Historic House Museums', p. 83.

²⁴⁴ West, 'Uncovering and Interpreting Women's History at Historic House Museums', p. 85.

²⁴⁵ Mayo, 'Putting Women in Their Place: Methods and Sources for Including Women's History in Museums and Historic Sites', p. 114.

²⁴⁶ Mayo, 'Putting Women in Their Place: Methods and Sources for Including Women's History in Museums and Historic Sites', pp. 113 – 114.

²⁴⁷ Mayo, 'Putting Women in Their Place: Methods and Sources for Including Women's History in Museums and Historic Sites', pp. 117.

²⁴⁸ Mayo, 'Putting Women in Their Place: Methods and Sources for Including Women's History in Museums and Historic Sites', p. 118.

²⁴⁹ Larsen, Ruth M., 'Introduction: 'Secret Springs' – Unlocking the Historic Histories of the Women of the Yorkshire Country House' in *Maids & Mistresses: Celebrating 300 Years of Women and the Yorkshire Country House*, ed. by Ruth M Larsen, (York: The Yorkshire Country House Partnership, 2004), pp. 1 – 34 (p. 1).

While, in some instances laundries, kitchens and other service areas have recently been opened to the public, the nature of the lives of both servants and chatelaines who inhabited them have been largely ignored.²⁵⁰

Porter's 1990 publication, meanwhile, presented an exploration of gender bias within representations of work in history museums.²⁵¹ This is relevant to several museum displays analysed in this study which represent 'work' environments, such as the shop displays and Widow Washer Woman's House at Abbey House Museum and the prison staff at Ripon Museum Trust's Prison and Police Museum. Porter selected the theme of 'work' to explore as she identified it as 'an area of special concern in women's history, and it is covered in all history museums'. She was critical of industrial museums for focussing too much on the 'process of productive or extractive industry', often ignoring or minimalising the social history attached to industrial histories. This point is very similar to Wilkinson and Hughes' criticism of military museums focussing on the objects (content) and not incorporating social history (context). According to Porter, when industrial museums did include a 'human element', this was very minimal and often favoured the 'male preserve', excluding women. This 'human element', when present, usually came in the form of 'a general socio-historical introduction and may also include a small section on wages and working conditions'. Porter stated that this 'social history is added on as an afterthought'.

Porter noted areas of work and industry in which women are and are not represented within history museums; women are represented, she argued, in 'spheres of domesticity, reproduction and consumption'. She observed that women in smaller industrial museums were 'entirely confined to domestic and shop settings, as consumers, assistants and housewives'. By contrast, men were represented 'at ease in the world of work and of technology'. Porter was left with the impression that '[Men] design and control technologies; women are the passive objects and operators' with the role of women as workers 'trivialise[d]'. Some museums represented women 'as the dexte[r]ous and long-suffering assistants to skilled husbands and others'.²⁵² This echoes Stig Sørensen's point about women in

²⁵⁰ Larsen, 'Introduction: 'Secret Springs' – Unlocking the Historic Histories of the Women of the Yorkshire Country House', p. 1.

²⁵¹ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

²⁵² Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

museums being represented as ‘observers’ to history in contrast to the agency assigned to men.²⁵³ Contrasting this, Porter did note a few cases in which represented women were not passive observers, but nonetheless they were represented as ‘exceptions, even amusing curiosities’.²⁵⁴ This assessment will be drawn on for the ‘domestic’ case study displays, such as the Widow Washer Woman’s House at Abbey House Museum and the Master and Matron’s Quarters at Ripon Museum Trust’s Workhouse Museum.

Porter analysed the language used in displays to interpret and represent women in displays to unpick the message that they, consciously and unconsciously, gave visitors. A label Porter observed at Leeds Industrial Museum in the stitching section derogatively commented on arrangement of the tables which enabled the women to ‘chat’ whilst working. Porter noted that ‘similar arrangements in male or mixed working areas pass without comment’.²⁵⁵ A recent visit to this museum site proved that over two decades after Porter made this observation, the label remains. As Figure 2 and Figure 3 illustrate,²⁵⁶ the interpretive label for the Machining exhibit says, ‘Originally the women worked side by side on long benches which allowed them to chat whilst they sewed.’ However, the interpretation for the Lay-Up Table exhibit (Figure 4 and Figure 5)²⁵⁷ suggests a similar layout with tables side by side; however, it does not comment on the men’s ability to talk whilst working.

Porter suggested a few reasons as to why the representation of women’s work history is ‘patchy and incomplete’ in history museums. The issue regarding the lack of object donations by women to museums was raised.²⁵⁸ Another issue raised by Porter related to class differences and the longevity of material culture. Objects belonging to higher classes have survived better than working class material culture, as higher classes ‘had the space and resources to store them.’ Porter drew attention to the fact that ‘The objects which reach our collections are generally those which have survived through abundance, or superiority and permanence of materials and construction’. These objects ‘are the legacy of more prosperous individuals and groups’. Therefore, there are fewer surviving working-class and work-related social

²⁵³ Stig Sørensen, ‘Archaeology, Gender and the Museum’ p. 139.

²⁵⁴ Porter, ‘Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums’.

²⁵⁵ Porter, ‘Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums’.

²⁵⁶ Figures 2 and 3, p. 171.

²⁵⁷ Figures 4 and 5, p. 172.

²⁵⁸ Porter, ‘Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums’.

history materials for both sexes for museums to add to their collections. To exemplify this, Porter explained how the apron of a female domestic servant would have been used as such: then, when no longer acceptable, it would be recycled into cleaning cloths. Work dresses under the aprons would be no different to non-work dresses and would be 'cut down and sewn into patchwork quilts' when no longer wearable. Servants' clothing that exists in museum collections tend to be from 'more formal uniformed staff of larger households, where servants (and employers) had established positions, with defined and specialised duties, clothes and tools', such as servants of the upper class. This, however, does not represent 'the majority (about two-thirds [of women engaged in domestic service]) who worked as general servants in households which could barely afford to employ them.'²⁵⁹

Porter also argued that the nature of women's work makes it difficult to represent large collections as much of it was un-apprenticed, 'casual or seasonal'. Women worked intermittently before marriage, in-between children, around running a household, and caring for family members. Often women worked from home as 'outworkers', taking in laundry, burling and mending cloth or making clothes. Porter stated that 'For women, the divisions between paid and unpaid, home and work, were blurred.' This blurriness makes it difficult for museums to identify representations of women's work in the collections; objects which could represent work are often used to represent domesticity instead. For example, a dolly or mangle (used for washing) would have been used for domestic purposes for the family's laundry to be washed but could also have been used by women to do the washing of another family as a source of employment and income. As a result, Porter found that

Domestic displays rarely suggest the range of activities typical in the living room of most households and few (if any) make reference with objects or words to productive work in the home.²⁶⁰

Porter also discussed collections classifications methods (MERL and SHIC) used in museums at the time. Porter noted how these methods 'treated [housework] differently from 'real work', and women's work is concealed and subsumed under other categories' as 'language and concepts separate the domestic sphere from the sphere of work and by implication, domestic work becomes not-work.' Porter gave the example of SHIC's classifying of 'articles and activities in the domestic sphere

²⁵⁹ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

²⁶⁰ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

[which] are associated with men' as Working Life, whereas 'Where work is done by women, it is usually ascribed to domestic life'.²⁶¹ This suggests that a revision of museum practice regarding categorising and classifying work, industrial and/or domestic objects is required. Brandon identified the same issue with military collections and their categorisation and made the same recommendation about approaching the classification of objects differently.²⁶² These issues that Porter outlined in combination make it harder for museums to collect, preserve and display work-related women's history. The interviews of museum professionals at the case study museum sites for this study highlights similar issues around collections material culture relating to women's history more generally.

Porter criticised Bradford Industrial Museum with its neglect of the working-class, and working-class women specifically. She noted how it chose

to display the house and parlour of the mill manager, although the mill workers were far more significant numerically. The conspicuous leisure of the middle-class woman is emphasized, but not its corollary, the labouring women in the mill on the one hand, and the domestic staff on the other.²⁶³

Since this article's publication, Bradford Industrial Museum has incorporated the history of 'labouring women'. The mill manager's house uses the kitchen and 'bare maid's bedroom' to represent the life of a female domestic servant.²⁶⁴ The textile galleries do incorporate social history showing the various work-related laws and legislations that affected men, women and children and first-hand accounts of workers experiences in the mills (of both sexes and different ages). While these displays may on first impression replicate Porter's disliked and criticised displays of a 'general socio-historical introduction and. . . small section on wages and working conditions',²⁶⁵ on the contrary, I know as a project assistant on the redevelopment of the textile galleries at Bradford Industrial Museum,²⁶⁶ the incorporation of social

²⁶¹ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

²⁶² Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress',. 110 – 111.

²⁶³ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

²⁶⁴ Bradford Museums and Galleries, 'Bradford Industrial Museum', Guidebook, [post 2010], p. 37.

²⁶⁵ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

²⁶⁶ When I started working for Bradford Museums in 2010 as a casual museum assistant, I assigned as a project assistant on the redevelopment of several galleries at Bradford Industrial Museum, including the textile galleries. My role (along a team) consisted of researching, designing and writing interpretation panels, redisplaying exhibits, and introducing interpretive methods and techniques with

history was central to the redevelopment of the galleries. It was not an ‘afterthought’ or a late addition, but rather a planned and crucial theme. The row of three back-to-back terrace houses also at Bradford Industrial Museum replicate what home-life was like for the working class in Bradford in 1875, 1942 and 1975.²⁶⁷ The 1875 house represents how the wife, Rachel, ‘was a seamstress working from home’. Her home-based trade is illustrated in the ‘parlour show[ing] the tools of Rachel’s trade and. . . the first floor bedroom would have doubled as a fitting room for her client.’²⁶⁸ Therefore there have been significant changes to the representation of working-class history generally, and working-class women’s history specifically, at Bradford Industrial Museum since Porter critiqued it decades earlier.

Women in Industry and Technology presented several papers which explored representations of women’s work history, particularly within industry-focussed museums, including Sue Werner and Su Jones’ paper on Forge Mill Needle Museum²⁶⁹ and Rosemary Preece’s on the National Coalmining Museum.²⁷⁰ Both papers looked at the difficulties of incorporating women’s history into displays about a male-dominated industry and outlined attempts to redress gender bias. Werner and Jones acknowledged that the Forge Mill’s existing displays tended to represent workers as male and excluded female workers all together. They outlined an implemented strategy to address the gender bias ‘through some of [their] temporary exhibitions and [their] educational and outreach work’.²⁷¹ These were temporary interventions, put in place to supplement the existing displays until funds became available to refurbish displays and incorporate women’s history permanently.²⁷² Similarly, Preece in her paper outlined efforts at the National Coalmining Museum (NCM) to incorporate women’s history into displays about a predominantly-male industry. Preece gave a detailed history of women working in the coalmining industry, including women’s experiences before and after the legislation (the 1842 Mines and Colliery Act) which prevented women from working underground and limited them to surface work, to the decline of women in the industry in the twentieth

a focus on school children and families. I re-joined Bradford Museums and Galleries in 2018 as Assistant Curator of Industrial and Social History based at Bradford Industrial Museum.

²⁶⁷ Bradford Museums, ‘Bradford Industrial Museum’, Guidebook, [post 2010], p. 31.

²⁶⁸ Bradford Museums, ‘Bradford Industrial Museum’, Guidebook, [post 2010], pp. 31 – 32.

²⁶⁹ Werner and Jones, ‘Forge Mill Needle Museum and Women in the Needle Industry’.

²⁷⁰ Preece, “Equal to Half a Man’: Women in the Coalmining Industry’.

²⁷¹ Werner and Jones, ‘Forge Mill Needle Museum and Women in the Needle Industry’, p. 145.

²⁷² Werner and Jones, ‘Forge Mill Needle Museum and Women in the Needle Industry’, p. 153.

century.²⁷³ Preece drew attention to the 'hidden army of women' who did not necessarily work in the coalmining industry themselves but were part of the wider coalmining community.²⁷⁴ Preece explained how these women

are only seen as glimpses, their lives wound around coalmining, involved but apart. Women's faces during strikes and lockouts. . . Women standing at the pithead, waiting for news after roof falls and explosions. . . Women appearing at local galas and celebrations . . . Women were even used as incentives for safer working practices.²⁷⁵

The latter 'glimpse' was exemplified by Preece who illustrated the point with a safety poster in the NCM's collection. The poster had a woman on it and the slogan 'Isolate – To see me again', sexualising and objectifying women.²⁷⁶

Preece acknowledged the voiceless 'working men and women' whose story, lives, and experiences are difficult to represent in museum collections and displays, due to the lack of material evidence.²⁷⁷ This echoes Porter's point about the lack of working-class objects in collections.²⁷⁸ As Preece surmised, 'Museums are about objects, but for women and coalmining there are few objects which have any relevance to their lives'.²⁷⁹ She also highlighted that the coalmining industry and community had very traditional views about gender roles. She noted how

Women have been assigned a peripheral or complementary role, as providers of sons and meals, washers of clothes at home, cleaners and secretaries at work.²⁸⁰

Andrea Taziker carried out an extensive survey of industrial museums in England to assess their portrayal of women, visiting 'at least eighty-five industrial museums around the country'.²⁸¹ Her paper 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museums' revealed her findings.²⁸² Taziker found women's history in industrial museums was side-lined in favour of that of men, and, when present, was represented inaccurately. Upon reflecting on her findings, Taziker

²⁷³ Preece, 'Equal to Half a Man': Women in the Coalmining Industry', pp. 155 – 159.

²⁷⁴ Preece, 'Equal to Half a Man': Women in the Coalmining Industry', p. 159.

²⁷⁵ Preece, 'Equal to Half a Man': Women in the Coalmining Industry', p. 159.

²⁷⁶ Preece, 'Equal to Half a Man': Women in the Coalmining Industry', p. 159.

²⁷⁷ Preece, 'Equal to Half a Man': Women in the Coalmining Industry', p. 159.

²⁷⁸ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

²⁷⁹ Preece, 'Equal to Half a Man': Women in the Coalmining Industry', p. 159.

²⁸⁰ Preece, 'Equal to Half a Man': Women in the Coalmining Industry', p. 160.

²⁸¹ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 163.

²⁸² Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum'.

asked 'Where was the portrayal of the harsh realities of their history?'.²⁸³ She found 'sterile', 'comfortable' representations of women which ignored and brushed over the harsh reality of working-class living and working.²⁸⁴ She reported on the numerous 'women sitting by the fire knitting almost without exception accompanied by a stuffed cat' (see Figure 6)²⁸⁵ in cottage interiors whilst she

looked in vain for the woman boiling water to fill the tin bath for the miner returning from the pit, for endless struggle bear and keep alive large families in cramped, overcrowded conditions on near starvation rations.²⁸⁶

Taziker pointed out how 'Many museums have attempted to show the human side of industry' but this was limited to 'the lives of the male 'worker''.²⁸⁷ This can be connected to Bennett's point about 'human universality' in which very a one-sided version of history (the 'story of Man') is presented ignoring diverse human experiences.²⁸⁸

These museums interpret representations of women, when present, through the 'household material . . . [and] in some cases with the additions of a back yard – with privy – and occasionally an entire building such as a miner's cottage'.²⁸⁹ Taziker was critical of these representations using household materials as 'Such collections do not seem to be taken seriously' as they lack detailed collection policy as objects 'dribble' into the museum creating a collection with 'little academic rigour'.²⁹⁰ She had observed cottages furnished with objects from different time periods and of different costs with little or no interpretation. She added that the right objects were displayed in some cases, such as the 'artefacts the women bought, made, used, the women's tools and implements', but '[i]n the interpretation of such collections the female role is often a ghost to the over-emphasised reality of the "male worker" who lived there'. She found that women were 'always on the periphery, their role negated by the over-emphasised role of the male worker'.²⁹¹ Even living history approaches fuel this distorted representation of women's history, in her opinion. The women interpreters

²⁸³ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 163.

²⁸⁴ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 163.

²⁸⁵ Figure 6, p. 173.

²⁸⁶ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 163.

²⁸⁷ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 164.

²⁸⁸ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, p. 91.

²⁸⁹ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 164.

²⁹⁰ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 164.

²⁹¹ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 166.

at the sites Taziker visited were 'usually sitting by the fire, knitting, embroidering, making rope-bottom shoes, baking biscuits and cakes'. However, these tasks (or rather the laid-back pace of them) suggest a 'life of relative leisure'; Taziker argued that 'They do not reflect the hard, backbreaking work that it took to simply keep a family alive, fed and clothed.'²⁹²

Many of coal-mining museums she visited also failed to represent women as workers in the industry, while those they did failed to interpret adequately such representations.²⁹³ Textile museums represented women workers 'in the background' whilst men took centre stage in displays about male inventors and workers.²⁹⁴ Open-air museums, such as Beamish Museum, represented women mostly as 'shop assistants, mostly under the watchful eye of the male supervisor . . . perform[ing] the servile and menial jobs'.²⁹⁵ Taziker expressed her concern that such inaccurate and biased representations of women will be taken as reality by visitors and 'will become the future memories of female participants in industry'.²⁹⁶

These studies over the last few decades have painted a picture of the representations of women and gender over time and in museums of different types. They have also provided a variety of analytical methods, tools, and lenses which can be applied in the fieldwork and subsequent analysis of this research project. Overall, the studies indicated that representations of women more generally are tokenistic, stereotypical, distorted, limited and limiting, both under- and mis-representing women. As some scholars demonstrated, displays with particular themes or specific collections on display have un-nuanced representations of women in stock roles: for example Wilkinson and Hughes identified the stock roles of 'nurse, whore or domestic servant' for women in military museum displays²⁹⁷ while Porter described the stock roles of 'consumers, assistants and housewives' in 'domestic and shop settings'.²⁹⁸ Reasons for these representations have been suggested, such as the sex of the curator, consciously and subconsciously, influencing collections and

²⁹² Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 166.

²⁹³ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', pp. 167 - 168.

²⁹⁴ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 168.

²⁹⁵ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 168.

²⁹⁶ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', p. 169.

²⁹⁷ Wilkinson and Hughes, 'Soldiering On', pp. 25 - 26.

²⁹⁸ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

display decisions, a lack of women's material culture in museum collections and the misclassification of women's material culture when it is present in museum collections. But what does this body of literature suggest about representations of Victorian women specifically in contemporary museum displays in light of this research project?

Domestic displays about Victorian women may, as West found in American historic houses, perpetuate or re-enforce the ideology of the Victorian separate spheres, the 'cult of domesticity'²⁹⁹ and angel-of-the-home myth – the cultural verisimilitude attached to Victorian women's history. As a result, Taziker's 'sitting, knitting and serving' motif – both as physical reality and metaphorically in terms of representing women as passive observers of history as opposed to active agents – may be a frequent representation of Victorian women in museum displays. The Victorian icon of the female helpmeet may be a repeated stock role or familiar trope in work and industrial displays about Victorian women, with no or little reference to autonomous women or women outside this stereotype.

These past studies have built a solid foundation for this research to build upon by offering lines of enquiry and observation for this research, more generally and specifically. Past studies suggest that representations of Victorian women's history may be physically and metaphorically in the background of displays with Victorian men and their history being at the fore-front and the foci of museum displays. There may be a difference between the representation of Victorian women in temporary and permanent displays, with temporary exhibitions utilising new scholarship and research about Victorian women, whereas historic permanent museum displays continue to present a very dated version or interpretation of Victorian women's history. The narrative of Victorian women's history may be simplistic, one-dimensional, and generalised, neglecting the complexities, intricacies and variances of experience for women across Victorian society. Porter's research into the difference between collecting material culture in terms of sex/gender and class suggests that there may be a lack of Victorian women's material culture in museum collections and, when Victorian women's material culture is collected, significant discrepancies between the representation of Victorian working class, middle class

²⁹⁹ West, 'Uncovering and Interpreting Women's History at Historic House Museums', p. 83.

and upper class women, due to the identified lack of working class material in collections.³⁰⁰ The fieldwork and subsequent linguistic and visual analysis of museum displays at case study museum sites explores the representations of Victorian women to determine whether they are ‘honest and fair’ or ‘passive and shallow’ representations.

With these past studies at the root of it, this study and its examination of the textual and visual components of museum displays at the case study sites will act as a litmus test, or a temperature check, to offer an indication of where exactly the museum industry is in terms of representing women’s history, through the lens of the relatively unexplored Victorian women’s history. Do the museum displays suggest that they are still at the ‘add and stir’ stage, are conscious and active steps being taken to address and redress some of the past problematic displays or are they at the aspirational stage Levin is advocating for 21st century museums to be aiming for? This study will realise some of the practicalities and reasons for such representations, and recommend some steps and changes that, if needed, advance museum displays forward towards more ‘honest and fair’ representations of Victorian women.

³⁰⁰ Porter, ‘Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums’.

(iv) Methodology

This methodology section will identify the project's key aim and research questions, outline the primary research methodology, detail potential issues and present some of the analytical tools that will be specifically applied for the analysis of the museum displays.

The aim of the research project was to explore representations of Victorian women in contemporary museum displays in the Yorkshire and the Humber region through two case studies; the Victorian Streets exhibit at Abbey House Museum (Leeds Museums and Galleries) and Ripon Museum Trust's three museum sites – Courthouse Museum, Prison and Police Museum, and the Courthouse Museum. The main research questions were:

- (1) How are Victorian women represented in contemporary museum displays?
- (2) Why are Victorian women represented in this way?
- (3) What challenges or barriers do contemporary museums face when representing Victorian women in museum displays?
- (4) What can be done to include/improve representations of Victorian women in contemporary museum displays?

These research questions were investigated with a dual approach of museum display analysis and interviewing museum professionals. Ethnographic observations of museum displays at the case study sites and subsequent analysis of these observations and findings took place. Interviews of museum professionals about the specific museum displays, and wider curatorial practice at the museum and heritage site, provided an insight into the curatorial decisions and issues behind the displays and bring to light institution-specific, and wider industry/sector, challenges and barriers of representing Victorian women in museum displays. One outcome of this project is to raise awareness on a small scale about representations of Victorian women, women more generally, potential gender bias, and inequalities in the museum displays at the case study museum sites. However, it is hoped that the long-term outcome of this project is that, on a wider scale, it encourages many more museums to reconsider, rethink, and redisplay, improving their representations Victorian women specifically and women more generally.

The overall primary research methodology, for both the museum display analysis and interviews, was qualitative. As explained in the Literature Review, early studies exploring portrayals of women in museum displays and collections were criticised for applying the quantitative approach of ‘counting women’.³⁰¹ As a result, a qualitative approach has been used for this research project, allowing a wider and broader investigation. However, this qualitative approach also has its limitations. In reference to past studies, Stig Sørensen noted limitations of assessing gender representations in terms of ‘fairness. . . truthful[ness]. . . unjust[ness]. . . bias’, as though ‘there was some objective account to compare against’.³⁰² How can one measure or judge fairness and bias objectively? Therefore, this must be acknowledged that this method produces subjective rather than objective results.

For the project’s display analysis research, an ethnographical approach was deemed the most appropriate, as it allowed the researcher to immerse himself or herself in the observed environment, in this case, the museums and their exhibits to observe the displays. The case study method was selected as it would allow detailed observations in context and in-depth analysis, whereas a broader survey of sites would provide shallower, limited data. A non-random sampling technique (purposive sampling) was used to select the museums for the case studies. This sampling ensured that the case study museum displays met the case study criteria: the case study museum display had to be within the Yorkshire and Humber region and the museum display had to represent an element or elements of our Victorian past. As the criteria do not specifically require the museum display to have a representation of a Victorian woman, this may have produced case studies in which the museum space does not have any representations of Victorian women. As the case study analysis and findings will demonstrate, the absence of representations of Victorian women in museum displays is just as interesting and worth analysing as the presence of representations of Victorian women. As this research project utilised feminist and gender discourse, while the primary focus is on representations of Victorian women, representations of Victorian men were also acknowledged, noting similarities, differences, and relationships between the way sex/gender are represented. When using gender as a tool for analysis, one cannot look at one sex

³⁰¹ Stig Sørensen, ‘Archaeology, Gender and the Museum’, p. 141.

³⁰² Stig Sørensen, ‘Archaeology, Gender and the Museum’, p. 142.

or gender in isolation without the other. Previous studies, presented in the Literature Review, used gender as an analytical tool or framework and analysed representations of both sexes/genders and the dichotomy between them.

As part of the case study sample, the selected case study museum sites were: Abbey House Museum, Leeds Museums and Galleries, and the three sites run by Ripon Museum Trust – the Courthouse Museum, the Workhouse Museum, and Prison and Police Museum. There are many museums and heritage sites in the Yorkshire and Humber region which met this criterion and could have been used as case study sites. There are several reasons why Abbey House Museum and Ripon Museum Trust sites were specifically selected. Much research has been conducted on national and local authority museums over the years, so it was important to consider an under-researched museum type or site, such as the Ripon Museum Trust sites. The Ripon Museum Trust sites offer a stark contrast to Abbey House Museum, in terms of governance, how they operate and the types of history they represent. The Ripon Museum Trust sites are independent charity museums relying on donations, external grants and its own income generation. After slowly gaining momentum over the last few decades, the Trust, and therefore the sites, have seen rapid growth in recent years. It relies heavily on volunteers, both front of house in terms of running the museums but also behind the scenes conducting research. The themes that these museums and their displays cover can be broadly described as law and order. Due to a lack of material culture, Ripon Museum Trust focuses on the historic spaces which the museums occupy. Contrastingly, Abbey House Museum, a local authority-funded museum, has had consistent and generous funding for decades from Leeds City Council as well as external funders. It has a broad, thorough and wide-ranging collection of displayed objects. It has a large team of specialist paid staff undertaking both front of house and behind the scenes roles, whose work is then enhanced and supported by volunteers.³⁰³ The Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum represent the broad themes of retail/shopping and domesticity. It was decided that this contrast of Ripon Museum Trust museums with a focus on law and order and Leeds Museums' Abbey House Museum with a focus on domesticity and shopping would allow wider issues to be explored, such as how

³⁰³ Part II (ii) of the thesis presents these case studies in much more detail which brings the differences to light.

Victorian women are represented across a range of themes and the impact on the representations due to museum funding, their ability to conduct research and refurbish displays.

First-hand ethnographic observations were made of specific museum displays and exhibits within these case study museum sites. Repeat visits were necessary for some sites to collect more data. The elements of the museum displays' components to be observed and analysed encompass and are not limited to textual, visual and audio interpretation, material culture, reproduced images, graphics, and exhibit names. Essentially, any representation, communicative and interpretive tool, method, technique or intervention used in that museum display to convey the display's message, narrative and information was observed during that field visit.³⁰⁴ To evidence the observations made and its subsequent analysis, a visual record was created through rudimentary maps of the museum spaces' layout and photographs were taken of the museum displays. The analysis of the data collected from the display observations, along with the information gleaned from the interviews, is structured and presented using the following headings or categories: textual analysis (Chapter 1) and visual analysis (Chapter 2).

Three museum professionals who were working at the case study museum sites at the time were interviewed as part of the primary research. This allowed an exploration and discussion about the challenges or barriers that the museum specifically, and museums more widely, face when representing Victorian women in museum displays and collections. This enhanced the research as the interviews gave an opportunity for issues to be explored and discussed which museum display analysis may not note or identify, such as curatorial, practical, and logistical decisions and issues. Purposive sampling was used again to select particular individuals. The interviews were semi-structured, with pre-determined and open-ended questions or lines of enquiry, some which were generalised and other more specific according to the interviewee and case study museum display. Interviews were recorded (via a Dicta-phone device) and notes taken. The interview recordings

³⁰⁴ This draws upon the semiotic and multimodal analyses of museum displays that were presented in the 'Introduction to Theoretical Terrains' section as this approach acknowledges the wide range of communication methods museums displays utilise, such as the interpretive language, graphics, objects etc.

were transcribed for use in this research project. The interview lines of enquiry included:

- An enquiry into reasons why Victorian women were excluded or included in the case study museum display at their museum site;
- A discussion about curatorial issues and barriers with representing Victorian women;
- A conversation about old/historic museum displays;
- An enquiry to any future plans to refurbish or reinterpret the museum displays, whether and how Victorian women may be represented in those displays;
- An opportunity for them to share their professional experiences of and opinions about curating, displaying and interpreting Victorian women (or women more generally).

It must be acknowledged that this fieldwork for the display analysis and interview strand of the research had potential issues, which were addressed and minimised. These issues included: bias, consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and health and safety. To minimise bias, museum sites at which I have previously worked at were not used as a case study due to potential bias with the analysis and findings. Museum professionals with whom I had a professional relationship were not interviewed for the research project. To conduct the fieldwork to collect data for the museum display analysis, informed consent was sought from the relevant persons (such as the site manager or local authority museums service manager) to use the museum as a case study. Consent was sought from the museum site's relevant person to make sure that photographs could be taken and used for academic and research purposes, in accordance with the museum's photograph policy or with special permission. Informed consent was requested of interviewees also. Interviewees and the person giving consent on behalf of the museums' management were permitted to reserve the right to withdraw participation at any time. If they do withdraw consent, the data collected would not be used and would be destroyed. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the project. If at any time during the interviews, the interviewer or interviewee felt that confidentiality may be breached, both could have exercised the right to suspend the interview and rearrange it. All data collected was securely stored to maintain confidentiality. Data

will be destroyed seven years after collection. Anonymity was offered to interviewees upon request. Whilst conducting the fieldwork, health and safety policies at the museum sites were followed. For interviews that took place at the interviewees' place of work or a public space, health and safety policies at that establishment were followed.

Analysis of case study museum displays focused on their 'language', both written and unwritten, and how they produced meaning regarding their representation of Victorian women. The textual analysis explores the written language, such as exhibition and exhibit titles and the interpretive text, and the representations of Victorian women through the historical information presented and word choices. For the textual analysis, *The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers* was consulted to provide some guidelines and framework to identify 'linguistic sexism'.³⁰⁵ This was specifically chosen as it was written to aid professionals with their writing. It therefore complements the practical approach and strand of this research project. While there are in-house style guides, handbooks for museum professionals and even workshops about writing museum text, these tend to focus on elements such as typography, paragraph structure, word length of sentences, paragraphs and labels, average reading age of audiences, and tone or style of voice. The majority do not focus on nuanced language, historical information choices and how to interpret and represent sex or gender. Interestingly, as its relevant to one of the case studies, a guide for text interpretation by Leeds Museums and Galleries does advise to '[a]void gender bias in terms of direct language and stereotyping. For example, avoid referring to a stuffed animal as 'he' if we don't know if the animal is male or female'.³⁰⁶ But no further detail or guidance about how to avoid gender bias or to represent gender is provided other than this example.

Visual analysis focused on the visual components of the displays – the reproduced images and material culture. Visual analysis which can be perceived as semiotic analysis, explored the unwritten language or "language" . . . in a much wider

³⁰⁵ Casey Miller and Kate Swift, *The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, ed. by Kate Moose, 3rd British edition (London: Women's Press Ltd, 1995), p. 1.

³⁰⁶ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'A practical guide to text interpretation', p. 7
<<https://www.museumdevelopmentyorkshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Practical-guide-for-text-interpretation-2017.pdf>> [accessed 13 September 2019].

sense'.³⁰⁷ As Stuart Hall explains, an 'Exhibition or display in a museum or gallery can also be thought of as a 'language', since it uses objects on display to produce certain meanings about the subject-matter of the exhibition'.³⁰⁸ In the absence of written words and alongside them, the displayed objects and non-textual components of exhibits, such as reproduced images, are media 'to express or communicate a thought, a concept, idea or feeling'.³⁰⁹ Henrietta Lidchi refers to the semiotics of exhibiting as 'the poetics of exhibiting'; 'the practice of producing meaning through the internal ordering and conjugation of the separate but related components of an exhibition'.³¹⁰ The binary of this is 'the politics of exhibiting' which explores 'the role of exhibitions/museums in the production of social *knowledge*', centring on the 'broader issues of knowledge and power'.³¹¹ As summarised by Hall, the poetics or '*semiotic* approach is concerned with the *how* of representation, with how language produces meaning', whereas the politics or 'discursive approach is more concerned with the *effects and consequences* of representation'.³¹² In the display analysis for this research, structured as textual and visual analyses, there will be distinctive sections purely of a linguistic, (semiotic) poetics or (discursive) politics approach, but there are also a overlap or combination of the approaches as well. A single element could be analysed or read linguistically or textually, visually, poetically and/or politically. The visual and material culture on display was analysed to see how the museum has 'recontextualised' the image or object, as Dudley put it, by looking at how the museum has 'attributed to particular meanings and values' to it.³¹³ As Jenny Kidd, a cultural academic, reminded us, 'museums turn "things" into "objects"', 'a process that is infused with power as layers of interpretation and significance are attached to what then becomes as "artefact"'.³¹⁴ Kidd explained that it is the context in which objects are displayed, with other objects and interpretive methods, that come together to tell the story – one which may have a 'cultural or political narrative'

³⁰⁷ Stuart Hall, 'Introduction', *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1997), pp. 1 – 11 (p. 4).

³⁰⁸ Hall, 'Introduction', p. 5.

³⁰⁹ Hall, 'Introduction', p. 4.

³¹⁰ Henrietta Lidchi, 'The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures', *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, pp. 151 – 208 (p. 168).

³¹¹ Lidchi, 'The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures', pp. 184 – 185.

³¹² Hall, 'Introduction', p. 6.

³¹³ Dudley, 'Introduction: Museums and Things', pp. 1 – 2.

³¹⁴ Jenny Kidd, *Representation* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 119.

or fail to 'engage with the complexity' of the object.³¹⁵ When analysing the material culture on display, while individual objects were studied in terms of what they are and any details about their history and provenance, the wider narrative that they are part of and come together to represent was considered as well.

Many of the studies discussed in the Literature Review implicitly influenced and shaped the approach of this study, the structure and implementation of the analysis. For example, the studies which focussed on interpretive text and how women are represented linguistically influenced the textual analysis. Clark Smith demonstrated how subtle word and phrase choices in interpretive text can (unconsciously) sexualise, degrade and downgrade women,³¹⁶ while Porter found that the interpretive language at her case study museum sites stereotyped, ridiculed, and at times infantilised women.³¹⁷ Studies that investigated visual aspects of museum displays shaped the visual analysis. For example, Stig Sørensen and Machin examined the portrayal and depiction of women in archaeological and Natural History display graphics, respectively, and noted how they reinforced gender bias, inequality and stereotypes.³¹⁸ Other researchers examined material culture in museum collection, such as Porter's study into representations of work in history museums.³¹⁹ This highlighted the practice of women's work-related objects been wrongly categorised and then subsequently interpreted as domestic or leisure objects by museums.³²⁰

It must be acknowledged that another strand of this research project could have analysed how museum visitors interact with, perceive or understand the representations of Victorian women in the displays at the case study sites. This could have been conducted through ethnographic observations of visitors, visitor interviews, and quantitative and qualitative visitor surveys. Whilst this was considered at the start of this research project, it was felt that this would generate too much primary research and data which could not be adequately analysed and explained in this thesis alongside the rest of the research. A decision was made to

³¹⁵ Kidd, *Representation*, pp. 121 and 123

³¹⁶ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', p. 68.

³¹⁷ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

³¹⁸ Stig Sørensen, 'Archaeology, Gender and the Museum', p. 143; Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at The Manchester Museum', p. 194.

³¹⁹ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

³²⁰ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

focus on investigating the textual and visual representations in museum displays and to consider representations of Victorian women from a museum point of view as opposed to a visitor point of view. How visitors interact with representations of Victorian women, and the Victorian past more generally, in contemporary museum displays would make an interesting post-doctoral or follow-up project to this.

This approach to the primary research not only generated some thorough and in-depth analysis of textual and visual elements of the museum displays on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum and the three Ripon Museum Trust sites, but also explored the rationale and reasons for such representations through the interviews of museum professionals responsible for the museum displays and/or sites. This helped to establish not only if representations of Victorian women in museum displays are 'passive and shallow' or 'honest and fair', but understand how and why they are, and support some prescribed recommendations to help museums to represent Victorian women and Victorian women's history in a more robust, rigorous, and nuanced way.

Part II: Case Study Analysis, Findings and Conclusion

(i) Introduction to Case Study Analysis

The following exhibits and museums were used as case studies for this research project as they met the case study criteria as set out in the methodology: the Victorian Streets exhibit at Abbey House Museum, run by Leeds Museums and Galleries, and Ripon Museum Trust's Workhouse Museum and Garden, Prison and Police Museum, and Courthouse Museum.

Abbey House Museum, Leeds, was visited on 1 September 2015 for initial fieldwork to take place. Further visits occurred on 17 February 2016 and 28 April 2017 to make further observations. Permission for the fieldwork and to take photographs was sought and given by Kitty Ross, Curator of Leeds History/Social History for Leeds Museums and Galleries, based at Abbey House Museum. Minor exhibit and display differences were noted on the three site visits. For example, the family engagement activities varied on each visit, and by the third visit the Foreign Fancy Goods exhibit signage had been replaced to correct an error and some interpretation folders appeared to have been reprinted and made available for visitors, some of which were previously missing. Additionally, a talk about 'The Evolution of the Abbey House Displays' by Ross was attended in February 2016 to gain a greater understanding of the history of the Victorian Streets' displays,³²¹ as Ross had been researching the history of Abbey House Museum's early Victorian Streets. Ross was also interviewed on 28 April 2017 to gain further insight into the history of the Victorian Streets as well as the behind the scenes curatorial processes, decisions and issues regarding the representation of Victorian men and women in museum displays and collections, specifically at Leeds Museums and within museums more generally and broadly. Ross is well placed to provide this insight as she has worked for Leeds Museums for almost twenty years as part of its curatorial team, including during the most recent major refurbishment of the Victorian Streets.³²² As Curator of Leeds History/Social History, Ross is responsible for the management of these collections, including acquisitions and research, and regularly

³²¹ This was a public talk given on Tuesday 23 February 2016 at Abbey House Museum as part of Leeds Museums and Galleries engagement and outreach programme. See Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Events: The Evolution of Abbey House Displays' <<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/Events/Pages/the-evolution-of-abbey-house-displays.aspx>> [Leeds City Council, accessed 26 February 2016]

³²² Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 2 – 3.

curates social history exhibitions, such as the annual temporary exhibition at Abbey House Museum.³²³

The Ripon Museum Trust sites were visited across several days on different occasions. The first set of fieldwork visits occurred in March 2016 when the Workhouse Museum was visited on the 3 March 2016, and the Courthouse Museum and the Police and Prison Museum on the 5 March 2016. The Workhouse Museum was visited again on 9 and 16 October 2017. On the 9 October 2017, Martin Wills, Collaborative Curator of the Workhouse Development Project, was interviewed in relation to his curatorial project to develop the main block, a newly-opened building within the Workhouse Museum site. During this visit, the main block was also toured, observed, and photographed. On 16 October 2017, James Etherington, Director of Ripon Museum Trust, was interviewed to gain an insight into the operations, strategic objectives and plans for the Workhouse Museum particularly and Ripon Museum Trust sites more generally as these may affect representations of Victorian women at Ripon Museum sites presently and in the future. Permission for the fieldwork and to take photographs was sought and given by Etherington. Between the 2016 and 2017 fieldwork visits, extensive expansion of the Workhouse Museum site had taken place. The main block building had been purchased, refurbished, partially interpreted, and partially opened to the public. Changes to the Workhouse Museum's Gatehouse building were observed during the October 2017 visits. This included observing the Waiting Room (which was previously inaccessible or not in existence during the 2016 visit), the closure of the 'Introduction to the Workhouse' Room, and the moving of its display panels and display cases into the Boiler Room, and the display panels in the Dayroom had been replaced with displays relating to the temporary cross-site exhibition *Urchins, Sprogs and Guttersnipes*.

These two case studies complement one another, as they have both differences and similarities which will allow more general, broader observations to be made, as well as more nuanced and specific points relevant to specific exhibits and museum sites. For example, both the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum and Ripon Museum Trust reflect the Victorian past or nineteenth century, although this is broader at Ripon Museum sites as they reflect a wider time period, but have

³²³ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 10 – 15.

particular exhibits focussing on nineteenth-century history. The Victorian Streets and Ripon Museum sites are not museums with the explicit purpose or aim of representing women's history; their representations of Victorian women are part of other historical narratives, histories, themes and stories, such as retail and work history on the Victorian Streets, and crime, penal and social welfare history at Ripon Museum sites. While Abbey House Museum is a local authority-run museum with Leeds Council, the Ripon Museum sites are independent museums run by the charitable trust of Ripon Museum Trust. The case study of the Victorian Streets exhibit, while restricted to just this exhibit, is very extensive and intensive due to the amount of content in the Victorian Streets exhibit (such as the amount of reconstructed work places and homes, the amount of material culture on display and interpretive text) and subsequent references to Victorian women throughout the exhibit. The case study of Ripon Museum Trust focusses on three different museum sites, but, due to lack of references at some Ripon Museum sites, homes in on specific exhibits, primarily exhibits at the Workhouse Museum. However, the absence of representation of Victorian women at the other sites has generated much discussion in terms of why they are absent and how they could be part of and incorporated into the historical narrative and history of the sites. An in-depth analysis of the textual and visual elements of these case study museum exhibits and museum sites will inform conclusions as to whether representations of Victorian women in contemporary museum displays are 'honest and fair' or 'shallow and passive' and Victorian women could be more robustly and accurately represented.

(ii) Case Studies

Background information and a brief history of Abbey House Museum, and Ripon Museum Trust and its three museum sites, will be presented to contextualise the case studies. It is important to understand their origins, past foci and subsequent development as a museum sites' history can influence or affect contemporary representations of Victorian women specifically, and women more generally, as points raised by other academics, museum professionals and scholars in the Literature Review indicated. Research into Abbey House Museum found that its current Victorian Streets are actually a second version of reconstructed period streets. The first Streets, installed in the 1950s and considered innovative,

represented olde worlde craft workshops and retails shops of an unspecified, nostalgic, 'old and gone' period.³²⁴ The second, and current, version of the period Streets were installed during a major redevelopment project which saw these Streets, redesigned as Victorian, open in 2001 and offer visitors a more authentic, immersive experience. While Abbey House Museum's Victorian Streets are built on reconstructed and reimagined environments and spaces, Ripon Museum Trust sites are based on authentic environments and spaces as the three museums occupy historic buildings. The museums subsequently use the historic buildings and spaces to tell their specific stories and histories of women as well as more general histories and stories about the themes the buildings represent which can be broadly described as law and order. The museum sites were set up and developed at different times over the last few decades, but recent curatorial efforts have focused tried to connect the museum sites to one another through cross-site temporary exhibitions and interpretive threads that weave the museums sites and their themes and stories together. While the Victorian Streets had some degree of flexibility and artistic licence in their design and with the narrative that the exhibits individually and Streets collectively tell, Ripon Museum Trust is restricted to the historic use of the buildings and their histories.

Abbey House Museum

Some information about Leeds Museums and Galleries will be given in terms of their governance, operational structure and their current collections. A brief history of Abbey House Museum and its Victorian Streets will then be presented as, while the focus of this project is the representation of Victorian women in twenty-first-century museum displays, an exploration of them in the twentieth century is fruitful to provide a historical context, tracking and illustrating the various changes Abbey House Museum and its Victorian Streets have undergone.

According to their website, 'Leeds Museums and Galleries is the largest local authority-run service in England', responsible for nine sites, which include historic

³²⁴ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 192 – 193.

country houses, an art gallery, industrial museums and a storage facility.³²⁵ Their 2017/18 annual review states that it employs 187 full-time equivalent employees and has a team of 189 volunteers.³²⁶ In 2017/18, Leeds Museums and Galleries welcomed 1,381,802 visitors.³²⁷ It hosted 27 temporary displays and exhibitions across its sites in addition to its permanent exhibits.³²⁸ Abbey House Museum, in Kirkstall, is one of the sites Leeds Museums and Galleries is responsible for.³²⁹ Abbey House Museum is popular with schools and family audiences, marketed as a 'fun, family-friendly interactive museum'; it was shortlisted for *The Guardian* 'Kids in Museum Family Friendly Award' in 2011.³³⁰ Leeds Museums and Galleries' current Collections Development Policy details the various collections it currently holds, consisting of 'an estimated 1.3 million individual objects'.³³¹ Objects are categorised into a collection, ranging from archaeology to decorative arts to social history, objects with local Leeds provenance to international objects.³³² With this research project in mind, it was reviewed to see whether Leeds Museums and Galleries recognise women's history and material culture in this Policy. Is Leeds Museums and Galleries actively collecting women's material culture? Or acknowledge an under-representation or, at the other end of the spectrum, an over-representation of women's material culture of particular themes or with certain types of objects. This Policy only refers to female or women's material culture or history explicitly on three occasions. It describes how within the Dress and Textiles Department '[t]he dress collection is predominantly British and consists of clothes and accessories for men,

³²⁵ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'About Us', <<https://museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/about-us/>> [accessed 13 September 2019].

³²⁶ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Building on Success Annual Review 2017-18', <<https://museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Leeds-Museums-and-Galleries-Annual-Review-2017-18.pdf>> [accessed 13 September 2019] p. 3.

³²⁷ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Building on Success Annual Review 2017-18', p. 3.

³²⁸ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Building on Success Annual Review 2017-18', p. 4.

³²⁹ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Home', <<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries/Pages/default.aspx>> [Leeds City Council accessed 3 March 2017].

³³⁰ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Explore the Victorian Street' <<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries/Pages/abbeyhouse/collections.aspx>> [Leeds City Council, accessed 9 February 2016]; Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Abbey House Museum', <<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries/Pages/Abbey-House-Museum.aspx>> [Leeds City Council accessed 9 February 2016].

³³¹ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Leeds Museums and Galleries Collections Development Policy', <<https://museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Collections-Development-Policy.pdf>> [accessed 13 September 2019], p. 3.

³³² Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Leeds Museums and Galleries Collections Development Policy'.

women and children'.³³³ The Department also includes 'the Kenneth Sanderson collection which contains a large quantity of mainly 18th century male and female fashionable clothes and accessories'.³³⁴ The Policy highlights notable 'women artists' in the Art Post-1980 collection.³³⁵ The Policy does not indicate any active or focussed collecting of women's material culture, nor does it acknowledge any gaps of women's material culture in the collections.

The building that Abbey House Museum occupies has experienced significant renovations throughout its existence. Originally a twelfth-century gatehouse for Kirkstall Abbey, the ruins of which are located opposite, the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century resulted in the defunct gatehouse being repurposed as a residential home.³³⁶ Leeds Corporation then bought the home in 1925, and it opened as a museum in 1927.³³⁷ This museum originally housed and displayed 'bygones', described as 'everyday social and domestic artefacts from the Leeds region which were now passing out of general use',³³⁸ as well as material, or 'medieval monastic material' more specifically, relating to Kirkstall Abbey.³³⁹ An article by Ross on 'Leeds Social History Collections: From "bygones" to "community history"' describes an early exhibit of a "Torture" case . . . displaying local police truncheons, the Morley brank and dental instruments.³⁴⁰ Today, Abbey House Museum focusses less on bygones and Kirkstall Abbey's history, and more on

³³³ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Leeds Museums and Galleries Collections Development Policy', p. 12.

³³⁴ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Leeds Museums and Galleries Collections Development Policy', p. 13.

³³⁵ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Leeds Museums and Galleries Collections Development Policy', p. 16.

³³⁶ Leeds City Museums, *Guide Book to the Abbey House Museum* (Leeds: Jowett & Sowry Ltd., no date [post 1958 and pre-1998]) n.p. [p. 1].

³³⁷ *Abbey House A Brief History* (display board), Abbey House Museum, Leeds Museums and Galleries, (viewed 17 February 2016).

³³⁸ Peter Brears, *Of Curiosities and Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums* (Leeds: The Friends of Leeds City Museums, 1989), p. 15.

³³⁹ Brears and Stuart Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museums and Galleries in Yorkshire and the Humberside* (Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council, 1989), p. 77

³⁴⁰ Kitty Ross, 'Leeds social history collections: From "bygones" to "community history"', *Social History in Museums*, 34 (2010) pp. 49 – 52 (p. 50),

<<http://www.shcg.org.uk/domains/shcg.org.uk/local/media/downloads/journal/Journal%20034.pdf>> [Social History Curators Group, accessed 1 March 2017].

displaying and interpreting artefacts from Leeds Museums' social history collection.³⁴¹

The exhibits that form Abbey House Museum's three Victorian streets – of Abbey Fold, Harewood Square and Stephen Harding Gate – are the focus of the Abbey House Museum case study. Collectively these will be referred to as the Victorian Streets or Streets. These Streets, like the building that houses them, have changed over time. Abbey House Museum underwent extensive building work in the 1950s to form the three olde worlde streets that would become its Victorian Streets.³⁴² This curatorial decision in the 1950s to construct recreated streets reflected museological trends which had been gaining momentum over the previous decades. An increase in the collecting of folk-life objects, by both museums and private collectors, subsequently resulted in the establishment of folk museums and open-air museums across Europe to house and display these growing folk collections.³⁴³ These museums utilised new display and interpretive methods. Traditional displays of 'individual specimens in neatly-labelled arrangements within glass cases' were replaced with contextualised objects in 'period rooms, or even period streets',³⁴⁴ 'Dioramas, room-settings, demonstrations and performance'.³⁴⁵ Abbey House Museum's original period Streets were strongly inspired and influenced by York Castle Museum's Victorian street, Kirkgate, which was founded

³⁴¹ The Leeds Museums and Galleries website highlights strong elements of its social history collection, which are currently displayed in the various galleries at Abbey House Museum. It says:

Traditional strengths of the collections have been in the areas of childhood (toys and games), retailing history, domestic life, musical instruments, slot machines and automata and printed ephemera. This has resulted in a rich and wide-ranging collection of social history material (over 100,000 items).

Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Social History', <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries/Pages/Social-History.aspx> [Leeds City Council, accessed 7 March 2017].

³⁴² Brears provided a detailed description of Abbey House Museum's Victorian Streets creation and subsequent refurbishment. See Brears, *Of Curiosities and Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, pp. 25 – 28.

³⁴³ Gaynor Kavanagh traced the early interest into folk objects and development of folk and open-air museums, from Artur Hazelius's Swedish open-air museum which opened in 1891 (pp. 15 – 16) to Dr John Kirk's founding of 'Castle Museum in York, with its street scene' (p.18). See Gaynor Kavanagh, 'History in Museums in Britain: A Brief Survey of Trends and Ideas', in *Social History in Museums: A Handbook for Professionals*, ed. by David Fleming, Crispin Paine and John G. Rhodes (London: HMSO, 1993) pp. 13 – 24 (pp. 15 – 19).

³⁴⁴ Brears, *Of Curiosities and Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 25.

³⁴⁵ Kavanagh, 'History in Museums in Britain: A Brief Survey of Trends and Ideas', p. 15.

by Dr John L. Kirk and opened in 1938.³⁴⁶ Mr C. M. Mitchell, who had been York Castle Museum's deputy curator and assisted Kirk in creating York's Kirkgate,³⁴⁷ moved to Leeds in 1953 to become a museum assistant at Abbey House Museum.³⁴⁸ Mitchell, who later became Leeds Museums' Director from 1957–1978,³⁴⁹ was the driving force behind Abbey House Museum's period Streets.³⁵⁰

The first Street, Abbey Fold, opened in 1954 'with its seven craft workshops'³⁵¹ 'representing the industries once carried out by the monks of Kirkstall'.³⁵² Harewood Square opened in 1955 with four³⁵³ 'retail shops'³⁵⁴ and finally, Stephen Harding Gate in 1958 'adding a further seven shops'.³⁵⁵ An old Abbey House Museum guidebook described the

three Streets of Cottages, Houses, Workplaces, and Shops of the late 18th and 19th centuries. They are typical of the many 'Folds, Courts, Gates, and Yards' which were so common in old Leeds and surrounding and which have nearly all disappeared. Most of the buildings shown have been removed from in and around Leeds and re-built exactly as they were found.³⁵⁶

Ross explained that these Streets 'weren't conceived at all at that point as a Victorian street'³⁵⁷ as the 'old streets didn't have a . . . clear date line of what period they were. They were . . . just *old* and *gone* but not necessarily the same age as each other'.³⁵⁸ Ross described how the early workshops and retail shops on the Streets 'evolved'³⁵⁹ with staff 'changing . . . the type of shop they are',³⁶⁰ except for

³⁴⁶ Brears and Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museum and Galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside*, pp. 76 – 77.

³⁴⁷ Brears, *Of Curiosities and Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 28.

³⁴⁸ Brears and Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museum and Galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside*, p. 76.

³⁴⁹ Ross, 'Leeds social history collections: From "bygones" to "community history"', p. 51.

³⁵⁰ Brears and Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museum and Galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside*, pp. 76 – 77.

³⁵¹ Brears and Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museum and Galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside*, p. 77.

³⁵² Brears and Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museum and Galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside*, p. 28.

³⁵³ Brears and Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museum and Galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside*, p. 77.

³⁵⁴ Brears, *Of Curiosities and Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 28.

³⁵⁵ Brears and Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museum and Galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside*, p. 77.

³⁵⁶ Leeds City Museums, *Guide Book to the Abbey House Museum* (n.p. [p. 14]).

³⁵⁷ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 201.

³⁵⁸ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 192 – 193.

³⁵⁹ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 202.

³⁶⁰ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 217 – 218.

the Hark to Rover Inn. Ross's research into the history of the early Streets, using photographic and archival evidence, led her to believe that 'since the 50s . . . a lot of [the exhibits] swapped round all over the place. There's been a lot of change, particularly in the early days'.³⁶¹ Past exhibits included an apothecary's,³⁶² a pewter shop,³⁶³ a music shop,³⁶⁴ and Ann Carter's Haberdashery³⁶⁵ – the latter will be considered later. Ross believed that 'the last shop swap was probably . . . about 1973. They put in a barbers'.³⁶⁶ But objects were frequently moved and replaced; according to Ross, 'Things were in for a bit . . . [Leeds Museums] acquired something new or swap them round'.³⁶⁷ A focus on the Streets' history and their phases of development has brought to light that there were shops on the old Streets interpreted as being owned by Victorian women. These are no longer present in today's version of the Streets.

Project funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) resulted in Abbey House Museum closing in 1998 to allow the period Streets to be refurbished, restaged and reinterpreted to, as Ross explained, 'be a little more representative with what you might have had in a Victorian street at the end of the nineteenth century'.³⁶⁸ The museum with its new Victorian Streets reopened in January 2001.³⁶⁹ Ross described the Streets as a 'unique selling point'³⁷⁰ and 'very popular'.³⁷¹ No longer representing the temporally non-specific olde worlde past, Leeds Museums claimed that the Streets accurately and authentically reflected, represented and recreated Victorian streets as they were in the 1880s. The museum's leaflet says:

There are three recreated Victorian streets to explore revealing life in 1880s Leeds. Step back in time and wander between the pub to the Sunday school, the grocers to the chemist and take a closer look at the shops and homes of the Victorians.³⁷²

³⁶¹ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 78 – 80.

³⁶² Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 199.

³⁶³ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 211.

³⁶⁴ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 205.

³⁶⁵ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 207.

³⁶⁶ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 82 – 83.

³⁶⁷ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 85 – 86.

³⁶⁸ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 218 – 219.

³⁶⁹ BBC, 'Abbey House Museum Tour'

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/leeds/citylife/abbey_house/into_abbey.shtml> [accessed 9 February 2016]

³⁷⁰ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 36.

³⁷¹ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 28.

³⁷² Leeds City Council, 'Abbey House Museum' leaflet (2017).

The Streets were designed to be an interactive and 'immersive environment'.³⁷³ There are very few specifically identified historic people connected to the exhibit. Clues to the owner include the names above the shop doors, references to generic groups of people, such as groups of workers like pawnbrokers and chemists, or the very few specific historic people who have been researched in the interpretive text folders. It is arguably the visitors who populate the Victorian Streets, moving from exhibit to exhibit as though they are in the assumed role of the Victorian shopper. They utilise authentic artefacts, from small objects decorating the living spaces, shop shelves, and retail windows to the original reconstructed buildings themselves representing residential, retail and trade interiors and exteriors. The accuracy and authenticity of the exhibits are underpinned by research into the actual homes, shops and businesses reconstructed on the Streets to represent Leeds in the 1880s. There are, however, continuity issues in their marketing material about the specific decade which the Victorian Streets reflect. The museum leaflet and 'Step Back in Time to Victorian Leeds' display board (see Figure 7)³⁷⁴ state that it's the 1880s,³⁷⁵ however a page on their website refers to the 1850s: 'Wander the recreated Victorian streets of Leeds and enter the enchanted shops and houses to discover what life was really like in the 1850s.'³⁷⁶ Although, while the specific decade might be debatable, it can be agreed that the Streets reflect mid-to-late Victorian Leeds.

To enhance and maintain this image of the authenticity of the Streets, there is very little 'overt'³⁷⁷ interpretation; it has been kept to a minimum through subtle and discreet interpretive techniques. The display panel 'Step Back in Time to Victorian Leeds' (Figure 7) positioned in the entrance area of the Streets explains this approach:

Step back in time to Victorian Leeds.

You are about to enter 3 recreated streets from the 1880s.

To make these streets feel as real as possible we have not put labels on the objects. We hope that this makes you feel like you have stepped back in time to Victorian Leeds.

³⁷³ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 28.

³⁷⁴ Figure 7, p. 174.

³⁷⁵ Leeds City Council, 'Abbey House Museum' leaflet (2016).

³⁷⁶ Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Family Fun'

<<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries/Pages/abbeyhouse/Family-Fun.aspx>> [accessed 23 June 2017].

³⁷⁷ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 48.

If you would like further information look out for information booklets around the streets and in some of the shops. Our Visitor Assistants are also very knowledgeable and happy to answer questions.³⁷⁸

Tracing the history of the Streets at Abbey House Museum has shown that while the second version of the period Streets, today's Victorian Streets, were part of a major redevelopment project, it does not necessarily mean that there was a blank canvas for them. Some of the exhibits, the retail and craft workshops, on the first version of the period Streets were a template or foundation for the subsequent Victorian Streets' exhibits, not just structurally or physically in terms of reconstructed buildings on the Streets, but in terms of the pre-existing research relating to exhibits and collected artefacts relating to past exhibits. This may have affected or limited the new Victorian Streets, particularly the representation of Victorian women and women's history on the Streets – as the original Streets focused on and showcased the crafts of male craftsmen, the nearby monks. As the second version of the period Streets focussed on the Victorian period, this would have prompted new research into that specific era and subsequent collecting of related artefacts to populate or set-dress the now Victorian retail, shop and residential exhibits with relevant artefacts to create an authentic experience for visitors. This new research and collecting focus has allowed specific exhibits, albeit few, to represent Victorian women, their histories and experiences as will be outlined later in relation to the Widow Washer Woman House exhibit and W. Mann's Haberdasher exhibit – although the extent and success of the representation will be analysed.

Ripon Museum Trust

Ripon Museum Trust is the charitable body responsible for the management of the three museum sites in Ripon, North Yorkshire. Unlike Leeds Museums which receives government funding from the local authority (Leeds Council), Ripon Museum Trust is a charity running independent museums; therefore, it relies on donations, Trust grants, project funding and its own income generation strands, such as entrance charges, shop sales, and education workshops fee. The Trust has experienced rapid expansion in both terms of site development, staffing and

³⁷⁸ Figure 7, p. 174.

volunteer support, services and funding over the last few years.³⁷⁹ In 2018, Ripon Museums Trust was 'named as a National Portfolio Organisation by the Arts Council' and awarded 'a grant of £140,00 per annum for the next four years'.³⁸⁰ This grant was earmarked to aid museum work and projects, such as a collections project, community engagement, school outreach and art commissions.³⁸¹ A Board of Trustees oversees the Trust at a strategic level, providing 'governance and leadership for the organisation'.³⁸² It has a small team of ten paid core staff and is heavily supported by a large pool of 'over 140 volunteers'.³⁸³ In 2017, Ripon Museum Trust welcomed 29,171 visitors across their three sites.³⁸⁴ It has, according to its website, a 'diverse collection of objects, documents and photographs relating to its key themes of law and order, crime and punishment, and social justice in Ripon and Yorkshire'.³⁸⁵ During his interview, Martin Wills quantified the collection; he stated that there are 'nine thousand objects in the collection and eight thousand are police' related.³⁸⁶ It is therefore very niche and specialist, often not representative of the other themes and stories reflected and told by the museum sites. Ripon Museum Trust itself describes their past approach to the collecting and interpreting the collections as 'amateurism' with a 'lack of investment and poor recognition of the importance of parts of [their] collection'.³⁸⁷ Their strategic aim was to professionalise and develop their collection.³⁸⁸

³⁷⁹ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Strategic Plan Summary 2014 – 20', p. 3
<http://riponmuseums.co.uk/docs/blog/rmt_plan_2014-20.pdf> [accessed 16 February 2018].

³⁸⁰ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Annual General Meeting Minutes 2018', p. 2
<https://riponmuseums.co.uk/docs/general/RMT_AGM_2018_Draft_Minutes.pdf> [accessed 13 September 2019].

³⁸¹ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Annual General Meeting Minutes 2018', p.2.

³⁸² Ripon Museums, 'Who we are', <https://riponmuseums.co.uk/about_us/who_we_are/> [accessed 13 September 2019].

³⁸³ Ripon Museums, 'Who we are'.

³⁸⁴ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Unaudited Financial Statements 31 December 2017', p. 11
<https://riponmuseums.co.uk/docs/general/Accounts_Dec_17_Final.doc> [accessed 13 September 2019]

³⁸⁵ Ripon Museums, 'Donate an object',
<https://riponmuseums.co.uk/support/donate_an_object_to_the_collection/> [accessed 13 September 2019].

³⁸⁶ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 16 October 2017, lines 127 – 128.

³⁸⁷ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Strategic Plan Summary 2014 – 20', p. 5.

³⁸⁸ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Strategic Plan Summary 2014 – 20', p. 5.

The three museum sites managed by Ripon Museum Trust are the Workhouse Museum and Garden (the Workhouse),³⁸⁹ the Police and Prison Museum, and the Courthouse Museum (the Courthouse). These museums are situated within original, historic buildings in the city centre of Ripon. The buildings correspond to the theme of the museum or the type of museum. Etherington described the museums as ‘the museum of the building but also of the thing that happened in the building and of the people involved with that’.³⁹⁰ Using these buildings, the collections on display at the sites, and the historical narratives told in the interpretation, Ripon Museum Trust provides an insight into over 200 years of law and order with a regional focus. The Trust’s mission statement is:

. . . to enrich the lives of all who experience and are inspired by our historic law & order sites and collections so that they gain insights into, and are provoked into thinking about, how the treatment of offenders and the relief of the poor have developed over the last 200 years.³⁹¹

Ripon Museum Trust was originally set up to respond to and remedy the lack of museums in Ripon, as it was left with no museums after the City Museum and Wakeman’s House Museum closed in 1956 and 1987 respectively. When the Old Liberty Prison, a Georgian prison that had also served as Ripon police station, became available in 1981, the Trust was established to set up a prison and police museum at this old prison site with the Police and Prison Museum opening in 1984. In 1994, a lease was taken out for the former vagrants’ wards in the Gatehouse building at the old Ripon Union Workhouse site (built in 1855) and the Workhouse Museum opened in 1996. In 2000, the Trust opened the Courthouse Museum in the old No. 1 Court in the Georgian court building, which had closed in 1998.³⁹² Etherington explained that in the past the museums had been marketed or branded as ‘The Yorkshire Law and Order Museums’.³⁹³

³⁸⁹ To distinguish between the historic workhouse and the modern day workhouse museum, its modern day usage as a museum shall be referred to as ‘the Workhouse Museum’ while the workhouse in its historic usage as a workhouse shall be referred to as ‘Ripon Union Workhouse’.

³⁹⁰ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 31 - 32.

³⁹¹ Ripon Museum Trust, ‘The Trust’, <http://riponmuseums.co.uk/about_us/the_trust/> [accessed 16 February 2018].

³⁹² Ripon Museum Trust, ‘The Trust’.

³⁹³ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, line 427.

The three museum sites are interlinked, not just by the overarching theme of law and order, but by interpretive threads which run throughout the sites connecting one to another. The Trust's website says,

Together the three museums tell a sorry and interwoven story of Law and Order in times past. Malefactors would be incarcerated at the Prison or Police Station before being taken to the Courthouse for trial. If a custodial sentence or transportation were imposed a family might be deprived of its breadwinner, perhaps leading to its remaining members being forced to seek the 'relief' of the Workhouse.³⁹⁴

One specific example is that the Sinkler brothers' wanted poster is displayed at the Courthouse and then the Sinkler brothers can be traced to a prison cell at the Prison and Police Museum. Details of Anne East's crime of theft and sentencing of transportation are referred on display panels in the Courthouse and she, or more specifically an illustrative representation of her, can be seen in the Prison and Police Museum behind bars – this will be reconsidered to later when the visual elements of exhibits and displays are analysed. The recent temporary exhibition *Urchins, Sprogs and Guttersnipes* has been specifically curated as a cross-site exhibition, so visitors can find out about how Victorian children were affected by the court, prison and workhouse systems at the relevant museum site.

The sites and buildings with their specific historic usages have been utilised by the Trust to represent processes, stages and/or more nuanced sub-themes within the broader theme of 'law and order'. The courtroom in the Courthouse is staged to recreate a court house layout and court scene and explores the themes of Victorian 'court, crime, punishment, [and] criminality', according to Etherington.³⁹⁵ Some of the former cells in the Prison and Police Museum are used as galleries or exhibition spaces to display related artefacts, while others are presented as recreated prison cells. These tell the history and stories around the sub-themes of 'imprisonment and punishment. . . [and] policing'.³⁹⁶ The majority of the buildings and their rooms at the Workhouse site are staged and interpreted according to the buildings' and rooms'

³⁹⁴ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Museums', <<http://riponmuseums.co.uk/museums/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

³⁹⁵ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, line 29.

³⁹⁶ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, line 30.

usage when it was a functioning Victorian workhouse, Ripon Union Workhouse, to explore the sub-themes of 'poverty and social care'.³⁹⁷

All the Trust museum sites, buildings and histories are enhanced with authentic, replica, and reproduction objects as well as primary sources, such as photographs, extracts from reports, newspaper articles, and artwork. Interpretation panels, labels and audio guides provide a context and an understanding of the building, theme and more increasingly, as Etherington explained, the individuals involved with or affected by the workhouse, prison, or court system. Etherington said that

something that [Ripon Museums Trust are] moving a lot more towards over the next few years is to focus more on the individuals who were there, the people who were involved rather than just the generalities³⁹⁸

of the place and themes. This is a pertinent point about the representation of people and which be discussed later in terms of its impact and effect on the representations of Victorian women, and women more generally, at Ripon Museum Trust sites. Together, the spaces, buildings, objects and interpretation across the museum sites provide an insight into 'the treatment of offenders and the relief of the poor have developed over the last 200 years'.³⁹⁹

The Workhouse Museum is the most extensive museum of the three Trust museum sites. After opening in 1996 with just the vagrants' ward section of the Gatehouse building of the former workhouse site, it later underwent expansion. The Trust took over the rest of the Gatehouse building and, with substantial external funding, were able to refurbish and open the whole Gatehouse workhouse building and adjoining garden in 2010.⁴⁰⁰ The site increased further, doubling in size,⁴⁰¹ in 2017 with the purchase, (partial) refurbishment and opening of the main block or "dining and dorm' building', which was funded by a HLF grant.⁴⁰² The main block has

³⁹⁷ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, line 28.

³⁹⁸ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 33 - 35.

³⁹⁹ Ripon Museum Trust, 'The Trust'.

⁴⁰⁰ Ripon Museum Trust, 'The Trust'.

⁴⁰¹ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Workhouse Museum & Garden',

<http://riponmuseums.co.uk/museums/workhouse_museum_gardens/> [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁰² Ripon Museum Trust, 'Meet Martin Wills, the curator in charge of the Workhouse Museum's exciting expansion', Blog,

<http://riponmuseums.co.uk/blog/meet_martin_wills_the_curator_in_charge_of_the_workhouse_museums_expansion> [created 3 July 2017, accessed 16 February 2018].

been, and will continue to be, reconstructed and interpreted with the year 1900 as a temporal focus. The Workhouse Museum site today now includes the Gatehouse building, the newly-opened main block, the surrounding grounds, outbuildings, and garden which made up the original workhouse site. The Museum's webpage states that 'The grim atmosphere of the Workhouse Museum has been carefully maintained in order to give visitors a sense of what life in a Victorian Workhouse could have been'.⁴⁰³ The audio tour introduction to the site explains:

Built in the Victorian times, this grim building was the last resort for those who had no way to support themselves. On your journey round, you will see something of the conditions in which they lived and the strict regime that governed their time here.⁴⁰⁴

During the site visits, it was observed that visitors are encouraged to follow a prescribed route through the site, aided by a map and the numbering of some rooms and buildings. This prescribed route replicates the process of entering the workhouse for Victorian inmates. For example, as of 2017, visitors start with the Guardians' Room as potential inmates would have done to appeal to the guardians to be accepted into Ripon Union Workhouse or alternatively receive dole/relief. Visitors, like accepted inmates, then follow the admitting process and discover the living and working conditions of inmates. Broader histories, wider issues and debates are also contextualised throughout this prescribed route. Previously, this was primarily done in the 'Introduction to the Workhouse' Room that visitors were advised to visit first, but this room has since closed, as observed during the 2017 site visit, and these displays and panels are now in the Boiler Room for the visitors to view. These panels and displays contextualise the workhouse in terms of the Old and New Poor Law Systems, controversy, and dissatisfaction with the systems, as well as examples of local workhouses. This site had the most representations of Victorian women and will form the basis of the Ripon Museum Trust case study analysis.

The Prison and Police Museum occupies the historic building that once served as the House of Correction for Vagrants between 1686 and 1816, until it was extended to become Ripon Liberty Prison from 1816. Prison reforms meant the prison was closed in 1878 and it became Ripon Police Station a year later until 1956.

⁴⁰³ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Workhouse Museum & Garden'.

⁴⁰⁴ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Workhouse Museum, 1 Workhouse Intro, <<http://wh.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

It opened as a Prison and Police Museum in 1984 and was refurbished in 2004. At the Prison and Police Museum, 'The history of policing is traced through displays of uniforms and artefacts from the Trust's extensive collections of police and prison memorabilia.'⁴⁰⁵ The exhibits have a local and regional focus on policing, as well as specific history and stories about the building's use as a prison and police station, including the former prisoners it housed and notable local policemen who were stationed there. The former cells are used as exhibition rooms or galleries to display the exhibits and explore an assigned theme and/or history. A few cells are reconstructions of prisoner cells.⁴⁰⁶ Of the three Ripon Museum Trust sites, this had the least amount of representations of Victorian woman, and women more generally. Reasons for this and ways of remedying this will be discussed.

The Courthouse Museum, occupying the old Courthouse building that was built in 1830, is a relatively small site compared to the other two. It opened in 2000 after the Magistrates' Court, located in the old Courthouse building, closed in 1998. The Courthouse Museum consists of three rooms: the Jury Room, the Retiring Room and the Court Room. The rooms and the objects on display provide 'an illustrated history of the use of the Courthouse' to 'learn about what happened in the courtroom in the 1800s'.⁴⁰⁷ The interpretation uses individual stories of local cases to illustrate the broader court system and penal system. The Court Room still retains its original court features and layout, such as the docks, witness box and jury bench, which is interpreted and staged with mannequins to represent those involved.⁴⁰⁸ This site had some references to Victorian women, as well as women more generally, which will be identified later.

Research into the history of the three museum sites of Ripon Museum Trust has shown that the Trust has grown over the last few decades, developing and occupying spaces and buildings as and when they became available to represent the historic use of the buildings and broad themes of law and order. Whilst, previously, the focus may have been on the historic buildings themselves, recent and future

⁴⁰⁵ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Prison & Police Museum', http://riponmuseums.co.uk/museums/prison_police_museum/ [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁰⁶ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Prison & Police Museum'.

⁴⁰⁷ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Courthouse Museum', http://riponmuseums.co.uk/museums/courthouse_museum/ [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁰⁸ Ripon Museum Trust, 'Courthouse Museum'.

efforts attempt to focus on the people and individuals connected to the site and affected by the system the site reflects, be it social welfare, policing, or punishment.

While exploring the background to the case museum exhibits and sites has provided a useful context, the following chapters will explore, analyse and discuss the content of them to unpack and unpick the representations of Victorian women in their current museum displays. Chapter 1 centres on textual analysis, examining the (audio and written) language and text of the exhibits across all case studies. The linguistics will be analysed to draw out any gender bias and gendered language, while the historical information provided in interpretation will be unpacked to examine how Victorian women are represented. Chapter 2 focuses on visual analysis of the case study exhibits and how their museum displays' visual components (reproduced images and material culture) represent Victorian women. In addition to the display analysis, interviews with relevant museum staff will explore some of the curatorial decisions, issues, and practices that underpin and therefore shape and impact the museum displays and their textual and visual representations of Victorian women. Are the representations of Victorian women in the exhibits and museum sites narrative 'honest and fair' or challenge preconceived ideas about Victorian women, or, on the other hand, are they 'passive and shallow' representations, one-dimensional, perpetuating existing ideas about Victorian women? Through these approaches, I will examine how Victorian women are represented in the case study museum exhibits and sites, explore some of the curatorial issues and reasons for such representations, and offer suggestions and strategies as to how Victorian women can be better represented – as presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 1 – ‘Women as Entities, Not Appendages’:⁴⁰⁹ Textual Analysis

This chapter will focus on the textual elements or components of the exhibits and displays, such as the names and titles of the exhibits and, language choices within the interpretive text, as well as the historical information provided in interpretation. This analysis and subsequent findings demonstrate how the selection of explicit and subtle names of exhibits and word choices can imply a particular message about Victorian women’s history. Due to this, the message can be at times monolithic and not suggest or explain the nuanced differences between Victorian men’s and women’s histories and experiences, including the class differences. Other times, the exhibit’s names, word choices and presented historical information can hide, down-play or misrepresent Victorian’s women’s history rather than showcase it, or frame it around Victorian men’s history as though women were an appendage to men and did not exist in their own right.

Names of Exhibits

As the names and titles of exhibits are perhaps the first thing which a visitor may encounter or notice when visiting a museum and viewing exhibits, this is an apt starting point for textual analysis of exhibits. The names of exhibits were analysed in detail to explore the identification and assignation of sex and gender to them, if at all, and the consequences of this in terms of what they suggest or imply to visitors about both Victorian women’s and men’s history. At Abbey House Museum, this meant focusing on the names of the retail, trade and residential exhibits on the Victorian Streets. For Ripon Museum Trust sites, the focus was on the names of exhibits, rooms, and buildings. On the surface, the majority are gender neutral, with a few exceptions. This gender neutrality and lack of specificity of exhibit names will also be analysed, as this approach or practice unwittingly conceals representations of Victorian women and Victorian women’s history. This can be seen with the W. Mann’s Complete House Furnish exhibit at Abbey House Museum and the Master’s and Matron’s Quarters in the main block at the Workhouse Museum, Ripon. This illustrates not only the need for specificity in exhibit names to clarify whether the exhibit reflects and represents Victorian women’s history, men’s history, or collective

⁴⁰⁹ Miller and Swift, *The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, p. 111

history, but a more considered and consistent approach. This may include not abbreviating names of exhibits or providing information in the interpretive text of the exhibit to address or clarify what the exhibit's name may imply. Some of these exceptions that identify, indicate, or suggest a specific sex or gender and what they imply will be analysed in detail. This includes the Widow Washer Woman's House exhibit at Abbey House Museum, as its focus on the marital status of the Victorian woman associated with it which necessarily suggests that Victorian women are appendages to Victorian men.

Across all three Ripon Museum Trust sites, the names of exhibits are generally non-gender specific as the exhibits, exhibitions, and galleries tend to be about or are named after themes, processes, spaces and places (such as what rooms once were used for), rather than the people and individuals connected to them. Even in the case of exhibits or rooms which are connected to people, most of them use gender-neutral names/nouns, such as the Jury Room at the Courthouse Museum and the Guardians' Room at the Workhouse Museum. However, as will be demonstrated later, some of these rooms, despite their gender-neutral names, are interpreted as being connected to the history of one gender/sex. There are a few exceptions where the sex of those connected to areas is highlighted: the Female Yard, Male Yard and Female Tramps' Privy. This is due to the segregation of men and women which occurred in Victorian workhouses, such as Ripon Union Workhouse which, as a result, created specifically gendered spaces.⁴¹⁰ Two specific areas which will be analysed in this section are the Master's and Matron's Quarters, which housed the Matron and Master, and the Tramp Major's Room, belonging to the tramp major who would oversee other tramps in exchange for privileges, at the Workhouse Museum. The name of the Master and Matron's Quarters at first seems to recognise both the Master and Matron but analysis will show that this is inconsistent, and the Quarters are colloquially known as just the Master's. Research has shown that tramp majors were in fact men – the female equivalent being tramp mistresses – so the Tramp Major's Room is in fact representing men's history, although this is not specified or made clear in subsequent interpretive text.

⁴¹⁰ The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act enforced the classification of paupers; in workhouses, men, women, children, able-bodied and non-able-bodied inmates were segregated. See Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 65.

Similarly, at Abbey House Museum, many of the names of the exhibits, as indicated above the exhibits on a sign or in its interpretation folder, are gender-neutral – despite the exhibits being associated and assigned with specific individuals, fictional and historic. This is because most of the names are presented in the format of first-name initials and surnames or just surnames. On Stephen Harding Gate, exhibits have been assigned or attributed to W. Mann (for the Complete House Furnisher exhibit),⁴¹¹ T. H. Sagar (Ironmonger), H. Mallet (Pottery), Heeles & Son (Land and Estate Agent), Taylor (Chemist), and Popplewell & Co (Greengrocer) exhibits. Abbey Fold has T. A. Sowry & Son (Pawnbroker), S. Strong's (Tobacco Pipe Manufacturer) and Robinson's (Coach Proprietor and Undertaker) exhibits. Excluding the '& Son' appendages which obviously have male connotations, the rest of the names associated with exhibits are gender neutral and therefore could be interpreted as businesses belonging to either a man or woman. Additionally, there is also a non-gendered 'Artisan' living in the Artisan Cottage in Abbey Fold. Frederic Forster's Mourning Warehouse (on Stephen Harding Gate) and Pellegrino Vassalli's Fancy Goods (in Harewood Square) shops are the only exhibits where the owner's first name is given in full, indicating that these have male owners.⁴¹² The Widow Washer Woman's House, one of the few exhibits with a gendered exhibit name, will be examined in detail later.

As previously noted, Clark Smith argued that visitors, when left to interpret exhibits and objects for themselves, will 'see what they have been taught to see and . . . remain blind to what they have been taught to ignore'⁴¹³. With this in mind, the lack of gender specificity in the exhibit labelling of most of the exhibits at Abbey House Museum and Ripon Museum Trust sites may result in many visitors naturally assuming that these exhibits are about Victorian men's history. This is particularly true in the case of the retail and business exhibits on the Victorian Streets at Abbey

⁴¹¹ The exhibit sign states it is 'W. M. Mann's Complete House Furnisher' but Ross, when interviewed, described this as an 'Art Furnisher/Haberdasher shop' and The Haberdasher interpretation folder is located next to time. It will be referred to using both. See Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 385.

⁴¹² During the first and second fieldwork visit to Abbey House Museum, the fancy goods shop sign said 'Vassalli Pellegrino', however on the third visit it was noted that the name has changed to 'Pellegrino Vassalli'. Ross explained during the interview that research into the actual business brought up business directory stating 'Vassalli, Pellegrino' as the owner but this was wrongly interpreted to be in a first name and surname format when it was actually surname and first name format. The sign had been altered to remedy this error. The name Pellegrino is a male Italian name. See Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 377 – 384.

⁴¹³ Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories', p. 68.

House Museum, as the gender-neutral names above exhibits may make visitors think that the shop exhibits are about male shop-keepers and business-owners only. On the contrary, as Murdoch explained, 'Some [Victorian] wives became intellectual and business partners with their husbands, sharing in professional work, although their contributions generally received little public notice'.⁴¹⁴ There may be the involvement of women in the running of these businesses – but this is concealed as the male names reflect male ownership and control. As analysis of the W. Mann exhibit will show, Victorian women's business history has received little notice and attention on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum, despite opportunities to represent this facet of women's history.

During the interview with Ross, she revealed that W. Mann's Complete House Furnisher or the Haberdashery exhibit is based on an actual retail shop owned by a woman, 'Mrs. Mann'.⁴¹⁵ Ross's revelation during the interview was intriguing as there is no indication that this exhibit represents or reflects a female-owned shop or female shop-keeper, either on the exhibit signage (see Figure 8)⁴¹⁶ which just states 'W. Mann's' with no titles of 'Miss' or 'Mrs', or in the interpretation folder (The Haberdasher folder) next to the exhibit, which does not detail the shop's specific history or individuals connected to it. During the interview with Ross, there was a lengthy discussion about Victorian women, and women more generally, being hidden in museum collections and how this might be remedied. Drawing on her own experience, Ross said that,

the more you do to document and research and properly. . . look at the people associated with the objects, more of those women's stories that are there can be explicit. Not necessarily the displays but certainly in the collection catalogue.⁴¹⁷

This seems to be the case here. Research has obviously been undertaken and gathered to uncover the history of Mann's shop and possibly Mann herself. This history of a Victorian woman may be explicitly outlined and detailed in the museum collection catalogue behind the scenes or curatorial research files internally – but this information has not then been shared externally to visitors through the exhibit display. While, for logistical reasons, every piece of research conducted on exhibits

⁴¹⁴ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 81.

⁴¹⁵ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 222 – 223.

⁴¹⁶ Figure 8, p. 174.

⁴¹⁷ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 432 – 436.

and objects and their historical connections cannot be included in exhibits and interpretation, there is a missed opportunity here. The inclusion of the title Miss or Mrs before 'W. Mann's Complete House Furnisher' on the exhibit sign would subtly inform visitors that this is female-owned shop and be a step towards representing this Victorian woman. The interpretation folder for the exhibit could explicitly present some information about Mann and her shop specifically or more general information about female shopkeepers of that retail trade, as Alison Adburgham's research into retail history identified 'women shopkeepers' who specialised in millinery, dressmaking and haberdashery in the long nineteenth century.⁴¹⁸ The interpretation folder for the Strong's Tobacco Pipe Manufacturer exhibit in Abbey Fold presents information about the (male) owners of that specific business demonstrating that the Victorian Streets interpretation folder can contain such information about specific exhibits, their history and people attached to them as well as more general information. By not explicitly identifying W. Mann's as a female-owned shop, Mann as a female shop-owners or the wider women's business history that Mann represents, this facet of Victorian women's history is unnecessarily hidden and obscured – not just in this exhibit, but the Victorian Streets more generally as further analysis will show.

The Widow Washer Woman's House is the only exhibit with an explicit connection to a Victorian woman expressed in the exhibit's title. This female widowhood narrative is also present in the historical information in its interpretation folder, as later explained. It is also the only exhibit in which the marital status of the home- or business-owner or tradesperson relating to an exhibit is explicitly referred to. The exhibit does not just represent a washer woman, but a widow washer woman. Miller and Swift discussed the 'non-parallel linguistic treatment involv[ing] the weight given to women's domestic relationships' referring to 'the compulsion to identify a woman as someone's wife or widow'. To borrow phrases from Miller and Swift, it suggests that women are 'appendages' to men and not their own 'entities'.⁴¹⁹ Miller and Swift suggested that one should ask the question 'Would I write it this way if the subject were a man?'.⁴²⁰ In terms of museums and heritage sites, museum

⁴¹⁸ Alison Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping 1800 – 1914 Where, and in What Manner The Well-dressed Englishwoman Bought her Clothes* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1964) (pp. 25 – 32).

⁴¹⁹ Miller and Swift, *The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, p. 111.

⁴²⁰ Miller and Swift, *The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, p. 115.

professionals should consider this when writing interpretive text for exhibits. By contrast, there is not a widower ironmonger, married male greengrocer, male divorcé undertaker on the Streets, neither identified in the exhibit's title or in the historical information about the exhibit. The example on the Victorian Streets is a more explicit example of a representation of a Victorian woman that is framed around a Victorian man. There is a similar example at Ripon Museum Trust's Workhouse Museum.

A section of the main block at the Workhouse Museum is reconstructed and interpreted to be the 'Master and Matron's Quarters' or 'wing'. It is referred to as this on interpretive panels about the main block. On first appearance, its name seems to acknowledge both the master and matron. These were senior and significant positions in workhouses, as together the master and matron oversaw the administration and finances of the workhouse, and the welfare of inmates, and they were often spouses. However, it was noticed that there is some slippage in how the Master's and Matron's Quarters are referred to and assigned to the Master and Matron. The interpretive panel title identifies the exhibit as the 'Master and Matron's Quarters', recognising the joint ownership and connection of the Quarters to both the master and matron. It was apparent, however, when interviewing Wills that it is often known as the 'Master's Quarters'⁴²¹ during the interview as he referred to it as such, as well as referring to the 'Master's room',⁴²² 'Master's garden',⁴²³ and 'Master's bedroom'⁴²⁴ when in fact the room or space belonged to or was used by both the master and matron. This has leaked through into some of the interpretive text at times, as analysis of the word and language choices will demonstrate, as often things are ascribed to or associated with the master only. In the interview, Wills acknowledged himself that 'we call it the Master's block all the time'⁴²⁵ whilst recognising that 'I think we could do better'⁴²⁶ at acknowledging the role women had in running Ripon Workhouse and workhouses but hoped that main block was a start. Rather than these misnomers, and those that will be described later, being a deliberate quashing or ignoring of the matron's role and this element of Victorian women's history, the impression given is that it is subconsciously and colloquially

⁴²¹ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 9 October 2017, lines 33 and 113 – 114.

⁴²² Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 9 October 2017, line 310.

⁴²³ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 9 October 2017, line 33 – 34.

⁴²⁴ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 9 October 2017, line 308.

⁴²⁵ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 9 October 2017, line 432.

⁴²⁶ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 9 October 2017, line 431 – 432.

shortened down to just 'Master's Quarters' as shorthand for ease of reference/speech. But by doing so, it glosses over the matron's connection to the historical workhouse and implies that the matron is less significant compared to the master.

The name of the 'Tramp Major's Room', which is in the Gatehouse building at the Workhouse Museum, may appear at first to be gender neutral. Today, the word 'major' is less synonymous with men which has increasingly becoming a unisex term since women are able to join armies and have achieved high positions or ranks. But the male connotation attached to it due to cultural norms is still strong for some today. However, in the Victorian period in the context of 'tramp majors' in workhouses, however, it would have been used to describe men only. They are also known as 'tramp masters'. Research into tramp majors and the role they played in workhouses revealed that they were 'often a workhouse inmate or retired tramp' whose tasks involved searching and removing personal belonging from vagrant inmates.⁴²⁷ The audio guide for Ripon Workhouse Museum explains that 'The tramp major was equivalent to a trustee in prison.' It also goes on to refer to the tramp major's other duties using male pronouns: '*He* was allowed privileges in return for keeping the tramps in order particularly overnight. *He* could stay for longer two nights but shared *his* room with *his* fellow tramps for *his* meals'.⁴²⁸ There is very little academic research into the female equivalent, but this appears to have been the 'tramp mistress'. Information, for example, about the heritage site of Guildford Spike, the remaining vagrants' ward of the since demolished Guildford Workhouse refers to 'the Spike' or casual ward having 'a married couple, the Tramp Master and Mistress, superintending'.⁴²⁹ The name of the exhibit 'Tramp Major's Room' in modern context may appear to be gender-neutral, but when considering its usage in the Victorian period, it appears that the exhibit is representing a facet of male Victorian history, in this case the male role of tramp major in the workhouse. There is no explicit explanation that the tramp major was a male role in the interpretive text in the Tramp Major's Room. This is conveyed implicitly in the historical information in the audio

⁴²⁷ M. A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834 – 1929: The History of an English Social Institution* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd, 1981), p. 260.

⁴²⁸ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Workhouse Museum, 15 Baths, <<http://wh.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴²⁹ Exploring Surrey's Past, 'Guildford: The Spike', <http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/places/surrey/guildford/guildford/guildford_the_spike/> [accessed 9 May 2018].

guide which uses male pronouns. While this is clearly a representation of Victorian men's history, there is no acknowledgement that this is just one perspective, a male perspective, with no reference to the female equivalent, the tramp mistress.

Analysis of the names of the exhibits on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum has demonstrated the gender neutrality of the majority of the exhibit names. This gender-neutrality, however, may not override the cultural codes and gender stereotypes visitors are familiar with – and so they may naturally assume that the exhibits are related and connected to Victorian men. This gender neutrality or lack of specificity masks and obscures one of the few representations of a female-owned business, W. Mann's exhibit. Another exhibit explicitly connected to a Victorian woman, the Widow Washer Woman House exhibit, labels or describes the woman in connection to her widow status, representing her as an appendage or extension of a Victorian man as opposed to her own entity. At Ripon Museum Trust's Workhouse Museum, the inconsistent and frequently omitted references to the matron regarding the 'Master's and Matron's Quarters' exhibit, although not intentional, unwittingly diminishes the presence and role of the Victorian matron. Although the Tramp Major's Room exhibit may suggest a gender neutrality due to the current usage of the word 'major' being unisex, the traditional male cultural norms and connotations of major implicitly suggest that the exhibit represent a male perspective, narrative or facet of history. This is then reinforced by the audio guide for the exhibit which uses male pronouns when referring to the tramp major, as well as the lack of references or acknowledgment to the female equivalent, tramp mistresses. Some of this analysis has started to look at the language and word choices in the exhibit's interpretation which will be continued as this, too, can imply a particular message, which may be historically inaccurate or too generic, about Victorian women's and men's history specifically and Victorian history in general.

Language and word choices in interpretation

There are specific language and word choices in the interpretation (textual and audial) that can be analysed and challenged in terms of how the choices represent and reflect Victorian women specifically, and Victorian history and women's history more generally. An analysis of the language and word choices in

the interpretation will demonstrate that, like the names of exhibits, there is a lack of gender specificity in general, using non-gendered nouns. While these words are gender-neutral, a discursive approach demonstrates that gender may be naturally assigned, assumed, or interpreted in the case of specific exhibits and histories by visitors, due to inherent cultural codes around gender stereotyping. A failure to clarify or follow up these gender-neutral words with information about gender differences not only encourages the potential gender assumption by visitors but inaccurately represents or distorts the history and experiences of Victorian women. That said, there are instances of specific gendering which represent a false history and experience of Victorian women and perpetuate Victorian ideology and myths about Victorian women. For example, the Hark to Rover Inn interpretation folder places women out of the public sphere and into the domestic/private sphere, perpetuating the separate spheres ideology – while the audio track at Ripon Museum Trust's Police and Prison Museum and its description of the women the prison housed perpetuates the iconic image of the Victorian fallen woman. The gendering of the guardians at Ripon's Workhouse Museum – through persistent references to them as male – ignores the role of women on boards of guardians, albeit it in small numbers, at Ripon Union Workhouse specifically and workhouses more generally. As previously stated, the role of the matron in the Victorian workhouse is ignored by references to the master only in connection to the exhibit of the Master's and Matron's Quarters. This is continued in the descriptions and interpretation of the exhibit. When the matron is referenced in the interpretation, the work history of the matron is reduced or minimised by references to her as 'wife of' the master and the suggestion that the matron is the assistant of the master when in fact, the matrons had their own set of duties and responsibilities alongside the master. These word and language choices imply a hierarchy in which the master is superior and the matron inferior in their roles.

Analysis of the language and word choices in the interpretation for the exhibits, presented in the exhibit's folder, demonstrated that much of the interpretive language uses non-gendered or gender neutral nouns. For example, the Chemist's interpretation folder for the Taylors Drug Compy Ltd exhibit on Leeds's Stephen Harding Gate refers to the non-gendered 'doctor', 'Victorian person', 'chemists', 'druggist' and 'customers'. The Haberdashery's interpretation folder for the W.

Mann's Complete House Furnisher exhibit refers to the non-gender specific 'haberdasher' and 'dress-maker'. The interpretation folder for Hark to Rover Inn exhibit mentions 'publicans', 'people', 'market holders', 'street traders', 'coopers', 'manager' and 'customers' of no specific sex/gender. On the surface, the use of non-gendered words and language does not refer to or exclude exclusively one sex rather than the other.

If, on the other hand, these non-gendered or general neutral nouns are considered using a discursive approach, or Lidchi's politics of exhibiting, there are gender connotations. Due to 'cultural codes',⁴³⁰ visitors may associate specific nouns, especially occupational title nouns, with a particular sex or gender due to societal and cultural gender stereotypes. For example, cultural codes mean that doctors and police officers are often deemed to be male, while teachers and nurses are female. Therefore, while these nouns in the Victorian Streets' interpretation denote gender neutrality linguistically, visitors may subconsciously connote them with a specific gender. For example, the doctor referenced in the Chemist's interpretation folder may be assumed to be male by visitors, while the school teacher associated with the Sunday School exhibit in Harewood Square may be assumed to be female. To remedy this then, the interpretation should be presented in such a way that it prevents or overrides the visitors' cultural codes and instinct to assign gender stereotypes, or it should provide information which either confirms (if true) or challenges the assumed and cultural gender stereotypes. For example, the Chemist's interpretation about doctors could refer to the barriers preventing female doctors to train and qualify 'until the women gained access to the profession in 1877'⁴³¹ and that, according to Murdoch, 'By 1901, the census listed 214 women as physicians, surgeons, or general practitioners in England and Wales'.⁴³² This would resolve any misconceptions or assumptions about the sex of Victorian doctors, while acknowledging historical reasons for gender differences in the profession. As the analysis of the historical information presented in the interpretation will demonstrate, there are few occasions on the Victorian Streets when gender differences are

⁴³⁰ Stuart Hall describes 'cultural codes' as the 'sets of concept, images and ideas' that 'Members of the same culture must share', 'which enable them to think and feel about the world, and thus to interpret the world, in roughly similar ways'. See Stuart Hall, 'Introduction', *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, pp. 1 – 11 (p. 6).

⁴³¹ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 126.

⁴³² Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 202.

explicitly acknowledged and explained. Ripon Museum Trust, on the other hand, does provide a few instances of historical information that recognises the different historical experiences of Victorian men and women, examples of which will be outlined later.

The Hark to Rover Inn's interpretation folder, however, does have instances of explicit and implicit gender-specificity concerning the pub's patrons and staff. Regarding the pub's patrons, the heading 'Time gentlemen please' precedes a paragraph about pub opening times. While the phrase 'Time gentlemen please' may have been selected as it is a well-known pub-related phrase in popular culture and refers to a closing hour which complements the paragraph's content about opening times, it implies that Victorian pub patrons are male, therefore excluding female patrons. The paragraph succeeding this section is about 'Who went to the Pub in the 19th Century?'. It states that 'The pub was a refuge for the working classes, providing relief from long hours of poorly paid work, and a meeting place for clubs and societies'. The gender-passivity of 'working classes' offers no reference to male or female patrons to correct this initial gendering caused by the phrase 'Time gentlemen please', which may encourage visitors to continue reading this interpretation as a male narrative or Victorian men's history. Later in the interpretive folder, this male narrative is further explicitly reinforced and emphasised as it states that 'Men were main users of the public houses' and 'No respectable middle class man would go to a public house'. The only reference to women in the interpretation folder are in two sentences that explains that

The Whip [pub] in the centre of Leeds only admitted women in the 1970s. The Temperance reformers often spoke of the women and children left outside the pubs waiting for any money left over when the men had finished drinking away their wages inside.

While the interpretation for the Hark to Rover Inn exhibit implicitly excludes Victorian women by word choices and explicitly by referring almost exclusively to Victorian men and reducing the inclusion of Victorian women to a mere two sentences, on the contrary, research into Victorian pubs and their patrons have proved that Victorian women as well as men frequented public houses, albeit in fewer numbers. Moiria Plant stated that 'By the beginning of the nineteenth century women were beginning

to be seen in the pub',⁴³³ while Girouard argued that 'Few respectable women had gone into the pubs in the mid-nineteenth century; it was the . . . lighter standards of comfort and finish which brought them into the pubs of the eighties and nineties'.⁴³⁴ This indicates that Victorian women did frequent the Victorian pub, in increasing numbers as the nineteenth century progressed. However, the word choices in the interpretation imply that the Victorian pub was a male domain.

In terms of pub staff, the folder also refers to the job titles of 'pot-men' and 'pot-boys' with the male suffix. Casey Miller and Kate Swift explain that,

. . . most job titles ending in man date from a time when only males performed the jobs described . . . the masculine-gender terms matched the sex of nearly everyone doing the jobs described.

Not so today . . . making the old job titles, when retained discriminatory.⁴³⁵

However, the interpretation's use of the archaic job roles and titles of 'pot-men' and 'pot-boys' does refers to the occupations in the Victorian period and research into Victorian occupations through census records indicate the existence of pot-men and pot-boys.⁴³⁶ Pot-women were a rarity if not an anomaly, therefore this use of these masculine job titles is seemingly valid and historically accurate.⁴³⁷ This is supported

⁴³³ Moira Plant, *Women and Alcohol: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives* (London: Free Association Books Ltd, 1997), p. 54.

⁴³⁴ Mark Girouard, *Victorian Pubs* (London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 5.

⁴³⁵ Miller and Swift, *The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, p. 37.

⁴³⁶ Using *Find My Past*, an optional keywords search for 'pot man' and another for 'pot boy' for every census between 1841 and 1901 was undertaken. A sample of these results revealed that the vast majority were for legitimate pot-men and -boys; very few of the search results were anomalies referring to other occupations with the word 'man' or 'boy' in the title, such as odds man, handy man.

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Pot man	4*	387	891	6**	157	295	106
Pot boy	1	709	683	36	340	170	150

*These four results were upon inspection found to be anomalies as they referred to four members of a household who lived at Quart Pot Lane Court in Northampton, none of which were pot-men, -boys or -women. As their address contains the word 'pot', the search wrongly flagged up their records.

**Similarly, 1871 had six results but three results referred to individuals living at Quart Pot Land Court.

⁴³⁷ Using *Find My Past*, an optional keywords search for 'pot woman' for every census between 1841 and 1901 was undertaken. The results was then looked at and recorded.

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Pot woman	0	11	11	0	20	1	12

Upon inspection of every result, all but two overall were irrelevant as it had brought up the records of women with other occupations which included the word 'woman', such as 'char woman', 'washer woman' and 'dairy woman' amongst others, as well as those with the occupation of 'pot warehouse woman'. The two relevant results, one in 1851 and one in 1891, which described the women as 'pot woman' are also possible anomalies. The woman from the 1851 census, Mary Ann Kirk, lived with a 'pot miner', so her job as 'pot woman' may have been connected to pot mining rather than bar or pub work. Elizabeth Lawton from the 1881 census lived with her brothers who are described as 'potters'.

by Girouard's research as he refers to 'pot-boys and barmaids' suggesting gender specific roles within the Victorian pub.⁴³⁸ The figure of the Victorian barmaid, which has received academic attention, is not present in the interpretation alongside the references to pot-men and pot-boys in the Victorian Streets' Hark to Rover Inn exhibit.⁴³⁹ Through examples of gendered word choices and a lack of clarity with non-gendered nouns to explicitly include and refer to Victorian women, the interpretation for the Hark to Rover Inn exhibit explicitly and implicitly places Victorian women, 'outside the pubs', as the interpretation itself states, which is not historically accurate. This inaccurate absence of Victorian women as pub patrons and staff in the Hark to Rover Inn exhibit perpetuates the separate spheres ideology of Victorian women remaining in the private (domestic) sphere 'outside the pubs' and Victorian men enjoying what the Victorian pub and wider public sphere has to offer.

While the Hark to Rover Inn interpretive folder reinforces the Victorian myth of separate spheres, the audio interpretation for Ripon Museum Trust's Police and Prison Museum perpetuates another, the stereotype of the Victorian fallen women. The first audio guide track for the Police and Prison Museum introduces the Museum to visitors with the following information:

You are following in the footsteps of a long line of vagrants, louts, drunks and lewd women who were taken here to be locked up before being whipped or set to hard labour.⁴⁴⁰

It is interesting that the vagrants, louts and drunks are not assigned a sex/gender, yet the lewd prisoners are specified as being women. This excerpt does not explicitly

Elizabeth may also have been a potter. While this conclusion suggests that the census records shows that there were no 'pot-woman' working in pubs and bars, to take these two women into consideration and a potential wrongful interpretation of these results and records, it will be concluded that 'pot-woman' were a rarity.

'Mary Ann Kirk', Census Return for Criches Row, Greasley, Basford, Nottinghamshire, England (Archive reference: HO107, Piece number: 2125, Folio: 275, Page: 25), online at:

<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbc%2f1851%2f0013021614> (accessed 13 March 2017)

'Elizabeth Lawton', Census Return for North Road, Burslem, Wolstanton, Staffordshire, England (Archive reference: RG11, Piece number: 2716, Folio: 125, Page: 2) online at:

<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbc%2f1881%2f0012173917> (accessed 13 March 2017)

⁴³⁸ Girouard, *Victorian Pubs*, p. 12.

⁴³⁹ For example in Diane Kirby's book *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs* focuses on nineteenth-century barmaids and Peter Bailey has published extensively on 'The Victorian barmaid as cultural prototype'. See Diane Kirby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) (pp. 17 – 106); Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, reprint. 2000) (pp. 151 – 174).

⁴⁴⁰ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Prison and Police Museum, 1 Welcome, <<http://pp.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

highlight male prisoners, just female prisoners. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Victorian usage and surviving/today's usage of 'lewd' means 'lascivious, unchaste'.⁴⁴¹ The use of this word in the interpretation represents imprisoned women as unchaste, sinful, and/or immoral. In the fuller context, the audio guide track does go on to explain that:

The master of the house of correction reported to Ripon magistrates that for the years 1820 to 23 he had imprisoned 10 travellers, 9 rogues and vagabonds, 20 beggars, a lewd woman, 9 held for disorderly conduct, a gypsy, a fortune teller and 51 unspecified.⁴⁴²

Again, this singles out female inmates but does not specify male inmates – but this may be due to the language and information present in the historical source, a report of some kind by the master of the house of correction, which was consulted. There is, therefore, historical evidence that the prison did house at least one 'lewd woman' between 1820 and 1823 and yet the use of the plural 'lewd women' in the interpretation could be read in two ways. It suggests that there were many 'lewd women' imprisoned there or it could be assumed by visitors that all imprisoned women at this prison were 'lewd'. Research into Victorian female prisoners has shown that, in reality, Victorian women made up a very small percentage of prisoners and were generally accused of a small group of particular offences. In the 1880s, female offenders 'made up a fifth of the local prison population'. Female convicts 'who served more than three months' in local prisons 'fell from around a thousand sentences a year in the early 1860s to just 34 in 1900'.⁴⁴³ They were more likely to serve 'very short sentences of 14 days or less, mostly for drunkenness and related crimes'.⁴⁴⁴ The reference and identification to 'lewd women' seems to be used to titillate visitors but gives a negative impression of Victorian women. From the first audio track, the audio interpretation is representing Victorian women in a derogatory way as the word 'lewd' is a loaded word suggesting sexual as well as criminal deviance. As Heather Shore, a crime historian, comments, in the nineteenth century, particularly 'from around the middle of the century', 'the experience of

⁴⁴¹ Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'lewd, adj.', (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/107735> [created June 2017, accessed 20 November 2017].

⁴⁴² Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Prison and Police Museum, 1 Welcome, <<http://pp.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁴³ John Briggs, Christopher Harrison, Angus McInnes and David Vincent, *Crime and Punishment in England: An Introductory History* (London: UCL Press Limited, 1996), p. 234.

⁴⁴⁴ Briggs, Harrison, McInnes and Vincent, *Crime and Punishment in England: An Introductory History*, p. 233.

women convicts, and penal regimes for women tended to be more centrally shaped by “moral” issues such as sexuality, alcoholism and feeble-mindedness’.⁴⁴⁵ The interpretation through the use of word ‘lewd’ seems to be conforming to and perpetuating this Victorian view of and approach to female criminals by subconsciously conflating sexual and criminal deviance. The usage of the word ‘lewd’ criminalises Victorian women not just in a legal sense, but in a moral and societal sense – as well as sexualising them: the connection of lewdness to unchasteness which can easily be construed as a veiled reference to sexual promiscuity, at best, and prostitution, at worse. It perpetuates the figure of the Victorian fallen woman who has transgressed from society’s norms and values of religious morality and sexual chasteness, and disregarded the mythicized and idealised separate spheres ideology. Interestingly, as further analysis of the Police and Prison Museum will show, there are very few textual and visual representations and references to Victorian women, and women more generally, throughout the museum site, despite this bold start to the audio tour.

The problems in terms of the gendered word choices and usages in the interpretive text in the Hark to Rover Inn interpretation folder at Abbey House Museum are replicated in the interpretation for the Guardians’ Room at Ripon’s Workhouse Museum. These word choices contribute to a wider issue about gender power relations in the displays in the Guardians’ Room through the word choices and the historical information in the interpretive text, and the images/graphics displayed. The Guardians’ Room is where historically the board of guardians would hold their meetings to make judicial and administrative decisions about the Ripon Union Workhouse, such as who to admit and who should receive dole as an alternative, as well access as the other local services that they controlled, for example schools. The Room is partially recreated with a round table at its centre to represent the decision-making duties and meetings of the board of guardians. The walls of the room display text labels, photographs, maps and reproduction images of artwork relating to Ripon Union Workhouse, the theme of poverty, the process of entering workhouses and life in the workhouse. An interpretation sheet which explains the Room’s layout refers to the board of guardians’ ‘Chairman’ and uses the pronouns of ‘his’ and ‘him’: it reads

⁴⁴⁵ Heather Shore, ‘Crime, Policing and Punishment’, *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain*, ed. by Chris Williams (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), Chapter 23, pp. 381 – 395.

‘This sketch represents the look of the Board of Guardians Room towards the end of the Victorian period, with the Chairman elevated on his dais, and the clerk below him’. Similarly, the Workhouse Museum’s audio guide track about ‘The Guardians’ repeatedly refers to members of the Board of Guardians as men. It says:

. . . In truth, the new Guardians were unselfish men with an unpopular job. In Ripon, most were clergymen, small tenant farmers or shopkeepers. However since they held power to tax, that is to fix the rates, it was necessary to also have professional men. For some years the Marquis of Ripon was chairman. . .⁴⁴⁶

The repetition of the word ‘men’ and male pronouns when referring to the guardians in both the written and audio interpretation gives visitors the impression that workhouse guardians, not just at Ripon Union Workhouse but generally across other boards, were exclusively male. As will be commented on later, visual representations in the Guardians’ Room also support or reinforce this impression.

But research into the governance and staffing of nineteenth-century workhouses has revealed that qualified Victorian women could be guardians. While Victorian women could not be *ex officio* guardians – as these were local magistrates or Justices of the Peace whose position allowed them to join the board of guardians and women could not be magistrates until 1919 – Victorian women could be elected guardians. However, they (like male guardians) had to meet the requirements of being ‘substantial rate-payers’, therefore ‘Those with most experience, married women, and with most leisure, their daughters, were effectively disqualified from standing as a guardian’ as ‘Only one householder in six was a woman’.⁴⁴⁷ According to Patricia Hollis, ‘Women would-be guardians had not only to be duly qualified and nominated, they had also to be duly elected.’⁴⁴⁸ It was not until 1875, however, that the first female guardian, Miss Merrington, was elected in Kensington.⁴⁴⁹ However,

⁴⁴⁶ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Workhouse Museum, 5 The Guardians, <<http://wh.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁴⁷ Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865 – 1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), p. 206.

⁴⁴⁸ Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865 – 1914*, p. 207.

⁴⁴⁹ It is worth acknowledging that Patricia Hollis referred to a possible earlier female Guardian: . . . the Dean of Bristol, Dr Beddoe, startled his listeners when he told them that as a young clergyman in a country parish he had helped to elect a woman guardian back in the 1830s. He recalled that the rest of the board, farmers to a man, had promptly left her to get on with it. The women’s movement could also cite one or two other examples of women who had been elected or co-opted to parish and poor law office without legal challenge in years gone by.

Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865 – 1914*, p. 195.

as Hollis revealed, Merrington, was later 'disqualified in 1879 because the election took place while she was moving house, and a ratepayer pointed out that for these days she was not eligible'.⁴⁵⁰ The qualification criteria proved to be one obstacle stopping many willing and able women from taking up such positions 'as few ladies of leisure are residing as ratepayers' as a contemporaneous article on female poor law guardians explained.⁴⁵¹ The article on 'The work of women as poor law guardians', published in the *Westminster Review* in 1885, explained how 'Poor Law is specially fitted for women; for it is only domestic economy on a larger scale' therefore 'every woman who has managed her own household with wisdom and economy possesses the qualities chiefly necessary in a guardian of the poor'.⁴⁵² However, it stated that 'Last year [1884] 31 ladies were officiating as Poor Law Guardians, fourteen of these being in London, five in Birmingham, four in Bristol and eight in Edinburgh'⁴⁵³ but 'many would gladly go and do the needful work on the Boards if this qualification were removed'.⁴⁵⁴ In 1894, the restrictive requirements for eligibility changed allowing anyone who had resided in their Union for two years to stand for election as a guardian. This, in theory, allowed men and women from the lower classes to run for election to be guardians as the property requirements were abolished. As a result of this change, 'one hundred and fifty-nine women were guardians in 1893; and eight hundred and seventy-five were guardians in 1895'.⁴⁵⁵ The number of female guardians was still significantly lower than that of male Guardians, but amongst the few female or lower-class guardians, many contributed greatly to the administration and conditions of the workhouse for inmates.⁴⁵⁶ Although female Guardians 'faced not just hostility from many male guardians, but

⁴⁵⁰ Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865 – 1914*, p. 207.

⁴⁵¹ 'The work of women as poor law guardians', *Westminster Review*, vol. 123, 1885, in 'Women and the Poor Law', *Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850 – 1900*, ed. by Patricia Hollis, pp. 247 – 248 (p. 248).

⁴⁵² 'The work of women as poor law guardians', *Westminster Review*, vol. 123, 1885, in 'Women and the Poor Law', *Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850 – 1900*, pp. 247 – 248 (p. 247).

⁴⁵³ 'The work of women as poor law guardians', *Westminster Review*, vol. 123, 1885, in 'Women and the Poor Law', *Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850 – 1900*, pp. 247 – 248 (p. 247).

⁴⁵⁴ 'The work of women as poor law guardians', *Westminster Review*, vol. 123, 1885, in 'Women and the Poor Law', *Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850 – 1900*, pp. 247 – 248 (p. 248).

⁴⁵⁵ Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865 – 1914*, p. 208.

⁴⁵⁶ Hollis' chapter 'The Work on Women Guardians 1875-1914' highlights some of the duties of female Guardians, categorised by Hollis as 'managing the workhouse', 'the care of the children', 'the training of girls', 'nursing the sick', 'guarding the feeble-minded', 'comforting the elderly', 'out-relief, pauperism, and poverty'. It also includes specific cases of female guardians making significant changes in their workhouses. See Hollis, 'The Work on Women Guardians 1875-1914', *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865 – 1914*, pp. 247 – 299.

also from many staff'.⁴⁵⁷ Social reformer and philanthropist Louisa Twining's publication *Suggestions for Women Guardians* (1885) detailed the broad breadth of involvement and responsibility female Guardians were encouraged to have as well as the attention to detail, from the provision of food, clothing, toys for children, beds and bedding, religious education to having oversight of the staff, such as the training of the nurses.⁴⁵⁸

The repetitive use of the word 'men' in the interpretation, however, omits this chapter in Victorian women's history and just frames the history of workhouse Guardians around men. Its usage may be because Ripon Workhouse Union itself did not have any female Guardians during the Victorian period, the period which the Guardians' Room reflects, as evidenced in further research. The *Guardians and Staff* booklet by Anthony Chadwick gives a specific history or chronology of Ripon Union Workhouse as well as more general workhouse history.⁴⁵⁹ It refers to many male Guardians of the Ripon Union Workhouse during its existence but only refers to one female Guardian explicitly; 'Miss King of Kings' Bakery had been a Guardian in the 1920s. . .'.⁴⁶⁰ Like the interpretive text, the booklet also refers to guardians as men, asking 'So what sort of men were the Guardians?'⁴⁶¹ and stating 'Because every Guardian represented his parish, the Guardians tended to know the paupers in the 'House''.⁴⁶² Despite the absence of Victorian female Guardians at Ripon Union Workhouse, the interpretation in the Guardians' Room about guardians could present the wider history of workhouse guardians, acknowledging that while Ripon Union Workhouse itself did not have any female Guardians during the Victorian period, others did.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁷ Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865 – 1914*, p. 214.

⁴⁵⁸ Louisa Twining, *Suggestions for Women Guardians*, 1885, in 'Work of Women Guardians', *Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850 – 1900*, pp. 243 – 247.

⁴⁵⁹ Anthony Chadwick, *Guardians and Staff*, Booklet 9 (The Workhouse Museum, Ripon: Ripon Museum Trust).

⁴⁶⁰ Chadwick, *Guardians and Staff*, Booklet 9, p. 8.

⁴⁶¹ Chadwick, *Guardians and Staff*, Booklet 9, p. 4.

⁴⁶² Chadwick, *Guardians and Staff*, Booklet 9, p. 10.

⁴⁶³ Coincidentally when researching female Guardians, the National Trust's Workhouse in Southwell launched a temporary exhibition in April 2018 called 'Faces of Change: Votes for Women'. The exhibition features 'original photographs and objects from The Workhouse which illuminate the conditions of women's work at this property', including an 'original photograph of Lady Laura Ridding, who was the first female guardian at The Workhouse, a significant Suffragist and supporter of working women's rights all her life. See National Trust, The Workhouse, Southwell, 'Faces of Changes: Votes for Women', <<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/the-workhouse-southwell/features/faces-of-change-votes-for-women-exhibition-at-the-workhouse>> [accessed 1 May 2018].

As previously explained, the exhibit of the Master's and Matron's Quarters in the Workhouse's main block building is often colloquially shortened to the Master's block or quarters, marginalising the matron's connection to the building. In addition to this, the word choices and language used to describe the Master's and Matron's block and the roles of the master and matron is inconsistent, varying from acknowledging and highlighting the matron's connection and role to at times downplaying or diminishing it, as the following examples will illustrate. In the main block, the 'Master and Matron's Quarters' interpretive panel at first states that 'The main block housed the master and matron's quarters . . . The yard immediately in front of the quarters also belonged to the master and matron', suggesting a partnership and joint ownership of the quarters (see Figure 9).⁴⁶⁴ As too does the 'A comfortable life' label in the dining room which refers to both the master and matron:

Although the daily tasks of the master and matron could at times be demanding. . . We also know that later in the workhouse's history, from the 1940s, the master and matron also had a maid. (see Figure 10)⁴⁶⁵

However, the 'Master and Matron's Quarters' interpretive panel (Figure 9) later describes the dining room as being 'master's dining room', now omitting the matron's connection and ownership of the dining room. On the same panel, a caption of a photo showing the master and matron (of Ripon Workhouse from 1949-51) in the sitting room describes it as the 'master's sitting room'. These room names may be influenced by historical sources as the exhibited 1930s building plan, which Wills and other researchers used as a primary source to understand and consequently interpret the main block, refers to particular spaces and rooms in the main block as the Master's only, such as the 'Master's dining room', 'Master's sitting room' and 'Master's yard'. The 'Pantry' interpretive panel in the main block initially refers to both the master and matron as it states that 'The master and matron's food was prepared in the workhouse kitchen. . .'. However, it later just refers to the master stating that 'In the twentieth century, the pantry also served as a food store for the

An article about the exhibition and Ridding explains how she won the 1894 election to become the first female guardian at Southwell Workhouse, beating 'two male candidates, including a vicar'. She paid particular attention to the living conditions of the inmates and make changes to improve them; these included 'better food and proper underwear'. See Maev Kennedy, "Our hero': First Female Workhouse Guardian is Star of Exhibition", *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/apr/30/our-hero-first-female-workhouse-guvnor-is-star-of-exhibition>> [created 30 April 2018, accessed 1 May 2018].

⁴⁶⁴ Figure 9, p. 175.

⁴⁶⁵ Figure 10, p. 176.

master's own family'. This not only excludes the matron but suggests a hierarchy in which the master is *paterfamilias*.

It is not just in the main block where the interpretation either excludes or diminishes the role of the Matron through subtle word and language choices. The Master's and Matron's block is referred to in the audio track 'Drawing Over Fireplace' for the Guardians' Room.⁴⁶⁶ The two sentences can be unpacked to explore some interesting observations regarding word choices, the ordering of the words and what the order suggests or implies about the workhouse master and matron. It says:

The gable building on the front looking out of the windows is the master's house. He was the man assisted by his wife, the matron, who was responsible for the day to day running of the workhouse.⁴⁶⁷

Focussing on the first sentence, there is the issue again of the Master and Matron's block being referred to as belonging to the master only, with the phrase 'master's house'. As previously concluded, it is often referred to as 'the master's' colloquially and for ease of reference but in doing so, the matron is excluded. In the second sentence, the word 'assisted' suggests that the matron's role was subordinate to the master's, due to the connotations of 'assistant'. It implies that the master's role was the most important and that the role of matron was to assist the master in his duties and responsibilities – as opposed to the role of matron being a separate role with its own duties and responsibilities to the workhouse and its inmates. It belittles the matron's role by referring to the matron as an assistant and appendage to the Master, her husband, rather than a professional woman in her own right. It also uses the words 'wife' and 'matron', with 'wife' first then 'matron' second. This is interesting as it subconsciously and hierarchically orders the roles with wife seemingly being the most important. However, in the context of the interpretation's message, surely the role of matron is most pertinent to the running of the workhouse rather than the role of wife? These observations connect with what Porter found when analysing how women are represented in history museums in connection to the themes of work and industry. Porter noted that women are 'entirely confined to domestic settings, as consumers, assistants and housewives' and represented 'as the . . . long-suffering

⁴⁶⁶ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Workhouse Museum, 4 Drawing Over Fireplace, <<http://wh.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁶⁷ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Workhouse Museum, 4 Drawing Over Fireplace, <<http://wh.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

assistants to skilled husbands and others'.⁴⁶⁸ We also see an example of what said Miller and Swift said about 'non-parallel linguistic treatment' of women and men,⁴⁶⁹ and, as suggested by Hein, if the background and foreground of displays were reversed,⁴⁷⁰ would the same be said about if the interpretation's focus was the matron? Would the matron be assisted by her husband, the master?

As demonstrated, specific word and language choices in the interpretation for the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum and exhibits at Ripon Museum Trust sites can imply a specific history and experience for Victorian women. As the examples given demonstrate, gender-neutrality in name exhibits and word choices can be misinterpreted by visitors and a generalised gender-neutrality can misrepresent or inadequately represent the history and experience of Victorian women. Because of the cultural norms associated with specific nouns, the non-gendered nouns used to describe people connected to the Victorian Streets exhibits and history can be interpreted as being inherently a male or female history or experience by visitors. For example, doctors can be interpreted and assumed to be male and teachers as female even if the job title is gender neutral. When these references are not followed up by historical information in the interpretation which either corrects or overrides the assumptions, or recognises that the experience of Victorian women was different to that of Victorian men, then visitors are given a false impression of that history. At the other end of the spectrum, gender specificity in some of the interpretive text can also represent an inaccurate history or experience for Victorian women, as shown in the Hark to Rover Inn interpretation on the Victorian Streets and the audio track for Ripon's Police and Prison Museum. The interpretive folder for the Rover Inn refers to male patrons and male pub staff, excluding Victorian women from the pub, however research has shown that women were pub patrons and workers. It perpetuates the Victorian separate spheres ideology with women absent from the public sphere, in this case the pub. The Police and Prison's audio track refers specifically to female prisoners and does so with a negative, derogative adjective, the word 'lewd'. This word perpetuates the stereotype of the Victorian fallen women, as the word 'lewd' as connotations of sexual

⁴⁶⁸ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

⁴⁶⁹ Miller and Swift, *The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, p. 111.

⁴⁷⁰ Hein, 'Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective', p. 57.

promiscuity and deviance. This paints an inaccurate and negative picture of Victorian female prisoners, as it is the first impression of Victorian female prisoners as well as one of the few references to women at all throughout the museum site. As identified, the matron at the Workhouse Museum is inconsistently referenced in interpretation, at times acknowledged and at other times omitted. The exclusion of the matron in the highlighted textual references not only excludes the matron and this facet of Victorian women's work history but creates a hierarchy between the master and matron: through consistent references to him, the master is assumed to be more important in comparison to the inconsistently mentioned matron. When referred to the matron is described as a 'wife' or the master's assistant, marginalising the matron's professional role. This has demonstrated how nuanced word and language choices affect how Victorian women are represented in these museum displays and how they imply a particular history or experience which may or not may be historically accurate or correct. As further analysis will demonstrate, this is the case, not just with specific exhibit names and word choices, but with the historical information in the interpretation for some of the exhibits.

Historical information in interpretation

On the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum and across the Ripon Museum Trust sites, the historical information in the interpretation is at times inaccurate and inconsistent in how it acknowledges or distinguishes the different histories and experiences of Victorian men and women. As will be shown, at times, history is presented as a monolithic experience for both Victorian women and men, with no reference to different experiences and histories. This presents an inaccurate representation or portrayal of not only Victorian women's history, but of Victorian men's history and Victorian history more generally. On a few occasions, there are attempts to highlight and explain these nuanced differences. But these are inconsistent and could be argued that do not go far enough in acknowledging the subtleties and nuances of the diverse experiences and histories of Victorian women and men.

Victorian female guardians are omitted from the interpretation in the Guardian's Room not only by word choices, specifically the use of the word 'men' when referring to Guardians, but additionally from the historical information in the

interpretive text. There is no acknowledgement that while Ripon Union Workhouse itself did not have any female guardians during the Victorian period, as evidenced in Chadwick's booklet which detailed only one female guardian which was in the 1920s,⁴⁷¹ other boards of guardians did have female guardians in the late Victorian period. As previously stated, there were thirty-one female guardians in 1884,⁴⁷² one hundred and fifty-nine in 1893 and eight hundred and seventy-five in 1895.⁴⁷³ Additionally, it is also not acknowledged that women who were local to the workhouse or had familial connections on boards, while not guardians themselves, played significant roles in workhouses as visitors and benefactors in terms of their charitable work and commitment to improving the welfare of inmates. The *Guardians and Staff* booklet by Chadwick explains that Caroline Bower, relative of Prof Frederick Bower and William Orpen Bower who served as Ripon Union Workhouse guardians, 'was one of many visitors who charitably worked for the House and regularly sent in flowers. The Marchioness of Ripon was a regular visitor and benefactor'.⁴⁷⁴ Chadwick also states that 'the Guardians tended to know the paupers in the 'House'. So did their wives, which explains their contribution to the workhouse as visitors'.⁴⁷⁵ The Workhouse Visiting Society had been established in 1858 for 'the introduction of a voluntary system of visiting, especially by ladies, under the sanction of the guardians and chaplains'.⁴⁷⁶ During visits, visitors would comfort, befriend and instruct inmates. The Society, according to Patricia Hollis, had disbanded in 1865, 'successful in its immediate aims' as 'Ladies were now visiting scores of workhouses, and they all knew what needed to be done'.⁴⁷⁷ While Victorian men may have held the official position or title of guardian, their female relatives (wives, daughters and sisters) may have also being heavily involved with workhouses as visitors, essentially *de facto* guardians, and yet this history is absent from the historical information in interpretation in the Guardians' Room as well information about female guardians.

⁴⁷¹ Chadwick, *Guardians and Staff*, Booklet 9, p. 8.

⁴⁷² 'The work of women as poor law guardians', *Westminster Review*, vol. 123, 1885, in 'Women and the Poor Law', *Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850 – 1900*, pp. 247 – 248 (p. 247).

⁴⁷³ Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865 – 1914*, p. 208.

⁴⁷⁴ Chadwick, *Guardians and Staff*, Booklet 9, pp. 7 – 8.

⁴⁷⁵ Chadwick, *Guardians and Staff*, Booklet 9, p.10.

⁴⁷⁶ 'The Workhouse Visiting Society', *English Woman's Journal*, July 1858, in *Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850 – 1900*, p. 243.

⁴⁷⁷ Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865 – 1914*, p. 200.

There is an exhibit in the Waiting Room at Ripon's Workhouse Museum about a key female figure connected to Ripon Union Workhouse, Mrs Elizabeth Sophia Lawrence, but even this addition and inclusion of a specific Victorian woman is used to tell Victorian men's history instead. In the Waiting Room, an interpretation sheet (see Figure 11)⁴⁷⁸ explains how 'In the early 19th century Mrs Lawrence was a very important person to the institution. She was the lord of the manor, very rich and very generous to the poor'. Despite her own wealth and philanthropy, the historical information in the interpretation, however, then refers to her grandfather's and her descendants' achievements in giving the original hall and surrounding land for the use of a workhouse and serving as guardians (presumably only the male descendants due to the lack of female guardians at Ripon Workhouse). It then goes on to describe her death and funeral, including an ode about her death that was published in a local newspaper, and her descendants' actions. Whilst attempting to include a case study or story of a woman with an authoritative connection to Ripon Union Workhouse, the interpretation is less about Mrs Lawrence and her personal connection to Ripon Workhouse, and more about her (male) familial achievements and connections, specifically the Marquess of Ripon who served as Chairman of the board of the guardians of Ripon Union Workhouse twice. The interpretation itself says that 'Mrs Lawrence was almost forgotten', but it could be perceived that Mrs Lawrence is almost forgotten or lost in this interpretation too.

In contrast to this lack of acknowledgment of gender history differences, one of the more substantial examples of the historical information addressing diverse gender histories on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum is the folder for the Widow Washer Woman exhibit. The historical information presents extensive facts and details about the involvement of Victorian women in the profession of laundry work. The information about this aspect of Victorian women's history is presented alongside information about Victorian men's involvement (or rather lack of involvement) with laundry work and offers a comparison regarding employment figures. The interpretation folder explains how 'Washing was always a female occupation at this time. If men had to do their own washing, they did it in secret'. The employment figures for the occupation of washing are compared to that of an occupation of a similar size for Victorian men, directly comparing Victorian women's

⁴⁷⁸ Figure 11, p. 177.

and Victorian men's history rather than treating and representing them in utter isolation. The interpretation for the Widow Washer Woman's House exhibit offers an apt example of how to offer balanced gender history, representing the history of both Victorian women and men, emphasising and acknowledging the similarities and differences between the histories and experiences for them both.

Another example of attempted gender balance in the historical information on the Victorian Streets can be found in the interpretation folder for the Forster's Mourning Warehouse exhibit. Yet this is not as successful as the Widow Washer Woman's House's exhibit as the element of contrast and comparison is very minor. The interpretation folder says 'Men were not expected to mourn as long for their wives', drawing attention to this gender differences of Victorian mourning practices. However, this one sentence is the extent of this gender balance or addressing the varied gender experience as the rest of the interpretation focusses on the female experience of widowhood and mourning, referring to 'widows', 'bereaved brides' and how 'women needed a whole new wardrobe' followed by a list of feminine mourning clothing and accessories. This acknowledgment of the different experiences of mourning for Victorian men and women is very limited, almost piecemeal and tokenistic, and could be developed further. Without any more references to the male experience of mourning or to widowers in the historical information (other than the one sentence) it presents the act of mourning as a dominantly female practice. This 'compare and contract' approach or model of Victorian women's and men's histories and experiences is inconsistent not only on the Victorian Streets but also across Ripon Museum Trust sites.

Another issue with the interpretation for the Widow Washer Woman's House exhibit is the mention of her 'widow' status and its relevance to the historical information and exhibit. As previously noted, the title of 'widow' suggests that women are appendages of men. However, Miller and Swift acknowledge that some information about domestic relationships, to which they give the examples of 'information about a person's children, grandchildren and spouse is relevant and of genuine interest'.⁴⁷⁹ One could argue that in the case of the Widow Washer

⁴⁷⁹ Miller and Swift, *The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, p. 115.

Woman's House exhibit, the status of widow is relevant to the exhibit and the history it represents as the interpretation information does explain that,

Men would sometimes buy their wives a mangle as a kind of insurance. If he was injured or died, she could scrape together a living taking in washing. Many women received little training beyond household skills, so washing was one of the few ways a widow could make a living.

It also explains that 'Widows with children formed the largest group of paupers receiving poor relief or entering the workhouse, where they would be separated from their children'. Therefore, the status of widow is relevant to the exhibit, as the interpretation makes a direct reference to the experience of some Victorian widows in terms of their economic and social position. However, this precarious economic position was not just experienced by widows but, according to Murdoch, more generally by 'Families headed by lone mothers – whether widowed, deserted, or married' as these 'were the most threatened by economic constraints'.⁴⁸⁰ Nonetheless, this exhibit could still have represented the Victorian washerwoman and laundry profession just as easily without the word 'widow', or alternatively just represented the Victorian widow experience in the interpretive information only as one aspect of Victorian womanhood and not in the exhibit title. Given the limited explicit representations of independent, entrepreneurial Victorian working women on the Victorian Streets, as further analysis will detail, it could suggest to visitors that Victorian women were dependent on men, specifically husbands, to provide them with the means and tools of trade so that they can work in a professional capacity. In contrast, the exhibits about work undertaken by Victorian men or male professionals do not acknowledge how Victorian wives and other female family members enabled these men to work by providing childcare and running the household while they worked, or how Victorian women were 'intellectual and business partners' to Victorian men, as Murdoch explained.⁴⁸¹ This can also be seen and applied to not only the exhibits on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum, but also in the historical information about the Master and Matron at the Ripon's Workhouse Museum.

An examination of the name of exhibits and the word and language choices in interpretive text, as shown that the matron is frequently omitted from the name of

⁴⁸⁰ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 87.

⁴⁸¹ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 81.

exhibits and when referenced, the words used to describe the matron suggests an inferiority or subordination to the Master and emphasise her role as 'wife' and assistant. This implied message continues throughout the historical information in the interpretive text about the matron and master. The two sentences referring to the matron in one of the audio tracks for the Guardians' Room has previously been analysed showing how it refers to the master's and matron's house as 'the master's house' only and how the matron, the 'wife' of the master, 'assisted' him.⁴⁸² The role of matron is not explained in any more detail than this brief and fleeting reference in the Guardians' Room. Prior to the opening of the Main Block, containing the Master's and Matron's Quarter's, in 2017, this was one of only a handful of references to the matron throughout the Workhouse Museum site. The very brief description of and references to the matron inaccurately represents her by brushing over their role and responsibilities. In reality, the posts or positions of master and matron worked in tandem with one another, with the master responsible for the administration, staff and male inmates (amongst other duties) and the matron responsible for the workhouse's domestic arrangements and the supervision of female inmates. In fact, the matron acted as a deputy for the master in his absence. If the matron died, resigned or was dismissed, then the master had to be formally re-appointed by the guardians or vacate his post.⁴⁸³ While historical information about the matron is lacking in the Guardians' Room, the newly-opened main block does however expand on this and explain the position of matron in slightly more detail. However, most visitors will visit the Guardians' Room first, guided by the museum's prescribed route, therefore this is the first impression visitors receive about the Victorian workhouse matron.

Whilst the representation of the matron in the historical information has been found to be passive and shallow, when present at all, there are several examples across Ripon Museum sites where attempts have been made to separate out the experience of Victorian women and men and highlight the differences between the

⁴⁸² 'The gable building on the front looking out of the windows is the master's house. He was the man assisted by his wife, the matron, who was responsible for the day to day running of the workhouse.' See Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Workhouse Museum, 4 Drawing Over Fireplace, <<http://wh.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁸³ Indeed, Wills during his interview explained that a Ripon Union Workhouse Matron passed away and the Master, her husband, was at risk of losing his post. To remedy the situation, the master married the schoolmistress who then became the matron which allowed him to retain his post. See Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 9 October 2017, line 48 – 53.

two. But, like some of the attempt in the Forster's Mourning Warehouse historical information on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum, these can be piecemeal and tokenistic, and improvements could be made. In the Courthouse's Retiring Room, a room in which the Justices of the Peace or magistrates would 'refresh themselves and get warm in front of the fire on cold days,'⁴⁸⁴ there is a panel on 'Liberty Magistrates or Justices of the Peace'. It states that '[Magistrates] were local men with property and influence and were not paid or legally trained . . .'. The use of the word 'men', as with the interpretation about guardians, suggest that only men could be magistrates, but fails to explicitly state whether Victorian women were eligible to be magistrates or not, and if not, why. Another panel in the Retiring Room about 'Modern Magistrates', however, does implicitly acknowledge that Victorian women were not magistrates by stating that 'Today magistrates are much more representative of the wider population and since the 1940s, women have been appointed as magistrates'. But again, this lacks the historical information to allow visitors to understand the barriers prior to the 1940s which prevented women from being magistrates. There is no reference to how 'the property qualification was abolished in 1906 and women were admitted to the bench in 1918.'⁴⁸⁵ While the lack of Victorian women's involvement in the legal profession is acknowledged, albeit briefly, their involvement with the opposite side of the law, as the accused and criminals, is also represented. Panels on sentencing ('Sentencing Powers of Liberty Magistrates') explain how 'In 1830, the Magistrates could sentence men, women and children to a range of punishments'. But that it is as far as the distinctions go, as it does not differentiate between gender and punishments when there were specific differences. For example, the panel states that at a public whipping, 'The criminal was paraded around the market place behind the cart to make sure everyone knew of their crimes for maximum shame and humiliation' while the Courthouse audio track about 'Punishment' states that 'The cat o' nine tails was used to whip people usually around the market place on market day for all to see'.⁴⁸⁶ The use of the gender-neutral words 'criminal' and 'people' suggests to visitors that both male and female criminals were whipped during this period. However, the whipping of women

⁴⁸⁴ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Courthouse Museum, 4 Retiring Room <<http://ch.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁸⁵ Briggs, Harrison, McInnes and Vincent, *Crime and Punishment in England: An Introductory History*, p. 221.

⁴⁸⁶ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Courthouse Museum, 5 Punishment <<http://ch.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

in public was abolished in 1817 and in private in 1820.⁴⁸⁷ Therefore in 1830, the year in which the panel seems to focus on, the publicly-whipped criminal would have been male only. This historical information on the interpretive panel can be considered as lacking nuance and distinguishing gender differences at best, or historically inaccurate at worse. The staged court scene in the Court Room at the Courthouse Museum and its textual and audial interpretation also attempts to explain the limited role of women in the legal system. The audio track about 'The Bench' states that:

The historical magistrates' court was composed of only men. Women had very few rights. The men chosen to be magistrates were the local landowners, high ranking clergy, the mayor and local businessmen.⁴⁸⁸

Contrastingly, the 'Juries' interpretation panel is initially ambiguous. The first sentence states that 'These are the benches where the jury sat; a group of ordinary people chosen to decide on the outcome of a particular court case'. The word 'people' suggests both men and women. It later says 'In 1830, jurors were drawn from the Liberty parishes in turns and consisted of 12 property-owning men', recognising that in 1830 only men could be jurors. This is emphasised by the audio that explains that 'In the 19th century, the jury, twelve men chosen by rota from the local villagers, were propertied gentlemen'.⁴⁸⁹ The first sentence through its use of the word 'people' suggests both men and women were jurors; this is true of very few nineteenth-century juries. Research has shown that in the nineteenth century, 'Property requirements meant that jurors (in addition to being male and over the age of 21) were mostly middle-class men'.⁴⁹⁰ However, since 'at least the twelfth century', there had been a need for a 'jury of matrons', female jurors, in some cases for example if female defendants 'pleaded their bellies'; this practice however 'significantly in decline by the last two decades of the eighteenth century' and '[b]y 1800 the appearance of the jury of matrons had become a rarity'.⁴⁹¹ In fact, it was not until 1919 with the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act when Britain had its first

⁴⁸⁷ Briggs, Harrison, McInnes and Vincent, *Crime and Punishment in England: An Introductory History*, p. 159.

⁴⁸⁸ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Courthouse Museum, 7 The Bench <<http://ch.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁸⁹ Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Courthouse Museum, 8 The Jury <<http://ch.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

⁴⁹⁰ Susie L. Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), p. 162.

⁴⁹¹ Deidre Palk, *Gender, Crime and Judicial Discretion 1780 – 1830* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2006) p. 34.

official female jurors.⁴⁹² The non-specific historical context of the first sentence creates ambiguity as visitors could assume it is referring to nineteenth-century or twentieth-century juries, but in the latter sentence, although it does not explicitly state that Victorian women were exempt from being jurors, it is implied. At the time of the fieldwork visit to the Courthouse Museum, there was a panel being installed in the Court Room on 'Women and the Law' (see Figure 12).⁴⁹³ Etherington, when interviewed in 2017, confirmed that this panel had since been removed.⁴⁹⁴ But this interpretation panel further unpacked and explained the limited women's history within law and order as:

Women played no part in any aspect of the law before the twentieth century, but women did serve in the courts in Victoria's reign as missionaries in the police court missions which helped defendants who had drink and money problems. In 1889 the Metropolitan Police appointed a few auxiliaries called *police matrons*.

It goes on to say how the first uniformed police woman joined the force in 1915 and the first magistrate was in 1921. This panel explains the absence of Victorian women as jurors, magistrates, judges and police officers, and goes beyond that period, into the twentieth century to be able to give examples of the appointments of women in these roles and positions. This panel is an apt example of how the exclusion of Victorian women from other exhibits can be addressed by providing thorough historical context in the historical information – even if this means straying beyond the historical period the museum site represents. Whilst it could be considered that the panel was tokenistic as it was placed in the back of the final exhibit or room at the Courthouse Museum and treats women's history separately (as opposed to the 'compare and contrast' approach seen with a few of Abbey House Museum's exhibits), it was a step towards representing Victorian women's history and women's history more generally in a 'honest and fair' way.

As acknowledged previously, Ripon's Prison and Police Museum lacks representations of Victorian women as well as women in general, but there is one panel that includes Victorian women and attempts to make distinctions between the

⁴⁹² John Hostettler, *Criminal Jury Old and New: Jury Power from Early Times to the Present Day*, (Winchester: Waterside Press, 2004), p. 126.

⁴⁹³ Figure 12, p. 178.

⁴⁹⁴ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 105 - 106.

experiences and histories of male and female prisoners. The panel – ‘Prisoner Uniforms’ in Gallery 8: Life in Prison (see Figure 13)⁴⁹⁵ – presents information, accompanied by illustrations and photographs, about prison uniforms for male and female prisoners, noting the differences. For example, it states that ‘most male convicts had loose coarse cloth jackets and trousers . . .’ while ‘female clothing consists of a glue [sic]⁴⁹⁶ gown with a red-striped petticoat’. Men ‘wore a cap with a large peak. . . and female prisoners wore a short alpaca veil over the face’ while ‘a man prisoner wore his prison number on a brass badge on his chest. A female prisoner’s number was carried on an armband or on her belt’. It is interesting that one of the few textual references to Victorian women at the Prison and Prison Museum is in relation of the theme of clothing, and by extension fashion. This relates back to what other researchers found when exploring representations of women and noting that women are mostly represented in connection to particular feminine themes, in this case fashion and clothing. Panels about other prison issues and themes, such as the panel on work in prisons and prison staff uniforms also in Gallery 8, fail to provide historical information about female convicts and female prison staff, instead using illustrations and photographs to represent them and this facet of Victorian women’s history with no or little historical information. These illustrations and photographs will be analysed later.

As previously detailed, Porter found that labour or work history is often treated, represented or portrayed differently in museums depending on whether it is about men or women.⁴⁹⁷ A strong thematic thread throughout the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum is that of work through the shop and workshop exhibits; it bleeds into the domestic exhibit of the Widow Washer Woman’s House exhibit – although to what extent and how explicit this is will be argued later. Therefore, Porter’s observations and findings about work are particularly relevant to the analysis of specific exhibits on the Victorian Streets. Porter’s research into gender representations in history museums identified a tendency for museums to represent women in the themes of ‘consumption’ and ‘leisure’ while men were represented using the themes of ‘production’ and ‘work’.⁴⁹⁸ When women’s history was framed

⁴⁹⁵ Figure 13, p. 179.

⁴⁹⁶ This should possibly be ‘blue’, not ‘glue’ as the interpretive text states.

⁴⁹⁷ Porter, ‘Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums’.

⁴⁹⁸ Porter, ‘Studies in Gender and Representation in British History Museums’.

around or associated with a production narrative, Porter found that the production side was downplayed or minimised; 'visitors are encouraged to believe that the products [made by women] "arrive" miraculously and without agency'.⁴⁹⁹

With this in mind, we can note a strong emphasis on a male production in The Grocers' interpretation folder for the Popplewell & Co Ltd exhibit, providing information about Victorian advertising, shopping experience, food products, and inventions/discoveries that improved food preservation. Victorian women are noticeably absent from the historical information; contrary to Porter's findings, they are absent even as consumers of goods, while, on the other hand, the exhibit provides numerous references to Victorian men. For example, the information in the exhibit's interpretive folder explains how companies, founded by Victorian men, manufactured food products, such as Mr. R. Goodall whose company made Yorkshire relish. It introduces Victorian men, namely Thomas Wakley and Arthur Hill Hassall, who investigated and campaigned against the adulteration of food and gives information about recognisable food goods and their male inventors, such as, amongst others, Alfred Bird who invented Bird's Custard and Jeremiah Colman who invented Colman's mustard. It also lists the men who developed the process and means of refrigeration and those who developed and patented devices to store and preserve foods, such as Peter Durand and his tin can, and Ezra Warner and his tin can opener. Here, the interpretive folder presents a narrative of men as producers and as actors in history. Porter's findings that industrial displays suggest that men 'design and control technologies' is also applicable in this case.⁵⁰⁰ As will be discussed later, the supporting visual images in the interpretation folder reinforce this narrative.

Specifically, Porter found that displays relating to housework at York Castle Museum represented women's roles as 'hobbies', 'passive' and 'mechanical', in contrast to men's role which were represented as 'work', 'active' and 'manual'.⁵⁰¹ But contrary to Porter's findings, the 'Victorian Washing' page in the interpretation folder for The Widow Washer Woman's House exhibit describes the intensive labour involved with washing:

⁴⁹⁹ Porter, 'Studies in Gender and Representation in British History Museums', p. 278.

⁵⁰⁰ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

⁵⁰¹ Porter, 'Studies in Gender and Representation in British History Museums', p. 148.

Washing was a far longer and more backbreaking process than today. . . Household washing would take at least a day. . . A survey of several hundred labouring families in London in the 1840s showed that whole process of laundering including drying, starching and ironing usually took at least 3 days. (See Figure 14).⁵⁰²

However, while the washing or laundry process undertaken by Victorian women is vividly detailed, it is described in a detached way. The word 'process', used twice, dehumanises the act of washing like it is done by invisible hands or even mechanically. Even the word 'backbreaking' does not explicitly connect or relate the invisible hands or broken backs to those belonging to Victorian women. While the historical information for the Widow Washer Woman's House exhibit does detail the labour and work associated with laundry work, it does so in a detached, 'passive' way which does not fully acknowledge the Victorian washer women. Porter's past findings are still partly relevant and applicable in this exhibit.

As previously indicated, visitors may assume the Sunday School exhibit in Harewood Square of the Victorian Streets may reflect a Victorian woman as the schoolteacher due to cultural codes and assumptions about gender roles. Analysis of the interpretive folder for The Sunday School exhibit, however, offers some unexpected results. While one may think that the Sunday School exhibit would be, due to cultural codes, gendered and fully represent Victorian women, they are surprisingly underrepresented. Despite the sign to the exhibit saying 'Miss Milne, Mistress' suggesting that the exhibit may focus on Miss Milne, a female school mistress, the interpretive folder in fact focusses on male teachers and represents Victorian female teachers in inferior positions to male colleagues. The interpretation folder presents a case study of a Victorian Sunday school, Wortley Methodist Sunday School, and it explains that the staff were five male superintendents and 28 female teachers. While this is a case study of a local Sunday school in Victorian Leeds relevant to the exhibit and the Streets, here, Victorian men are in the superior position of superintendents while Victorian women are in an inferior position of teachers reporting to the superintendents. As the case study only refers to male superintendents, visitors may assume the this position was limited to Victorian men only, whereas in fact superintendents could be male or female, 'sometimes known as the master or mistress, whose job it was to organise the day to day running of the

⁵⁰² Figure 14, p. 180.

school'.⁵⁰³ There seems to be an inconsistency with the exhibit as it assigns the exhibit of the Sunday School to 'Miss Milne, Mistress' but Miss Milne, her duties and responsibilities, her position and her social history – if she is a historical person – are not expanded upon beyond this sign. Her attachment to the exhibit is irrelevant and could be interpreted as tokenistic. The interpretive folder also presents another case study of a male teacher who 'took the headship of the Guiseley Wesleyan Day School in 1882 remaining there until 1916'. Whilst this exhibit cannot be faulted for challenging cultural codes and gender stereotypes by representing Victorian male teachers, it can be criticised for failing to describe the extent to which, according to Murdoch, 'The 19th-century expansion of the school system created new professional positions for women' and how 'after the 1870 Education Act . . . teaching developed into one of the largest and relatively well-paid professions for women'.⁵⁰⁴ Miss Milne could have been a conduit through which to tell this facet of Victorian women's history – but instead she and this Victorian women's history has been side-lined. To remedy this lack of representation, the interpretation could have highlighted the gender differences regarding employment of Victorian male and female teachers as

all female teachers still lagged behind men in their salaries, remained concentrated at the elementary levels, lacked opportunities for advanced, and in many localities experienced a marriage ban that allowed authorities to fire female teachers who announced plans to marry.⁵⁰⁵

This would explain why in the case study Victorian men only were in the position of power and authority as superintendents, and highlight gender discrepancies, at best, or, discrimination, at worse, in this profession in the Victorian period.

Similar observations can be made about the Victorian Streets' Pawnbroker's and the Haberdashery exhibit and the historical information in their interpretation folders. As previously explained, the interpretive text in the Haberdasher's interpretation folder uses gender-neutral language, specifically nouns. An analysis of the historical information provided in the interpretation folder suggests that there is some subtle gendering in the form of a poem and yet the gendering of the

⁵⁰³ Gillian Carol Gear, 'Industrial Schools in England, 1857 – 1933: 'Moral Hospitals' or 'Oppressive Institutions'?', Doctoral thesis, University of London Institute of Education, 1999, p. 96, <http://eprints.ioe.ac.uk/6627/7/DX211996_Redacted.pdf> [accessed 13 April 2017].

⁵⁰⁴ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 198.

⁵⁰⁵ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 198.

interpretive text overall does not go quite far enough with its specificity. The historical information in the interpretation folder provides answers to the questions 'Where did the Victorians buy their Clothes?' and 'What Was A Haberdasher?' referencing a gender-neutral dress-maker. These interpretive sections offer no reference to specific genders, failing to acknowledge Victorian women – as both consumers and producers as dressmaking was in fact profession dominated by Victorian women. According to Murdoch,

The production of inexpensive textiles prompted an expansion of the dressmaking industry, causing needlewomen (including dressmakers, milliners, stay-makers and embroiders) to become one of the largest categories of female workers following domestic servants and factory workers.⁵⁰⁶

This Victorian women's labour or work history is concealed by the lack of gender specificity in the interpretive folder, through the gender-neutral word 'dress-maker', and the lack of acknowledgment in the historical information of the connection to Victorian women's history. As previously stated, the Haberdashery exhibit is identified to belonging to W. Mann (whom Ross revealed is a woman). Visitors, however, are not informed implicitly or explicitly in the exhibit name, interpretive text, or historical information for the exhibit of this female-run business.

Similarly, as previously stated, the interpretation folder for the Pawnbroker's exhibit also uses gender-neutral nouns such as 'pawnbrokers' and 'employees' which suggest a gender neutrality or non-specificity. However, further research into the historical information provided in the interpretive folder about the pawnbroking trade and who pawnbrokers are in terms of their elevated social status in Victorian society proved that it should, in fact, be gendered. While the use of the non-gendered word 'pawnbroker' suggests that pawnbrokers were both men and women, the historical information is in fact implicitly specifying male pawnbrokers. It says 'Pawnbrokers . . . took a greater part in respectable life, becoming town councillors and Justices of the Peace'. But women could only become town councillors after the 1907 Qualification of Women (County and Borough Councils) Act which allowed women stand and vote for all council elections,⁵⁰⁷ and they were not allowed to

⁵⁰⁶ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 183.

⁵⁰⁷ Chris Game, 'Twenty-nine per cent Women Councillors after a Mere 100 Years: isn't it Time to Look Seriously at Electoral Quotes', *Public Policy and Administration*, 24(2), 2009, pp. 153 – 174 (p.

become JPs until the 1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act.⁵⁰⁸ Therefore, when the interpretation uses the word ‘pawnbrowsers’, what it actually means is male pawnbrokers, but it fails to make this distinction. This misinterprets Victorian women’s history and represents Victorian men’s history as universal, monolithic history rather than highlighting the gender differences – or clarifying that when it describes the ‘respectable’ roles undertaken by pawnbrokers, it is specifically referring to male pawnbrokers only. However, despite these criticisms of the two exhibits, both do attempt to offer some more nuanced and gendered interpretation of Victorian women’s work history.

The Haberdashery exhibit does this through a primary source, a poem, although as it will be argued, this represents the mythicised Victorian needlewoman and focusses on her social and economic conditions rather than her professional skills. There is a reference to Victorian women’s work history later in the Haberdashery’s interpretive folder, not through the historical information but the inclusion of a primary source, a Victorian poem by Thomas Hood called ‘The Song of the Shirt’, about the Victorian needlewomen and revealing ‘The harsh reality of dressmaking as way of life’ (see Figure 15).⁵⁰⁹ The poem portrays the female dressmaker as a woman, ‘with fingers weary and worn’ ‘sat in unwomanly rags’ ‘in poverty hunger dirt’. This poem is an apt representation and example of what Murdoch referred to when she described how

By the 1840s and 1850s, the distressed needlewoman – half-starved, freezing in a garret, suffering from failing eyesight, and perhaps even resorting to prostitution – emerged as a recognized figure in reform literature.

Through this poem, the interpretation represents Victorian women in the feminine profession of needlework. As Beth Harris stated, ‘Sewing was, in many ways, the ultimate sign of femininity’, therefore needlework was seen as a ‘natural’ profession for women.⁵¹⁰ And yet the poem defeminises these Victorian women as their dire

157), <<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0952076708100877>> [published 1 April 2009, accessed 12 April 2017].

⁵⁰⁸ Stephen Wade, *The Justice Women: The Female Presence in the Criminal Justice System 1800 – 1970* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Ltd, 2015), p. 21.

⁵⁰⁹ Figure 15, p. 181.

⁵¹⁰ Beth Harris, “‘Slaves of the Needle:’ The Seamstress in the 1840s’, *Victorian Web*, <<http://www.victorianweb.org/gender/ugoretz1.html>> [Last modified 10 December 2014, accessed 11 April 2017].

state and condition has left them 'unwomanly'. It does not focus on the profession or craft itself of dressmaking or the skills required for it, but instead focusses on the (arguably mythicised) social situation and conditions attached to it. Rather than the exhibit representing an entrepreneurial, (emerging) lower-middle class business woman, such as Mrs Mann, the exhibit perpetuates this victim-figure of the Victorian poor female needlewoman or dressmaker to visitors. By focussing on the social conditions, the potential female production narrative is implicit and downplayed and becomes lost amongst the heavily mythicised (and essentially negative) representation of the Victorian needlewoman as depicted in the poem.

The Pawnbroker's interpretive text offers some gendered historical information as it acknowledges how different property rights in Scotland meant that Scottish 'husbands were equally as likely to go the pawn shop as the wife', but the 'shame' associated with pawning meant that it was women and children [who] were usually seen at the shop rather than the man, the head of the family' (see Figure 16).⁵¹¹ While it identifies different gendered behaviours, it suggests that Victorian women were mostly associated with the act of pawning goods. It does attempt to represent Victorian women as entrepreneurial – but their business activity is rather negatively represented. The interpretation goes into detail about the act of pawning, explaining how a go-between or 'intermediary', used to take goods to the pawn shop, was 'usually a woman' known as 'poppers, bundle women, runners or other local names'. It goes on to explain that:

Poppers were used by women working long hours in mills or factories who couldn't spare time to do their own pawning, or by women too ill or with too many young children to get out of the house. Some poppers worked casually for a glass of whiskey while others made a regular living doing it. Some poppers were paid by particular pawnbrokers to use them rather than the competition. (Figure 16).⁵¹²

The interpretation at first represents these go-between women as entrepreneurial and business-minded, but it then belittles them and undermines their business activity by stating that some would do it 'for a glass of whiskey'. This reference to the alternative payment of their services diminishes and downgrades their business skills and activity. The acceptance of alternative payments is not mentioned in relation to

⁵¹¹ Figure 16, p. 182.

⁵¹² Figure 16, p. 182.

any of the male workers or businessmen represented on the Victorian Street: for example, it is not stated that the male grocer or chemist may have traded goods or accepted alternative payment *in lieu* of monetary payment. As this is one of the few explicit examples of entrepreneurial Victorian women on the Victorian Street, it is disappointing that this representation is diminished by the reference to alcohol due its connotations as visitors may then paint their own picture of the female go-between as drunk.

The representation of the needlewoman and go-between are both of working-class women. There is a clear class divide on the Victorian Street with Abbey Fold being the working-class backstreet, and Stephen Harding Gate being the middle-class respectable street of commerce and leisure. Harewood Square does have an air of respectability with the Sunday School and Fancy Goods shop, while the Pawnbroker's exhibit implicitly represents the fragility of working-class respectability. While there is an explicit distinction in class representation on the different Streets, the exhibits themselves frequently fail to acknowledge the class variances or nuances, and different class experiences connected to the aspect of history the exhibit represents. This can be seen more so with the Forster's Mourning Warehouse exhibit in its interpretive folder: it fails to acknowledge class diversity in the experiences and customs for mourning, for both Victorian women and men. It does briefly reference a class element as it states that 'Whole families, including servants in richer households, were expected to follow the rules of mourning', but it does not detail or characterise class differences of mourning more generally or class differences through a gender lens, such as the difference between a middle class Victorian woman's mourning practice and a working class Victorian woman's experience. As Murdoch commented, 'most widows from the upper and middle classes wore all black morning dress, referred to as "widow's weeds," for two years', however,

Working-class women unable to afford new mourning clothes would likely borrow black attire for the funeral, resort to the pawnshop, or dye one of their dresses black. Women not only lent one another clothing, but also sewed dresses and widows' caps for friends as a sign of sympathy.⁵¹³

⁵¹³ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 69.

The interpretation's failure to acknowledge that this exhibit represents a middle-class experience of mourning only and to differentiate class experiences presents an inaccurate, one-dimensional, universal experience that has been applied to all Victorian women, regardless of class. While it may not be appropriate for examples of working-class mourning clothing to be on display in the middle-class Forster Mourning Warehouse exhibit, the Pawnbroker's exhibit could have been utilised to represent the working-class mourning experience by displaying mourning clothing which could have been pawned or sold there, as Murdoch highlighted.

This universal representation of Victorian women in mourning, regardless of class, is then reinforced through a primary source, the article 'Mourning and Funeral Usages' from the magazine *Harper's Bazaar* (17 April, 1886), which is included in the interpretation folder. *Harper's Bazaar*, a fashion magazine, was founded in America in 1867 as 'A repository of fashion, pleasure, and instruction' 'aimed at affluent women'.⁵¹⁴ The magazine article reproduced in the interpretation folder details world-wide, mostly female, mourning practices in terms of the clothing styles and fabrics that should be worn and for how long. Whilst clearly appealing to its middle-class audience, due to the wealth needed to purchase the various mourning dresses of different materials to suit the period of mourning and the degree of relationship to the dead, the interpretation folder does not put the source into context or explain that the views and practices of mourning expressed are middle class. Like the historical information in the interpretation folder, the primary source offers a middle-class perspective and yet is presented as a universal perspective, not differentiating the varying class practices.

Like the historical information for Forster's Mourning Warehouse, the historical information for the Widow Washer Women exhibit offers a mainly one-dimensional representation that does not acknowledge class differences. The interpretation at first says that 'Washing was always a female occupation at this time'. It was in fact a working-class female occupation and the interpretation should in this instance distinguish the different class experiences of Victorian women; middle-class and upper-class Victorian women would have had (working-class) domestic servants to

⁵¹⁴ Stephen Mooallem, '150 Years of Harper's Bazaar', *Harper's Bazaar*, December/January 2016, <<http://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a18658/history-of-harpers-bazaar/>> [published 21 November 2016, accessed 5 April 2017].

do laundry for them or would have outsourced their laundry to a (working-class) laundress. By not recognising the class differences, this suggests a monolithic, universal history and experience for all Victorian women. Further on, however, the interpretation presents information on other Victorian female occupations available for 'poorer Victorian women' other than being a 'washer woman'; this therefore implies, albeit subtly, that the washing/laundry service was an occupation for poorer Victorian women. The interpretation folder says

Other jobs open to poorer Victorian women included peddling (selling door to door or in the streets), taking in sewing, lodgers or childminding. As well as washing, women would try to supplement their income in any way possible, such as fortune telling. (See Figure 17).⁵¹⁵

This not only acknowledges that not every working-class Victorian woman was a washer woman, but also that particular occupations were class-specific, nevertheless this could be more explicit and class differences could be considered throughout the interpretation and not just in this paragraph.

The historical information in the interpretation folder for some of the exhibits on Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum have some limited attempts at gender balance where the history and experience of Victorian women and men is compared. But here examples are few and arguably does not go far enough; this approach is not applied in every interpretation folder for each exhibit. An analysis of some of the historical information showed that, at times, the history and experience of Victorian men is presented as universal and monolithic history for both Victorian men and women. The interpretation also does not adequately differentiate between the experiences of different Victorian women's history, presenting the experience of one class stratum as universal history for Victorian women of all classes. The representation of work history in the interpretation folder is interesting; as one interpretation folder dehumanised the process of work, another mythicized the Victorian women doing the work and focusses on their social conditions as opposed to their skills and handiwork, another belittles the Victorian women engaged in that type of work, and another downplays it and just represents Victorian women in inferior roles to Victorian men.

⁵¹⁵ Figure 17, p. 183.

This section has analysed the textual elements of some of the exhibits of Abbey House Museum and Ripon Museum Trust. Some of the names of exhibits, the language and word choices, and historical information in the interpretation of the exhibits on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum and across Ripon Museum Trust sites were found to be gender neutral and to lack specificity. The instances of gender neutrality and lack of specificity presents a monolithic and broadstroke representation of Victorian history – Bennett’s identified ‘story of man’ narrative – which does not differentiate or distinguish the different and nuanced experience affected by sex and gender.⁵¹⁶ This specifically obscures Victorian women’s history at best, and at worse inaccurately represents it. The lack of clarity and nuanced specificity leaves room for misinterpretation and assumptions by visitors, who are subconsciously influenced by cultural codes and norms. A few of the examples of specific gendering through the use of particular words differentiate the experience or histories of Victorian men and women causes some issues. Some word choices perpetuate Victorian ideology and myths rather than challenge them. While, Porter and Wilkinson and Hughes identified the particular tropes and stock roles ‘consumers, assistants and housewives’ and ‘nurse, whore or domestic servant’, respectively, in their research, the trope of Victorian fallen women at the Prison and Police Museum and the mourning widow on the Victorian Streets are used here.⁵¹⁷ Other word choices, for example the use of certain gender pronouns, suggest that exhibits and the history that they represent are about either Victorian men and women – but analysis has shown that at times the use of male pronouns wrongly and inaccurately excludes Victorian women from the historical narrative, such as the persistent references to guardians at the Workhouse Museum as men. When correct pronouns are used, these are at times not contextualised by the historical information to explain why Victorian women were excluded from this area of Victorian history. However, amongst the broadstroke approach and at times inaccurate representations, there are examples on the Victorian Streets and with some Ripon Museum Trust exhibits which attempt to represent a nuanced historical narrative which differentiates and recognises the varying histories and experiences of Victorian men and women. For example, the Courthouse Museum does

⁵¹⁶ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, p. 91.

⁵¹⁷ Porter, ‘Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums’; Wilkinson and Hughes, ‘Soldiering On’, pp. 25 – 26.

acknowledge a lack of female magistrates while employment figures for Victorian men and women are actively compared and contrasted for the Widow Washer Woman's House exhibit on the Victorian Streets. But this is piecemeal and inconsistent, arguably the 'add-women-and-stir' method criticised by Holcomb, and the variables of 'class, religion, race, age, and locality' highlighted by Murdoch need to be considered and included more systematically on the Victorian Streets and across Ripon Museum Trust sites to make the text of the museum displays more 'honest and fair' and less 'passive and shallow'.⁵¹⁸

Chapter 2 – 'Reality requires things':⁵¹⁹ Visual Analysis

In this chapter, I will analyse the visual components of the museum displays on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum and across Ripon Museum Trust sites with focus on the reproduced images (illustrations, cartoons, sketches and photographs) in interpretation folders, on graphic panels or interpretive panels; and the material culture on display forming the exhibits. The analysis will demonstrate that the visual elements of the museum displays reinforce the messages or narratives expressed textually, particularly in the historical information provided. While this synergy between the two seems appropriate, sensible, and rational, as previously argued in the textual analysis chapter, most of these messages and narratives are not necessarily 'honest' and 'fair' representations of Victorian women as they lack nuance. They represent Victorian history as the same for all regardless of sex/gender and class, exclude particular narratives and histories about Victorian women, and/or at times perpetuate stereotypes about Victorian women rather than challenge them. Overall, the reproduced images and material culture displayed in exhibits collude with and perpetuate the textual misrepresentations of Victorian women's history, as certain examples will illustrate, rather than being utilised as a tool to unpack, challenge, counter or correct them.

On the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum, while Victorian women have a significant presence quantitatively through reproduced images, the quality of the representations is found to be quite shallow, repetitive and superficial. The reproduced images in the Forster's Mourning Warehouse interpretation folder

⁵¹⁸ Holcomb, 'Gender and Heritage Interpretation', p. 38; Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. xviii.

⁵¹⁹ William Whewell, 'Remarks on a Review of *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*', 1884, quoted in *Victorian Things* by Asa Briggs (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1990) p. 11

reinforces the textual message that mourning was a Victorian female and middle-class emotion and practice. Reproduced images in the Grocer's interpretation folder underlines the textual narrative of men as producers and agents and women as passive, menial workers. Contrastingly, visual representations of Victorian women, and women more generally, are considerably lacking across the Ripon Museum sites in comparison to visual representations of Victorian men and men in general. When visual representations of Victorian women are present, the reproduced images reflect them as in inferior positions compared to their male counterparts. The material culture used to represent Victorian women's history on the Victorian Streets confines them to the role of consumer and places them firmly in the private sphere as the material culture links Victorian women to the themes of shopping, consumerism and domesticity, as 'consumers, assistants and housewives' as previously noted Porter.⁵²⁰ One exhibit, the Widow Washer Woman's House, does attempt to reflect one example of working-life for working-class Victorian women using material culture – but even then, its clarity and explicitness is questionable as it is presented in a domestic space and amongst household objects and the mixed objects could be giving mixed messages. The material culture on display at Ripon Museum Trust sites is limited due to the lack of existing objects connected to the sites specifically and the themes they represent more generally (nineteenth-century social welfare, and the law and prison systems), but even then, it is rarely supplemented with replicas and facsimiles. Of the little material culture on display, very few objects have explicit or even implicit connections to Victorian women's history or women's history more generally due to the restricted, if not non-existent, role women had in nineteenth-century courts and prisons as judges, lawyers and police officers. The newly-developed main block of the Workhouse Museum has the potential to represent Victorian women as inmates and matrons using the historic building itself but, as will be explained, this has possible curatorial problems which may ultimately limit or restrict the representation.

⁵²⁰ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

Reproduced Images

Many of the exhibits on Abbey House Museum's Victorian Streets and across Ripon Museum Trust sites include reproduced images either in interpretive folders, on interpretive panels alongside text, or as graphic panels. Many of these are reproductions of Victorian photographs, paintings, sketches and illustrations. Whilst these primary sources are a product of their own time with particular historical and cultural agendas, meanings, biases and limitations, they have been purposely selected or curated by the museum (or museum/exhibition curator more specifically) for the exhibits: they represent, illustrate, emphasise or complement the exhibit's textual and/or visual message, narrative or theme. But as previously argued, at times these textual messages and narratives exclude Victorian women or when they include Victorian women, do so within the confines of stereotypical roles and cultural images, or offer a very simplistic representations of Victorian history which do not acknowledge the nuanced differences of sex/gender as well as class. As the analysis will demonstrate, these reproduced images generally work hand-in-hand with the textual elements of the exhibit, often reinforcing these problematic messages and narratives. I will argue that the reproduced images could be used more creatively to not only support the textual elements when appropriate, but also to challenge, counter, and correct these messages and narratives to create a more varied, nuanced, 'honest and fair' representation of Victorian women in these exhibits.

The visual reinforcement of textual themes, narratives and messages can be seen more evidently in a few exhibits on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum. Contrary to the findings of previous studies which argued that found that representations of women were quantitatively lacking on museum displays, there are many reproduced images that represent women, and Victorian women specifically. In the Forster's Mourning Warehouse folder, quantitatively there are nine separate images and of these three depict men (all of whom are alongside women) and seven depict either one woman individually or more than one woman. However, when these reproduced images are qualitatively analysed, they are found to be quite one-dimensional, lacking nuance and depth. As the textual analysis demonstrated, the Forster's Mourning Warehouse exhibit's historical information represents the experience of mourning for Victorian women, with very few references to the male

experience of mourning, perpetuating the stock role of grieving widow. It does not acknowledge that this is one class perspective (a middle class perspective) or offer representations of other class experiences of mourning, or any of the other variances Murdoch referred to of 'class, religion, race, age, and locality'.⁵²¹ The images and visual depictions in the Forster's Mourning Warehouse interpretation folder reinforce this female-focussed and middle class experience of mourning as there are several images of Victorian women dressed in ornate mourning clothes, only accessible and affordable to middle-class and upper-class women. Rather than challenging the woman-centred, bourgeois narrative conveyed by the historical information in the exhibit's interpretation folder, the reproduced images support this narrative as most of the images depict Victorian middle-class women in mourning, excluding the working-class experience and minimising the male experience of mourning. This narrative is encapsulated by one of the images which shows Queen Victoria in her iconic black attire during her prolonged period of mourning after the death of her mother and Prince Albert. This popular cultural image of Queen Victoria – widowed, elderly, dressed in black with a 'not amused' expression – is frequently used in museum displays about the Victorians due to its recognisability and iconic nature, one that has been recently challenged in the previously highlighted exhibition⁵²².

It is not just the Forster's Mourning Warehouse folder which favours images of Victorian women; the Haberdasher's interpretive folder contains eleven images which are mostly reproductions of Victorian fashion plates from the Leeds Museums and Galleries collection, as stated by the interpretation folder. Three of the images depict men (all of which are alongside women) and nine depict women. Of the nine images depicting women, all but one show middle- or upper-class Victorian women in fashionable and expensive clothing. This fuels the trope of women as consumers, as identified by Porter.⁵²³ Only one image – the one accompanying Thomas Hood's poem about the distressed and, as previously argued, mythicised dressmaker – depicts a working-class Victorian woman, which could be perceived to be tokenistic. Like the images in the Forster's Mourning Warehouse folder, the selection of images

⁵²¹ Lydia Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO LLC, 2014), p. xviii.

⁵²² 'Victoria & Albert: Art & Love', *Royal Collection Trust* <<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/victoria-albert-art-love/the-queens-gallery-buckingham-palace>> [accessed 5 August 2016].

⁵²³ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

offers a one-dimensional representation of Victorian women, focusing on the experience of middle- and upper-class Victorian women, minimising the experience of working-class Victorian women as sartorial workers and excluding and ignoring the experience of working-class Victorian women as consumers who would buy materials from the haberdasher to make their own clothing.

The inclusion of reproduced images in the interpretation folders for both the Forster's Mourning Warehouse and the Haberdasher exhibits could be an opportunity to develop, layer, and challenge the class and gender narratives that the textual elements of the exhibits present by including some of more examples of working-class experiences (through depictions of working-class clothing and those who worked in the clothing trades) and examples of male experience (of mourning as well as wearing and making clothing products). This subversive would demonstrate to visitors that mourning was not just a female experience and that fashion history is not limited to women only but also encompasses men as consumers and producers. This relates to what was previously said about representations of women being limited to and focussed through the lens of the apparently feminine themes of clothing/fashion, home life and leisure. Scholarly research proves that clothing and fashion were part of Victorian men's lives: as Christopher Breward argues, while 'There is much evidence to sustain the notion that a feminisation of "fashionable" consumption. . . during the period',⁵²⁴ 'men [were] right at the centre of a debate concerning fashion and modern life'.⁵²⁵ Accordingly, he explores 'the consumption habits and fashionable identities of men'.⁵²⁶

While there is the issue of the Forster's Mourning Warehouse and Haberdasher exhibits at Abbey House Museum arguably using too many images of Victorian women and too few of Victorian men, Ripon Museum Trust's Prison and Police Museum has the opposite problem: there are too few images of Victorian women and too many of Victorian men. There is very little visual representation of Victorian women and women more generally in exhibits in the Prison and Police Museum. Quantitatively, the vast majority of the visual depictions of people in photographs and illustrations are either male individuals or groups of men. There are

⁵²⁴ Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860 – 1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 2.

⁵²⁵ Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860 – 1914*, p. 2

⁵²⁶ Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860 – 1914*, p. 1

over one hundred visual representations of men in total. A couple of the images are pre-Victorian, a few (less than a dozen) are specifically from or represent the Victorian period, and a handful (again, less than a dozen) date from the twentieth century; and the majority are undated or temporally non-specific. These visual representations depict men as both criminals and members of the police force or prison staff. By comparison, there are a significantly smaller number of visual representations of pre-Victorian women, Victorian women, twentieth-century women and women from a non-specific/undated period. There are around twenty-two visual representations of individual women or groups of women in only eleven exhibits or displays across the site. Those which are specifically Victorian or relate to or can be applied to Victorian history will be analysed specifically, while the others will be referred to. Analysis of these will show that the vast majority of the reproduced images of Victorian women and women more generally depict them as criminals: they are often represented in images which have no supporting textual interpretation to contextualise the image and provide an insight into that aspect of women's history. This formalist approach to let the images 'speak for themselves' is problematic, as Moore highlighted. Men, on the other hand, are visually represented in a variety of roles more frequently, and often the reproduced images relate directly to in-depth textual interpretation, so they appear more relevant to, and important in, the exhibit.

As stated, many of the limited images of Victorian women represent them as criminals. Outside the Prison and Police Museum in the prison yard, there are two barred windows. In one window there is the illustration of a woman with a sign stating 'Anne East 1833 7 years Transportation for theft of 1 pair Boots' (see Figure 18).⁵²⁷ The companion to this in the second window is an illustration of a man with a sign reading 'George Wilson 1830 14 years Transportation for Larceny Items stolen: clothing'. Anne East is a historical person that Ripon Museum Trust has used as an interpretive thread or narrative across their museum sites. East is also referred to at the Courthouse Museum: details of the crime of which she was accused and found guilty at Ripon court are listed twice on interpretation displays, the 'Bound for South Australia' and the 'Transportation' panels. The fact that East is used repeatedly may be as it is one of the cross-site interpretive threads to link the sites together, or it may be an indication there is either few examples of female criminals that can be used or

⁵²⁷ Figure 18, p. 184.

that the research into finding other examples of female criminals has not been undertaken. This may be Within the Prison and Police Museum, in Gallery 13: Mugshots, an exhibit on 'Criminal Identification' shows a page from a Northallerton prison record book for 1877 with photographs of and information about of both male and female prisoners. Of the twelve photographs in this specific exhibit, four are female convicts. Elsewhere in the gallery, the walls are covered with mugshots of various criminals from different periods (mostly the early twentieth-century, as suggested by the style of the clothing worn) and a few pages from police records showing the criminals' record and photograph, seven of which are of female convicts. The visual representations of female criminals and prisoners lack context as the gallery does not provide much historical information in this gallery, other than a brief audio track,⁵²⁸ image captions, and object labels. There is no displayed research about the individual women who appear in the photographs; they are purely represented as prisoners and criminals with no personal biographies, which could explain their crimes and provide a social history context. This level of research has been undertaken and subsequently displayed for two nineteenth-century male criminals, the Sinkler Brothers, who are represented in Gallery 9: Transportation gallery as mannequins, as an interpretive label explains their criminal history. Even the research on East which is presented at the Courthouse Museum is absent from the Prison and Police Museum.

Another panel on 'Prisoner Uniforms' in Gallery 8: Life in Prison textually details both male and female prisoners' uniform in the interpretation, as previously referred to. This historical information is accompanied by a sketch of a 'Veiled female prisoner' and photograph of 'female prisoners at work c.1900'. The latter image not only illustrates the uniform for female prisoners but offers an implicit glimpse, though somewhat brief and fleeting, into what prison life was like was female prisoners, as it depicts them 'at work' in the prison garden. This photograph appears to be less staged or posed than other photographs on this interpretive panel, and more of a snapshot, as the female prisoners are kneeling beside flower beds, gardening. Another panel in the same gallery about 'Work in Prisons' shows a photograph of female prisoners doing laundry work with the caption ' . . . Women did this work in

⁵²⁸ The audio guide says 'Our mugshots show all human life from the weather beaten faces of vagrants to the glamour 1920s female con artists'. See Ripon Museum Trust, Audio Tour – Prison and Police Museum, 14 Mugshots <<http://pp.bcb-board.co.uk/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

prisons within a Women's Section (*above*) but men had to do it in male prisons' (see Figure 19).⁵²⁹ Interestingly, though, male prisoners undertaking laundry work is not depicted in any of the photographs. This is the only image of female prison work on the panel, while the other six photographs depict work undertaken by male prisoners. The tasks they are shown performing include: chopping firewood; weaving material; baking; and manufacturing mail bags – these could be seen as semi-skilled or hard labour tasks.

As previously stated, one of the few textual references to Victorian women and women more generally in the Prison and Police Museum centres on the 'feminine' theme of fashion and clothing and this is also true of these visual representations which focus on and showcase the clothing worn by female prisoners and the laundry work undertaken by female prisoners. This is a missed opportunity to represent Victorian women beyond this restricted theme, as reproduced images could show the broad range of tasks and labour undertaken by female prisoners and not just the perceived feminine and 'light' tasks (such as laundry and gardening) but ones which might be considered harsh, hard and inherently 'male' tasks, thus challenging preconceived ideas about Victorian women.

Mixed in with these representations of Victorian women as criminals and prisoners, there are a handful of visual depictions of Victorian women as prison or police staff – although they are so infrequent they could be overlooked. As previously highlighted, in Gallery 8: Life in Prison, the panel 'Prison Staff Uniforms' (see Figure 20),⁵³⁰ textually goes into detail about uniforms for male prison staff in the nineteenth century, omitting historical information about female prison staff. Female prison staff are, however, represented visually in illustrative sketches and photographs. A sketch shows a principal matron in the 1850s, a photograph shows a 'Lady Officer and Matron in Gloucester Prison c 1900', a group photograph of staff at Northallerton prison in 1891 shows female staff and another, a Gloucester matron. Looking at the composition of the photographs and sketches, three show the female prison staff in posed positions, with the sketch showing the 1850s matron seated, and the photograph of the lady officer and matron in what looks like a studio-style pose with them jointly holding a bouquet of flowers: the group photograph of both male and

⁵²⁹ Figure 19, p.185.

⁵³⁰ Figure 20, p. 186.

female prison staff has been taken in the grounds of the prison with the prison itself as a backdrop. Only one visual representation, the one showing the individual Gloucester matron, depicts a female prison staff member at work or offers clues as to what her role involves, as it shows her with a locked cell door and a set of keys. While the images are appropriate to the panel theme of prison staff uniforms, in the absence of historical information about female prison staff, these visual representations of female prison staff could have implicitly enlightened visitors as to what female prison staff did, such as their duties. However, apart from the latter image of the Gloucester matron with keys, the selected images merely show their uniforms with little reference to their day to day tasks, duties, and responsibilities. Again, this relates to what was previously said about representing Victorian women within the theme of fashion and clothing and how visual representations of Victorian women in exhibits could be utilised to go beyond this theme, challenge it and fill in gaps when textual interpretation has fallen short of representing Victorian women in a well-rounded and multi-faceted way, if at all.

Other visual representations of non-Victorian women or women of an unspecified date include: a female prisoner oakum picking on the 'Oakum Picking' panel about prison occupations; a female police radio operator from the 1950s; a female visitor; two photographs of twentieth-century female investigators/scientists on one of the display panels about the 'West Yorkshire Police Fingerprint Bureau: Over a Century of Successful Identification [sic]'; and an exhibit of illustrations from Moses Pitts' 'The Cry of the Oppressed' (1691) which features three women.

Ripon's Courthouse Museum has a similar number of Victorian women and women more generally in reproduced images with those mostly concentrated on a particular exhibit about 'Women and the Law'. There are forty-eight representations of (Victorian, twentieth- and twenty-first-century) men across nine exhibits in photographs or paintings compared to twenty-four representations of women (Victorian, twentieth- and twenty-first-century) across five exhibits. Again, these images lack supporting textual interpretation to contextualise them. As Dudley pointed out, objects can become 'dead' in museums as they are decontextualised, and advocated for museums to not just contextualise but recontextualise objects.⁵³¹

⁵³¹ Dudley, 'Introduction: Museums and Things', pp. 1 – 11 (pp. 1 – 2).

On the 'John Naylor' panel in the Courtroom, there is a nineteenth-century photograph of a group of people, men and women, but only the men (John Naylor's sons) are identified and labelled in the image. A mugshot of a Victorian woman, Eva Griffin, taken in 1862 is repeated twice but in both instances lacked context and explanation. For example, it appears on an interpretation panel about 'Transportation', which fails to acknowledge whether Eva was transported to Australia as punishment for her crime. The two 'Women and the Law' panels (see Figure 12)⁵³² which explain how women entered the legal and law professions in the twentieth century does have thirteen images of female police officers, judges and magistrates in nine different photographs. The women are clearly identified and labelled and relate directly to the text interpretation on the panels. The 'Modern Magistrates' panel in the Retiring Room which notes that 'since the 1940s, women have been appointed as magistrates' has a group photograph of the Ripon Court magistrates in 1998 which shows unnamed male and female magistrates.

The visual representations of Victorian women and women more generally at the Prison and Police Museum and the Courthouse Museum are not just limited quantitatively when compared to the significant higher number of representations of Victorian men and men more generally, but men are visually represented in a wider range of roles, and positions and scenarios compared to the limited and barely there visual representations of women. Men are visually represented in great numbers as heroes, villains, investigators, police officers, magistrates, jurors, and offenders, often supported and reinforced with objects, historical information and characterisation. By contrast, the rare visual representations of women depict them fleetingly and sparingly as criminals more commonly, often with no or little interpretation to provide any historical information (even basic information such as their names). The visual representations for Victorian men, and men more generally, offer a wider, more in-depth and more nuanced representation of men in the policing and prison system: those of Victorian women and women more generally are much more limited at best and tokenistic at worse.

While there is a lack of representations of Victorian women at Ripon Museum Trust's Prison and Police Museum and the Courthouse Museum, there is a visual

⁵³² Figure 12, p. 178.

narrative about Victorian women on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum which balances that of Victorian men. Analysis of the textual elements of particular exhibits on the Victorian Streets demonstrated that there is a contrast of two narrative threads: a male production narrative and a female consumption narrative. These two narratives are amplified by the reproduced images used in some exhibits. As previously identified, the Haberdasher exhibit's historical information glosses over the skill and manual labour needed to make clothing and this continues with the reproduced images: eight of the nine images of Victorian women depict the end-product of dressmaking with Victorian women wearing the finished article, the completed items of clothing, as consumers and customers. Only the image accompanying the Hood poem depicts the process and manual labour involved with dressmaking. The reproduced images present Victorian women as consumers first and foremost and minimises the extent to which Victorian women were involved with the production of clothing as makers and skilled craftspeople – although it must be acknowledged that men as makers and craftspeople are also excluded from this exhibit although present in others. This reiteration of the male-production and female-consumer narratives, which Porter also identified in museum displays, through reproduced images can also be seen the Grocer's exhibit.⁵³³ Textual analysis of the historical information in the Grocers' interpretation folder observed a strong male production narrative and this is enforced by the accompanying images in the interpretation folder. Quantitatively, there are five images (a mixture of advertisements, sketches and photographs), three of which depict men and two depict women. One image shows a male shop-keeper or shop-server and another shows a man on a cart outside Sainsbury's shop. Both men and women feature in the historical advertisement for Bird's Custard with male cooks and female domestic servants or maids. There is also an image of female workers on an assembly line in a factory – although this latter image looks post-Victorian. The visual representations of Victorian men in positions of powers or superior work/employment positions, compared to Victorian women as servers and menial workers, reinforces the narrative that men are active agents in history and 'women are the passive objects

⁵³³ Porter, 'Studies in Gender and Representation in British History Museums'.

and operators', as Porter commented of museums' industrial and technological displays.⁵³⁴

That said, there is an example of reproduced images depicting Victorian working women in another exhibit. The interpretation folder for the Widow Washer Women exhibit contains five images, three of which depict women engaged in the act of washing. The first of the three images, which is on the front cover of the folder, is a photograph showing a woman outside using a wooden dolly in a dolly tub to clean clothing. The second is a sketch showing a woman pegging clothes onto a washing line, while a third shows a woman handwashing clothes in a dolly tub. Whilst analysis of the historical information argued that it dehumanised the act of washing by detaching women from the act, presenting it mechanically using the word 'process' as opposed to manual, the images do to some extent portray the manual, hands-on nature of washing undertaken by Victorian women. But the images still fail to clearly demonstrate the intense level of manual labour due to the static and posed nature of the photograph and sketch, similar to the posed photographs of the female prison officers on display at the Prison and Police Museum. As will be later argued, the material culture on display in the exhibit helps to represent the manual nature of this work.

As pointed out, textually and visually, some of exhibits on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum represent Victorian men more commonly in socially and professionally superior positions. This is also true of the Guardians' Room exhibit at Ripon Museum Trust's Workhouse Museum. As previously argued, some of the textual elements at the Workhouse Museum, particularly in the Guardians' Room, create a hierarchy of power in which men, as guardians and masters, are in a higher social position as the historical information (subconsciously) minimises the roles of the Matron, and ignores the existence of female guardians and the role other Victorian women had in both Ripon Union Workhouse specifically, and workhouses more generally, as visitors and benefactors. Analysis of the reproduced images in the Guardians' Room will show that they, too, perpetuate this hierarchy of Victorian women being in positions lower than Victorian men.

⁵³⁴ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

While the Guardians' Room's interpretive text and historical information exclude Victorian female guardians and minimise the role of the matron, the few visual representations of these roles in the workhouse also reiterates this marginalisation. Displayed portraits of Ripon Union Workhouse guardians throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century supports the textual interpretation as all guardians in the portraits are male. A collection of photographs showing the board of guardians in 1935, however, does show the presence of female guardians by this period (see Figure 21).⁵³⁵ But these are not highlighted or contextualised as no historical information about these female guardians or female guardians more generally accompanies the photographs. This is comparable to the lack of historical information accompanying the mugshots of female criminals at Ripon's Prison and Police Museum.

While Victorian women are not represented visually in the Guardians' Room as guardians or matrons, they are consistently represented as inmates or potential inmates of the workhouse in the artwork, illustrations, and pictures on display. The artwork on display specifically in the Guardians' Room are associated, according to the interpretive sheet, with Charles Dickens 'directly or indirectly': the images are by John Leech, Luke Fildes, and Hubert von Herkomer (see Figure 22).⁵³⁶ The artwork on display can be separated into two categories: life before entering the workhouse; and life in the workhouse. There are nineteen paintings or illustrations on display, some of which are grouped together to form exhibits. Quantitatively, out of the nineteen paintings or illustrations, one shows children with a man and woman but not in a family unit (*Oliver Twist* by George Cruikshank), one shows a woman and men (*The Workhouse Test* by John Leech), two show a family unit of a mother, father and child (*On Strike* and *Hard Times* by Hubert von Herkomer), two show a woman with a child or children (*The Pinch of Poverty* by T. Kennington and *The Crawlers* by John Thomson)⁵³⁷, five show just women (*Eventide, a Study in Westminster Workhouse* and *Christmas in a Workhouse* by Hubert von Herkomer, *The Idiot* by John Leech, *Women's Work Yard* by George Cruikshank and one image from Henry Matthew's *London Labour and the London Poor*) and seven show just men (six of

⁵³⁵ Figure 21, p. 187.

⁵³⁶ Figure 22, p. 188.

⁵³⁷ The interpretive panel with the image and quotation refers to the image as *The Crawler* when it was actually entitled *The Crawlers*. It also wrongly refers to Thomson as Thompson.

Matthew's *London Labour and the London Poor* images and *A Dinner at a Cheap Lodging House* by George Cruikshank). Quantitatively, Victorian men and women are represented in the artwork and illustrations the same number of times. However, a qualitative analysis of these show that the representations of Victorian women in the artwork is markedly different to that of Victorian men. The audio guide track about the artwork, called 'Pictures', asks visitors to be critical of the pictorial scenes depicted in the displayed paintings and illustrations as:

They say a picture tells a thousand words. Those on the wall opposite the door say much about attitudes towards the poor in the nineteenth century. Did the women of Westminster workhouse really drink their tea in china cups from silver teapots?

This problematisation of the scenes depicted in the artwork encourages visitors to question these visual representations of poverty and the life in the workhouse for Victorian women – although this problematisation is limited to the painting *Eventide* by Hubert von Herkomer which shows female inmates drinking tea from china cups and a silver teapot. But, despite this encouragement to be critical of the artwork and the representations shown, they still give visitors a particular message about Victorian women. Qualitative analysis of the artwork shows that Victorian men are shown to be in a better social position than Victorian women, or to have more agency and social mobility than Victorian women.

On the staircase corridor leading to the Guardians' Room, there is a reproduction of the iconic image by John Thomson of *The Crawlers* (1877) (see Figure 23),⁵³⁸ depicting a destitute woman cradling a baby, with a quotation which starts with the following sentence: 'Crawlers are generally women reduced by vice and poverty to that degree of wretchedness which destroys even the energy to beg'.⁵³⁹ In the Guardians' Room, *The Pinch of Poverty* (1891) (see Figure 24)⁵⁴⁰ by T. Kennington also shows a woman also cradling a small child and accompanying by two other children. These depict the poverty experienced by single women with

⁵³⁸ Figure 23, p. 189.

⁵³⁹ The interpretive panel accredits the quotation to Thomson. It seems to have been adapted or summarised from the commentary accompanying the image in the chapter 'The Crawlers' in *Street Life in London*. The commentary was actually written by Adolphe Smith, not Thomson. See John Thomson and Adolphe Smith, 'The Crawlers', *Street Life in London* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1877), pp. 81 – 85, <<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:gup308waf>> [LSE Digital Library, accessed 28 November 2017].

⁵⁴⁰ Figure 24, p. 190.

children. Both *On Strike* (1891) (see Figure 24)⁵⁴¹ and *Hard Times* (1885) (see Figure 25),⁵⁴² both by Hubert von Herkomer, show or suggest the poverty experienced by families as they show a woman (mother), man (father) and children. *On Strike* shows a man in the doorway of a house in a strong, determined, resilient pose with his wife, holding a child and another older child stood behind her inside: the wife has an arm across her husband's and round his neck with her head bent touching his, in a self-comforting, weak and defeated manner. The title suggests that the man, who is dressed in old work clothes, is out of work due to a strike and therefore the family are struggling to make ends meet. *Hard Times* shows a family, carrying bundles, resting by the roadside, suggesting that they are travelling, possibly for work as manual labour tools they had been carrying are on the ground next to them. It suggests the mobility of families to gain employment during times of poverty and 'hard times'. The *London Labour and London Poor* (1851) exhibit of eight images shows some of the individuals that Henry Mayhew, a nineteenth-century journalist, interviewed as part of his social study of London's street life (see Figure 26).⁵⁴³ Six of the individuals shown are male individuals, with jobs varying from 'The London Dustman' to 'The Street-Seller of Nutmeg Graters' to 'The Street Seller of Dogs' Collars'. The only depicted female is described as 'The Cross-sweeper that has been a Maid-Servant'. *A Dinner at a Cheap Lodging House* (1851) by George Cruikshank shows a group of men in a lodging house eating, some sitting at tables and some on the floor (see Figure 27).⁵⁴⁴ These paintings and illustrations show poverty outside of the workhouse, while the others which will be described show life in the workhouse.

The Workhouse Test by John Leech depicts the first stage for the process of entering the workhouse (see Figure 28).⁵⁴⁵ It shows a woman on the floor in front of a table of men. Research has shown that this is an illustration taken from the 1844 novel *Jessie Phillips: A Tale of the Present Day* by Frances Milton Trollope, in which the lead character Jessie is received into the workhouse. The illustration shows the scene in which Jessie fainted whilst being interviewed by the Board of Guardians whose decision it was as to whether she should be admitted into the workhouse or

⁵⁴¹ Figure 24, p. 190.

⁵⁴² Figure 25, p. 191.

⁵⁴³ Figure 26, p. 192.

⁵⁴⁴ Figure 27, p. 193.

⁵⁴⁵ Figure 28, p. 194.

not.⁵⁴⁶ *Oliver Twist* by George Cruikshank (1838)⁵⁴⁷ shows the famous scene from the serial novel by Charles Dickens in which Oliver Twist asks for more porridge. It shows Oliver, other boys at the workhouse, Mr Bumble, and Mrs or Widow Corney, the female matron of the workhouse (see Figure 27).⁵⁴⁸ Visitors, however, may only identify the male characters of Mr Bumble and Oliver in Leech's illustration and Dickens' novel as the more recognisable and not Mrs Corney, unless they know the plot of the novel intimately. *The Idiot* by John Leech shows several women together in one room (see Figure 27).⁵⁴⁹ Research has shown that this image, which Ripon Workhouse Museum has titled 'The Idiot', is another illustration from Trollope's novel *Jessie Phillips* (see Figure 27).⁵⁵⁰ The illustration shows a scene before Jessie is received into the workhouse and depicts the character of the 'idiot Sally', a fellow inmate.⁵⁵¹ *Eventide, a Study in Westminster Workhouse* (1878) by Hubert von Herkomer shows elderly women in a workhouse taking tea with teacups and a silver teapot (see Figure 29).⁵⁵² Von Herkomer's *Christmas in a Workhouse* (1876) shows elderly women in a workhouse, with one receiving a gift from a female visitor/benefactor. *Women's Work Yard* by George Cruikshank shows women undertaking a work task (Figure 27).⁵⁵³ It can be assumed that this is a work yard of a workhouse as the building in the background states 'union' and many workhouses were known as unions, such as Ripon Union Workhouse. Although not from the nineteenth century, it is also worth noting that an exhibit of four twentieth-century photographs shows female 'paupers' or inmates only.

The representation of Victorian men in the illustrations and artwork often seems to place/depict them in better social positions than Victorian women as there are depictions of men in power (such as the Guardians in *The Workhouse Test* and Mr Bumble in *Oliver Twist*), men in employment or the potential ability to work (as

⁵⁴⁶ Frances Milton Trollope, *Jessie Phillips: A Tale of the Present Day* (London: Henry Colburn Publisher, 1844), p. 188

<<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ZHONAJHCAnsC&dq=Jessie%20Phillips%3A%20A%20Tale%20of%20the%20Present%20Day&pg=PR1#v=onepage&q&f=false>> [Google Books, accessed 5 December 2017].

⁵⁴⁷ The illustration caption refers to it as *Oliver Twist*, but the illustration is actually called *Oliver Asking for More*.

⁵⁴⁸ Figure 27, p. 193.

⁵⁴⁹ Figure 27, p. 193.

⁵⁵⁰ Figure 27, p. 193.

⁵⁵¹ The image is in between pages 82 and 83 and Sally is described as an 'idiot' on page 84. See Trollope, *Jessie Phillips: A Tale of the Present Day*, p. 188.

⁵⁵² Figure 29, p. 195.

⁵⁵³ Figure 27, p. 193.

seen in the *London Labour and London Poor* exhibit, *Hard Times* and *On Strike*) or just on the poverty-line (such as the men seen having *A Dinner at a Cheap Lodging House*). The majority of the representations of Victorian women (with the exception of Mrs or Widow Corney in *Oliver Twist* and the woman giving the gift to the elderly female inmate in *Eventide*), however, seem to be of destitute women below the poverty line (such as the women in *The Crawlers* and *The Pinch of Poverty*), women reliant on men (such as the wives in *Hard Times* and *On Strike* depending on their husband's employment, and Jessie's future being in the hands of the male Guardians in *The Workhouse Test*), women in servitude (such as the 'The Cross-sweeper that has been a Maid-Servant' in a *London Labour and London Poor* exhibit) or under the care of the workhouse (such as the women in *The Idiot* and *Women's Work Yard*, *Eventide* and *Christmas in a Workhouse*).

When considering the artwork, illustrations and photographs qualitatively, there is a gender divide in the Guardians' Room with Victorian men being in a higher social position/class (even if only slightly higher) or in a respectable profession (such as the male guardians) and Victorian women living on or under the poverty-line as inmates, or potential inmates, of the workhouse. This implicitly creates a hierarchy, not just socially but in terms of power and authority. This seems to be symbolised by *The Workhouse Test* in which men as guardians, in the position of power, are above a woman represented to be in the position of destitution and helplessness, whose life is in the hands of the male guardians and who is therefore at their mercy. While the interpretation about the artwork asks visitors to question the images, stating that 'Those on the wall opposite the door say much about attitudes towards the poor in the nineteenth century', this problematisation of the artwork is not possible without historical information about the period, artwork and/or artist, and historical context. There is an interpretive sheet, entitled 'Art', that provides some information about the artist Fildes and von Herkomer. However, this is very brief and does not provide information about the specific artwork on display. For example, the 'Art' interpretive sheet says that von Herkomer 'composed pictures illustrating poverty and injustice' and that while he, like Fildes, was 'deeply admired by socialist and trade union writers', 'fine-art critics found their work to be sentimental and even mawkish'. The artwork clearly reflects Victorian values and ideologies and each painting and illustration had a particular agenda, specific purpose and underlying influences, but

these are not explained to visitors. Without this context, visitors may accept the visual representations at face-value as they are not given the tools and information to be able to be critical and unpack the artwork and illustrations and explore their potential biases, influences and intentions. Other than the china teacups and silver teapot in *Eventide* referred to in the 'Artwork' interpretive sheet, visitors are not asked to question any other elements of this artwork or the others which may be deliberately exaggerated to evoke sympathy. Taking *Eventide* as an example, von Herkomer first conceived this as an illustrative wood engraving for the magazine *The Graphic* in 1877.⁵⁵⁴ This illustration, called *Old Age – A Study at the Westminster Union* depicted elderly female inmates with a table at the foreground, littered with fabric, teacups and scissors, at which some women are sewing and cutting fabric. One elderly woman is stood at the table cutting a length of fabric. There does not appear to be any workhouse staff present. The emphasis is on the fragility of the women, the task at hand and the austerity of the conditions. In 1878, this scene was reworked in *Eventide*, showing a less impoverished, more leisurely and comfortable evening scene at the workhouse. The elderly women at the table in the foreground are still working with fabric but alongside the fabric and scissors on the table is a small vase of red flowers suggesting some comfort and luxury. There is now a side table in front of the larger table which has sat upon it the silver teapot and a china teacup. A younger woman, identified by Lee M. Edwards as a 'female attendant',⁵⁵⁵ now replaces the elderly woman who was cutting the piece of fabric and the elderly woman is now seated with a teacup in her hand and a letter in the other. These two images while similar have subtle differences which, according to Edwards, made the workhouse scene more 'palatable' with *Eventide* showing a more relaxed, comfortable, genial and cheery scene (although despite the softening, this was seen as too gritty, 'brutal and shameful' to Victorian art critics).⁵⁵⁶ It is interesting that on display at Ripon Workhouse Museum is the sanitised version of the workhouse scene and its predecessor is not displayed or referred to.

⁵⁵⁴ Hubert von Herkomer, 'Old Age – A Study at the Westminster Union', *The Graphic*, 7 April 1877, pp. 324 – 25.

⁵⁵⁵ Lee M. Edwards, 'From Pop to Glitz: Hubert Von Herkomer at the 'Graphic' and the Royal Academy', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1991, pp. 71–80 (p. 76).

⁵⁵⁶ Edwards, 'From Pop to Glitz: Hubert Von Herkomer at the 'Graphic' and the Royal Academy', p. 76.

Elsewhere in the Workhouse Museum there are other visual representations of Victorian men and women in photographs, sketches, or illustrations, although the majority are twentieth-century or undated. Amongst the visual images of men as workhouse inmates, staff and patrons, there are some visual representations of women as workhouse inmates and staff. But – like the reproduced images on display at the Prison and Police Museum – many of these are undated, lacking labels/captions as well as interpretation providing historical information. For this reason, many of women in the reproduced images are anonymous and at times some images seem irrelevant or unconnected to the panel's interpretation. For example, a photograph on the 'Leisure' panel in the Receiving Ward shows an undated photograph of four elderly female inmates with a female member of staff; as it has no caption, the connection between this photograph and the theme of leisure is not obvious. A panel about 'Dormitories' shows female staff members in children's dormitories, in the commonly depicted role of 'caregivers' as identified by Brandon, but the photographs have no captions to explain the date at the photograph was taken, where it was taken, or who the female staff members are.⁵⁵⁷ There is one photograph on a panel about 'Staff' in the Receiving Ward: although it is twentieth century, the panel does identify the date (1935), place (Ripon Workhouse) and the male and female staff in it, who include a workhouse nurses, the matron and a guardian (the previously discussed Miss King). There is also an exhibit about Mr and Mrs Wade, who were Master and Matron of the workhouse in the 1940s, which show a photograph of them together in their living quarters and a photograph of Mrs Wade with female inmates. While this photograph could be used to illustrate the duties of the matron in the workhouse and of Mrs Wade specifically, it fails to do so as the interpretation fails to do so, simply stating that this is 'Mrs Wade with female inmates' and then explaining that the photograph might be earlier than the one of Mr and Mrs Wade and of inmates at another workhouse.

Material Culture

As well the images, the material culture or museum objects in display in the exhibits across the Ripon Museum Trust sites and the Victorian Streets at Abbey

⁵⁵⁷ Brandon, 'Looking for the 'Total' Woman in Wartime: A Museological Work in Progress', p. 108.

House Museum were assessed. While each individual object for every exhibit was not analysed in great detail, what was examined was the type of material culture, its historical significance, and how the material culture is used to collectively convey a message in terms of representations of Victorian women. As Carnegie reiterated, 'every museum has objects which were used, made, bought by or depict women which can be interpreted in ways which allow honest and fair appraisals of women's roles in society'.⁵⁵⁸ Analysis found that, as in the case of the reproduced images, material culture on the most part is used to reinforce the textual narratives and messages of the exhibit – which have previously been found to be problematic – rather than challenge them. On the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum, the extensive amount of material culture certainly supports the narrative of Victorian women as consumers and firmly links women with domesticity – although one exhibit (the Widow Washer Women's House) does attempt to use material culture to represent working life and trade for a working-class Victorian woman. Nevertheless, even in this case, the artefacts are blended with and mixed in with material culture relating to domesticity, and how far the exhibit represents women as workers is debatable. By contrast, across the Ripon Museum Trust sites there is a significant lack of material culture and what is displayed has very few explicit and implicit links and connections to Victorian women's history specifically, and women's history more generally. Reasons for this lack of surviving material culture from the historic sites and about themes they represent are given by Etherington and Wills. If the historic buildings themselves are considered, then the newly-opened main block of the Workhouse Museum has the most potential to represent Victorian women's history specifically and women's history generally, due to the historical sex-segregated nature of the building but, as will be explored, this future development and opportunity has potential curatorial problems.

Unsurprisingly, there is an extensive amount of material culture on display in the exhibits that form the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum. These objects are displayed in the reconstructed retail shops or trade workshops mostly, with a couple of reconstructed domestic and leisure spaces, on the Victorian Streets and they are closely associated to the theme of shopping which, as previously noted, is a

⁵⁵⁸ Carnegie, 'Trying to be an Honest Woman: Making Women's Histories', p. 64.

reoccurring theme in representations of Victorian women's history and women's history more generally in museums. Ross alluded to this when interviewed:

. . . there was a feeling that, in an interesting way, we needed to have the tobacconist and barber's shop in a sense. . . as a male-shop because a lot of the other shops in terms of their clientele would have been women. So it was women who would go to the grocer, and the haberdasher. They were the main customers there. . . . But there was certainly a feeling in a sense, a conscious thing to. . . put in a shop that was a bit more masculine.⁵⁵⁹

I would argue that the male-orientated or 'masculine' shops on the Victorian Streets – the tobacconist's, barber's, and arguably the pub – are more associated with leisure activities and free time than shopping. In a sense, they reinforce the Victorian separate spheres ideology as a division has been created where there are female-orientated shops (as upcoming analysis will demonstrate) closely associated with shopping, domesticity, and the private sphere and therefore perpetuating the myth or cult of domesticity, while the male-orientated spaces which are closely with leisure, pastime pursuits and the public sphere which Victorian men were encouraged to explore, according to the ideology. And as Murdoch told us, 'The binary division of life's actions into public and private spheres oversimplifies the many ways in which women actively engaged the worlds beyond their homes.'⁵⁶⁰

Three of the other exhibits on the Victorian Streets are inherently gendered in terms of the material culture on display – the Mourning Warehouse exhibit, the Haberdashery exhibit and Pawnbroker's exhibit. In the Mourning Warehouse exhibit, which Ross described as being 'aimed at women',⁵⁶¹ there are two mannequins, one displaying male clothing and the other female clothing. The other objects making up the exhibit, however, are items of feminine clothing and accessories, such as fans, parasols, shoes, jewellery and hair accessories (see Figure 30).⁵⁶² This supports the exhibit's message, mediated through the textual interpretation and reproduced images, that mourning was a predominantly feminine. All the items on display in the shop window of the Haberdashery exhibit are feminine items, such as handbags, fabrics with feminine prints, hats, gloves and parasols. Not one object on display could be identified as 'masculine' in character or intended for men. Again, this

⁵⁵⁹ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 266 - 280.

⁵⁶⁰ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. xxv.

⁵⁶¹ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 281.

⁵⁶² Figure 30, p. 196.

perpetuates this narrative of women as the predominant consumers of the age. No displayed material culture alludes to the production side of haberdashery which Victorian women were commonly associated with, or the figure of the Victorian female dressmaker which the interpretive folder briefly introduced. There are no sewing machines or dressmaking tools displayed. The material culture on display in the Pawnbroker exhibit is similarly extensive, with lots of small objects as well as some bigger objects (see Figure 31).⁵⁶³ The material culture on display is grouped according to typology: for example there is a collection of musical instruments, perfume bottles, clocks and home décor ornaments, jewellery, glasses, pocket watches, brooches, clothing and walking sticks. Collectively, however, most of the objects are predominantly feminine and domestic in character and arguably luxury objects more associated with upper-working class or middle class.

Many of the objects across these three exhibits, as well as the ones in the Pawnbroker exhibit, are objects more commonly related to the more affluent classes, such as the lower middle class and upwards. The experience of working-class Victorian women has been ignored or minimised in terms of the material culture on display in these three exhibits. And yet there are opportunities for this to be highlighted. For example, the Pawnbroker's exhibit could display female working-class clothing to demonstrate where working-class women acquired clothing from, in contrast to the Haberdashery exhibit.⁵⁶⁴ As previously observed, the Haberdashery exhibit could not only show the products a haberdasher sold, but the trade or process of dress-making through tools and equipment, such as a sewing machine, to emphasise the role of working-class female dress-maker who appears very briefly in the interpretive folder in a poem and an image. Ross revealed that there was once an intention to represent working-class precarity through the staging of a cart of household possessions to signify a 'moonlight flit', but it did not come to be.⁵⁶⁵ There are opportunities for these three exhibits to have more varied representations of Victorian women through the material culture, with just a few alterations or minor interventions with the introduction of working-class objects, or replicas, as Ross did highlight that that a lack of working class material culture is a problem they face;

⁵⁶³ Figure 31, p. 196.

⁵⁶⁴ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 69.

⁵⁶⁵ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 339 – 343.

‘there are some things we would love to have now say about working women in the past but that’s the stuff that got worn out and thrown away’.⁵⁶⁶

The Widow Washer Woman’s House is the one exhibit on the Victorian Streets which uses material culture to show the professional life of a working-class woman. As stated before, Taziker accused industrial museums of portraying women ‘sitting, knitting and serving’ with a cat in front of the fire, producing inaccurate ‘sterile’ and ‘comfortable’ stereotypes of Victorian women.⁵⁶⁷ The Widow Washer Woman’s House does have a faux burning fire, a tea-cup and saucer set on the table, some needlework out, and an empty chair: on the surface, this seem to support Taziker’s criticism. But the Widow Washer Woman’s House exhibit does use material culture to try to represent and reflect ‘the harsh realities of their [women’s] history’.⁵⁶⁸ The House contains an array of laundry trade-related objects, and the domestic comforts are sparing to reflect the precarious subsistence levels of life endured by the working classes (see Figure 32).⁵⁶⁹ There is bare stonework, a basic chair, an open sewing box on the table, a wash/laundry tub on the floor, several irons on the side, and a clothes horse with clothing on it in the corner, amongst other objects. This represents the busy house in which domestic life and work life share the same space and are blended. This echoes what Lydia Murdoch has to say about working-class homes: ‘There was no hiding the daily work required from women to maintain their domestic realms or tidy separation of domestic and commercial labor’.⁵⁷⁰ As Porter highlighted, material culture of this kind is often categorised and displayed by museums as domestic objects, as opposed to work-related items. The display does attempt to challenge this restrictive categorisation, contrary to Porter’s findings which found that displays rarely ‘reference with objects or words the productive work in the home’.⁵⁷¹ But do visitors pick up on the fact that the laundry items are in fact professional tools and equipment as opposed to domestic or household objects? Do they see the exhibit entirely as a domestic space or do they also see it as a blending of a professional and domestic space? Are the material culture’s laundry trade connections explicit enough on their own, or does the

⁵⁶⁶ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 541 – 542.

⁵⁶⁷ Taziker, ‘Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum’, p. 163.

⁵⁶⁸ Taziker, ‘Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum’, p. 163.

⁵⁶⁹ Figure 32, p. 196.

⁵⁷⁰ Murdoch, *The Daily Life of Victorian Women*, p. 97.

⁵⁷¹ Porter, ‘Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums’.

connection only become apparent alongside the interpretive text which provides historical information about the laundry trade?

While the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum has very little interpretive text but extensive amounts of material culture on display to populate the reconstructed spaces, there is significantly less material culture on display across the Ripon Museum Trust sites. Here, the emphasis is on the historical buildings and spaces, supplemented heavily with interpretive text. Etherington and Wills from Ripon Museum Trust gave an insight into why there is a lack of material culture on display and in the Trust's collection. Wills said that 'in workhouses generally . . . there's just no collection from workhouse to workhouse museum. You'll realise that there's barely anything that's left behind so it's hard to tell individual stories'.⁵⁷² Etherington gave two reasons for this deficiency. The first being that

. . . our number one issue is that the workhouse especially, although to be fair all three sites, you're not proud of being here. . . the system was deliberately designed, for people to be ashamed to be associated with it so it's not the kind of place you would keep a memento from in the way that a lot of other employment places or other museums have people [who] . . . saved things from there as they'd enjoyed working there or it was a memento of their life. . .⁵⁷³

The second reason is that in workhouses,

money had to go as far as possible so you used things until they wore out, you repaired them as often as you could and once they couldn't be repaired anymore they were thrown away or destroyed.⁵⁷⁴

This culture of re-use and recycling in workhouses relates to what Porter previously noted about working-class material culture in general: she argued that it was used to destruction or re-purposed out of necessity, and therefore missing from museum collections. This was also highlighted by Porter.⁵⁷⁵ These two reasons, shame and the need to reuse items, explain the limited amount of material culture available to the Ripon Museum Trust sites. With so little material culture available, this then further limits the representation of Victorian women and women's history more generally as there may not be many explicit and implicit links either in the limited material culture available. As previously established, these historic sites and themes

⁵⁷² Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 16 October 2017, lines 142 – 144.

⁵⁷³ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 45 – 51.

⁵⁷⁴ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 53 – 56.

⁵⁷⁵ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

already have restricted or minimal women's histories attached to them, since in the nineteenth-century, women were excluded from or had limited professional roles in the court, prison, police and workhouse systems.

For these reasons, analysis of the three Ripon Museum Trust sites of the material culture on display indicated that very little material culture had links to Victorian women's history specifically or women's history more generally. Some of the material culture included authentic objects, but others are replicas or facsimiles. At the Courthouse Museum, the focus is on the building itself, and its particular rooms and spaces which are used to explain the process and history of the court system. Key objects on display in the Retiring Room are leg irons, a replica cat o' nine tails, and police rattle belonging to Samuel Winn, Ripon's first professional policeman. There are also lots of facsimiles (printed scans and photographs) of original documents and ephemera which are printed on interpretation panels or displayed separately. These include a document about Samuel Winn's salary, a warrant for John Sinkler (one of a pair of criminal brothers whose history is traced across the sites), a document about William Pullen's bail, an alehouse licence for George Walbron, two wanted posters (one of which is for John Sinkler), an uncompleted general summons poster, and an uncompleted individual summons notice. Only one relates to a woman, and it is pre-Victorian. It is a record from the 1770 Ripon Sessions Record Book which details the guilty verdict and sentencing (to a public whipping) of Elizabeth Baxter.

Similarly, at the Prison and Police Museum, there are very few objects which represent Victorian women specifically or women more generally. Throughout the Museum, there are restraining chairs and stocks, a twentieth-century police bike, documents (original and facsimiles) relating to the planning and construction of the historic building the Museum is housed in, a police truncheon belonging to Thomas Sweeting (a nineteenth-century Ripon policeman), an extensive amount of police truncheons and life preservers, helmets and uniforms (replica and original), multiple badges of different ranks, a man trap, animal traps (used for poaching), replica prisoner uniforms on male mannequins representing the criminal Sinkler brothers, equipment relating to the mounted police, a twentieth-century police motorbike, twentieth-century radio equipment, a replica crank, a treadmill or treadmill, and leg restraints, handcuffs, and birch rods. There is also a Victorian cell consisting of a

bed, washstand, table and slop bucket with a mannequin of a male, not a female, prisoner. Taking these objects for face-value, it is not apparent that any of them relate women's history, nor it is indicated in the interpretive text. The only object explicitly connected to women is a sign which says 'Collator Policewomens Department' (Figure 33).⁵⁷⁶ The object label says:

Halifax Borough Police

This sign was used in the former Borough Police Station in Harrison Road in Halifax in the 1960s.

The Collator was the first title used for collection of Local Information. Policewomen at that time were in a department separate from the men.

Even the Workhouse Museum, the most extensive Ripon Museum Trust site, has little material culture explicitly representing Victorian women, or even women more generally. Authentic and replica objects are used to recreate the workhouse rooms, laid out to demonstrate the admittance process of workhouse 'inmates' and their experience of living there. As previously argued, the interpretive text for objects, rooms, and that stage of the admittance process refer to 'inmates' and 'paupers', often not distinguishing between female and male inmates or paupers, or acknowledging that both sexes were admitted to the workhouse. Images used to illustrate what took place in rooms or at the stage often show male inmates. There is very little to explicitly state that this room or stage was applicable to female inmates, or this object would have been used by female inmates. One of the few objects with explicit links to women or the workhouse experience for women is a display of 'workhouse uniform' which shows the uniforms for children, a man's shirt and a female inmate's outfit of a shirt, apron, mop cap and shawl. Although not specified, these are most likely replicas rather than originals for the very reasons given by Etherington. This confirms what was previously argued about the representation of Victorian women in the Police and Prison Museum through reproduced images: once again, the representation of women's history is confined to fashion and clothing history. In the Receiving Ward, there is a replica of 'a mid-nineteenth century workhouse bed'. The interpretive text says 'It is the size prescribed for a mother and infant'. It is interesting that the woman represented is a mother, rather than a woman with no dependents. While this may be to elicit sympathy in terms of the conditions

⁵⁷⁶ Figure 33, p. 197.

mothers and children were forced to endure in workhouses, it also perhaps unconsciously reinforces Victorian ideology of women being 'angels in the house' and women being wives and mothers as rather than representing them in their own right or even reinforce the trope of 'the fallen woman' if the woman had the child outside of wedlock.

In the newly-opened main block, there is a juxtaposition between two reconstructed rooms opposite each other. One is laid out like a dining room in the master's and matron's quarters. It shows a fireplace, a mantelpiece with ornaments, paintings hanging from the picture rail, a piano, and a table laid out for afternoon tea. (Figure 34).⁵⁷⁷ The other room is the 'master's study' with a detailed interpretive panel explaining the responsibilities and duties of a master of a workhouse, along with a desk with a typewriter, books and writing material upon it as well as display of keys to emphasise his level of responsibility (Figure 35).⁵⁷⁸ This stark contrast of the work space and domestic space, with the work space overtly assigned to the master of the workhouse, unconsciously assigns the domestic space to the matron of the workhouse, who has not been assigned her own work space. Again, this reiterates the separate spheres ideology with Victorian women being restricted to the private, domestic sphere even in this case when the matron is a professional working woman and instrumental in the running of the workhouse. When interviewed, Wills explained that the master 'probably wouldn't have done his work here. But we wanted to represent the kind of administrative and managerial side of the master's role which is why we put it on there'.⁵⁷⁹ It is interesting that there was a conscious decision to illustrate the work of the master, but not the work of the matron. Could it not have been a shared office for both the master and the matron? Alternatively, objects could have been displayed in the dining room to suggest some of the matron's work duties, such as writing equipment or a record book on the table.

What is unique about the Workhouse Museum is that the building itself is inherently gendered, as workhouses were initially required by law to segregate men,

⁵⁷⁷ Figure 34, p. 197.

⁵⁷⁸ Figure 35, p. 198.

⁵⁷⁹ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 16 October 2017, lines 64 – 66.

women and children.⁵⁸⁰ At Ripon Workhouse Museum, this is more apparent in the outside areas and in the newly-opened main block building. Outside there is a male yard and female yard – the latter having a laundry area and a kitchen, providing task work for female inmates. When it was a functioning workhouse, the main block had a female wing and male wing. At the time of research, the main block had only been partially opened with plans to eventually develop the rest of the block. As Wills explained, the development may be based on income generation opportunities and museum necessity, rather than using the space to continue to represent and reflect workhouse history.⁵⁸¹ The development which has taken place centred on representing specific stories and histories, some of which did not necessarily reflect the historic use of the room. For example, the master's and matron's quarters were reconstructed to represent their living quarters, although, as explained, the master's study is inauthentic and was created to illustrate the master's job and duties. During the interview, Wills pointed out that the schoolroom, too, was not intended to be an accurate construction of the room's historic use or purpose, as it would have actually have been a dayroom for female inmates – but there was a need to reflect the experience of children in the workhouse.⁵⁸² As the Trust considered how to develop the rest of the building, there was an ongoing debate or discussion and a curatorial decision to be made around the dual nature of the building and whether certain areas need to be duplicated. As Wills explained, because of 'the very nature of the building, you run the risk of just constantly saying something twice'.⁵⁸³ Using the dormitories as an example, he commented that

Obviously the history's different but there are certain rooms where they would have been dressed pretty much identical so how do you do that without a visitor going 'Oh, another dormitory' which is exactly the same'.⁵⁸⁴

Wills explained that even with the dual or gendered nature of the building, it 'has got more areas that would have been female domains I guess because of the kitchen'

⁵⁸⁰ The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act enforced the classification of paupers; in workhouses, men, women, children, able-bodied and non-able-bodied inmates were segregated. See Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884*, p. 65.

⁵⁸¹ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 16 October 2017, lines 250 – 251 and 260 – 261.

⁵⁸² Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 16 October 2017, lines 186 – 189.

⁵⁸³ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 16 October 2017, lines 159 – 160.

⁵⁸⁴ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 16 October 2017, lines 161 – 164.

where female inmates worked.⁵⁸⁵ But at the time, the kitchen had not been developed, although there was an ambition there to do so as it would allow them to explore and represent more ‘stories of the inmates, particularly the female inmates who were working here’.⁵⁸⁶ Depending on which approach is taken with the future development of the rest of the building, there is the risk that either Victorian women’s or men’s history could be favoured by the nature of the specific wings or rooms selected to represent workhouse history or reflect the historic use or purpose of the room, and which wing or rooms are used for other museum purposes, such as offices or storage. As Karp and Lavine highlighted, in museums ‘decisions are made to emphasize one element and to downplay others, to assert some truths and to ignore others’.⁵⁸⁷

This section has analysed the visual elements of some of the exhibits on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum and across the Ripon Museum Trust museum sites. These two contrasting case studies illustrate some of the issues concerning the representation of Victorian women’s history more specifically or women’s history more generally with a vast number of artefacts and some reproduced images on display on the Victorians Streets at Abbey House Museum and a limited amount of material culture and reproduced images across Ripon Museum Trust sites. It has shown that across the Ripon Museum Trust sites, visual representations of Victorian women and women more generally, mediated through reproduced images and material culture, appear less frequently compared with the level of representation of men. When present, reproduced images of women and material culture connected to women’s histories more generally lack context and in-depth historical information and/or clarity regarding implicit or explicit connections to women’s history – so they are often disconnected from the rest of the exhibit, can seem irrelevant or their inclusion can seem tokenistic or an afterthought. The few visual representations of women support and perpetuate the narrative given in the textual interpretation which presents Victorian woman in inferior positions to men, as of a lower social standing or as societal outsiders as poverty-stricken, criminals or

⁵⁸⁵ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 16 October 2017, lines 371 – 372.

⁵⁸⁶ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 16 October 2017, line 407.

⁵⁸⁷ Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, ‘Introduction: Museums and Multiculturalism’ in *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 1 – 9 (p. 1).

workhouse inmates and only infrequently or fleetingly as professionals, such as police officers and workhouse guardians.

There are explanations for this, such as the exclusion of women from professional roles in courts, prisons and workhouse systems and the lack of existing material culture relating to the themes of nineteenth-century social reform, law and order as well as the specific historic sites. But the historical workhouse building itself is innately engendered as it segregated men and women and therefore has explicitly female and male spaces which could be used to represent Victorian women's history and women's history more specifically. Yet it fails to consistently acknowledge which inmates, male and/or female inmates, used the space in the buildings and areas of the workhouse (for example in the areas illustrating the admittance process). There are even instances when women's history has been unconsciously and even actively written out of the exhibits, such as the curatorial decision to display a recreated schoolroom rather than the historical female dayroom and the imagined master's study representing the master's duties and responsibilities and omitting those of the matron in the newly-developed main block of the Workhouse Museum. Visually, women's history here does appear to be hidden in the footnotes of the exhibits (metaphorically speaking), piecemeal, and at times tokenistic in character when present at all.

By contrast, on the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum where visual representations of Victorian women are quantitatively greater in number, when analysed qualitatively there are issues with the messages and histories they imply. The reproduced images and material culture portray Victorian women in a one-dimensional, narrow, and stereotypical way; as affluent shoppers, intricately connected to domesticity and the firmly in the private sphere. On the Victorian Streets, the hegemonic narrative is about Victorian women being 'angels of the house', grieving widows, the predominant consumer of the age and middle class - with a limited attempt to represent working-class women's history. Even the Pawnbroker exhibit, synonymous with poverty and lower-class lifestyle of bread-line living, has costly, opulent objects on displays, therefore minimising the representation of the working-classes. There is an attempt to represent a Victorian woman, the widow washer woman, as a lower-class worker or labourer through the objects on display relating to the laundry trade. But as these are presented in a

domestic setting, mixed in amongst other household objects, it is easy to consider these objects to be an extension of the domestic or household representation as Victorian laundry work was both a domestic chore as well as something that was 'sent-out' by affluent households to be done by working-class women as a form of cottage industry work. There are missed opportunities to represent Victorian women in other than the stock roles of consumer, shopper, and 'angel of the house' as highlighted with the Haberdashery exhibit. This exhibit does not display any objects to represent the production side undertaken by Victorian female seamstresses, such as tailoring or dress-making tools, even though this mythicised figure is present in the interpretive folder.

Whilst acknowledging the limited amount and type of material culture available to both Leeds Museums and Galleries for the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum and Ripon Museum Trust museum sites, there are opportunities to use reproduced images and material culture (or lack of it) to challenge some misconceptions about Victorian women (such as Victorian women as consumers and 'angels in the house'), and to represent Victorian women's history in a multi-layered manner by offering new interpretations and representations (such as more working-class women's experiences on the Victorian Streets and fuller coverage of the matron's role in Ripon Museum Trust's Workhouse Museum main block). Rather than the visual elements challenging some of the messages implied by the textual elements, or providing a different perspective or a multi-layered representation, they collude together to perpetuate a superficial narrative about Victorian women's history.

Chapter 3 – Conclusion

What is clear from these two case studies is that both Leeds Museums for Abbey House Museum and Ripon Museum Trust are conscious of the necessity, value, and benefit of including and representing women's history more generally as well as Victorian women's history specifically. But museums and curators today are restrained and restricted by what historical information they have been able to research and uncover, what material culture is in their current collection and more widely available to acquire or borrow, the reproduced images they have been able to

source, and what fits in with the focus of their theme, display, exhibition or wider museum site. As a result, at times representations of Victorian women can be non-existent or, if present, limited, fleeting, one-dimensional and in fewer instances, inaccurate both textually and visually. There are examples of attempts to represent Victorian women beyond stock roles and traditional tropes, and to recognise the differing histories and experiences of women. For example, the Victorian Streets' Widow Washer Women in the laundry trade, the panel at Ripon's Courthouse Museum about women in legal professions and (albeit, sometimes problematic) references to the matron at the Workhouse Museum. While these are useful in representing and interpreting Victorian women's history in ways which acknowledges and unpacks women's history and nuances within in, this needs to be applied more broadly across exhibits, displays and wider sites rather than piecemeal, discreet or *ad hoc* examples. Can Mrs Mann, the hidden Victorian Streets haberdashery owner, who is referred to as 'W. Mann' in the exhibit's name only and is not referenced at all in the interpretation, be given some space in the historical information to be used as a conduit to introduce the theme and history of Victorian businesswomen? Can the matron be given her own workspace, or share that of the master's, in the Workhouse's main block? Alongside information about predominately male boards of guardians, and photographs of them, for Ripon Workhouse Union specifically or workhouses by generally, can the philanthropic work undertaken in this workhouse, others and the surrounding local community by female relatives of male board members regarding the welfare and care of workhouse inmates and the parish's poor be acknowledged? But this relies on both time and money being allocated to research these histories and experiences to undergo re-displays or re-write interpretive panels and folders.

As well as time and money being barriers that Ripon Museum Trust and Abbey House Museum face, the interviews with museum staff revealed other issues that specifically hinder or effect representations of Victorian women in museum displays. While the detailing is specific to Abbey House Museum and Ripon Museum Trust, some of these are wider challenges and broader issues that other contemporary museums also face. These can be largely categorised into documenting and documentation, and researching.

Ross explained that museum records and documentation practices conceals not only women's histories and stories in terms of the object's content or what it represents or illustrates on a basic level, but the object's context regarding the donor and provenance. She referred to it as 'the invisibility in the record'.⁵⁸⁸ In cases when a husband and wife donated an object together, it was often just the husband's data and information that was recorded, 'basically him with her attached', rather than data and information collected and recorded about both of them as individuals.⁵⁸⁹ Even when the donated object may be more about the female co-donor, the record may focus on the male co-donor instead. Ross gave the example of portraits of women, but records referring to the male donor, 'him', primarily; 'this is just his wife. We . . . don't always know what her name is other than that she's Mrs. . . .'.⁵⁹⁰ Ross stated that to prevent this invisibility in contemporary records for objects currently collected, she makes a deliberate effort to capture all the relevant information about people associated with the object; 'when I collect anything I just try to get the full name and life of somebody associated with the object'.⁵⁹¹ For Ross it is about 'making sure that you've got the stories with objects. . . not necessarily pioneering women's stories but. . . everyday women's stories will come through'.⁵⁹²

Although not explicitly referenced by Etherington or Wills, one issue with their documentation is that they have around eight thousand police-objects out of the nine thousand objects that Ripon Museum Trust has. Much of the police-related objects were given to them by another police museum in Bradford when the museum closed.⁵⁹³ Unless the documentation was passed onto the Ripon Museum Trust alongside with the objects, then they might not have the context for the police objects and may have lost the histories and stories attached to them. 'One thousand [objects] are . . . handling and society history', according to Wills.⁵⁹⁴ Contemporary collecting has expanded collection which goes beyond police objects. They are inventorying these objects but have not accessioned them as museum objects yet.⁵⁹⁵ Unless these objects were collected alongside crucial information about its donor

⁵⁸⁸ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 565.

⁵⁸⁹ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 541-2.

⁵⁹⁰ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 545-6.

⁵⁹¹ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 549-50.

⁵⁹² Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 637-9.

⁵⁹³ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 333-334.

⁵⁹⁴ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 9 October 2017, line 136

⁵⁹⁵ Appendix 3, Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills, 9 October 2017, lines 137 – 138

and its provenance, then histories and stories about women more generally and Victorian women specifically that are connected to the objects may be lost.

Both Ross and Etherington also discussed the issues with research, in terms of the difficulty of being able to undertake research, and the difficulty in researching women's histories. Ross said that 'most curatorial professionals haven't got time for research, so it's not that the information isn't *there* but it needs looking for'.⁵⁹⁶ Ross explained how she relies on, and appreciates, volunteers and students doing the research instead.⁵⁹⁷ Even when research can be undertaken, there are issues with how sources and records have recorded, or not recorded as may be the case, women's histories and information. For example, Ross stated how 'it's always more difficult to follow women's ancestry' and noted issues with 'name changes' and when names stay the same down the male line'.⁵⁹⁸ Ross did reiterate however that it is not that the information, histories and stories are not there, '[they are] just harder to find'.⁵⁹⁹ Ripon Museums Trust main issue with research is that the records directly relating to their historical sites are wide-spread and 'separated' with some in the North Yorkshire Records Office and some with the National Archives in Kew, London.⁶⁰⁰ While the records are 'most[ly] complete' but certainly the 'biggest set' 'out of the North Yorkshire ones'.⁶⁰¹ They are aware that historically 'clerks would have discarded things, old items, that were no longer relevant'.⁶⁰² Therefore there are issues around accessing the existing records to undertake research due to the practicalities and logistics of getting researchers, primarily volunteers, to where the records are kept as well as the possibility of relevant records been previously destroyed. Etherington also recognised that '[they] can only work with the history [they've] got',⁶⁰³ 'the female experience. . . was very limited in the period' the museum sites focus on therefore it limits what women's histories and stories can be told.⁶⁰⁴

⁵⁹⁶ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 549-50.

⁵⁹⁷ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 600-605.

⁵⁹⁸ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 595-7.

⁵⁹⁹ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, line 597.

⁶⁰⁰ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 64-67.

⁶⁰¹ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 62-63.

⁶⁰² Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 68-69.

⁶⁰³ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 243.

⁶⁰⁴ Appendix 2, Transcription of Interview with James Etherington, 16 October 2017, lines 95 – 96.

If this research were to be positioned next to the scholarship that has come before it, it demonstrates that there has been some progress in terms of how women, more generally, and Victorian women, specifically, are represented in contemporary museum displays. However, this progress, it seems, can still be piecemeal and inconsistent, varying from exhibit to exhibit and museum to museum. While some representations of women have moved on beyond Taziker's observation of them 'sitting, knitting and serving'⁶⁰⁵ – for example the Widow Washer Women exhibit on the Victorian Street – other representations still limit women to stock roles and stereotypes, such as the role of grieving widow and Porter's identified consumer narrative⁶⁰⁶ on the Victorian Streets, and inferior and vulnerable victims of society at the Workhouse Museum. Opportunities to represent women in ways which illustrate the breadth and depth of Victorian women's history beyond traditionally perceived feminine themes are absent or overlooked, such as the missing portrayal of female business-owners on the Victorian Streets and female guardians at the Workhouse Museum. There are attempts to represent Victorian women in more superior positions and authentic roles – such as the representation of women's work history on the Victorian Streets through the figure of the widow washer women and seamstress, and matron at the Workhouse Museum – but these opportunities are not monopolised or expanded upon to the extent of which they could be. In fact, some attempts are subsequently undermined and reduced by the lack of consistent acknowledgements to those women and that aspect of women's history, or lack of historical information and/or material culture to contextualise and illustrate their history and experience. This research suggests that contemporary museums still have some progress to make in terms of representing women's history in their museum displays. This is possible to develop these existing 'glimpses', as Preece described them,⁶⁰⁷ of Victorian women to longer gazes with some attention to detail, research into the nuanced histories and experiences of Victorian women, and a willingness to go beyond the expected, and challenge aspects of assumed history.

This research project has resulted in three recommendations regarding representing Victorian women in museum displays. The first recommendation is for curators and other museum professionals planning, designing, and creating displays,

⁶⁰⁵ Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum'.

⁶⁰⁶ Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

⁶⁰⁷ Preece, "Equal to Half a Man": Women in the Coalmining Industry', p. 159.

exhibits and exhibitions, to become more acutely aware of the choices they unconsciously or even mistakenly make when it comes to word/language choices and presenting historical information. It is not just about being conscious to potentially sexist language or historical information that fuels gender stereotypes, as Clark Smith and Porter exemplified in their research, but choices which may inadvertently obscure or distort Victorian women's history.⁶⁰⁸ Do particular abbreviations minimise the role of Victorian women – like in the case of the abbreviated references to the 'Master's Quarters' at Ripon's Workhouse Museum which excludes the presence and role of the workhouse matron? Does this exhibit's name clearly and explicitly indicate that this exhibit is connected to a Victorian woman or Victorian women's history, unlike the W. Mann's haberdashery exhibit on the Victorian Streets? Is this historical information applicable to all Victorians universally or does it need to be more nuanced to differentiate and clearly point out that this can only be applied to a specific sex/gender, class or locality? For example, the mourning clothing displayed and practices described in the Mourning Warehouse exhibit on the Victorian Streets which does not explicitly state that it is referring primarily to middle-class and upper-class women's history, and that clothing and practices were different for working class women. This will create more pointedly nuanced textual elements of museum displays which will build a more comprehensive and convincing representation of Victorian women's history.

The second recommendation is that, that rather than have the textual and visual elements of museum displays coming through to tell one monolithic, universal narrative – singing the same tune – curators should take the radical step of presenting contradictory elements, ones that challenge one another to create a cacophony of different narratives, histories and stories. When the material culture suggests one history, use historical information to offer another: for example, when the material culture on the Victorian Streets alludes to Victorian women as consumers, provide historical information that emphasises Victorian women as producers or when Victorian male police and prison officers are reflected in material

⁶⁰⁸ Clark Smith gave an example of two labels about corsets, one which sexualised women to be 'busty' and one which used non-sexually-loaded language to describe how a corset affects the female body. Porter pointed out how a label at Leeds Industrial Museum described how female workers chatted while they worked as the work station layout allowed them to yet male workers were not described to despite the same layout.

Clark Smith, 'A Women's Audience: A Case of Applied Feminist Theories'; Porter, 'Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums'.

culture, as they are at Ripon's Prison and Police Museum, provide historical information about police matrons. When the name's exhibit implies one history, present a reproduced image that challenges that – as previously suggested about W. Mann's Haberdashery exhibit on the Victorian Streets or the Matron's workspace in the 'Master's Quarters' at Ripon's Workhouse Museum. Done effectively, they will harmonise into a polyphony of multi-layered, in-depth and meaningful displays, representing Victorian women's history specifically or women's history more generally in stimulating, thought-provoking and bold ways beyond his-story, stock roles, stereotypes and cultural norms. When Ross was interviewed, it was highlighted that although not explicitly stated in any interpretation, W.Mann's shop is the only female-owned business on the Victorian Streets. Later conversations about future refurbishments brought up plans to potentially replace W.Mann's shop with another shop to reflect the rise of the department store. Ross then realised in that moment that 'we might actually accidentally be removing the only female known shop' and said in light of that, the refurbishment plan would require some further consideration.⁶⁰⁹ Ross and her colleagues will have to consider the benefits and disadvantages of removing W. Mann and this unique exhibit, and replacing it with another exhibit which may run the risk of repeating and reinforcing the narrative of Victorian men as producers and Victorian women as consumers.

The third recommendation is to represent and acknowledge the missing women's history – the gaps and absences in women's history itself (due to sex/gender, class and even locality differences) as well as their own research, material culture and reproduced images available. I would propose that curators go one step further than Sørensen's empty German display cases and explain why historical information, reproduced images or material culture relating to aspects of women's history is not present, represented and included. Ripon Museum Trust attempted to do this with the panel about 'Women in Law' at the Courthouse Museum, but it was not explicit enough and this could be extended into the other museums and other aspect of histories which appear to omit women's history. An emphasis could be put on the fact that there were very few female guardians in workhouses in the nineteenth century due to the restrictive qualification criterion. It could be pointed out that Victorian women played crucial yet under-recognised roles

⁶⁰⁹ Appendix 1, Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross, 28 April 2017, lines 385 – 387.

in police forces as police matrons at the Prison and Police Museum. It could be acknowledged that, while not represented on the Victorian Streets themselves, in nineteenth-century Britain there were many female shop-owners and business-women, like the obscured W. Mann. There could be a recognition that Victorian middle-class ideals may have placed Victorian women in the domestic sphere, many women were key players and actors in the public sphere and nineteenth-century society. Curators could actively appeal and search for research, stories, objects and histories that fill in these gaps and missing links. By being more consciously and acutely aware of how language and historical information can imply particularly messages textually, how particular material culture and reproduced images can suggest a particular meaning visually, and by acknowledging the gaps and limitations due to a lack of research, historical information and material culture , curators could significantly improve representations of Victorian women in museum displays, offering something more profound, textured and authentic, and give a much richer insight into the complex histories, experiences and lives of Victorian women.

At this start of the project in 2014, women's history was firmly on many museums' agenda with the vast majority using the centenary of the First World War as a hook, so to speak, to hang women's history on as reflected through their exhibition programmes, events, research and community projects. This focus then switched in 2018 from the centenary of the First World War to women's suffrage with the centenary of the Representation of the People Act and subsequent votes for (some) women. Many museums then began researching their collections or the local histories around them to uncover stories about suffragists and suffragettes, particularly those from a working-class background who have previously been overshadowed by the well-known London-based and higher-class suffragists and suffragettes. But what will museums turn to or look for once now the First World War has been commemorated and the centenary of (some) women's suffrage has been celebrated? Which women's history event or anniversary will museums focus on next as a hook, a reason, a conduit, to represent women's history? The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act in 1919 permitted women to be lawyers, magistrates, jurors and Justices of the Peace. The 1920s saw a series of laws been passed or amended to extend civil liberties and rights to women, including the 1928 Equal

Franchise Act which brought voting rights for women in line with that of men.⁶¹⁰ Will these centenaries capture the imagination of curators and museum professionals and be the focus of the next wave of representations of women's history in museums? Time will tell.

I hope that this recent and obvious interest, both by museum professionals, the wider public and museum audiences, in women's history encourages museums to look inwards to uncover women's histories and stories attached to objects in their collections and communities in their vicinity without the need to attach to them to a relevant or particular anniversary or centenary? While using such key dates and anniversaries or the category of 'women's history' no doubt grabs the attention of the public, generates interest, and often has funding and grants opportunities, museums must look for ways to continue including and incorporating women's history, not simply because it is trendy history or *women's history* but because it is *history*. From the ordinary to the extraordinary, from Jane Pratt with her guiding candle to the immortalised Queen Victoria, these women and many others' histories, stories and experiences are just sitting in museum collection stores, archives and history files waiting to be uncovered, showcased and represented, not passively or shallowly, but honestly and fairly.

⁶¹⁰ Other laws include: the Sex Discrimination Removal Act in 1920; the Law of Property Act in 1922; and the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1923.

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Figure 1 Charles Green, *Something Wrong Somewhere*, 1868.⁶¹¹



⁶¹¹ Charles Green, *Something Wrong Somewhere*, (watercolour), (London: V&A, 1868), © Victoria and Albert Museum, <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1108344/watercolour/>> [V&A, accessed 24 September 2015].

Figure 2 Photograph of Machining exhibit in the Tailoring gallery on the second floor at Leeds Industrial Museum (Taken by Lauren Padgett on 16 November 2016).



Figure 3 Photograph of Machining label of the Machining exhibit in the Tailoring gallery on the second floor at Leeds Industrial Museum (Taken by Lauren Padgett on 16 November 2016).

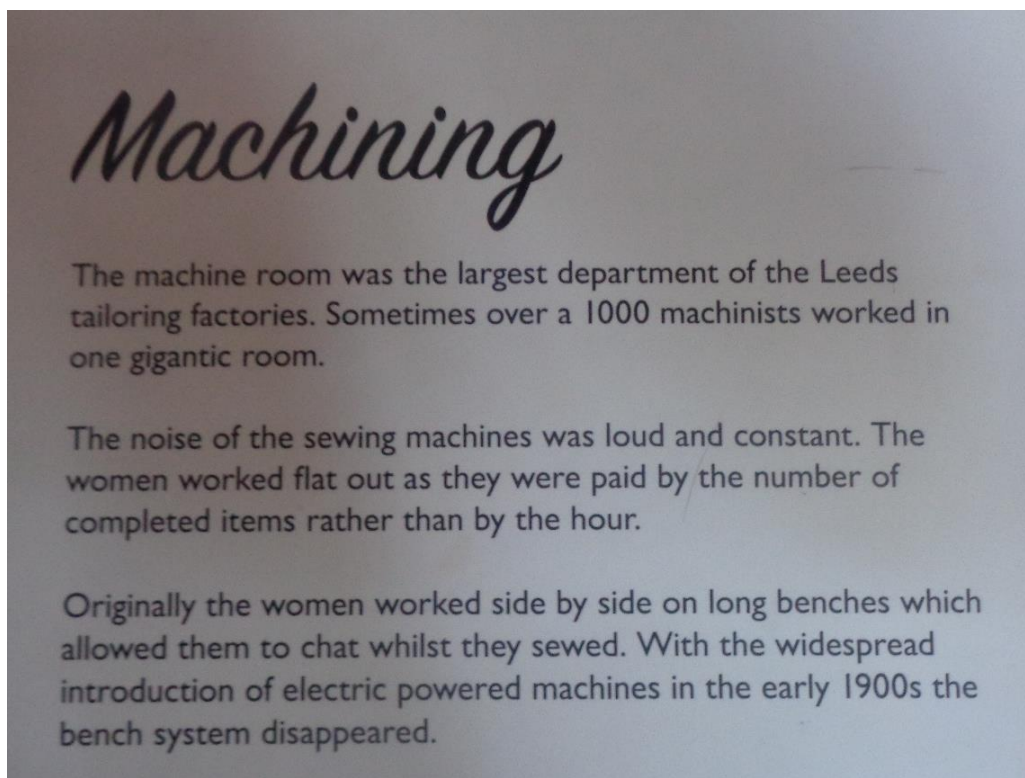


Figure 4 Photograph of Lay-Up Table exhibit in the Tailoring gallery on the second floor at Leeds Industrial Museum (Taken by Lauren Padgett on 16 November 2016).



Figure 5 Photograph of Lay-Up Table label of the Lay-Up Table exhibit in the Tailoring gallery on the second floor at Leeds Industrial Museum (Taken by Lauren Padgett on 16 November 2016).

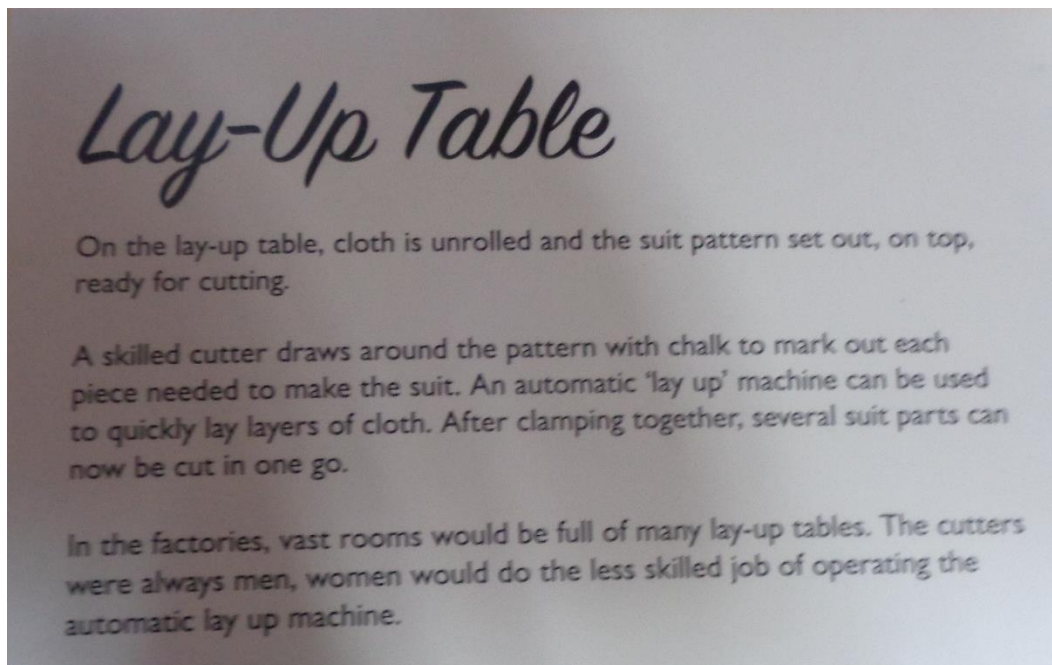


Figure 6 Frederick William Elwell, *The Curiosity Shop*, 1929.⁶¹²

This painting resembles Andrea Taziker's description of 'women sitting by the fire knitting almost without exception accompanied by a stuffed cat' in cottage interiors at the museum sites she conducted research at.⁶¹³



⁶¹² Frederick William Elwell, *The Curiosity Shop*, 1929, oil on canvas, Collection: Harris Museums & Art Gallery, Preston, © the artist's estate, Photo credit: Bridgeman Images
<<http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-curiosity-shop-152075>> [Art UK, accessed 24 January 2017]

⁶¹³ Andrea Taziker, 'Sitting, Knitting and Serving: The Portrayal of Women in Industrial Museum', in *Women in Industry and Technology from Prehistory to the Present Day: Current Research and the Museum Experience*, ed. by Amanda Devonshire and Barbara Wood (London: Museum of London, 1996), pp. 163 – 196 (p. 163).

Figure 7 Photograph of Step back in time to Victorian Leeds display panel, Victorian Streets, Abbey House Museum (Photo Ref: AHM.ENT02, Date Taken: 1 September 2015 by Lauren Padgett).

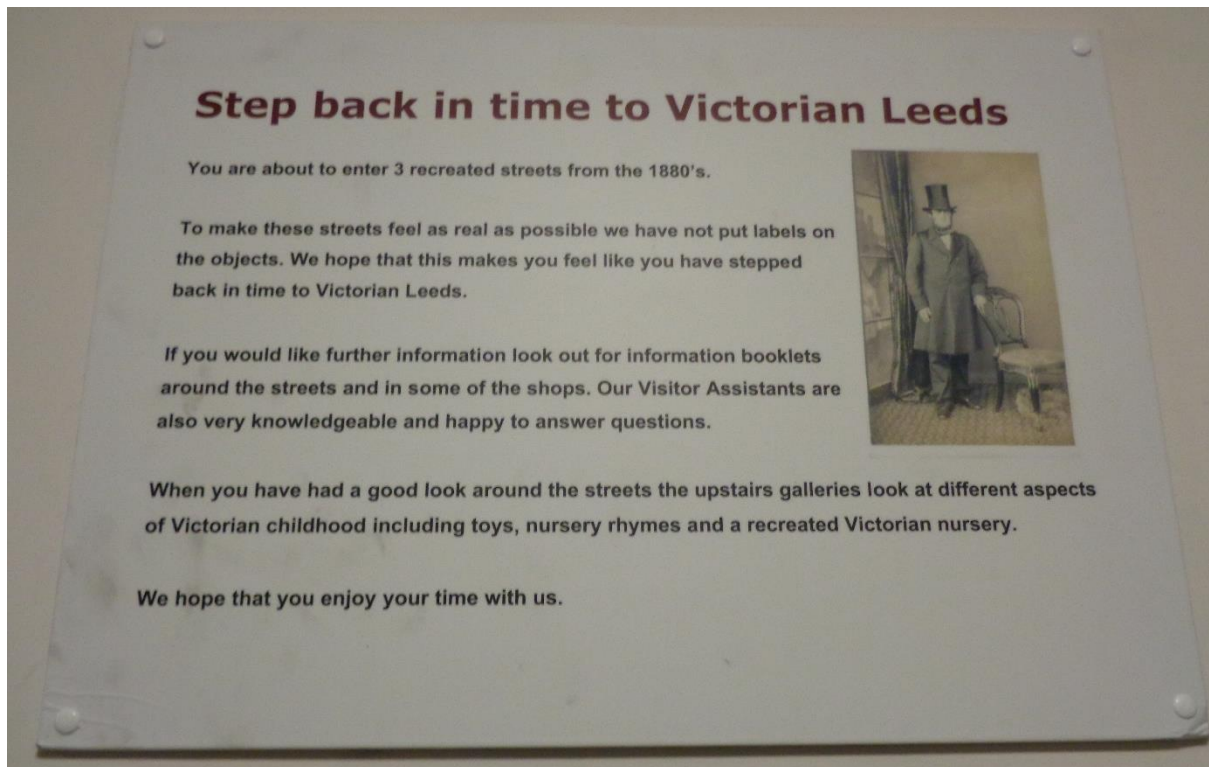


Figure 8 Photograph of W. Mann's Complete House Furnisher exhibit, Stephen Harding Gate, Abbey House Museum (Photo Ref: AHM.SHG02, Date Taken: 1 September 2015 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 9 Photograph of Master and Matron's Quarters display panel, Main Block, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.MB17, Date Taken: 9 October 2017 by Lauren Padgett).

MASTER AND MATRON'S QUARTERS



This photo shows Herbert Wright and his wife (master and matron from 1949 - 1951) in the master's sitting room in 1950



Taken in 1935, this shows Matron Lawson who was living in the workhouse with her husband from 1932 - 1936

The main block housed the master and matron's quarters, which consisted of the front rooms at the centre of the ground and first floors. The yard immediately in front of the quarters also belonged to the master and matron.

Here, the master and matron lived literally side-by-side with the inmates, separated by only a locked door or a wall. This was so they could keep a close eye on the male and female wings respectively, especially overnight when most other staff would have gone home.

Over the nearly 100-year history of Ripon workhouse, thirteen different masters lived in this section of the building. The master and matron were usually a married couple. This room shows how the master's dining room might have looked in the early 1900s.

More recently, the building was used as council offices until Ripon Museums Trust bought the building in 2017 with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Figure 10 Photograph of Master and Matron's Dining Room, Main Block, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.MB20, Date Taken: 9 October 2017 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 11 Photograph of 'Mrs Elizabeth Sophia Lawrence' interpretive sheet, Waiting Room, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.WR07, Date Taken: 9 October 2017 by Lauren Padgett).

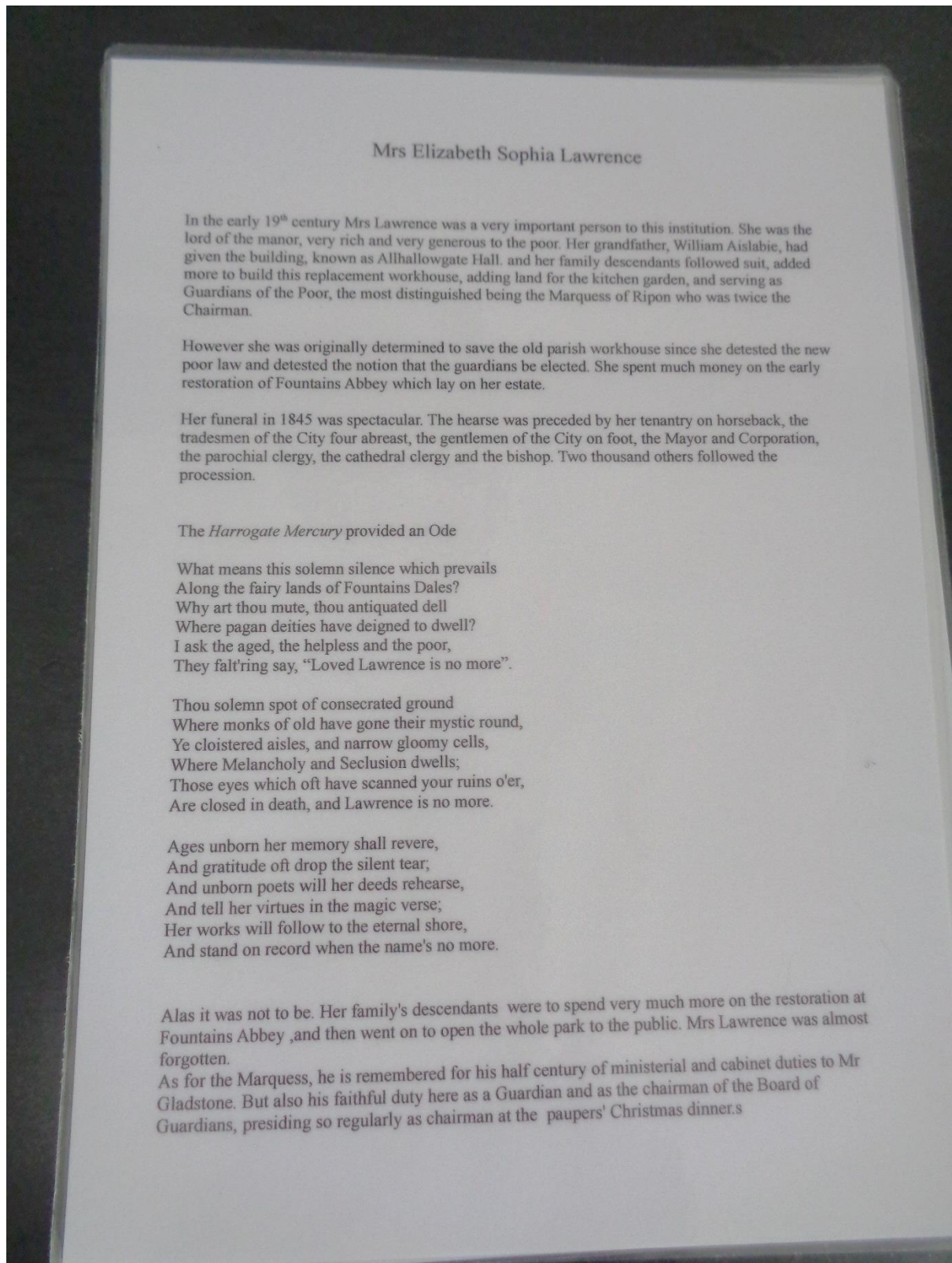


Figure 12 Photograph of 'Women and the Law' display panels, Courtroom, Courthouse Museum (Photo Ref: CHM.CR19, Date Taken: 3 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).

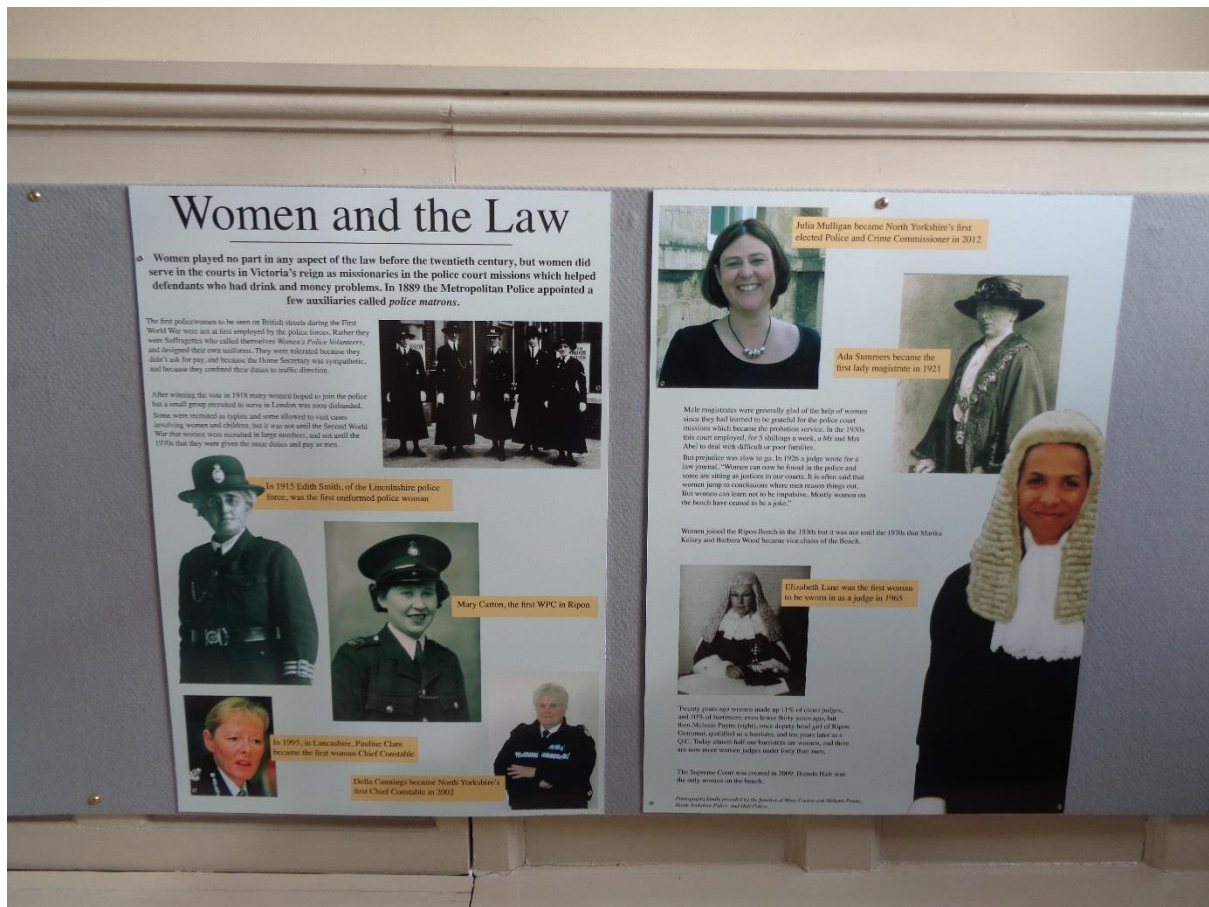


Figure 13 Photograph of 'Prisoners' Uniform' display panel, Gallery 8, Prison and Police Museum (Photo Ref: PPM.GALVIII07, Date Taken: 5 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).

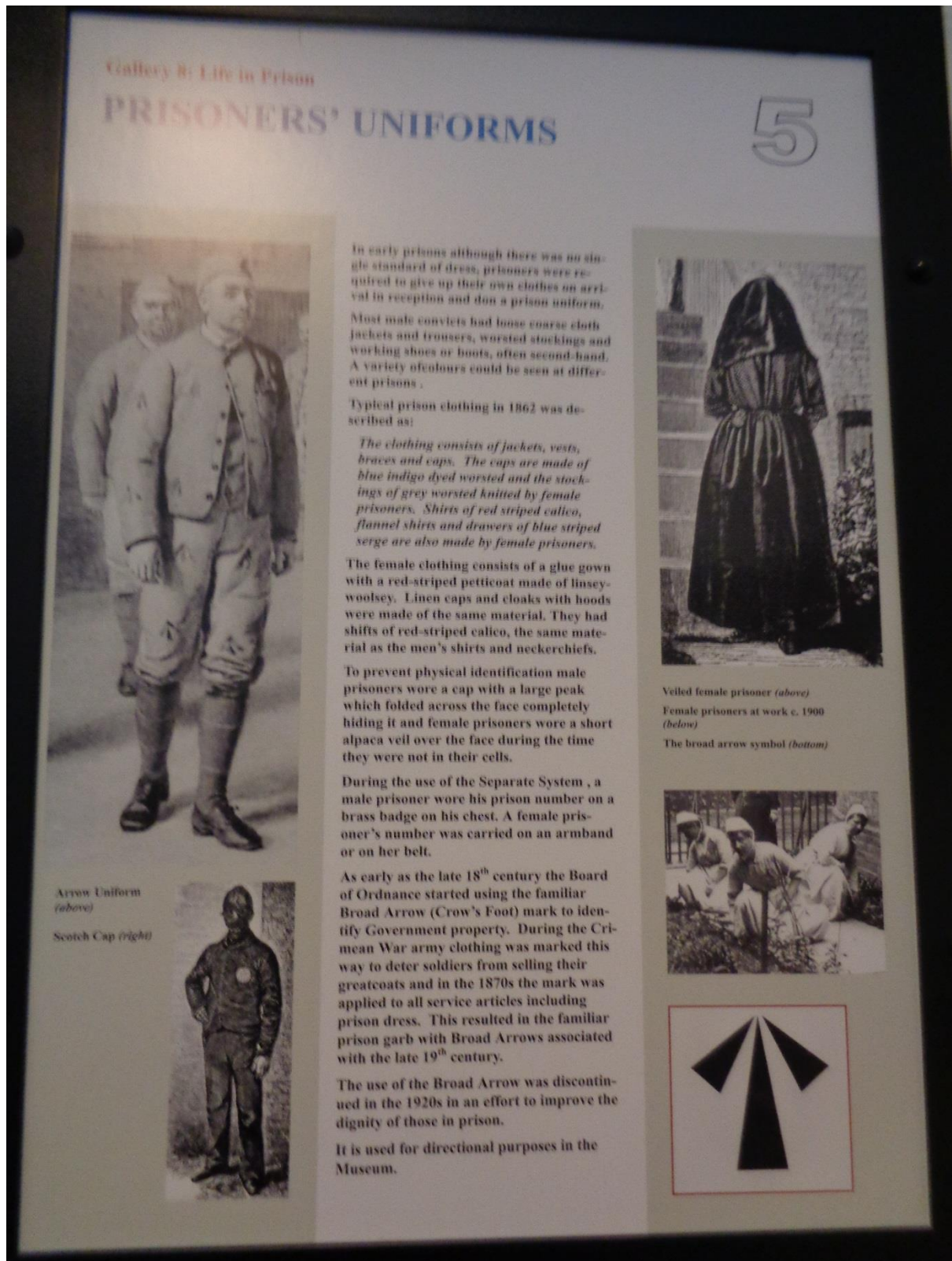


Figure 14 'Victorian Washing' page, *The Widow Washer Woman's House Folder*, *Widow Washer Woman's House*, *Abbey Fold*, *Abbey House Museum* (Photo Ref: AHM.AF14, Date Taken: 1 September 2015 by Lauren Padgett).

Victorian Washing

Washing was a far longer and more backbreaking process than today. There were no washing machines, no packets of washing powder and no electricity.

There was also no running water in poorer houses at this time. Water had to be brought from a communal pump. The cobblestone paving and open drainage channel in this street was removed from Hunslet in South Leeds, as was the water pump which provided water for 16 houses.

Household washing would take at least a day and that day was usually Monday. The Sunday roast provided cold meat for Monday supper, meaning no cooking was needed and the washing could take over.

A survey of several hundred labouring families in London in the 1840s showed that whole process of laundering including drying, starching and ironing usually took at least 3 days.



Analysis of spending habits in the 1800s shows that the smaller the family income, the greater the proportion spent on food. When there was a rise in income, it was immediately followed by a large increase in expenditure on washing and mangling.

Figure 15 'The Song of the Shirt' page, *The Haberdasher Folder*, Haberdasher exhibit, Stephen Hard Gate, Abbey House Museum (Photo Ref: AHM.SHG47, Date Taken: 17 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).

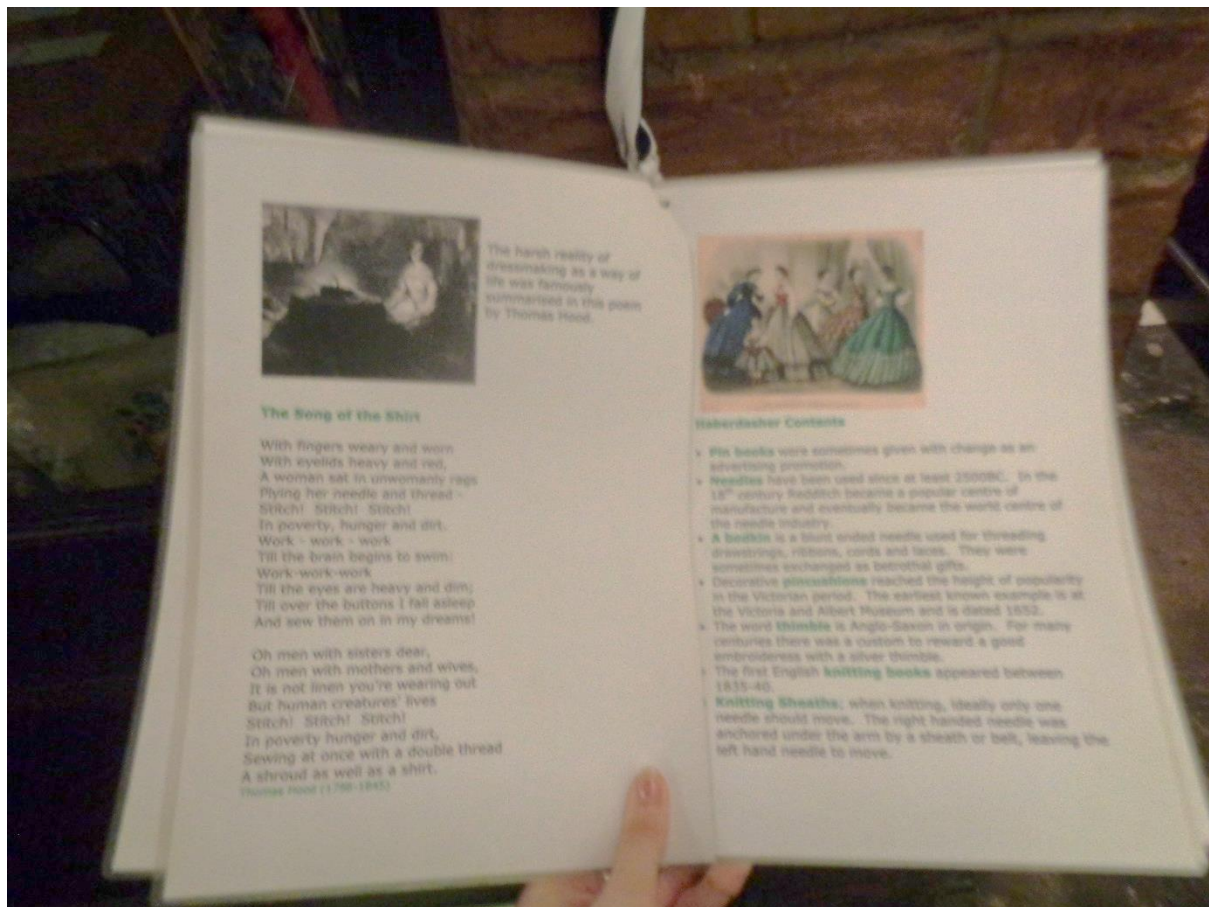


Figure 16 'Customers' page, *The Pawnbroker Folder*, Pawnbroker exhibit, Harewood Square, Abbey House Museum (Photo Ref: AHM.HWS11, Date Taken: 17 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).

Customers

It was mainly women that went to the pawn shop, noticeably so that it was reported to the 1870 Select Committee on the trade. One reason was that until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, all property belonged by definition to her husband. In Scotland different property rights meant that husband and wife had joint ownership in household goods. Consequently husbands were equally as likely to go the pawn shop as the wife.

Going to the pawnshop was often seen as a source of shame, so much so that other terms were used to disguise the visit. A term in common use was 'visiting uncle', whilst others said their clothes had been sent to the dyers or the tailors. This may be another reason why women and children were usually seen at the shop rather than the man, the head of the family.

Go-Betweens

Sometimes those who couldn't get to the pawn shop used an intermediary, usually a woman. These were known as poppers, bundle women, runners or other local names. Poppers were used by women working long hours in mills or factories who couldn't spare time to do their own pawning, or by women too ill or with too many young children to get out of the house. Some poppers worked casually for a glass of whisky while others made a regular living doing it. Some poppers were paid by particular pawnbrokers to use them rather than the competition.

Figure 17 'The Victorian period . . .' page, *The Widow Washer Woman's House* Folder, *Widow Washer Woman's House*, Abbey Fold, Abbey House Museum (Photo Ref: AHM.AF15, Date Taken: 1 September 2015 by Lauren Padgett).

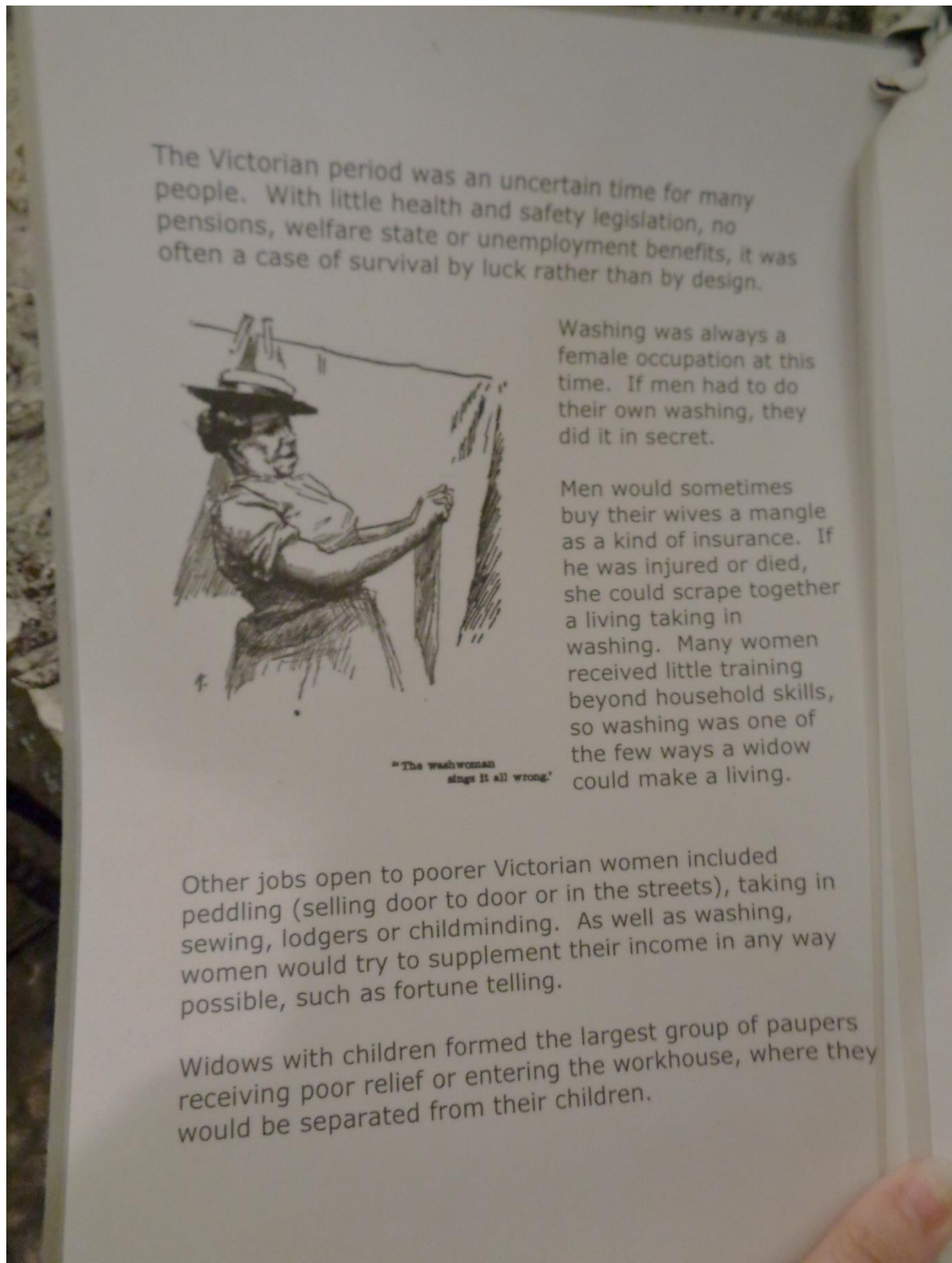
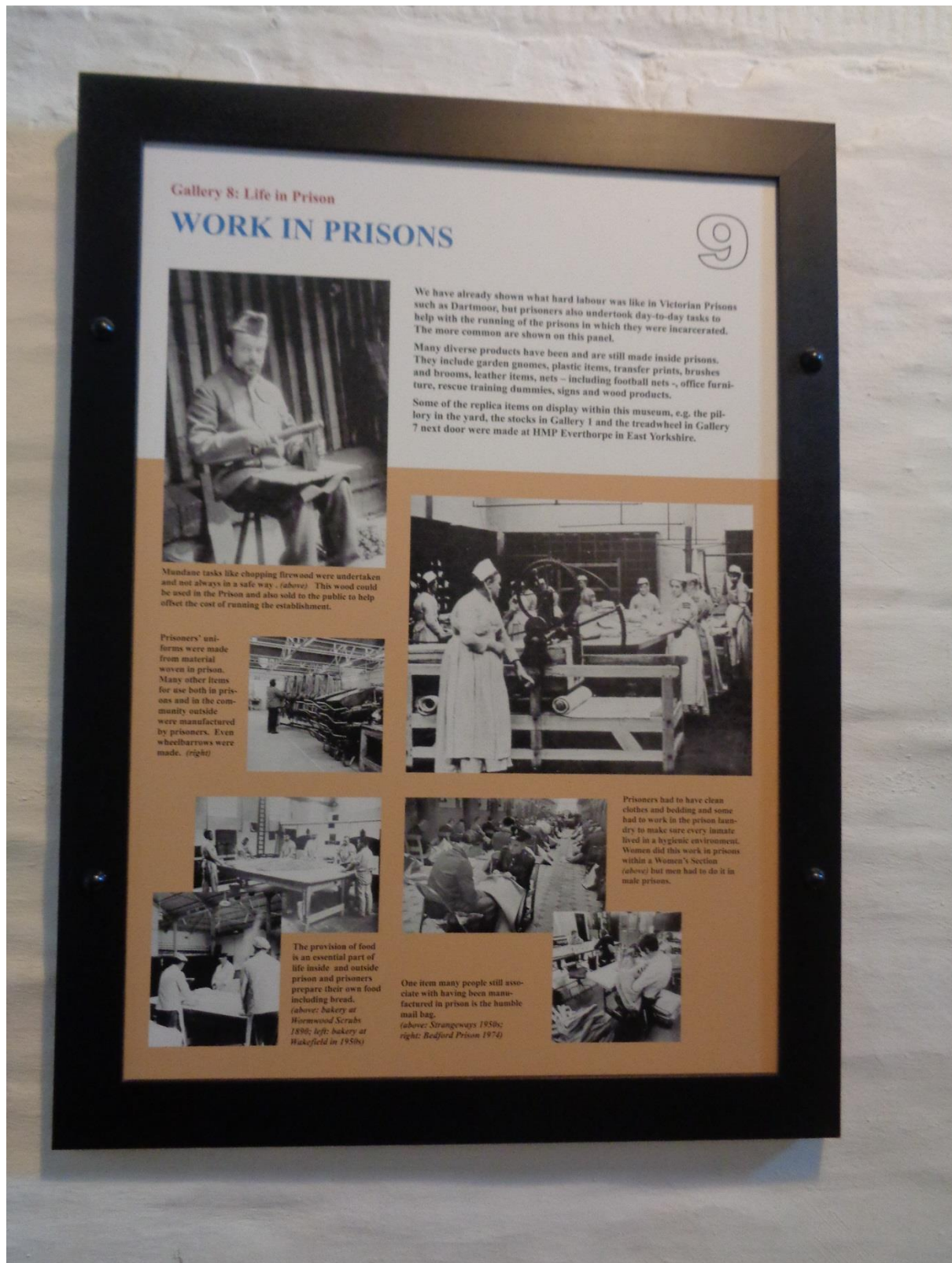


Figure 18 Anne East exhibit, Police and Prison Museum, (Photo Ref: PPM.EXT02, Date Taken: 5 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 19 Photograph of 'Work in Prisons' display panel, Gallery 8, Prison and Police Museum (Photo Ref: PPM.GALVIII02, Date Taken: 5 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



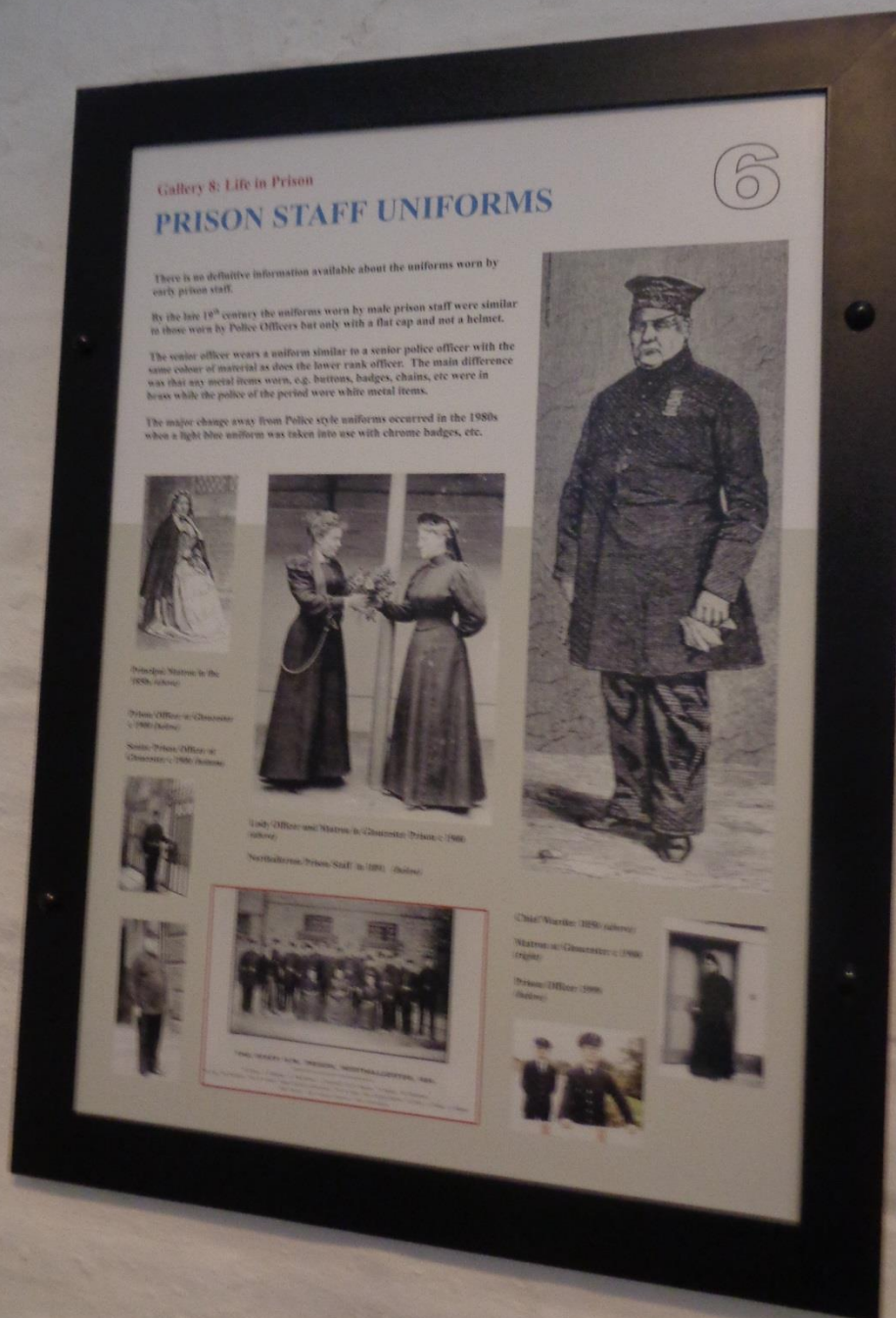


Figure 21 Photograph of Guardian exhibit, Guardians' Room, Workhouse Museum
(Photo Ref: WHM.GR07, Date Taken: 2 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 22 Photograph of 'Art' interpretive sheet, Guardians' Room, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.GR19, Date Taken: 2 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).

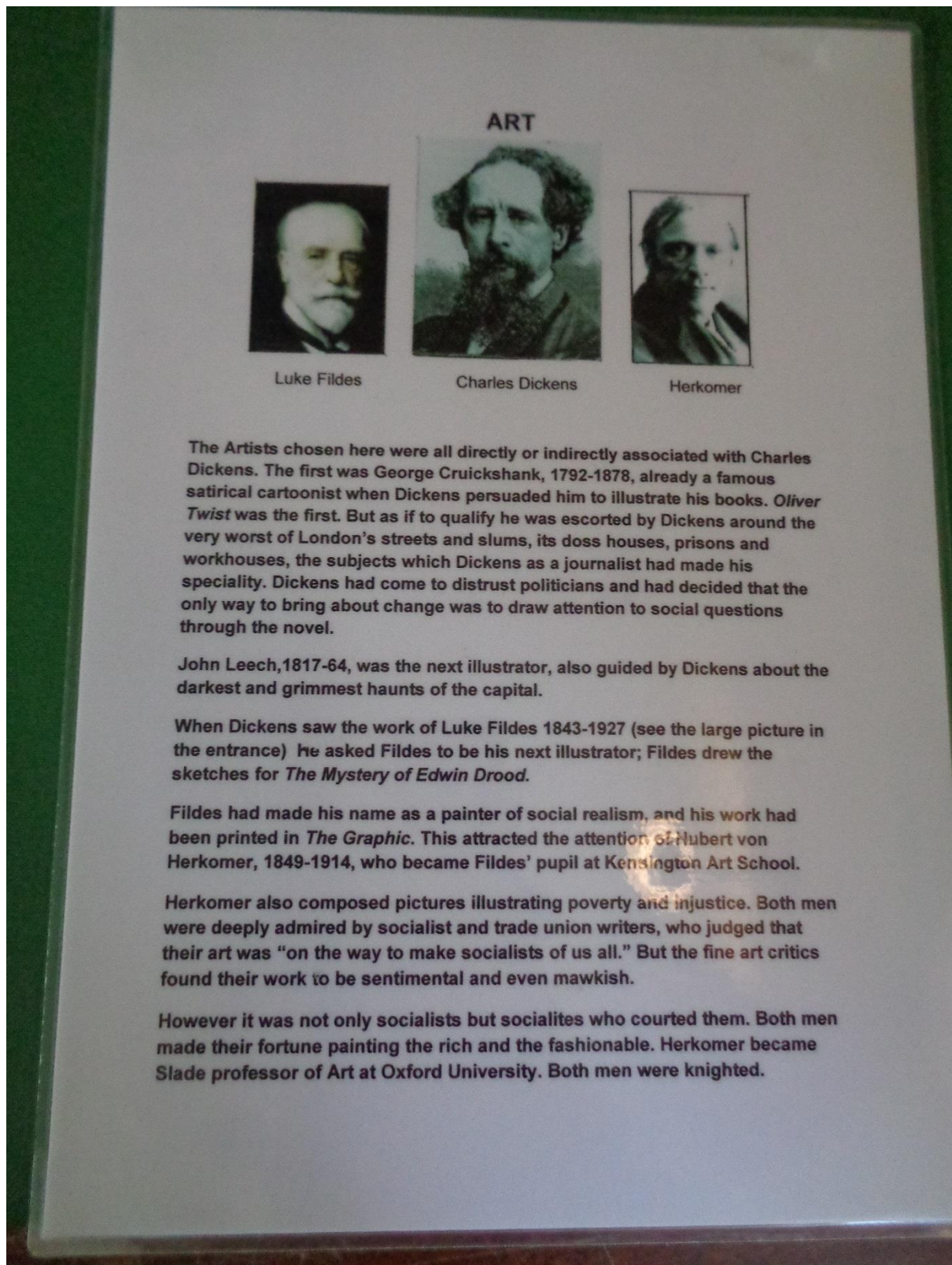


Figure 23 Photograph of 'The Crawler' exhibit, Guardians' Room, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.GR01, Date Taken: 2 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



The Crawler - photographed by John Thompson in 1876.

"Crawlers are generally women reduced by vice and poverty to that degree of wretchedness which destroys even the energy to beg. She did not give her name. She is a vagrant and sits on the workhouse steps nursing a friend's child, which keeps both warm. The friend pays her with bread and tea."

John Thompson.

Figure 24 Photograph of 'The Pinch of Poverty' (left) and 'On Strike' (right), Guardians' Room, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.GR14, Date Taken: 2 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 25 Photograph of 'Hard Times' (top) and 'Christmas in the Workhouse' (bottom), Guardians' Room, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.GR12, Date Taken: 2 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 26 Photograph of 'London Labour and the London Poor' exhibit', Guardians' Room, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.GR18, Date Taken: 2 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 27 Photograph of 'A Dinner at a Cheap Lodging House' (top), 'The Idiot' (right), 'Women's Work Yard' (bottom) and 'Oliver Twist' (left) exhibit', Guardians' Room, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.GR13, Date Taken: 2 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 28 Photograph of 'The Workhouse Test' exhibit, Guardians' Room, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.GR17, Date Taken: 2 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



The Workhouse Test - Illustrated by John Leech.

Who deserved relief? The able-bodied could only be relieved in the workhouse. If they refused to enter they could not be considered deserving, nor could their need be "timidly, urgent or necessary".

Figure 29 Photograph of 'Eventide' exhibit, Guardians' Room, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.GR11, Date Taken: 2 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 30 Haberdasher exhibit, Stephen Hard Gate, Abbey House Museum (Photo Ref: AHM.SHG19, Date Taken: 17 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 31 Pawnbroker exhibit, Harewood Square, Abbey House Museum (Photo Ref: AHM.HWS03, Date Taken: 2 September 2015 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 32 Widow Washer Woman's House exhibit, Abbey Fold, Abbey House Museum (Photo Ref: AHM.AF22, Date Taken: 17 February 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 33 'Collator' exhibit, Prison and Police Museum (Photo Ref: PPM.GFC11, Date Taken: 5 March 2016 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 34 Dining Room, Main Block, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.MB19, Date Taken: 9 October 2017 by Lauren Padgett).



Figure 35 Master's Study, Main Block, Workhouse Museum (Photo Ref: WHM.MB05, Date Taken: 9 October 2017 by Lauren Padgett).



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Appendices

Appendix 1

Edited Transcription of Interview with Kitty Ross (Leeds Museums and Galleries)

Interview conducted on Friday 28 April 2017 at Abbey House Museum, Leeds

Interviewer: Lauren Padgett (LP), PhD student at Leeds Trinity University

Interviewee: Kitty Ross (KR), Leeds Museums and Galleries

This is an edited transcription so feedback sounds and words have been edited out and the audio has been translated into sentences and paragraphs which are coherent, readable and intelligible.

Certain parts have been redacted as Kitty spoke to one of her colleagues who entered the room on a couple of occasions, therefore this has been redacted - this is indicated in the transcription.

1 LP: So I suppose my first question is how long have you worked at Leeds
2 Museums?

3 KR: That's getting embarrassing. Nearly, well yes, next month I would have
4 been here twenty years. I started in May 1997.

5 LP: And what's your current job role and title?

6 KR: My current job title is curator of Leeds history slash social history, and I'm
7 part of the collections teams for Leeds Museums and Galleries and responsible
8 for the social history collections, and work alongside curators of other
9 collections. I do have a part-time assistant also looking after the same area of
10 collections, Nicola.⁶¹⁴ And so my responsibility include at Leeds sort of
11 managing the collections, acquisitions, accessioning, cataloguing,
12 documentation, enquiring relating to them, helping publicise, obviously social
13 media which is something that had crept in more and more and obviously then
14 sort of museum displays, loans out and planning exhibitions so one of the
15 biggest sort of roles each year is we do a major exhibition change here at
16 Abbey House.⁶¹⁵ Although I assist with a lot of other exhibitions across the
17 sites, that's the one that sort of has become habitually what I do. It's not written
18 absolutely that my role is to do the exhibition here, technically it could be
19 someone else but yes, we just, I tend to project manage that and also obviously

⁶¹⁴ This is Nicola Pullan, Assistant Curator of Leeds and Social History.

⁶¹⁵ The temporary exhibitions occupy the temporary exhibition space at Abbey House Museum and changes annually.

20 assist with access to the collections for our education team and community
21 team etc.

22 LP: OK. Thank you.

23 KR: Pretty standard.

24 LP: Yes. Quite a varied job then?

25 KR: Oh yes. Keeps me interested.

26 LP: How would you describe Abbey House Museum and the Victorian Streets?

27 KR: Right. Well from a marketing point of view, it's definitely sort of the most
28 family friendly of the Leeds Museums sites. And because we've got the
29 Victorian Streets that's very much very popular as sort of immersive
30 environment. And we don't have anything similar at any of the other sites. We
31 tend to have either country houses obviously display themselves as a *house*
32 and Thwaite Mills displays itself again as the sort of working mill and then other
33 sites are more sort of display driven.⁶¹⁶ You know, they are not so tied up with
34 what the actual original building was or I suppose more slightly more
35 conventional museum displays. Armley is an interesting mix of sort of the mill
36 itself but also displays about social history. So the streets are sort of on the
37 ground floor these reconstructed streets.⁶¹⁷ It's our unique selling point really.
38 But upstairs we can be a bit more museum-y in terms of being able to sort of do
39 thematic exhibitions and I do enjoy the two aspects of that. And obviously
40 another of our sort of unique selling points here is the childhood collection and
41 the fact that we have childhood galleries and toys. Some people said we *are*
42 the 'Kirstall Toy Museum'. We've never been called that.

43 LP: That's interesting.

44 KR: But I think people come up with that, depending on what bit of the museum
45 they remember and obviously slot machines are another thing that's very
46 popular.

47 LP: How would you describe or explain the interpretive method or methods
48 used for the Streets?

49 KR: For the street? It's something, a bit influx really. We've not, we don't have
50 very much overt interpretation in the street. And we have trialled some sort of
51 little folders of information, some of which look a little bit scrappy. I think we are
52 looking to try and have *that* in a more sympathetic format. We haven't
53 advanced very far on that but one of the things we are looking at is sort of

⁶¹⁶ Leeds Museums and Galleries has Temple Newsam and Lotherton Hall as country house sites and Thwaite Mill Watermill as an industrial site.

⁶¹⁷ Leeds Museums also has Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills.

54 things that could be on the counter that look a bit in keeping but when you open
55 them up all the information [inaudible] plastic laminated sheets which is what
56 we tend to have at the moment or nothing at all. We did, a couple of years ago
57 do a couple of video interactive screens. One of which is a child's game looking
58 at what it's like to be a Victorian child and what your life chances were, well
59 more what your career choices would be based on answering various basic
60 questions like 'Do you like school?' 'Do you like maths?' 'Do you like the dark?'
61 and its steers you towards realising that possibly you could get a better job if
62 you say 'Yes I like school'. So that's quite entertaining and we've also got
63 another one that just explores some of the objects in the street shop by shop,
64 not absolutely every shop, but we were able to put in that also the fact that we
65 have a lot of archive, catalogue quite a lot of our archive pictures of the street
66 and how it itself has evolved since they were built in the 1950s. So that
67 interactive has some key objects and I did notice that at least a couple of them
68 you've already moved out. And the public haven't noticed that yet but they are
69 not on display anymore. And that's one of the problems with having a slightly
70 expensive bespoke, singing and dancing interactive. Its jolly difficult to then get
71 any money or have any expertise in sort of saying 'actually can we swap that
72 for another one that *is* on display'. And even actually we did a shop and then
73 we got money to change, redo the signage for it and the interactive now doesn't
74 quite fit what the shop is. So, and I really haven't observed for much myself how
75 many people use that. I think it's sometimes quite slow. I don't know how much
76 its used but it's interesting one way having it is a discreet place somewhere that
77 could give a bit more sort of, for those who are interested and want to delve a
78 little bit more. So we had key objects in the shop and some of the archival
79 images and photos and catalogues that related to that Victorian shop,
80 specifically the one we based it on, and also then the different archival photos
81 that show what that unit has *been* in its live since the 50s because a lot of them
82 of swapped round all over the place. There's been a lot of change, particularly
83 in the early days. I came in 1997 feeling not much change had happened, I
84 think probably it hadn't since the late 70s. That's probably the last time they
85 were doing very much. I think the last shop swap was probably in about mid-,
86 about 1973. They put in a barbers. So I think everything had been fairly static
87 then, but when I look back through the archive photos, somethings were
88 moving every other year. Things were in for a bit and became something else,
89 they acquired something new or swap them round for whatever. Can't interview
90 them, they are all dead. So that's the interactives, but that's really it. We don't
91 have anything labelled in the shop, although of course the other sort of
92 interpretation that we have to have, not interpretation but signage that we have
93 to put down is some of the museum-type signage. And we have just had a
94 whole load of signage redesigned for us to make the point be slightly more
95 friendly about it. It's the sort of thing you have to say 'please don't let your
96 children jump up and down on this cart' or 'don't sit on this bicycle'. Sometimes
97 you feel that you shouldn't really necessarily have say to people that . . .

98 LP: Yes, but you do.

99 KR . . . There's a classic one upstairs which is not the street, but it's basically
100 saying 'please don't potty train your child in the gallery'. Which again you sort of
101 feel possibly shouldn't have to be said but because it's been done and people
102 could say 'it didn't say I shouldn't'. So we have got slightly cartoony Victorian
103 characters to show you where the lift is and tell you not to ride the bicycle and a
104 few things like that. So that sort of has come into the street recently by the
105 mainly remove gain sort of scrappy labels that were written in block capitals and
106 laminated, which isn't really our policy, but they tend to get done by visitor
107 assistants in response to something happening. To response to the fact that
108 someone has said that 'it didn't say I shouldn't'.

109 LP: I remember when I worked at Bradford Industrial Museum and we had a
110 bicycle on display and I put a 'do not sit' sign on top of the seat and one of my
111 colleagues said 'you don't need that', I said 'you'll be surprised'. Three weeks
112 later, we saw a gentleman with his grandson riding the bike around the gallery.
113 He'd literally picked the sign up and put it on the ground. His excuse was. .

114 KR: So that was after you had the sign?

115 LP: Yes. He said 'It says sit, it didn't say I couldn't ride it'. Be specific in your
116 signs, 'do not sit', 'do not ride', 'do not touch'. So were you part of the HLF
117 refurbishment that happened?

118 KR: Yes. I wasn't part of the bid so I wasn't party to how they sort of wrote the
119 bid. I came, I think, they had either just heard or were waiting to hear for it when
120 I came in 1997. I can't remember the exact timing of it but pretty soon they got
121 the go ahead to do the refurbishment. And so, I did, had visited the museum
122 before, I had friends in Leeds and things so I had, did know of it and I had a
123 little chance to get familiar with the old displays before we packed them. We
124 started, my office initially was were boot is in the childhood gallery and that was
125 backfilled with people, with uncatalogued and random things, things not put
126 away, things not catalogued and collected, unclear statuses so I did start by
127 trying to sort out that office out. There were things piled up sort of up to the
128 window, you couldn't walk across the floor and that was a lot of my early role
129 was managing the back-up of the museum. It was very early stages of it going
130 on computer so a few things were already on the database but basically we
131 were entering most things from scratch and at that point we weren't networked
132 so when we started the project in I'm trying to remember we when closed to the
133 public, probably in 1998, possibly April 1998 or something like that. And at that
134 point we recruited three sort of project assistants and we at that point had three
135 separate computers and every night I can to reconcile the data to sort of bring it
136 all into one because as in every museum they were lots of objects with the
137 same basically root accession number, we had to deal with duplicate numbers.

138 They were lots of things to sort out. But we did get a lot of data captured and it
139 involved in terms of just basically capturing that basic data onto sheets, a lot of
140 the front of house staff stayed on to help pack and occasionally that gave us
141 some interesting vague data, you had the odd thing that said 'metal thing'. But it
142 got a number and it got a location so we are still sort of going back through all
143 that, but it meant that the social history collection, everything that was in this
144 building pretty much, the odd thing got missed, but it got tagged, recorded and
145 got a computer record. And that really has been an incredibly useful thing
146 because the opportunity to basically gut a building and catalogue everything in
147 it, a lot of places never get that. And this museum had definitely been the sort of
148 place where, whenever they had a sort of audit it was things like 'well, we know
149 we've got it but we don't know where it is' answer.

150 LP: Yes. I'm familiar with that.

151

152 KR: And this room was a store, a costume store. So we moved everything out
153 to an industrial unit at Yeadon, not Yeadon that was another one that was the
154 Leeds City Museum, no it was Penraevon industrial estate at Meanwood. We
155 had two industrial units with a bakery in between where collections were stored
156 and we had offices there as well and we did the sort of planning for this project
157 there while the building was, it was a £1.5million project the majority of which
158 was on structural, roofing things and also trying to, putting in the lift and
159 basically ensuring that we could have level access even if it's not the same
160 route as everyone else. There is level access to all the display areas and café
161 but unfortunately to get to the café, you have to via the museum and across the
162 cobbles. But the whole sort of moving the entrance to where it now is, people
163 used to come in up steps in what's now is the café. So yes, obviously being a
164 1990s project it needed to comply with DDA. So that's another of the sort, we
165 had a very good architecture who worked around the fact that the building was
166 built in bits, classic wings added here so even on the ground floor the floor
167 aren't even, you probably noticed that you have to go . . .

168 LP: Yes, you have to go up and down . . .

169 KR: . . . that's really to do with the ceiling and upstairs that causes problems as
170 the fact that the ceiling heights aren't all the same, which caused our designers
171 all sorts of issues. Not really sort of thinking about it. The Humpty Dumpty in the
172 childhood gallery was I think actually, also possibly that was made because it
173 was made to imperial and not metric measures or something like that so it
174 came back bigger than the designers thought it was and it wouldn't fit in the
175 space and had to have a sort of, it's not as egg shaped as it should have been
176 as its basically its tummy removed to fit. It's a listed building and a building
177 with a muddled history. So all of that needs to be taken into consideration and

178 also in terms of opening out spaces and working out what things were original,
179 which things were stud partition walls and things. Particularly on this floor a lot
180 of it has been opened out, we did lose one shop unit in the Street in order to put
181 the lift in. A tiny little cobbler's shop in the corner. So there's one less shop unit
182 than there was in the old street in order to be able to allow visitors to get
183 upstairs.

184 LP: I've been looking at, well, what I can from old visitor guide books, looking at
185 some of the old exhibits, I noticed that they were two of the shops that were
186 interpreted to be owned by women. So there was Ann Carter's Haberdashery
187 and Rachel Aron's Toy Shop.

188 KR: Oh. I think that was very, very brief, the one that was a toy shop. I'm not
189 sure when that was. I don't . . .

190 LP: No, it's in an early visitors' catalogue.

191 KR: An earlier catalogue. I don't even think we have even got a picture of that.
192 That's interesting. Yes.

193 LP: I'm just interested in the curatorial decision to remove because they don't
194 exist in these Streets.

195 KR: They don't. Partly being that we were trying to make the, the old streets
196 didn't have a sort of clear date line of what period they were. They were sort of
197 just *old* and *gone* but not necessarily the same age as each other. And the very
198 early street, one of the things we, one of those eureka moments, the very early
199 street was based actually more around some displays they had done at the
200 Abbey in the early 1950s, exhibitions about the sort of crafts that would have
201 been associated with the Abbey so they choice of craft workshops they had
202 were based on what they Abbey might have needed. And again, quite vague.
203 There was an apothecary, there was the blacksmith and saddler, so the choice
204 of original workshops particularly in Abbey Fold came from that. And therefore
205 weren't conceived at all at that point as a Victorian street, particularly they were
206 conceived, a lot of it was a lot was earlier but also a lot later. And it sort of
207 evolved and I think Harewood Square which was the first one that had had
208 shops really, rather than workshops. I think initially they had the apothecary in
209 there and they had, they did have the music shop initially and then the two bay
210 windows where we've now got our toy and fancy goods shop. They were again
211 slightly varied. I think at one point the Ann Carter haberdasher was one of
212 those, but I can't remember the sequence of it all. But they changed quite a bit.
213 Some of them were also a bit based on, Mitchell came from, C. Maynard
214 Mitchell who's bust is up there, curator who had been previously at York and
215 came with York Kirkgate in his head and some of it slightly replicated that, there
216 was a sort of pewter shop which pretty much, well York had one. So I think we
217 never sort of, we didn't necessarily start with exactly, because those, with a

218 smaller exception of things like Sagar's ironmonger which it's definitely the
 219 contents of that ironmonger's came from Sagar's and we kept that, that's one of
 220 the main ones we kept the same way and we kept the Hark to Rover pub as the
 221 same, pretty much otherwise, some of the shops are actually changing with the
 222 type of shop they are. We were looking at trying to, I suppose be a little more
 223 representative with what you might have had in a Victorian street at the end of
 224 the nineteenth century. Say for instance, the backstreet has now far fewer
 225 workshops because a fold would have probably had only one or two
 226 workshops, and dwellings and so on. So yes, probably the only absolutely
 227 female owned shop we have now is Mrs Mann, art furnisher on the main street.
 228 And we also have a widow washer woman's house. These are the two ones
 229 where I suppose we are being quite specific with them [inaudible] the widow
 230 washer woman.

231 LP: So the furnisher and haberdashery shop. . .

232 KR: Well, yes and haberdasher got the name Mallet and that's what we just
 233 removed because it got swapped, the two shops got swapped over because
 234 they were mice in the very crowded haberdashery shop and so it got very
 235 quickly, I wasn't involved with that decision, moved, swapped to the other shop
 236 and become the small, what we had had as the small haberdasher became the
 237 Burmantoft shop because the mice couldn't eat the Burmantofts and things then
 238 moved over. I think what we are probably, possibly looking at doing which of
 239 course may actually then remove another female name from the street is we
 240 are looking at re-doing that shop a bit more as a department shop of the period
 241 around the Grand Pygmalion. But it's an interesting thing to think about in terms
 242 of representation. But I am not sure what the history of Ann Carter was, but it
 243 was a name they picked out of the directory rather than it having any
 244 connection with what they put in it. And I'm not sure what her dates were. And
 245 we removed the H. Mallet who we don't know the gender of, although a lot of
 246 haberdashers probably were run by women so H. Mallet may have been
 247 female. It came from a, that came actually just from a 1860s receipt in the
 248 collections so actually it was a bit early and wasn't a purveyor of Burmantofts
 249 which is now in that shop. But yes, I think the toy shop one had a very short life.
 250 I'm trying to think of any others, no it probably was just the Ann Carter's that
 251 was still there just as a shop window, when we closed.

252 LP: So just the Widow Washer Woman's exhibit and the . . .

253 KR: And Mrs Mann's art furnisher which is the shop, really now you can just see
 254 the windows and you go inside with the dressing up. But there's quite possibly
 255 something we might look at rebranding just to try to, because the display isn't
 256 an art furnisher display, it's a mix of some of the art furnisher display so the big
 257 cabinet in there and there are some Burmantoft plaques in the window. They
 258 are what was in there and it was actually mainly showing furniture and

259 Burmantofts. Very mundane, practical reasons to deal with pest control it got
 260 swapped over. And I suspect that some of the decisions of previous things were
 261 all to do with that or somebody came in and re-did a display. They're not always
 262 justified by historic research, they can be as much about practical day-to-day
 263 decisions. That said, looking at the Street was much to do with looking at who
 264 was listed in directories. So our Toy Shop now is Vessalli, and that of course
 265 that's at least to the fact not everybody originally came from Leeds. He was
 266 probably a Swiss-Italian, he was marketed as a Swiss toy shop. But it was a
 267 male owned shop.

268 LP: I think you have touched on some of the issues, but my next question was
 269 were there any issues regarding the representation of Victorian women when
 270 planning, designing, exhibiting or interpreting the Streets? This could be due to
 271 research, or curatorial decisions or the collections.

272 KR: I think we were certainly trying to sort of, there was a feeling that, in an
 273 interesting way, we needed to have the tobacconist and barber's shop in a
 274 sense sort of as a male-shop because a lot of the other shops in terms of their
 275 clientele would have been women. So it was women who would go to the
 276 grocer, and the haberdasher. They were the main customers there. So actually
 277 having, I suppose in a sense there was a conscious effort to actually put, and
 278 actually the toy and goods shop might have been something regarded as aimed
 279 for women's tastes so they might not have aimed it at women but I think there
 280 was a feeling that quite a lot of those were very much, the women was doing
 281 the main decision-making and customers in the shops and therefore putting in
 282 the male barber and tobacconist, and newsagent shop would possibly have
 283 been a sort of male customer based. But with something like the iron-monger it
 284 was probably about 50 50 with what you going to get, whether you're buying
 285 candles or, I don't know. I've not studied it. But there was certainly a feeling in a
 286 sense, a conscious thing to sort of put in a shop that was a bit more masculine.
 287 And because also the mourning warehouse can be very much aimed at women
 288 as they did most of the mourning, or had to wear black for longer. So I think, but
 289 obviously we didn't go down the line of actually having any manikins or anything
 290 like that so a lot of the interpretation, when we touched on interpretation, the
 291 other interpretation that we sometimes do, we do it less than we used to, but
 292 there are visitor assistants who sometimes dress in character. And I think when
 293 schools come and do particularly the murder mystery event, there's probably a
 294 sort of quite a wide range of characters, male and female, in *that* interpretation,
 295 people in the street. Because we don't do that consciously, we certainly don't
 296 do it as manikins. But that's another way in which . . .

297 LP: I interpreted that as it's the visitors who people the street.

298 KR: Yes, they very much do. But there are sort of some workshops that use the
 299 street, particularly Sarah Allen's murder mystery workshop that she does. I

300 think the characters are not necessarily there, there's a trail of them there,
301 they're named. And a bit of the story is given as to what their involvement is, if
302 they might have done it, so there's certainly a mixture of female shopkeepers
303 and people involved with it. So we certainly have had, certainly when we had
304 volunteers coming to do, actually I'm not sure about that as I wasn't involved in
305 it, but we did certainly have a group of volunteers who came in and actually did
306 in character interpretation and almost inevitably they were all female, they
307 applied for that so. So whether it's how historically based it is, that's different
308 but that's (inaudible) if you're a volunteer pool of people who want to come and
309 re-enact shopkeepers.

310 LP: That's interesting.

311 KR: We sort of ended up having them.

312 LP: Yes. Ah. Ok. I think you have touched on it but my next question was were
313 there any conscious curatorial decisions regarding the representation of
314 Victorian men and women. So you mentioned that you knew there would be
315 these gendered exhibits with the barber's been quite male and the mourning
316 warehouse been quite female. I'm quite interested in the decision to have a
317 widow washer woman.

318 KR: I think that was in part, as much, probably almost less to do with gender
319 and a lot to do with trying to show the grades of class and poverty. And we had
320 a little cottage that we interpreted as being an artisan's cottage and actually sort
321 of that had previously been a bare display but actually it's quite a small space
322 but cluttered with knick knack things and the basis that an artisan with a little
323 steady income might be able to afford that sort, so we filled the house with the
324 classic sort of, one of your colleagues looked at, one of the things a Leeds
325 Trinity somebody when analysing working class mantelpiece. And actually the
326 fact that they may not be high quality things but people if they had a bit of spare
327 money did accumulate *stuff*. The artisan cottage was very much sort of that
328 level of working man and the widow washer women was sort of the more
329 precarious character in the street. Most of what is in her cottage is the washing
330 that she has taken in. But I think there was also a few things to do with the fact
331 that she might do a bit of fortune telling of the side, you know, different ways of
332 trying to make money. And so yes, and the other class, because there are three
333 domestic stroke work dwellings on that street and the other one is the pawn
334 broker's house. And that's somebody, again, the pawnbroker was a decision to
335 put in as we were looking at the whole sort of informal credit system and how
336 people, again, there were good social curatorial reasons for having a
337 pawnbroker in terms of being able to explore that whole area again about
338 people's precarious finances and how people bought their Sunday suit by
339 gradually pawning it for less each week and that sort of thing. And the
340 pawnbroker's house is the sort of person making the money out of that poverty

341 and precariousness, so that's the sort of lush Victorian parlour, possibly
 342 showing classier things from the shop in a domestic setting which I think is what
 343 they sometimes *did*. So the pawnbroker's house relates to the pawnbroker's
 344 shop. And so that's the one that's got sort of lots of glass lustres and plush
 345 furniture and all the rest of it, so they were sort of three gradations in a sense,
 346 the widow washer woman was the bottom of that, so I think that's as much a
 347 consideration as the fact that she was female. And I think one of the things I
 348 remember being discussed that we never ever did was Daru would have really
 349 loved to have had a cart in the street showing a moonlight flit with somebody
 350 sort of having to, couldn't afford their rent having to move quickly.⁶¹⁸ But there
 351 was never any space for that and it would have been quite difficult to manage
 352 as a sort of [inaudible], but I think they were sort of trying to get some of that
 353 sort of you know in a sense stories in or imply them in it.

354 LP: Yes. I think that would have been a conservation risk with visitors would just
 355 dive onto the cart and pulling stuff off . . .

356 KR: Definitely. We have got, we've got the cart coming in but it's not a
 357 moonlight, it's not done as a piece of street furniture with sacks and barrels. But
 358 I do remember that being discussed. And the pawnbroker of course is also a
 359 wonderful curatorial ruse to put anything because there's far less sort of rigour,
 360 obviously there's a lot of older things in there because people pawned anything.
 361 But it was done as a social thing. . . [redacted].

362 LP: I think you have covered this but it's, what influenced or prompted these
 363 particular representations of Victorian men and women. So you have explained
 364 that it was more about the class representation . . .

365 KR: Yes. I think there was class and also just trying to, sort of, I suppose a bit of
 366 plausibility of what might have been in the same street, you know, at one point
 367 in time rather than I suppose the evolution of the Victorian street, it did feel like
 368 it evolved organically around its own, probably as much sort of practical things
 369 of you know curatorial chance what collections came up and probably all sorts
 370 of practical that we don't know about. I know about the ones we've had, so I've
 371 discussed the fact about the mice nibbling, trying to nest in our haberdashery
 372 collection and we swapped two shops for not, well for conservation curatorial
 373 reasons rather than you know researched curatorial questions. So, yes I think
 374 that's, it is a really interesting one and there are so many things to look into. I
 375 wasn't, so a lot of it, the decisions about what shops we did and things like that
 376 were taken as part of the bid which I wasn't involved with so [inaudible] some of
 377 the detail of what we call the shops and things, we then sent students off to
 378 research and occasionally some of it came back with slightly funny results
 379 which we are sorting out now that weren't as sort of rigorously researched. But

⁶¹⁸ Daru Rooke was heavily involved in the refurbishment of the Victorian Streets at Abbey House Museum before working for Bradford Museums and Galleries.

380 yes, probably I think women was just one of the sort of things that they were
 381 looking at, probably not trying to sort of consciously ensure that there was a,
 382 possibly the choice of Mrs Mann as the art furnisher, you know, it was a real
 383 one listed, you know, perhaps that's a good one to choose that for that reason.
 384 And certainly we had a different name for the toy and fancy goods shop and the
 385 certainly the decision to go with Vassalli was to show a migration story to the
 386 fact that he was obviously not a standard Leeds name. But I managed to, we
 387 had to change that one as I managed to get his name the wrong way round.
 388 Partly because it was an Italian name and I don't really quite spot which was
 389 the surname and which was the first name. It was Pellag-, I had it down as
 390 Vassalli Pellagino which it is in directory, *with* a comma. When we find his
 391 actual things, its P. Vassali, you know, Vassali is the surname and I got it the
 392 wrong way round. So at expense, we got that re-done. And I had said, yes, we
 393 haven't made decisions yet on the, on the, what's now the basically art
 394 furnisher stroke haberdasher shop. But yes, the fact that we might actually
 395 accidentally be removing the only female known shop we've got is possibly taken
 396 you need to take into some consideration.

397 LP: That was going to be my next question, is there any refurbishment plan for
 398 the Victorian streets?

399 KR: We are certainly looking at tidying up some of the shop displays and
 400 making them a little more rational and taking out some of the anomaly things or
 401 the things that are sort crowded in there and there is a possibility, you know, we
 402 did get a quote doing the new sign for the, for that shop, and part of what we
 403 need to look at is the balance of the different shops because it's quite easy to
 404 sort of end up to sort of slightly replicating, so the toy and fancy goods shop, so
 405 we might, one of the reasons for looking at a department shop, were just
 406 coming in at that point and there's the fantastically named Grand Pygmalion
 407 was one of them, it's so we could still have a bit of a haberdashery department
 408 and justify also having the sort of fancy cabinet in there and possibly a bit more
 409 again sort of not Burmantofts but some other sort of house décor items in there.
 410 But it's a difficult one as its slightly then overlaps with what we have got in the
 411 toy and fancy goods shop so it sort of not replicating too much. But, yes, there's
 412 lots of conflicting bits of things that we balance around the display that may
 413 change. But the main thing has been trying to think about how to get, coming
 414 back to your interpretation thing, is what I said looking at improving our discreet
 415 interpretation. There are other things that we, the thing that has gone that we
 416 had initially was we did have a soundtrack on the street. Which was a subtle
 417 night and day through 24 hours in 24 minutes and had the lighting change. And
 418 we had a whole sort of set of mostly not, not very narrative things going on so
 419 you'd hear knocking up in the morning, sounds of sort of people, a lot of it was
 420 sort of scrapping, banging and indistinct muttering in the background.
 421 Occasionally people would sing in the pub or actually ask for something in one

422 of the shops. But it got, we haven't, we lost the original, again, it was now done
 423 16 years ago and you'd now have a backup online somewhere but of course it
 424 was on a corrupt CD and we can't find another copy of it as the people who did
 425 it have gone out of business. It's all a bit up for discussion. But that was one of
 426 things we had, and there have been discussions about whether we look at it or
 427 if it's easier to sometimes manage the museum without that as it means that we
 428 do, if you have that burbling in the background then doing live interpretation is
 429 tricky. The lighting changing on and off was, also can create problems. So I
 430 don't know whether we would necessarily go back to that. And we did have a
 431 discussion about sort of having discreet oral history within the shops using,
 432 creating handsets that look like the very earliest telephones we've got from the
 433 1870s, which was basically a wooden mushroom. But there would be ways of
 434 doing that but we haven't pursued that yet, we may never. But that's another
 435 way of sort of having available bits of interpretation that aren't overwhelming or
 436 in your face or interfering with trying to immerse yourself or interfering with
 437 having a children's trail, whatever else is going on. . . [redacted].

438 LP: So with your twenty years' experience in museums, do you think that
 439 representations of Victorian women or women more generally have changed?

440 KR: I think it's one of those things that people, I suppose sort of does go up and
 441 down in people's consciousness with whether it's an issue they particularly
 442 want to look. I would say that one of things in just trying to sort of properly
 443 document our collections is being the more you do to document and research
 444 and properly sort of look at the people associated with the objects, more of
 445 those women's stories that are *there* can be explicit. Not necessarily the
 446 displays but certainly in the collection catalogue, it's something that obviously
 447 with doing a women's exhibition next year, we are looking at trying to ferret
 448 further and Nicola's doing a lot of trying to add in female constituents to records
 449 and trying to research a bit more of their lives.⁶¹⁹ And its certainly being, I would
 450 say just in general in museums, there has been a few gaps. I think it was in
 451 either in one of the more recent *Museums Journals*, there's has been far more
 452 exhibitions about women artists, both of contemporary artists but also looking
 453 back and reassessing women artists from the past. And in, sort of things like,
 454 the interpretation of the First World War, there's been definitely, there's been
 455 much more of an emphasis on again sort of hidden histories and lots of sort of,
 456 Armley's got an exhibition on women, work and war, looking at women's work in
 457 the First World War so trying to sort of bring women's stories out. So I don't
 458 know whether how much it's changed but I think the more research is done, the
 459 more you know what to look for in the collections. But I think there probably
 460 have been sort of periods when it's been more of a political focus. I think it

⁶¹⁹ Kitty is planning the 2018 temporary exhibition for Abbey House Museum which will be connected to the 100 year anniversary of (some) women receiving the vote but will be about women's history and contemporary women in society more wider.

461 comes and goes as a political issue. But next year, I think you'll find quite a lot
462 of things because of the 2018 anniversary. I think a lot of people will be
463 focussing, like we are, focussing on women's stories around that. And we're
464 certainly, our exhibition focus will be on a much broader thing than just suffrage.
465 We are looking at 150 years of sort of widening opportunities and changing
466 roles of women across work, professional lives, home and you know the public
467 sphere.

468 LP: Sounds really interesting.

469 KR: So yes we are just scoping it at the moment. So yes if you look at our
470 museum next year, you'd think we're great. And then we change it to something
471 else and you think 'Oh'. I was quite conscious when we did Crime and
472 Punishment, which was the exhibition we had last year that women mainly
473 popped up as victims of crime.⁶²⁰ And occasionally as criminals, but not very
474 much. We didn't look at, you know, because of the period, again we were
475 looking further back, certainly not, I think we made a reference to when the first
476 female police officers were appointed in one of the text bits but we didn't have
477 anything from anybody who was a women law enforcer. And we can Leonora
478 Cohen in that as our go-to feminist who was there both as a criminal and as a
479 JP.⁶²¹ So she's good fun for crime and punishment.

480 LP: Yes, she's been at both sides.

481 KR: She been both sides. But as I said, when I looked at sort of, quizzed sort of
482 on the representation of women, well yes there's reference to them bring
483 murdered here. We also had the dripping riots as one of the (inaudible) which
484 was about a woman accused of stealing dripping and actually loads of people
485 rioted on her behalf, they thought it was terrible that she was being prosecuted
486 for this. But yes, that was definitely an exhibition, and obviously we have Fairy
487 Tales and Fantasy at the moment and there's quite an interesting gender
488 dynamics coming on it that.⁶²² Obviously a lot of the fairy tales are about
489 women or girls but is it all about them wanting them to be princesses or being
490 victims of the wolves or. . .? The classic thing that people do feminist
491 reinterpretations of, strong characters. I think that, one of the, where a lot of the,
492 again areas that Sarah thinks very much about gender, is how we deal with
493 things like the dressing up areas. And there was a struggle with Crime and
494 Punishment wasn't there to make the designers not just make all the female
495 nurses and male doctors and male, you know to actually, because we were
496 looking at in terms of dressing-up . . . [redacted]. So I think that with fairy tales

⁶²⁰ 'Crime and Punishment' was the 2016 temporary exhibition at Abbey House Museum.

⁶²¹ Leonora Cohen was a local suffragette and campaigner; Leeds Museums' collections have objects relating to her.

⁶²² 'Fairy Tales and Fantasy' is the 2017 temporary exhibition at Abbey House Museum.

497 again it was trying to make sure that it wasn't all just pink dresses and sort of a
 498 variety of things to dress up in so that's one of the things that we've trying to
 499 sort of, and obviously when we do the women's exhibition we are going to try
 500 and think carefully about ways of sort of actually, yes it's not just, there *will* be
 501 something to do with men in it. One of the things I would definitely like to try to
 502 include is about the idea of what a women's role is or what's typically female
 503 and bring out, for instance we've just acquired a First World War needlepoint
 504 sampler made by a man in the trenches and we've got a similar thing, we've got
 505 some patchwork that I know was made by somebody, a man, in the Second
 506 World War and bring out those and sort of put them and say 'oh actually', you
 507 look initially at a piece of needlepoint and a piece of quilting and think, assume,
 508 absolutely that '*of course* it's made by a woman'. So I think that's some of what
 509 the sorts of things that we'd like to sort of bring in to the exhibition next year is
 510 in sense, everyone should be allowed to do what they like. What [inaudible],
 511 what they enjoy doing, *not* feel constrained by what's their traditional role.

512 LP: Yes. That kind of leads onto one of my other questions which was what
 513 could museums do to represent the history of men and women better. So I
 514 suppose there it's about challenging . . .

515 KR: I think it's sometimes about challenging that sort, we've done that, I mean
 516 one of the nice things we've done before for the exhibition before Crime was
 517 How Do I Look?⁶²³ And that was again, there were lots of interesting captions
 518 about male and female identity, the assumption when we started looking at
 519 doing the exhibition was that it was going to be about hair and makeup and
 520 everything. It's a women's beauty exhibition. And actually, it ended up having a
 521 lot about male grooming anyway because there's an awful lot of paraphernalia
 522 around beards and moustaches and shaving. But we were able to put in things
 523 like, one of the classic things when you look at things like corsets was the fact a
 524 lot of nineteenth century military men are corseted. So I think that sort of nice
 525 thing of bringing in things that surprise you, your assumptions about what's
 526 male and female. There's a big discussion about pink which came out of this
 527 exhibition but also the women's exhibition, you know, do you avoid pink or do
 528 you want to discuss pink? I think we'll probably discuss pink and obviously
 529 when people look this historically it was a male, strong male colour and its now
 530 Barbie-ised and seen to be just you know, so there's a history behind things
 531 that sometimes is interesting to challenge. So I think that is one of the things
 532 that we would quite like to look at and there's, people have brought up also
 533 things about you know, all the discussion about actual gender identity, and
 534 people's actual, what they identify as, trans-gender, things again that we'll
 535 probably that we won't deal with in a complex way but I think that by looking at
 536 ideas of what masculine and feminine. We're going to look at gendered toys as

⁶²³ 'How Do I Look?' was the 2015 temporary exhibition at Abbey House Museum.

537 well and whether they are pushing them one way, being marketed one way or
538 another. Whether as a boy you're allowed to have a doll. Yes, if its action man.

539 LP: Yes, but not if it's Barbie.

540 KR: My sister classically as a child burst into tears one Christmas morning as
541 my dad tried to give her Meccano. She said 'it's a boy's toy'. I think he wanted
542 to share some toys with her. And I don't think where she got that idea that
543 Meccano is a boy's toy. Because we didn't think that Lego was a boy's toy as
544 children.

545 LP: Yes. That's interesting isn't it?

546 KR: But she definitely, aged whatever it was, got very upset. So I think that
547 those are some of the areas that we'll look at. And I think that we definitely want
548 to make sure that it sort of, that we bring the male audience along with us. And
549 across the museum, one of the things that I'd say in our documentation with our
550 registrars, it's a bit of a pain but quite a lot of things will be donated by Mr and
551 Mrs So and So and they decided that they wanted to have a separate
552 constituent record for Mrs, Mr and Mrs, when they have jointly said they both
553 want to be acknowledged rather than a sort of single unit which is basically him
554 with her attached. And I think what's what we are trying to sort of look at, you
555 know, because they are quite a lot of, you know we'll have portraits of
556 somebody's wife but they still the constituent may say that, have *him* as the
557 main sort of reason we've got it, and this is just his wife. We might don't always
558 know what her name is other than that she's Mrs . . .

559 LP: Wife of .

560 KR: Wife of and Mrs So and So and Lady So and So. So yes that's, it's trying to
561 get these sort of stories. As you even just, you known when I collect anything I
562 just try to get the full name and life of somebody associated with the object.
563 Because quite often, you get things frustratingly in the collections that are just
564 from somebody's mother and it just says 'this belonged to my mother'. Who
565 was your mother, you know? What's her name? Because it's probably not what,
566 if the donor is a married women it's possibly not the same of hers. So I just try
567 to make sure that we do sort of name people, occasionally people get upset
568 about that. Somebody said 'Why do you need to know all this stuff' and I was
569 thinking 'Because it sort of puts it into context and it's not that we are trying to
570 sort of delve into your secret family data'. Most people really want to tell you but
571 just occasionally I've had somebody say 'Why do you need to know what their
572 date of birth was? Because I need to know how old is it. Not because I want to,
573 I don't know, spill their family, you know, yes, I think it's personalising things to
574 individual people is a lot of it.

575 LP: My next question was about barriers that hinder the representation of
576 women . . .

577 KR: Well a big thing historically is just their sort of invisibility in the record. And
578 the fact that if you are looking at say the trade directories as your source, it's
579 the householder, so some women are there just because they are by default
580 the householder or the owner of a business but otherwise, you know, there are
581 not what, I mean some things like census records everybody but the other sort
582 of sources that we look at the women might be there but they are not, they are
583 quite difficult to track down. So I think that's quite a lot of it and yes, it's what
584 survives and how much information people thought to record at time. And also
585 what's kept, what's kept and what people thought were important, so there are
586 some things we would love to have now say about working women in the past
587 but that's the stuff that got worn out and thrown away, you know, that's probably
588 why you don't have very many maids' outfits. You know, things, overalls,
589 possibly from you know more recent times, people do sort of treasure and keep
590 that sort of thing but that, it's not that those sort of things didn't exist, it's their
591 survival and what you've got in the say costume collection is generally the high
592 end or the sort of treasured family, you know, you'll have the wedding dresses,
593 the christening gowns, the little boots from the child and their best dresses. But
594 far less about the things you might be more interested in.

595 LP: Yes, the ordinary day dresses . . .

596 KR: Or what you know if they did work what they wore for work. So, address
597 that more contemporary really. But it's I think it's as much about the dynamics
598 of what people have collected and what we get in museums is what people
599 themselves, their families, have preserved. In less, you get sort of, the more
600 chance survivals of you know something that was sort of discovered by
601 accident or preserved sort of accidentally. Or preserved, you know the whole
602 thing of things like, you know, poor's peoples costume is that a lot of may now
603 be based on what got walled up in buildings and hidden clothes and that sort of
604 thing. It's a sort of whole thing that gets preserved in a way that normally
605 wouldn't. Because it ends up in the rag trade, you know. It's as much. . . So
606 yes, as I say, that's the biggest area that, the two areas that have been
607 frustrating, in a way start looking for people because it's always more difficult to
608 follow women's ancestry just because of things like name changes and things,
609 than it is where when names stay the same down the male line. It's not that it's
610 not there, it's just harder to find.

611 LP: Yes. What could museums do to kind of remedy this? Is there anything they
612 could actively do to kind of correct it?

613 KR: Well I think, some of it is actually having a chance to sort of do research on
614 your collections. And I, I'd say I've exploited Leeds Trinity University students

615 for this for years. It's actually sending those people off to go and do that
616 ferreting as its time constraining. You know, most curatorial professionals
617 haven't got time for research, so it's not that the information isn't *there* but it
618 needs looking for. So some of it is making use of volunteers. The web is
619 fantastic because an awful lot of people have done that also increasingly, you
620 can find things that people *have* researched online, and make those
621 connections. So yes definitely, improving, you know, trying to get, gather
622 together the information about the people associated with objects will get you
623 more women's stories. Obviously, in terms of contemporary collecting projects,
624 you're starting with what's around now so that's sort of easier. And that's
625 obviously an area in which we can, and through something like an exhibition
626 we're doing we're hoping that some of these things will come out of the wood-
627 work and it generally does. You put your exhibition up and all of your best
628 exhibits start appearing half way through the year. So, definitely, just in terms of
629 what we went through at the last collections development meeting on
630 Wednesday, and compared with again going back through sort of what was
631 collected in the past and you think 'Why didn't they question, why didn't they
632 ask, note down all the background'. Because lot of things would have had a
633 story and they've not really noted it down. People have kept it for a reason. Like
634 I said, the real frustrating thing is writing down things like, you know, 'it was my
635 grandmother's' but who was she? Where did she live? What she did? We are
636 trying to get as much of that now, and often our criteria for collecting something
637 is that there's a story around it so quite a lot of the recent things that we've
638 collected, that have been offered, we've been offered some little children's
639 boots from a family and they've now got some information about their
640 grandmother was born in 1906 and worked a tailoress and married, you know,
641 we've got her story. Although the boots are actually older than that and
642 similarly, it's quite interesting as there is number of things that we would
643 normally say that we wouldn't collect yet another christening gown, yet another
644 wedding dress but we've collected a wedding dress because it's got the name
645 of Madame Ernest who was a Leeds dressmaker, that we've got another
646 examples of so this is as much about the maker of the dress so we've collected
647 that one. And thinking about it, that's something, you know, we wouldn't put in a
648 wedding dress because we are not dealing with marriage as a subject in here,
649 but we could potentially decide that we wanted to put the wedding dress if we
650 wanted to represent women as makers, as a dress-maker, a named dress-
651 maker. We probably won't but I think a lot of it is around making sure that
652 you've got the stories with objects. And then these sort of not necessarily
653 pioneering women's stories but sort of everyday women's stories will come
654 through.

655 LP: Umm. And then my final question is, I'm really interested in whether visitors
656 come with a certain image about the Victorian past . . .

657 KR: I'm sure they do. It's usually wrong.

658 LP: Yes. And I suppose, is it a museum's place to kind of give them what they
659 want, give them their image of the Victorian past or is it the museum's place to
660 kind of challenge it?

661 KR: I think, I mean, in terms of the Street, one of the things we did try to do, as I
662 said, was fix it as a slightly more precise, we're not very precise and we fudge it
663 quite a lot, point in time so we're late Victorian. One of the biggest things was
664 people's perceptions of Victorians is that she lived for an awfully long time and,
665 as people noted in 1901 when they looked over her reign, a huge amount of
666 change happened in that period so, and I've noted that people's idea of what a
667 Victorian is sometimes is Georgian, sometimes is Edwardian anyway, in terms
668 of their sort of, their whole slightly hazy chronology based on what they think.
669 So, that's, you know, everyone in stage coaches, boating on the river with
670 Boaters, those are both outside the period we're looking at. I certainly like
671 pulling out the fact that sort of people, I started my career in the 90s when there
672 was a lot of arguments about what Victorian values were. And pointing out that
673 there were some very sort of enlightened Victorian out there, they all weren't
674 just, you know, I think for me it's getting the idea that it was a period of debate
675 and change, and that's one of the reasons why I'd like to go back into that
676 period but we are not starting in 1918, the women's thing is, a lot of the issues
677 that are live then were live now. And people were having these debates and
678 they were people violently arguing about what a women's place was, it wasn't
679 an assumption that it was, not everyone felt it should be in the home, not all
680 Victorian children were seen and not heard. An awful lot of what you can
681 sometimes base your ideas of the Victorians about what they wrote they
682 wanted to be so lots of extracts about what the ideal person should be, but
683 actually you're only writing that because people aren't like that.

684 LP: Yes. It's wishful thinking.

685 KR: It's wishful thinking. So the idea that the streets were safe and everything,
686 clearly it wasn't. Not everyone, you know, temperance is there as an issue
687 because lots of people were drunk so, and there are etiquette books because
688 actually most people need to be told how to behave, rather than that they did
689 that because they were Victorians. So I think those are some of the sort of
690 assumptions. And certainly bringing out the fact that women did do more,
691 particularly individual women did interesting things that you didn't expect. One
692 of the mini projects I did, just as a result of looking at our music collection, was
693 to look at all of the sort of, try to research all the women composers because
694 that's a classic thing that people say 'women didn't write anything, or they only
695 started writing music in the 20th century or. . .', and half, no, probably about a
696 third of what you had a piano [inaudible] was written by women. They were not
697 famous people but they churned out lots of stuff that people bought and played

698 in their parlours. So that's one of the sort of areas you know you can help
699 challenge that.

700 LP: Yes, that's interesting.

701 KR: They may not be on the list of the best of whatever. It's interesting in
702 literature, probably a lot of the Victorian writers' people think 'ah, women'. But
703 there's probably the only area in which that's the case. And as I said, there's an
704 assumption that with things you know women couldn't even sort of somehow
705 managed to sort of compose music but they clearly did. I think there were a lot
706 more women artists out there, again they're not, they're not big names but if
707 you look at the actual analysis of even people getting exhibited and things, they
708 were more women, there were quite a lot of women artists acquired by the art
709 gallery in the 1880s. But then dismissed later as being sort of a bit sub-standard
710 but then that's part of the reassessment of [inaudible] they're interesting
711 [inaudible] and they could been famous at the time and then forgotten.

712 LP: Yes. Yes. Do you think there needs to be almost an institutional shift then of
713 what museums thinks are worth exhibiting?

714 KR: I think that's one of the things that's happening and I think there's probably
715 more ideas about sort of, ideas of what might be interesting to people and not
716 just necessarily having a sort out, I think it's also working across sort of from
717 different disciplines, you know if you come from a very sort of a traditional fine
718 art thing you have a very strong opinion about what you think is good or bad art.
719 I think that sometimes looking out it a bit different, from more historical or
720 different, coming from different directions can mean you reassess it, not
721 necessarily just as you whether or not you value it as, is it a really good artist or
722 not, and who decides that anyway?

723 LP: Yes. That's really interesting. I think that's everything question wise that I . .
724 .

725 KR: Thank you for challenging us . . .

726 LP: No . . .

727 KR: . . . and you have just pointed out that we are probably about to, could be
728 about to eliminate the only woman business name we've got with the shop. And
729 we'll be very, very careful after what you and ----- have both said about the way
730 that we refer to individuals in our text⁶²⁴ . . . [redacted] . . .

⁶²⁴ Another researcher, whose name has been redacted, had interviewed Kitty the previous day about the upcoming women's history exhibition. Kirsty had mentioned to Kitty the habit of referring to women as Mrs and by their first name in museum text. Before the interview, Kitty and I discussed the textual and linguistic representation of women in museum interpretation.

Appendix 2

Edited Transcription of Interview with James Etherington (Ripon Museum Trust)

Interview conducted on 16 October 2017 at the Workhouse Museum (Ripon)

Interviewer: Lauren Padgett (LP), PhD student at Leeds Trinity University.

Interviewee: James Etherington (JE), Director of Ripon Museums Trust.

This is an edited transcription so feedback sounds and words have been edited out and the audio has been translated into sentences and paragraphs which are coherent, readable and intelligible.

- 1 LP: There we go. So you are happy to be named and not anonymous or
- 2 anything like that?
- 3 JE: Yes. No. No.
- 4 LP: That's fine.
- 5 JE: I won't say anything I won't stand up for.
- 6 LP: How long have you worked for, for Ripon Museums Trust?
- 7 JE: Just over two years now.
- 8 LP: It's gone through quite a development during that short two years as well by
- 9 the looks of it.
- 10 JE: It has indeed. It's gone, it's a lot different to the place I started and it's going
- 11 to be a lot more different over the next couple of years as things develop. I've
- 12 had a lot of projects, a lot of money and we've obviously got the new site, the
- 13 new building, and our National Portfolio Organisation status starting on the first
- 14 of April.

15 LP: Congratulations.

16 JE: So we'll be funded by the Arts Council for the first time, which is really
17 exciting.

18 LP: Very good. Yes.

19 JE: A lot of work, but really exciting.

20 LP: So your job as Director, what does that entail on a day to day basis?

21 JE: Basically it's looking after everything that goes on, ensuring that
22 everything's happening as it should, handling strategic elements, making sure
23 that we've got a plan and are moving it the right direction, monitoring the
24 organisation and dealing with finances, fundraising, that kind of thing.

25 LP: Ok. So how would you describe the three museum sites at Ripon?

26 JE: Well the three sites are in historic buildings, all listed in one sense or
27 another, I think they are all grade II. They are all museums of the themes
28 attached to those buildings so the workhouse deals with poverty and social care
29 to a certain extent, the courthouse deals with court, crime, punishment,
30 criminality and the prison and police deals with imprisonment and punishment
31 in that way but also policing. To a certain extent, they are the museum of the
32 building but also of the thing that happened in the building and of the people
33 involved with that and that's something that we're moving a lot more towards
34 over the next few years is to focus more on the individuals who were there, the
35 people who were involved rather than just the generalities of courts and cases
36 as it were.

37 LP: Umm. So I was talking to Martin about some of the curatorial issues that
38 have come about with him doing the new block and he said one of the things
39 was a lack of material culture in the collections with it being predominantly a
40 policing collection and due to the fact that there are not many objects that have
41 survived from workhouses..

42 JE: Yes.

43 LP: So kind of just a general question about are there any issues when it comes
44 to representing people, particularly Victorian women, because Martin was
45 explaining about the lack of material culture might affect that later down the line.

46 JE: Yes. That is our number one issue is that the workhouse especially,
47 although to be fair all three sites, you're not proud of being here, in fact it was
48 deliberately designed, the system was deliberately designed, for people to
49 ashamed to be associated with it so it's not the kind of place you would keep a
50 memento from in the way that a lot of other employment places or other
51 museums have people, you know, people saved things from there as they'd
52 enjoyed working there or it was a memento of their life, whereas here it's the
53 opposite. And another problem is that the money was designed, because it was
54 funded by the Poor Law rates, which was essentially the first national tax I
55 suppose. The money had to go as far as possible so you used things until they
56 wore out, you repaired than as often as you could and once the couldn't be

57 repaired anymore they were thrown away or destroyed so there is very limited
58 amount. I mean, we've been in touch with Gressenhall Museum in Norfolk and
59 they have got a bigger selection but maybe a couple of hundred maximum of
60 items. Whereas some industrial museums or other museums based out of, you
61 know, places of work or places of employment, they can count on thousands of
62 items. That is the biggest problem.

63 The other problem is the records. We don't have our own records. The majority
64 of them are at the North Yorkshire County Records Office. Ripon has the most
65 complete set out of the North Yorkshire ones there and certainly the biggest
66 set, but that's by no means everything. There is a set, and also the fact is that
67 records are separated so anything written from here to the Poor Law office in
68 London is stored at the National Archives in Kew. Anything that was wrote back
69 should be in the North Yorkshire Records Office if it was saved but then storage
70 was an issue so every few years a clerk would have discarded things, old
71 items, that were no longer relevant. So that's another issue is drawing things
72 out. Our research team are doing a wonderful job starting to put individualities
73 to the generalities so starting to draw out names and stories as illustrative
74 things, so our current exhibition *Urchins, Sprogs and Guttersnipes* has a lot
75 more named people, it tells you what happened to them and illustrates what it
76 is. So there's a lot more work to do, a lot more stuff out there I think that can
77 illustrate that and a lot more depth we can go into the records. It's just difficult
78 not having access to them on daily basis and yes, getting down to London and
79 accessing the stuff there isn't easy as well. I think that the key issue is the fact
80 that we don't have anything that we would want to tell the stories and to draw
81 from. Yes.

82 LP: Do you think there's a particular issue about telling the stories of Victorian
83 women whether the themes, for example the theme of policing, whether that's
84 quite restricting in the fact that women didn't play a part in policing until quite
85 later on?

86 JE: Yes. I would say to a certain extent, we do, what we have managed to pull
87 out has been fairly equal in terms of representation so the stories we are putting
88 out, it's not, certainly for the workhouse, it's not all men and it's not all women.
89 We've got a good mix of individual names people with their kind of stories so
90 from this side, from the workhouse side of things it's slightly easier. It is more
91 noticeable certainly in the courthouse and police museum because you can
92 actually trace the first female police officer, the first female judge, the first
93 female magistrate. And they are, because there is the kind of the thing we're
94 looking at the 20s, 30s, 40s when a lot of these things are happening so the
95 Victorian period, there's not. In terms of prisoners, we do have abit of stuff, we
96 are starting to pull out a little bit of stuff about female prisoners but there were
97 no female prison wardens. So you're getting as much of the story as was there.
98 But obviously it's difficult to fully represent the female experience because, to a
99 certain extent, it was very limited in the period. But I think what we are pulling
100 out as we've dug into it, what we're pulling out that we've got the same amount
101 of information on men and women but obviously that's a limited area to pull
102 from.

103 LP: When I came to do research, was it two years ago?, and I was in the
104 Courthouse Museum, I think one of your volunteers was just putting up a panel
105 about women and law and I thought that was quite interesting because in a way
106 it kind of explained the absence of women in there by demonstrating that this is
107 a 19th century courthouse but women didn't actually feature in it, well other
108 than from being a prisoner, until the 20th century.

109 JE: Yes. That's something, we haven't got that panel up at the moment but we
110 are restoring it for next season because I think is important to tell that story and
111 certainly now as we are now Arts Council funded, diversity and representing
112 diversity is, it's not that we've not wanted to do it, but it's now a requirement of
113 our funding that we look at doing that so it's something that we need to explore
114 and expand more, not just for women but for all sort of forms of diversity.

115 LP: Is that going to be part of the curatorial decisions when it comes to future
116 exhibitions and revamping displays?

117 JE: Yes.

118 LP: Diversity's going to be quite a part of that?

119 JE: Yes. It's following the Art Council's creative case for diversity which is not
120 the easiest thing to explain but in its generality its avoiding tokenism by just
121 doing an exhibition on women you could say but focussing on trying to include
122 elements of diversity across everything you do. So that will be a case in all
123 curatorial decisions in the future is both ensuring we're representing the widest
124 possible diversity that we have available, you know and if you haven't got the
125 history you can't pull it out of thin air. But making sure where we have it, we are
126 representing it and where we are representing that we do it from multiple
127 perspective. So if we are doing a thing about disability in the workhouse, which
128 is something that we have, we know we are lacking at the moment, because a
129 lot of people here were here because they couldn't work, not necessarily
130 because there weren't jobs but because they physically or mentally couldn't
131 work, we don't tell that story very well at the moment. We've really only got one
132 panel it so, but doing that, not just us telling that story but bringing in people
133 with disability to help curate that, to help explore that issue and ensure that it's
134 done both sensitively but also authoritatively and that's the same that we'll do
135 across all of our curatorial, where we want to tell a story, we need to involve the
136 people who contemporarily have that perspective to ensure not we're not, what
137 we have suffered from in the past and I think it's a case for a lot of museums is
138 that single voice narrative, you know the people that are doing it tend to be
139 museum professionals and there is nothing wrong with that, they are not doing
140 anything that isn't fact-driven but it's that lack of perspective. It's you know your
141 white middle class, generally male, although the sector is tipping a lot more into
142 female at the moment, but that white middle class perspective that maybe
143 ignores or doesn't see some of the nuances that might have been better with a
144 multiple voice perspective so that's what we'll be doing. Everything we do
145 should be collaborative in some form in the future and as I say it's a
146 requirement of our funding from the Arts Council that we do it but it's not
147 something that we're against doing, it's not something that the Arts Council

148 force upon us. It's something that we've wanted to do for a while but it's always
149 easier to do when you have a bit of cash there.

150 LP: Yes. So this is like a natural progression now towards that. That sounds
151 really good. Can you share any kind of details about developments if they are
152 kind of available for the public to find out about?

153 JE: Not at the moment. Not because it's restricted, it's because we're going to
154 be led by our partners and by our collaborators so a lot of it will be open to
155 what people's enthusiasm and passions and interests are. Which is a bit of a
156 terrifying thing to say, that you don't know what you're going to do as people
157 expect that, certainly of me as the Director, people expect you to know what
158 your organisation is going to do. But this approach is better in that it again it
159 moves us away from that single voice. If we say 'this is the order we're going to
160 tackle things' then it's us telling people what they want to hear. Whereas if it's
161 we're going to work with these partners and see what their enthusiasm and
162 their interests are and then work together so that both of our interests are met
163 then it'll be a stronger piece of work. We do know that we'll be focussing early
164 on the Prison and Police Museum especially. The displays are over 13 years
165 old since their last revamp in 2004. So they do need doing and what we have
166 identified across all three sites is a lack of coherent narrative from the visitors'
167 perspective. So as you come in, certainly at the Prison and Police Museum
168 probably most noticeably but here at the workhouse, especially as we're
169 changing the site and with the new building, what's the story, what's the thread
170 you're following around. Is the story presented in a logical narrative way?
171 Certainly here, at the moment, at our existing site you go from talking about
172 tramps to talking about inmates to talking about tramps. It kind of dots around
173 and it repeats itself and in one room you might have women and children and
174 food and work. And in other room you might spend the whole room just talking
175 about work so the weighting and things are not right. And it's grown up naturally
176 and to a certain extent you work with the space you've got, you work with the
177 information you've got but as we've moved on we can step back and spend a
178 bit of time and say 'what is the story we want to be telling in collaboration with
179 people?' and then revamp it to do that and some of the Arts Council will help
180 pay for that work over the next four years, there's money each year to set aside
181 to do some new panels, to do some new design work, to put new information in
182 to reorder what we are telling people.

183 LP: That sounds good. So one of my questions was any refurbishment plans
184 but you've touched upon that.

185 JE: Yes. I mean the key thing is obviously we purchased virtually the entire
186 workhouse site. The only building I would say it is in reasonable condition is the
187 museum that we had originally. The new block, the main block, is usable but
188 not in a great condition and certainly it needs a new roof and the rest of the site
189 needs significant work so over the next four years we will be raising up to four
190 million pounds to refurbish the site. The other museums need a revamp on their
191 displays but that's more of a, I was going to say cosmetic, it's not quite cosmetic,
192 but it's more of a kind of light touch approach so neither of them will have
193 massive works done to them.

194 LP: Sounds good. I'll try not to repeat things we've already covered. So kind of
195 more generally from your experience of working in museums, do you think that
196 representations of women have changed over the years or is there anything
197 you've kind of identified about how museums approach women's stories and
198 women's history?

199 JE: I think from my experience it is generally becoming this issue of diversity
200 and representing not just the traditional male dominated narrative is becoming
201 much more important and much more regular and I think we went through this
202 period as a sector of tokenism where you did an example on women and it was
203 a temporary exhibition and that ticked your box or mentality perhaps it ticked
204 that box, 'Oh yes, we are doing, we are being diverse, we're talking about
205 women'. And I think that's something that has moved on now, certainly with the
206 Arts Council's Creative Case is very important factor for the future, is that
207 understanding that actually doing an exhibition about women or disability or
208 ethnic diversity is a good thing in its own right but actually reflecting those
209 stories throughout is better, a better thing. It will take decades more for that to
210 become fully done throughout the sector just because of the kind of
211 refurbishment times and money really, money is very tight in the sector so
212 replacing an entire display to make it more diverse is a challenge so you have
213 to wait until budgets allow but I think it is certainly when I started it was moving
214 more in that direction, as I say, it was still that kind of doing something by doing
215 something temporary approach but now it's moving much more towards we're
216 doing something and we'll reflect everything within that and I think that's the
217 same with women. It is, there are still a lot of, as I said, this tokenistic thing
218 which is unfair, it's not deliberately tokenistic, but there are still a lot of,
219 especially in the art world, a lot of female only artist shows and galleries and
220 things like that for contemporary work and things. But I think overall the move is
221 on to highlight key people for change, key people and people who aren't your
222 stereotypical white male and I think that's definitely reflected in Victorian
223 museums I've seen. Their focus is much more on women, I think the Castle
224 Museum in York has started focussing I think on Elizabeth Fry, the chocolate
225 maker alongside Terry and Rowntree, more traditionally that's the two
226 chocolate makers you'll talk about she had an equally important role and they
227 have started to pick that thing out a lot more and make it a lot part of the
228 ongoing discussion.

229 LP: Yes. Now you've mentioned it, I did spot that when I went to the Castle
230 Museum.

231 JE: Yes.

232 LP: Yes. I was speaking to Kitty Ross at Leeds Museums and she's very much
233 of the same opinion as you about having these women's stories embedded in
234 everything. She was talking about it from a research point of view, you know,
235 from people offering objects to the museum and kind of getting these stories,
236 capturing them there and then, and at least then you've got that information,
237 even if it's just on the museum record that can become embedded in displays
238 and exhibitions and things.

239 JE: We're moving in the same direction as well. We've had a project funded
240 through the Esme Fairbairn Museum Association Collections Fund to improve
241 our back office side of the collections but also to train our volunteers in oral
242 histories and to look at adding contemporary thought and contemporary
243 information and contemporary collecting into the collections so that we can
244 have, you know, sound clips of people saying 'Oh yes, I remember this' and
245 looking to diversify the knowledge about individual objects which will hopefully
246 led through into a more diverse discussion about it.

247 LP: I think we've probably mentioned this is a way, any barriers that hinder the
248 representations of Victorian women or women more generally?

249 JE: We've talked about the lack of information. We've talked about the lack of,
250 in some respects, you can only work with the history you've got. Everyone
251 would love to have a connection to Emily Pankhurst, someone like that, some
252 who you can hang your hat and talk about but not everyone has that history and
253 you dig and dig and dig and hopefully you've find something, and as I say we've
254 found a lot of information, but we've not yet found anyone who flips the kind of
255 received wisdom of its head and say Oh well this was only a male-dominated
256 profession and unfortunately that's what we are discovering and its difficult as
257 you want to give equal time and equal importance to everything and we do as
258 far as you can but unless you have that history to work with and we've very
259 driven because we're site-focused, I mean we do cover a wide area, we do try
260 to cover North Yorkshire more generally, but our key focus is the sites we've
261 based on and research hasn't thrown up anything yet as that's a shame in
262 some way, as I say you want to dig out that person who flips everything on their
263 head and changed received wisdom, but at the moment we haven't and maybe
264 that's down to Ripon. I think those are the key barriers really. And money is
265 always a difficult thing, as I say, we have done a lot of work for this *Urchins,*
266 *Sprogs and Guttersnipes* exhibition and it has, we've developed a lot people-led
267 stories which we are trying to move towards but at the moment, the money isn't
268 there to put that into our permanent displays and there will be over time. The
269 Arts Council money will help with that but that's it, temporary exhibitions cost a
270 couple of thousands, updating a whole permanent display can cost tens of
271 thousands and we just don't have the money to do that kind of thing so that's
272 the other barrier, you know, I don't think any other museum will tell you that you
273 have enough money to do anything they want to do. There's certainly no, I think
274 there's no conscious mental barrier, that's not to say that there isn't a
275 subconscious or mental barrier to doing this kind of thing, because I think, like I
276 say, the one voice approach automatically includes some conscious bias and
277 it's something I'm very conscious of it that you work from what you know, you
278 work from your experience and you tend, you can have empathy but unless you
279 have lived through it or have the perspective, you can't fully represent it. So
280 there's no conscious bias against doing it, it's just whether we are doing enough
281 to get past the subconscious bias, that you try everything to put that in place but
282 again you work with the people you've got and the team you've got and whether
283 we've got the right mix of people, there's no a lot you can do about that,
284 especially when you are heavily volunteer-led like we are, you can't just go out
285 and drum up the people that you want necessarily.

286 LP: I suppose in a way when you've got volunteers during research, their own
287 interests and passions kind of seep into that and might influence the research
288 that happens.

289 JE: Yes and I mean it's an ongoing problem, it's a human problem, there is
290 nothing you can do about the way humans are wired but it is, we are led by
291 what our volunteers do, we don't have the money to for a professional
292 researcher and we also lack a local university which is a hindrance for us as an
293 organisation. A lot of museums are heavily dependent on researchers and the
294 closer in proximity you are to a university, the easier it is to access it, obviously
295 you've come up today which is great, but we maybe get 2 or 3 students a year,
296 whereas other museums I've worked in university towns, you would expect to
297 have, I mean I worked for Oxford University museums and, you know, they had
298 a whole department dedicated to you accessing the collections for research for
299 Oxford university students and you know, obviously that's an individual case
300 because it's a university museum but that does distract or make it a little difficult
301 to access research that isn't volunteer-led. As I say, they do a wonderful job,
302 they are very conscious and very conscientious but as I say they can, you're
303 driven by people's enthusiasms not necessarily by, you know, I can't see 'I want
304 this research done for this exhibition' because that's not the way it works. They
305 say 'here's the research you've done' and we build the exhibitions around what
306 we know rather than what we might want to know. You can ask and sometimes
307 they can find stuff and sometimes they can't.

308 LP: Yes. I liked in the new block the kind of snippets of individual stories, so
309 there's the woman who hung herself on the stairwell and the woman who, did
310 she turn up drunk and got taken upstairs and you can see these individual
311 stories coming out. Is that something that's going to be kind of led into the main
312 museum in here a bit more.

313 JE: Yes. It's the approach we want to develop across the Trust because I think
314 people identify with people, people connect to people, so you can tell a story, I
315 mean it's what Stalin said 'one death is a tragedy, one million deaths is a
316 statistic'. A story about how vagrants were given poor food, you go 'Oh that's
317 terrible', a story about an individual who maybe died because of a lack of it or
318 suffered some way because of lack of food becomes an immensely more
319 empathetic, people can see themselves in it, they can see the suffering that
320 perhaps, and the joy as well on the flip side, when there are good things to talk
321 about you can see that more as well. I think we tend to focus more on the
322 negative and empathy for the suffering and obviously given our themes, there
323 tends to be a lot more suffering than joy, but there are good sides to things. So
324 that's something, and again, it's lack of money. We'd have done it already if we
325 had more money to just update our galleries whenever something new came in.
326 For example, we've got a lot more stuff about Thomas Sweeting, the very first
327 Constable and he was a wonderful character, had all sorts of adventures and
328 we will be updating the gallery about him but we've had stuff for a year or two
329 years that we really should be talking about but we haven't had the money to
330 put the gallery in yet but that will go in soon. Yes. This people-led focus using
331 individuals to illustrate the broader theme, that's where we are definitely driving
332 towards over the next four years.

333 LP: Very good. And I spotted on the website that you've got a partnership with
334 the Police Museum in Bradford.

335 JE: Yes.

336 LP: Is this part of the ACE funding?

337 JE: No this is part of the Esmee Fairbairn funding. Because we both are police
338 museums, or we both have a police museum, we are arguably the biggest
339 police collections between us in Yorkshire and we felt that there was a lot of
340 stuff we could do together. We have a lot of items from Bradford from when the
341 old police museum there closed down and we both represent different
342 communities. Obviously Bradford focusing on Bradford so that's a very
343 ethnically diverse community. We focus on Yorkshire and focus more perhaps
344 on the rural community so we have a lot to complement each other. So we
345 share the curator through the project, a joint project, with the same outcome of
346 expanding the knowledge we have of our collection including contemporary
347 stuff in our displays and generally enhancing the stories we're telling by
348 involving the audiences we want to be attracting.

349 LP: Very good. So it sounds to me like if I were to visit again in four years, it'll
350 all be completely different.

351 JE: Yes. I think, hopefully not completely, we don't want to chuck the baby out
352 with the bathwater. Certainly the buildings themselves will still be the key focus
353 but hopefully the impression you get, the feeling you get, will be different. What
354 we are trying to do is provoke you into thinking more and asking more
355 questions of yourself as well as things so we're moving, we're changing our
356 strategy possibly next year. We're developing it at the moment but we've just
357 put the development on hold because we've had quite a lot of other stuff going
358 on with this money going in but the idea of our strategy is instead of focussing
359 externally on outcomes, we'll focus on impacts. So what impact we're having on
360 our community, our volunteers, our visitors, on the community of knowledge I
361 suppose that we generate. One of the impacts we're looking at is asking the
362 questions, so one of the questions we ask is 'was the workhouse a good or a
363 bad thing?' or 'do you think workhouses were a good or bad thing?'. Getting
364 people to think really more along those lines, not necessarily to come to an
365 answer, but we get a very even split of people saying 'how terrible', well it's not
366 even but we get a lot of people saying how terrible it was but we also get
367 comments from people saying 'oh, we should bring them back'. And we want to
368 be abit more engaged with that debate about , we want everyone to go away
369 having thought about it in a bit more depth rather than, either than just saying
370 'wasn't it an awful thing?' or 'Oh, scroungers, scrounger benefit people, they
371 should just bring the workhouses back', so ask that question and challenge that
372 kind of view because I think some people might come in with that kind of
373 viewpoint and, you know, maybe they'll leave with it but also maybe they'll just
374 have a think about it a little bit and maybe they will come to the same decision
375 but that's the kind of thing we want to ask. We want you to ask more questions
376 of yourself and of the history I suppose and hopefully we'll answer and maybe
377 some haven't been answered or can't be answered. Maybe that will spark
378 people into maybe thinking outside of the experience and that's a big aim and a

379 big ask but it's something we'd like to achieve. If every visitor went home having
380 learnt a new fact and also having thought a bit about something, then we'll be
381 satisfied.

382 LP: That sounds good. We found it quite useful at The Peace Museum when
383 we talk about historic immigration for example connecting it to what's
384 happening today. And having those conversations, people tend to connect with
385 it more when it's something they have seen for themselves or witnessed for
386 themselves.

387 JE: And it's in our mission to have an impact on contemporary life but we
388 haven't done it yet. Perhaps it's a lack of skill, certainly a lack of resource to
389 explore it, but also a lack of confidence to get involved as you can find yourself
390 very easier getting into that area of being preachy or being crusading, and for
391 me museums are a space, a safe space, for people to think, not necessarily to
392 be told. You deliver facts, and you can deliver facts in as many ways as you
393 can but you should never, for me a museum should never tell you what to think,
394 museums should ask you questions and give you the space and you know the
395 best museums will facilitate discussion with others, not necessarily just the
396 group you came in with, maybe it'll ask questions, encourage people to engage
397 with one another, either digitally or on-site or away from site about that kind of
398 thing. The best museums will encourage you to think and ask questions but will
399 not tell you what the answer is, only the facts involved, and let you, or the facts
400 as we told them at the moment, as you know, history is very fluid I suppose,
401 very flexible, you know new things are being discovered every day and new
402 interpretations or based on the culture they come from I think.

403 LP: That's very interesting. Yes. I'm just trying to think of projects and themes
404 and stuff that people might connect to. Sounds good.

405 JE: I mean we did look at next year, last year we put together an exhibition plan
406 for the first time. We'll never really had a plan, we just moved from one
407 exhibition to the next. Next year was going to be the year of women to tie in
408 with suffrage but the conclusion we came to is, at the moment, we don't have
409 enough knowledge, enough stuff coming out to justify doing a full exhibition
410 across all three sites focussing on women because we don't have enough to
411 say about it. And that's difficult to hear because actually you want to think about
412 it and we took the decision to change what we were doing partly due
413 circumstances because we have the new site and things, what we can display
414 and can talk about has changed, you know, we've got different spaces and from
415 a marketing perspective we've got to focus on our key assets for next year
416 which is this new building and what's changing and encouraging people to
417 come and you can't divorce finances from history unfortunately, as much as
418 you'd like to, especially in a small organisation like ours we can't, you have to
419 have one eye on what's going to attract people in and that doesn't lead what we
420 do as a curatorial thing but it leads how we present it and what we can afford to
421 do at one time I suppose. So yes, we've had to abandon that plan which is a
422 shame because as I say we do have stuff to tell but we just don't have the
423 research to back it, we don't have enough additional stuff to put in so what
424 we've said we'll do is make women perhaps our priority for inclusion in the
425 regular displays to review what we've got rather than try to do a separate

426 temporary exhibition that obviously fits which the approach that we are trying to
427 take anyway, but it's a shame that we haven't.

428 LP: Yes. I suppose you could have a cell at the Prison Museum which tells the
429 suffragette experience in prison but if there were no suffragettes imprisoned
430 there then it loses its relevance and it's a step away from you getting these
431 individual stories and going back to it being more broad and generalised.

432 JE: Yes. It goes back to the generic rather than the specific. And again, that
433 raising questions that there must have been suffragettes in North Yorkshire but
434 to what extent do we interpret North Yorkshire within our displays? Do we stick?
435 We've a bit torn, a live debate within the Trust is, where does our responsibility
436 end, where does our ambition end? Do we call our collections, because we
437 have branded ourselves 'The Yorkshire Law and Order Museums' in the past,
438 which by the very name would suggest that we would take anything from
439 Yorkshire but then our displays are very focussed on our buildings and I think
440 it's right that those buildings, because those buildings are themselves a key
441 item in the collections. So yes, it becomes, and I think again it comes down to
442 what your volunteers are interested in so at the moment our research
443 volunteers are very interested in Ripon and the surrounds and the buildings so
444 we wouldn't have that specific information about, you know, people in York or
445 somewhere like that which arguably could be something we could talk about
446 and could give specific examples from York but at the moment we've decided
447 not to progress that but perhaps in the future as we widen our reach, we'll be
448 able to widen our talk, what we talk about.

449 LP: Yes. I don't think I have any more specific questions unless you have
450 anything else you'd like to add or explain.

451 JE: No. That's everything. Yes. As I say we are very keen to ensure that our
452 displays are fully representative, it's just getting over those hurdles to make
453 sure they are.

454 LP: Yes. It sounds like a step in the right direction to doing that and it seems to
455 be the kind of passion within the organisation to do that which is probably the
456 first hurdle isn't it?

457 JE: Yes. You can, the old one, you can take a horse to water but can't force
458 them to drink. If there's no passion to do something, you can force it through
459 but it's never going to be as good as something that's a passion project for
460 someone or some people and I think we can that enthusiasm within the
461 organisation to do it, it's just making sure that we get there.

462 LP: Other than the changes that have happened at this site, has there any
463 recent change-arounds at the Prison Museum or Courthouse one?

464 JE: No. The only change is the temporary exhibition, *Urchins, Sprogs and*
465 *Guttersnipes*. I don't know when you visited last. It probably wasn't our
466 exhibition about the 200th anniversary . . .

467 LP: I think it was.

468 JE: Ah, so yes, we have an annual programme, so we had that exhibition and
469 then we've got this one this year and we've still in decisions about what going to
470 be in for next year so there's not been any changes to any of the other
471 galleries.

472 LP: That's fine. So that's it really. So thank you very much for your time. It's
473 been really interesting to get that insight over what's happening and the future
474 of it. So that's been really useful. Thank you.

Appendix 3

Edited Transcription of Interview with Martin Wills (Ripon Museum Trust)

Interview conducted on 9 October 2017 at the Workhouse Museum (Ripon)

Interviewer: Lauren Padgett (LP), PhD student at Leeds Trinity University.

Interviewee: Martin Wills (MW), Ripon Museums Trust.

This is an edited transcription so feedback sounds and words have been edited out and the audio has been translated into sentences and paragraphs which are coherent, readable and intelligible.

As opposed to a sit down interview, Martin gave Lauren a tour of the new block at the Workhouse Museum and during the tour they discussed the new block development in relation to its representations of Victorian women and curatorial decisions. Certain parts of the tour audio has been redacted as Martin broke off to speak to visitors, volunteers and staff. There were also other conversations between Martin and Lauren which were not related to the research project and therefore this has also been redacted - this is indicated in the transcription.

- 1 [Redacted]
- 2 MW: [inaudible] Ok. I'll start outside if that's Ok.
- 3 LP: OK, yes, that's fine.
- 4 MW: . [inaudible]. . . There's not too much we've done in terms of the
- 5 interpretation of women in here but I'll explain as we go round really why but . . .
- 6 LP: Yeah. That would be great.
- 7 MW: . . . if you're interested in the context of the building and what we've done I
- 8 can explain that for you.
- 9 LP: Absolutely.
- 10 [redacted]
- 11 MW: So this is main block. So we got the building at the start of the year so it
- 12 was a Victorian workhouse from 1854 to around 1948. Then it changed to kind
- 13 of care home. So those who were left behind who couldn't work. . . [reacted] . . .
- 14 so it was kind of like a care house for those who couldn't move on after the
- 15 workhouse system stopped until about 1976 and then it changed to the hands
- 16 of North Yorkshire County Council where it's essentially Council offices keeping
- 17 within their kind of social care remit for like mental health and later some of the
- 18 offices became Citizens Advice Bureau but all within that social care kind of
- 19 umbrella broadly speaking. Then it was, came us essentially. So the Council
- 20 decided to leave. And then Ripon Museums Trust got an emergency grant from
- 21 the Lottery to purchase the building. And we got the building outright I think
- 22 around March time this year. I started post at the end of May and then we
- 23 wanted to open the building as soon as we could so we had about two months

24 to change old abandoned Council offices into as much of the museum offer as
25 we possibly could.

26 LP: Very good.

27 MW: So this is what we have now. So the building is. . . [redacted] . . . So main
28 block was a purpose built building, specifically designed with the segregation of
29 people which I guess is a bit more relevant to what you're studying.

30 LP: Yes.

31 MW: The Master's quarters at the front here. And then we have the female wing
32 and male wing at each side. The only room that everyone can access is the
33 dining hall. The gardens also were segregated so we're stood in the Master's
34 gardens here. And then this would have been the female workyard, one of the
35 female workyards there. And then this would have been the male workyard
36 there. So you kind of get a sense of how close they all were together so the
37 Master could have been having his high tea when the men are breaking rocks
38 just next door and stuff like that. So although the whole thing's designed to
39 keep them separate. They also quite lived on top of each other. That's not the
40 say that the Master's role was quite lucrative role. Not lucrative, but you know,
41 comfortable. You would also have to work with, have a matron as well so you'd
42 have to be married so the master would by and large tend to anything
43 administrative and bureaucratic and management of the building but also in
44 evenings he would also tend to the male workmates. The matron would tend to
45 the female workmates on the other side of the wing. So it's quite, we'll try to do
46 a whole tour of the building if you like, so you can see the spaces that aren't
47 open so you can see, it's quite demonstrative how it was sort of organised
48 anyway. So there is an instance in fact, that I think, I think it's actually on one of
49 the panels in the school room about how the master was married, his wife died
50 then therefore he couldn't work here anymore without a married woman,
51 without a wife because they would each individually tend to the different
52 genders so instead of shutting up shop and leaving, he married the school
53 mistress and then they just needed to replace the school mistress.

54 This is the Master and matrons' block. We have pictures of various Masters and
55 Matrons here so this is Matron Lawson and Matron Wright so these a quite later
56 Master and Matrons. And this is room that we've tried to convert here so up
57 until about three months ago this was an old reception room for the Council. So
58 this is why this is here. This was like a glass pane to speak to the person
59 through. So we've had to do a bit of covering up. But we stripped the walls and
60 we uncovered this original paintwork from the 1930s and just tried to bring it
61 back. The year we went for is about 1900. And then also we opened up these
62 rooms as well.

63 This is the Masters' study. A bit of a fudge. You'll notice the theme of fudging as
64 we go round because he probably wouldn't have done his work here. But we
65 wanted to represent the kind of administrative and managerial side of the
66 Master's role which is why we put it on there.

67 This is a kind of history of the workplace . . . [inaudible] . . . But we wanted to
68 represent again the modern use of the building so this is why we made this

69 desk. It's all experimenting. It's not working very well. People think it's my desk.
 70 So we're going to experiment with things and try to see what people are
 71 interested in. Are they interested in the history of workhouses or the history of
 72 this building because this building was obviously was Council offices for a third
 73 of its lifetime so we're seeing if there's an interest in telling that whole sort of
 74 social care history instead of just the history of the workhouse? And this is kind
 75 of sums up how the building was designed. . . [redacted] . . . So this is quite a
 76 nice way of showing how it was separated so the female wing is here. Dining
 77 hall. Male room. We're in the Masters' quarters here. [inaudible] and you've got
 78 the kitchen here which we'll come to towards the end. So interesting things
 79 about the female side and the difference between the men's side shows how
 80 different their lives were. The female side sewing room. This is from 1930s I
 81 should say so not the original 1850s plan which we don't have. The kind of stuff
 82 they have here, bread store, sewing room, day rooms where they would do
 83 their work. The men's rooms were very different and you can see the type of
 84 different labour that they were working on because each, the men's room would
 85 access the dining room through a lavatory so this would be a washing up
 86 space. So it kind of shows that these were doing a lot dirtier work before they
 87 went to the dining room as opposed to the females who could access the dining
 88 room straight room the places that they were working. So I mean there's ideas
 89 about hygiene and cleanliness in these times obviously so we can tell a lot from
 90 the building and the plans in terms of what kind of things they wanted to do.
 91 The females [inaudible] also work in the kitchen and we'll see later how the
 92 females had a bigger view of the female yard of this side but no view of the
 93 male yard of this side. I guess for the passing off food and maybe that they
 94 shouldn't be watching men working.

95 But yes I should say really now that we've not so much told the story as in
 96 female and male at the moment. The main reason was that we only had a
 97 couple of months. We wanted to open up as much of the building as we can.
 98 One of the things that was important, especially for me when deciding what we
 99 opened, was making sure that it was, because it's quite a maze and you'll see
 100 how labyrinthine the space is, so we wanted to choose an easier route for the
 101 public to make through so this is why we've opened the female wing. So we've
 102 not opened the female wing to tell the female stories because we, I wouldn't
 103 want to do that until we can do the male wing because it just becomes lopsided
 104 then as a visitor experience. So if we did open up the both sides, I think we can
 105 say this is the female room, this is the male room, this is what men did, this is
 106 what females do. But until that point, we just tell more general stories, if you see
 107 what I mean?

108 LP: That makes sense. Yes.

109 MW: Alright. Should we go on?

110 LP: Yes. Thank you.

111 MW: So I'll take you upstairs later, in abit.

112 LP: Ok.

113 MW: And see upstairs in the Master's quarters. And we're still in the Master's
114 quarters now. And this is where the pantry would have been. And it's pretty
115 much exactly how we got it. So all these shelves, we sort of reckon these are
116 probably about 1830s. The floor must be 1830s too. So yeah, it was just a case
117 of dressing it with objects from around 1900. The pantry would have been
118 slightly different in a sense that it would have usually housed the stuff that
119 people shouldn't have access to, so like alcohol, medicines and things like that.
120 The kitchen would have had the more cooking stuff but it wouldn't matter so
121 much that people could access that. So it's a bit of a kind of representation of
122 the kitchen and pantry because we knew that the kitchen wouldn't be open yet
123 but it's the next room we're hoping to open. So that's why it looks like this.

124 LP: Gosh, you were really lucky that they still had the shelving and that in
125 here.

126 MW: Yeah. Yeah. When I came round before my interview, I saw this space
127 and thought that's an easy win really. You know everything's still there.

128 LP: That's one room ticked off already.

129 MW: Yeah. Exactly. Just put things on the shelves and make it nice
130 atmosphere. All we changed was the light and these curtains which are a bit of
131 a bodge really because there's all like panelling and circuit panels so that's why
132 that's there. But other than that, that's all we did in this room. And all this
133 collection as well was brought in in the months after I started just from locals
134 and stuff because our, the museums' collection is by and large just police stuff.
135 So there's nine thousand objects in the collection and eight thousand are
136 police. Around one thousand are kind of handling and social history so we've
137 used some of the collection but all this stuff on open display is stuff that we've
138 just taken in and inventoried but not accessioned because we wanted to keep
139 things open display without the risk of, you know, well less of a risk really.

140 LP: Do you think that's going to an issue if you were to open up the female side
141 because of the lack of material culture in the collections belonging to it?

142 MW: Yes. Definitely. I mean in workhouses generally as well there's just no
143 collection from workhouse to workhouse museum. You'll realise that there's just
144 barely anything that's left behind so it's hard to tell individual stories and this is
145 another dilemma we have got in a sense that the day tasks are fair enough as
146 they did do different things and we tell them in the [inaudible] wing as well
147 which will ultimately move over here. But that night time activity, is it worth
148 opening a male dormitory and a female dormitory because the male dormitory's
149 not going to have Top Gear posters up or anything like that. It's not going to be
150 that different because we have not got the objects and wouldn't know 100 per
151 cent what the differences would be between the dormitories. I think they pretty
152 much would have been exactly the same so then you duplicate, you're just
153 duplicating two spaces but at the same time you want to represent the two
154 spaces so it's quite tricky.

155 LP: Yeah. It's which kind of curatorial decision do you make.

156 MW: Yeah. Exactly.

157 LP: Because you could tell that room to tell a completely different story that's
158 not being told elsewhere.

159 MW: Yes. But the very nature of the building, you run the risk of just constantly
160 saying something twice but saying but this would have been, you know, the
161 female would have used this, males would have used this. Obviously the
162 history's different but there are certain rooms where they would have been
163 dressed pretty much identical so how do you do that without a visitor going 'Oh,
164 another dormitory' which is exactly the same. Do you see what I mean?

165 LP: Yes . . . [Redacted] . . .

166 MW: So then you come through to the dining hall so this would have been the
167 centre of the building and it would have been the place everyone could access
168 but individually, so there wouldn't have been men and female together during
169 meal times or even ages so they separated the ages as well. But they might be
170 a co-ed kind of time during Sundays like Sundays service and stuff which might
171 be the only time males and females could see each other because essentially
172 you were here with your wife and your kids so that might be the only time they
173 could all meet. The [inaudible] design is specifically laid out for this came kind
174 of, oh there's a door behind there, for this coming in at different angles. So I
175 think we mention this on the panel there. It was a while ago I wrote that.

176 So yes, this is female wing. So as I was explaining, the main reason we
177 decided to go down this, open this side up is, you'll see on the other side, it's a
178 lot harder to interpret just the kind of building shape and the way rooms are set-
179 out, it's harder to get people through and use the rooms. Yes, so essentially
180 we're in the female wing. We have not told any of the females' story as yet
181 here. This is going to be a temporary exhibition space so this will change quite
182 quickly and will probably be, during the time I'm here we need to experiment
183 with what we show so these rooms will probably be used for things not
184 workhouse related, so temporary exhibitions and stuff like that [inaudible].

185 This was the sewing room so we've mentioned that it's the sewing room here
186 and we use this object to represent that it was the sewing room. Again, this is a
187 fudge as the school room would have been in the kids' block but the kids' block
188 is now demolished. But if we didn't tell the kids' stories somewhere then there
189 would be no representation of children. If we were being strict about things,
190 there would be no way we can tell people about the children that were in the
191 workhouse because none of the rooms were used were for children here. So
192 yes, again this could have been a dayroom to show the work that women did in
193 the workhouse but we wanted to a school room in somehow so we decided to.

194 And then we go back through. These are the next two rooms, these are the
195 next two rooms we are opening so this is kind of what all the rooms were like
196 when we first got here apart from with woodchip wallpaper on so we stripped
197 them and lined them. Again, this will probably be a temporary exhibition space
198 so things outside of the normal workhouse story we would tell here. And this we
199 might use for the same thing. . . [redacted] . . . or we might use this for a space
200 that kind of tells some of the trade and crafts people did in the workhouse. So
201 we get to decide maybe have a consultation to do with the rest of the volunteers
202 and curatorial team before we decide what to do.

203 So then we do get a personal story of a woman here and we just explain the
204 dual staircases so men and women were separated but also by age so the
205 females, the younger females would be separated from older females so they
206 had two staircases. Older females this side. Younger females this side to
207 access their two different dorms. So this is something we knocked through as it
208 was boarded up by the Council and we knocked through to show it. It's quite
209 exciting. Knocking down a wall to reveal something. But again, it mentions that
210 women were all separated but we've not drawn out any specific female history
211 or [inaudible]. This does tell a story that one of our volunteers found about a
212 female who hung herself here.

213

214 So we've at the end of the kind of interpretive offer now. This is the cafe we're
215 experimenting with and here is the feedback board where we are asking people
216 to comment on what they see and then we record all this as my year here is
217 about evaluation, essentially working out what people are interesting in and
218 what they want to see. It's something that comes out a bit on the board that
219 people do want to see dormitories a lot. So we know that's something we
220 perhaps need to work on. People want to see the kitchens and stuff so two
221 areas which would be associated with the females in the workhouse. But yes,
222 so it informs us really about what we do next so, yes.

223 LP: It's a good idea.

224 MW: Should we see the rest of the building?

225 LP: Yes please. Thank you. [redacted]

226 MW: We're upstairs in the female wing now. This would have been four big
227 rooms, dormitories, but as you'll see they have been cut down into lots of little
228 Council offices and spaces. So you can see the problem we would have if
229 visitors we're up here without doing a big bit of capital works, I think it'll do really
230 tricky because what can you do with any these little rooms?

231 LP: Yes and coming up with a narrative that fits these rooms and maybe
232 doesn't require a certain path so they can just . . .

233 MW: Yes.

234 LP: Yes, it'll be tricky to come up with something.

235 MW: Yes. I mean there's also kind of access issues as well, like we wouldn't
236 have a lift up here. I think we are starting to look at now opening up some of
237 these rooms because we need to know, because my project will inform the big
238 bid, how people are finding navigating these spaces and stuff. Even though
239 they would look massively different if we had millions. But you'll see for
240 example this is the, this is the dual staircase so this is where it come up but it's
241 been boarded over so it's just another room added which wouldn't have been
242 there. But we'll probably open it to make it tell that story about the segregation
243 of women by age as well. Yes.

244 So this bit of the tour just becomes [inaudible] an old Council office, an old
245 Council office, an old Council office. But you'll also see what we inherited in
246 terms of the furniture and things which were left behind so we just kind of stash
247 it in here.

248 LP: Yes. It'll come in handy.

249 MW: Yes. Yes. We're going to try to sell a lot of it. We've sold a bit. It's just
250 room after room. We also the extent of the collection that we get in brought in
251 which we've not yet used, which we store in here and try to inventory. It's
252 happening very quickly. It's quite tricky really to keep up on top of it all. But you
253 know, they potentially might be very useful. This might be the store so what we
254 might do is that upstairs there wouldn't be any museum space. Again that kind
255 of idea of it would just be dormitories, if we were being strict about it, it would be
256 just four female dormitories. And would we need to tell that four times, the
257 females [inaudible] I think people would just get fed up. So we thought this
258 might be a more isolated space for operational stuff. So this would be, might be,
259 the museum store. We don't know.

260 So then we come up into the other female dorm. An art group is going to take
261 over this space soon so we are diversifying what we do here. Trying, dabbling
262 in art and what people and whether people have the appetite for coming to a
263 workhouse museum and finding out about art remains to be seen. But it's all,
264 the idea is [inaudible]

265 LP: The, I think The Foundling Museum in London have done some really
266 interesting art projects. I think they got an artist to come in to work with children
267 and also produce a series of work around, you know, the tokens that mother's
268 would leave with the children to later identify them. She's done a whole art
269 project around that idea of the types of tokens that mothers would leave with
270 their children. It's half a something isn't it, half a playing card and the mother's
271 got the other half. So if they eventually come back for their child then they
272 know, it's like Annie with the necklace. But she's done a whole art project
273 around the idea of the tokens.

274 MW: Right. That does sound good. I mean that's something, I didn't even
275 explain the *Consumption* film down there. That was the first artistic
276 collaboration that they have done here. And it was that the artist had a
277 traditional workhouse meal cooked and then it was served. The males and
278 females came in separately and eat it. It was a reconstruction of that. It is
279 something that, again over the year we'll experiment with, whether if we did
280 have artists and arts stuff going on would it always be within the theme or is
281 there an argument to broaden out from our core themes of law and order and
282 poverty. So we'll experiment with that abit as well. But I'm hoping this will be a
283 kind of open studio drop-in session where people can come in sit with the artist
284 and make some work. We'll see. We'll see.

285 Oh I need to explain. In this room, this door wouldn't have been here. So this,
286 we've just passed through the threshold of male and female side. So this would
287 have been the females dormitory, this would have been the males, this door
288 wouldn't have been here. But how it would have worked to access it is, if we go
289 back through here which is now the Master and Matron's quarters again, you

290 can see the routes that the Master would have taken to tend to the males and
291 the Matron would have taken to the females. So that's what really good about
292 the building, you've still got these amazing features that show how the building
293 operated and the role of the Master and Matron and what they would have
294 done.

295 LP: Yes. Even if the rooms themselves don't tell that story, you've still got the
296 architecture and layout that does it for you.

297 MW: Yes. Exactly. Essentially that's kind of the thing with the dual staircase,
298 were we Perspexed it up. You see what I mean, put Perspex on it, is because
299 their essentially like museum objects. We don't have, as we discussed before,
300 workhouse objects really. These kind of architectural features work really well
301 as objects. I'm always trying to think of ways, instead of, the route just walking
302 through, what can we do to really emphasis these as objects essentially that tell
303 these stories of the workhouse. So the Master and Matron would have staff so
304 during the day the staff would tend to the running but during the evenings, staff
305 might go home and the Master and Matron would be sleeping here. If it kicked
306 out the Matron would go to the women if it was the women and the Master
307 would go to the males.

308 And this is the Master's bedroom which is the nicest room in the house which
309 we hope will experiment with an Air B n B kind of thing in here. So we might
310 dress it as the Master's room. It could be a place for visitors most of the time
311 but also a rental space so people can live as the Master. But it's a bit of an
312 investment that we need to consider.

313 LP: I bet you have a lovely fireplace behind there.

314 MW: Yes. Right. Like every fireplace is boarded up in one way or another so we
315 can't wait to get it all up. I mean this is another thing, the trunking, downstairs
316 we removed so much of this. It was all in every room so that was a big, that was
317 a bit of an expense as we had to get an electrician in to do that.

318 And then in the other rooms [inaudible] just filled with stuff. But you'll see, I think
319 it's this room, some of the things like spring water and things, Coffeemate just
320 left behind. It's been a bit of a, a bit hard because you've got to move, clear a
321 room, put everything in one room and then we work on that room so we have to
322 clear room and put it in another room and that we get to that room .

323 LP: Yes. You are just kind of pushing the problems round aren't you?

324 MW: Yes. It's been a pain. But I just need to get sorted and get it solved.
325 [inaudible] But we have people who've been round who used to work here and
326 they couldn't believe what was left behind [inaudible] obviously it was just the
327 staff who were responsible for the clearing and they wouldn't have had extra
328 people to help and had to do this on top of doing their normal work, it's just like
329 'let's just get the stuff we need and go' which is understandable.

330 So anyway, we are back in the male wing and down here are the dormitories,
331 the male dormitories so you can see there's fake walls, false walls, put up
332 there, partition walls so it doubles in size. We'll go down actually.

333 And it mirrors as well so then we have the double staircases here for the old
334 and younger males. And then you'll see this would have been one dormitory.
335 That room you just saw and this one would have been one big dorm.

336 LP: Yes. Full size.

337 MW: So these walls will come down as well at some point so we might use this
338 to show.

339 LP: It'll be a good space won't it? Size-wise.

340 MW: Yes. It's difficult with the dormitories as well. Everyone wants to see them
341 but I'm not really sure what they'll see. Do you know what I mean?

342 LP: Yes.

343 MW: It's, by their very nature they are stark empty rooms with just crap beds in.
344 So the best thing we can hope for, and again, this is why the female wing kind
345 of won't work as well because the females' wing is quite small. When this is one
346 big room, it could look quite cavernous and kind of like quite austere. So we will
347 probably tell the male's as a dormitory as opposed to a female dormitory. But I
348 mean, I'm not an expert in the subject so someone might tell me one day that
349 actually the female dorm was massively different and worth duplicating the
350 rooms, but, yes. It's something I'm struggling with because the answer could be
351 that we completely bring the workhouse back but I don't think people will, there
352 won't be enough, not that there wouldn't be enough stories to tell, I just don't
353 think that people will have the appreciate to look round stark rooms for an hour,
354 for an hour and half. And I just think we need to get that balance right
355 somehow. Anyway, this is what I've got to find out while I'm here. Right watch
356 these stairs, they're a bit uneven from men tramping up and down them.

357 So now we are downstairs in the male wing. These are, these would have been
358 the male dayrooms. [inaudible] And then we have a similar one. This is where,
359 the one that currently stores. This is the next one we need to clear because
360 now we can start working on this room. The problem I was telling you earlier
361 about.

362 LP: There's not a shortage of doors I see.

363 MW: Yes. Got a few doors. Yes. Yes. A few ladders. So this is slightly different
364 to the female wing because this corridor would have gone all the way through to
365 the hospital which is the building you can see through the window here which is
366 Community House which is the hospital. So this is an isolated corridor and
367 these would have been bricked up which would have led all the way to the
368 hospital. . . [redacted] . . . There would have been two additional doors there for
369 the males to access the dining hall. . . [redacted]. . .

370 This is the kitchen so this is the next thing that we do. Again we can bring all of
371 the female side of the story. In fact, the building I guess has got more areas that
372 would have been female domains I guess because of the kitchen. So this is
373 where the females would work. This would be the female yard some we'll be
374 explaining about the windows. Nice big windows for the female side and then
375 these little ones up here on the male side so they couldn't smuggle food out or I

376 guess also contact. The males couldn't speak to the females. This would have
377 been where the oven was, here and there would have been various work
378 benches and stuff like that. In the 1930s plans, it does plot out where the tables
379 were and that which is quite useful. But we'll probably want to bring it back to
380 earlier than it. They, I think, there would have been cooking staff as well but the
381 females by and large would have been doing stuff like I guess the chopping, the
382 peeling, the washing, the cleaning.

383 And then we have in the back here. This would have been the old scullery, so
384 the wet room I guess is a good way to describe it. This is also where the boilers
385 were and now where our modern boiler is. Brilliant isn't it?

386 LP: Yes. I love all these little spaces in museums. All the little rooms. I used to
387 work for Bradford Museums in an old mill and we'd have like random rooms.
388 Yes. They were my best rooms.

389 MW: So I mean because the boiler will have to stay in here I guess so I don't
390 know what we'll do in terms of if we ever open up these spaces. It's hard to
391 know.

392 And then finally just at the end, these would have been ovens where we
393 currently store stuff again. It's down on the plans as bread oven here. There
394 would also have been the access to the basement here so this is something
395 that we're excited about that we'll uncover the basement which goes down
396 beneath and is the length of the kitchen area so it's quite big.

397 LP: There could be all sorts of objects down there for you.

398 MW: Yes. I've got this dream that we're going to find these amazing workhouse
399 objects down there. You can kind of see into it because there's these open
400 grates outside and someone put a phone down. You can there's a cold slab
401 meat table so that's there. But I'm sure there won't be anything of interest. Yes.
402 So this is the kitchen so this is the next thing we do which will give us more of a
403 scope, I guess, because outside of the Master's room, there's only really the
404 schoolroom which is a representation of life in the building in there but again
405 that's a bit of a fudge as that's not where it would have been. So this will be the
406 first kind of [inaudible] inmate room where we would be telling more of the
407 stories of the inmates, particularly the female inmates who were working here.
408 So this is would we'll get on with.

409 LP: Very good.

410 MW: And it's cold.

411 LP: Yes.

412 MW: That concludes our tour.

413 LP: Thank you. . . [redacted] . . . I think you've pretty much answered the
414 questions I had planned out. So it was stuff about any issues regarding
415 representing Victorian women in planning, designing and interpreting the block
416 but you've talked about that. So unless you have anything to add?

417 MW: Well I guess there's the thing about the access to information is quite
418 tricky in this kind of museum and the objects to tell the stories of women and I
419 guess that what we've done now is not necessarily representing what we would
420 like to do in terms of telling the gender stories. We kind of went down the route
421 of doing it this way for a different reason, for different reasons, so we know
422 there's scope that we could tell two gender stories role which we would do.
423 What we have done so far isn't what we will do.

424 LP: Yes. Ok. That's fine. Because one of the things I observed when I did the
425 fieldwork last time when just the main block was open is, the only
426 representations of women are them as inmates so even in the Guardians' room,
427 it's still very much, even though towards the back end of the Victorian period
428 women could be Guardians, that kind of side of it isn't told in the Guardians'
429 room. So it came across to me almost like it was the story of men in power and
430 the women as inmates.

431 MW: I see what you mean. Right. Yes. I mean we've drawn it out a bit here, I
432 think we could do better, I mean we call it the Master's block all the time for
433 example [inaudible] but at least they're are shown, I mean there's photographs
434 of women as the Matrons and stuff in here.

435 LP: Yes. I was quite pleased when I saw the Matron, I was like 'Oh. This is what
436 I'm looking for'.

437 MW: Yes. So, but I guess, yes, it has been easier to, there has been more of a
438 reason to show that. Yes. You're right. There were female Guardians in power
439 in the workhouse system and this was a good easy way to demonstrate that.

440 LP: Yes. Very good. I think that's it really. Yes. That's about it. I think we've
441 pretty much discussed everything as we've walked round. So that's great.
442 Thank you very much.

443 MW: No worries. [redacted]

444 LP: One of the other questions is, what primary sources are you using to kind of
445 understand the layout of the space?

446 MW: There's the old plans that we have. The earliest one that you've got is
447 1930s unfortunately. I kind of just work with the research teams and curatorial
448 teams. They give me information and I kind of interpret it I guess. So there's all
449 kinds of stuff in Northallerton records, but again there's not much really. We
450 kind of rely on the odd photograph which always comes from later, plans that
451 come from later as well. And just any other records held by Northallerton and
452 Kew as well I think. But again, it's quite hard to piece together as massively, oh
453 and newspapers as well so you get like local newspapers which one of our
454 volunteers has trawled through to find anything relevant to or related to the
455 workhouse history, which is good as they do get a bit more of a gender neutral
456 idea because there's stories about men and women and stuff that happens as
457 you've got a few stories from there about females and what their lives were like.
458 Like I mentioned the drunk lady. Do I mention the drunk lady?

459 LP: The stair incident, oh no that's the one . . .

460 MW: Yes. The women who hung herself. There's also a story about so they
461 could leave the workhouse during the day and some people came back drunk
462 and there's a story in the paper that one of them was woman who ended up
463 being dragged upstairs and had to be subdued with a bucket of water. Pretty
464 grim, not very nice but yes, they are the main things that they kind of use to get
465 the history out. I mean we're lucky because one of our curators has been here
466 since the museum started and we've also got Peter Higginbottom who's the
467 kind of expert in workhouse, he's got his website.

468 LP: Yes. I've come across his work.

469 MW: Yes. He's one of the people on our project's panel and things so he's
470 really good source of information and checks through the information that we've
471 put up. Yes.

472 LP: Very good.

473 MW: Got a few avenues.

474 LP: Yes. Lovely.